

GALILEO IN AMERICA

by
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CHARACTERS

Bertolt Brecht

Director Brecht

Theorist Brecht

Playwright Brecht

Note: Bertolt Brecht is a separate character from the other Brechts.

Charles Laughton / Galileo Galilei

Virginia (Galileo's daughter)

Interpreter

Hallie Flanagan

Jerome Robbins

Pete Seeger

FBI Agent 1

Chief Inquisitor (HUAC chairman)

FBI Agent 2 / Inquisitor 2

FBI Agent 3 / Inquisitor 3

Note: FBI Agent 1 and Chief Inquisitor are separate characters. FBI Agents and Inquistors should be clearly distinguished from each other by costume and bearing.

Inmate 1 / Andrea

Inmate 2 / Little Monk

Inmate 3 / Federzoni

Clown 1

Clown 2

Clown 3

Clown 4

SCENES	PAGE
ACT 1: AMERICA	
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 13	4
SCENE: DANCE OF THE INQUISITORS	6
SCENE: THREE BRECHTS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE	6
SCENE: SEVEN	9
SCENE: HALLIE FLANAGAN	9
SCENE: GARDENS	11
SCENE: LAUGHTON	14
SCENE: THREE BRECHTS ON MARXISM	18
SCENE: WORK ON GALILEO	19
SCENE: POEM	21
SCENE: WRITING THE SCRIPT	22
ACT 2: GALILEO	
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 1-2 / FBI	25
SCENE: THREE BRECHTS ON THEORY	28
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 3-6	31
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 7	33
SCENE: HUAC: JEROME ROBBINS	34
SCENE: SURVEILLANCE	37
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 8	40
SCENE: VIRGINIA	41
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 10-11	42
SCENE: LIFE OF BRECHT	42
SCENE: OF LIVES THE LUCID	43
ACT 3: HUAC	
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 12a (ASYLUM)	44
SCENE: THREE BRECHTS (SHOW TRIALS)	48
SCENE: HUAC: BRECHT (1947a)	50
SCENE: THE MEASURES TAKEN	58
SCENE: HUAC: BRECHT (1947b)	59
SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 12b (RECANTATION)	63
SCENE: DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN	63
SCENE: HUAC: PETE SEEGER (1955)	64
SCENE: CROSSING THE BORDER	67
SCENE: BRECHT ON THEATER AND FILM	68

ACT 1: AMERICA**SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 13¹**

(A sense of temporal remoteness to this meeting; a noir-ish atmosphere. The tone should be one of conspiracy, not argument. Once Virginia is onstage in this scene, she never leaves the stage until the end of the piece.)

GALILEO

(Reading) "I live in a house in the country a prisoner of the Inquisition, until... I die?"

BRECHT

You are writing your book in secret.

FBI AGENT 1

Because Virginia is now a spy for the Inquisition?

BRECHT

Yes.

VIRGINIA

Wait. Just wait. This is all wrong. First of all, my father and I are very close.

GALILEO

Especially at the end...

VIRGINIA

And I didn't live with him, that was my brother Vicenzio. I live in a convent. You know that.

BRECHT

What is the question here?

VIRGINIA

Why are you making me side with his enemies? Why do you want... need him to despise me? I'm not like that.

BRECHT

I took you out of that convent. Where (*pointing at Galileo*) he put you because you were illegitimate.

GALILEO

She had no chance of getting married.

FBI AGENT 1

(*To Galileo*) You could have legitimized her? You legitimized her brother.

BRECHT

I am not using the son in my play.

VIRGINIA

Well, I am in so little in the play that I really thought you would get rid of me altogether.

FBI AGENT 1

(*To Brecht*) You have Galileo recant in public to mislead the Inquisition?

GALILEO

So I can carry on my work... undercover?

BRECHT

No, this provides too cheap and shallow a moral. (*Pointing at Galileo*) He gives Virginia hints of what he's doing.

FBI AGENT 1

He puts her at risk from the Inquisition.

BRECHT

The Church is her master.

FBI AGENT 1

He neglects to teach her anything that might remove her from the influence of the church.

BRECHT

Oh yes. He manipulates both her love and her devotion to the church. (*To Galileo*) And you betray your profession.

GALILEO

Bah, amateurs.

(*He leaves*)

VIRGINIA

Wait !

BRECHT

(Singing) Speak of the weather
Be thankful he's dead
Who before he had spoken
Took back what he said.

FBI AGENT 1

Any man who does what we are doing must not be
tolerated ?

BRECHT

(Looking after Galileo) In the ranks of science.

FBI AGENT 1

In the ranks of literature?

BRECHT

(Pause) As you like.

FBI AGENT 1

In the ranks of government?

BRECHT

The state tolerates what it needs to, in order to
remain the state.

FBI AGENT

(Singing) Just whose city is the city?
Just whose world is the world?

(Blackout)

SCENE: DANCE OF THE INQUISITORS

*(The Inquisitors and FBI Agents take
part in a Dance of the Inquisitors.
This dance overlaps into the next scene
and can continue throughout if
desired.)*

SCENE: THREE BRECHTS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

(The three extra Brechts alone; their relationship to the set is one of discomfort.)

THEORIST BRECHT

If you can stop congratulating yourselves? HUAC was no success.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

But it was! The committee was fed up with all those other people saying *no*. And I *used* that. I said to them, very politely I said, I'm a guest in your country and I don't have constitutional rights. I'm going to answer *all your questions*.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

They didn't know what to do with me.

THEORIST BRECHT

You were a collaborator.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

It was tactically sound.

THEORIST BRECHT

Unprincipled.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Reminiscently, trying to ignore Theorist Brecht) They even let me have the cigar.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

The perfect smokescreen. They would ask me a question, I would take a long puff *(Substantial pause while he demonstrates)* while I thought out my answer.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

And the interpreter also, a very fine stalling device.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

The poem! I originally wrote it in *German* but they showed it to me in *English*, so I said...

DIRECTOR BRECHT

(Joined by Playwright Brecht using an overdone German accent) "No, I never quite wrote that, something's wrong with the translation."

THEORIST BRECHT

Splitting hairs.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Shrugs) The committee didn't do their homework well enough to catch me.

THEORIST BRECHT

"Any man who does what I have done must not be tolerated."

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

This is beside the point. Yes, in bourgeois terms I am immoral. I lie, I cheat my friends, I'm a misogynist. It doesn't matter. They *(pointing to the audience)* just found out that I'm a fraud and it doesn't matter the least little bit.

THEORIST BRECHT

You don't have the right to judge that.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

I won't let *them* off the hook just because they don't like me. Don't start from the good old things, the scandal, the gossip everyone loves, start from the bad new ones. HUAC, the FBI, the Patriot Act...

THEORIST BRECHT

Why does it let them off the hook to think about you and not off the hook to think Galileo who has been dead for 400 years?

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

There is always too much to deal with. The truth is in the time, not in authority.

THEORIST BRECHT

Even if the authority is me?

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Slowly) You want authority? Truth? I don't know who I am. I was a poet. I didn't write most of the plays. My name, other voices... Grete, Elizabeth. Fine. But.

Somewhere along the way I leaked out of myself. This person whom everyone calls Brecht, I know him as *(gesturing to himself)* Scheissvolk. The shit man. I should be saying, I should be able to say, Grete Steffin wrote this, Elizabeth Hauptmann wrote that. But I won't. Scheissvolk can't. Over here I am Scheissvolk, over there *(pointing to Director Brecht)* is Brecht. And *(to Theorist Brecht)* your job is not to put us under the microscope, your job is to turn *them (indicating the audience)* into collaborators too.
(Blackout)

SCENE: SEVEN²

(Great Seal of the United States projected large on rear wall or scrim. A long table as for a congressional HUAC-style hearing, with microphones, pens, paper, bottles of drinking water, etc...)

VIRGINIA

(singing) Seven roses on the bush,
 Six belong to the wind.
 One will stay so there is just,
 One for me to find.

Seven times I'll summon you,
 Six times stay away,
 But the seventh promise me,
 Come without delay.

(Hallie Flanagan enters and sits down in the chair to one side, waiting quietly.)

The stork does not bring babies,
 Seven does not bring luck,
 And there is not any devil
 In our Re-pub-lic...

(Virginia moves aside as the Chief Inquisitor enters and seats himself in the center chair behind the table.)

SCENE: HALLIE FLANAGAN³

*(Hallie Flanagan and Chief Inquisitor;
as if at a HUAC-style hearing)*

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Please state your name and occupation.

HALLIE FLANAGAN

Hallie Flanagan, director of the Federal Theater Project.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I want to quote from your article, "A Theater is Born", in the *Theatre Arts Monthly* edition of November 1931. "Unlike any art form existing in America today, the workers' theaters intend to remake the social structure without the help of money—and this ambition invests their undertaking with a certain Marlowesque madness." You are quoting from this Marlowe. Is he a Communist?

HALLIE FLANAGAN

I was quoting from Christopher Marlowe.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Tell us who Marlowe is, so we can get the proper reference.

HALLIE FLANAGAN

Put in the record that he was the greatest dramatist in the period immediately preceding Shakespeare.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Of course, we had what some people call Communists back in the days of the Greek theater.

HALLIE FLANAGAN

Quite true.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

And I believe Mr. Euripides was guilty of teaching class consciousness also, wasn't he?

HALLIE FLANAGAN

I believe that was alleged against all of the Greek dramatists.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

So we cannot say when it began.

(Blackout. Two spotlights up, one on Brecht, sitting quite far off in another part of the stage, and one on FBI Agent 1, sitting in the Chief Inquisitor's place at the table, but casually. The Great Seal has been replaced by a round vignette showing Brecht's Los Angeles home circa 1941.)

SCENE: GARDENS⁴

BRECHT

I am remembering a little garden. A lawn, white garden furniture. Lemon trees, shrubs with red flowers, a palm tree. It was Tahiti in the form of a big city. *(Pause)* It is as if they took away my guide as soon as I entered the desert.

FBI AGENT 1

It cannot be both Tahiti and the desert

BRECHT

Excuse me?

FBI AGENT 1

You say Tahiti, you say the desert. Factual inconsistency.

BRECHT

I was speaking metaphorically.

FBI AGENT 1

Of the desert?

BRECHT

No. The desert is real. All the greenery in Los Angeles— wrestled from the desert by irrigation.

FBI AGENT 1

Stop paying the water bill, it all stops growing.

BRECHT

Exactly.

FBI AGENT 1

Of Tahiti then?

BRECHT

I enjoyed sprinkling the garden.

FBI AGENT 1

You can't distract me with your inconsistencies.

BRECHT

I could not breathe in that climate.

FBI AGENT 1

You are speaking metaphorically again. It is an imprecise habit.

BRECHT

Almost nowhere was my life harder than in your country. That mausoleum of the easy-going. Housing developments where nothing actually develops. And Hollywood, an American notion of heaven. Which does double duty by serving as hell for all the... others...

FBI AGENT 1

For everyone who made the mistake of being unsuccessful.

BRECHT

So economical.

FBI AGENT 1

And despite this, on the day after Pearl Harbor, you declared your intention to become a citizen of the United States. Of Tahiti, or of the desert?

BRECHT

Of Tahiti and the desert. *(pause)* You are still watching me?

FBI AGENT 1

No. Not...not since you went back to Germany.

BRECHT

When did you start? Right away when I arrived?

FBI AGENT 1

Does it matter anymore?

BRECHT

1941?

(Pause)

FBI AGENT 1

1943. *(Pause)* We took you in when you had nowhere else to go.

BRECHT

You accuse me of ingratitude?

FBI AGENT 1

I make no accusation.

BRECHT

Of course we who would not have shared Hitler's victory did share his defeat. *(Pause)* And there is no proper bread in the United States.

FBI AGENT 1

Americans are nomads and nomads don't know anything about eating.

BRECHT

I wrote that. You read my journals.

FBI AGENT 1

Later on I did.

BRECHT

You build houses that are extensions of garages. That last 20 years, and you don't even stay that long.

FBI AGENT 1

I myself was in the Los Angeles Bureau for 42 years. *(Pause)* You never followed up on your intention to become a U.S. citizen.

BRECHT

(Laughs) Development. All that is left is a nomadic theater by people on the move for people who are lost.

VIRGINIA

"Galileo lives in a house in the country..."

BRECHT

Virginia.

VIRGINIA

"Galileo lives in a house in the country a prisoner of the Inquisition, until he dies."

FBI AGENT 1

The Life of Galileo, Scene 12.

VIRGINIA

Thirteen.

FBI AGENT 1

Scene 13? Aren't we getting ahead of ourselves here?

(The projection of Los Angeles is replaced by the following projected text, which FBI Agent 1 reads.)

All right. Los Angeles, 1944. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht, in exile from the Nazis, begins work on a new translation of his play *The Life of Galileo*. His collaborator is the actor Charles Laughton.

(FBI Agent 1 exits; Virginia moves aside and hands her script to Laughton as he enters.)

SCENE: LAUGHTON⁵

LAUGHTON

Last night a great chunk of my garden fell off in a landslide.

BRECHT

Transience is an essential part of beauty.

LAUGHTON

They tell me it's just the beginning, more will go. The sea is undermining it. The light in the whole house has changed. You can see the sea. It has a sea view.

BRECHT

A re-creation myth.

LAUGHTON

To be honest, I don't want to see anybody right now, I'm so embarrassed. It's in all the papers.

BRECHT

"In the end, the gods discarded the heavens and the earth." Mostly, the earth.

LAUGHTON

No. Stop. One moment. (*seriously, in a French accent*) "In the beginning God created beautiful women and the good gray earth of Provence that brings forth the noble wine. And the earth slid into the sea, and was gone, and horror was in the faces of the women and the men alike..."

BRECHT

Do the butler, your grandfather?

LAUGHTON

(*In an English accent*) "In the beginning His Lordship created the Order of the Garter and the House of Peers. And the earth was without peasants and void, and His Lordship hunted in the meadows and in the copses and by the streams. Then God said, "Let there be foxes."

BRECHT

Soldier in battle.

LAUGHTON

(*In an American accent*) "In the beginning God created the shell bursts and the foxholes. A lot of fucking good that did us. And the foxholes collapsed and were filled with mud and water and corpses, so what else is new? And mustard gas was on the faces of the dead and of the living, if you could tell them apart."
(*Recollecting himself*) I feel like an old woman with chest pains. Tell me about Galileo.

BRECHT

The man or the play?

LAUGHTON

The man.

BRECHT

You shouldn't idealize Galileo. You know the kind of thing— the scholar as impotent stargazer. My Galileo is a powerful man.

(Laughton stands and begins to work on this; eventually he finds this pose: stomach thrust forward, both hands on the buttocks, head thrown back. Director Brecht and Theorist Brecht enter and watch.)

LAUGHTON

Earthy. A large belly.

BRECHT

An engineer teaching a very concrete subject.

LAUGHTON

(Trying different movements) Using one meaty hand to gesticulate.

BRECHT

But with precision.

LAUGHTON

Face?

BRECHT

A face like Socrates. And a sense of humor. That should come through in the translation.

LAUGHTON

History without humor is a ghastly thing.

BRECHT

Of course, Galileo is not Falstaff either. He loves eating and drinking, but he wouldn't drink at work.

LAUGHTON

He works in a sensual way.

(He moves around the space, setting up a telescope and a tall stool.)

BRECHT

He handles his tools with elegance. He understands machinery.

LAUGHTON

Shirtsleeves. *(He rolls up his sleeves)* Comfortable trousers for working in.

BRECHT

Trousers? Is that not... *anachronistisch?*

LAUGHTON

I found a picture yesterday, a 17th century painting by... I forget... anyway, there were men wearing long trousers.

BRECHT

(Nods) Galileo looks at his own world as if it is all outdated.

(Brecht turns on projections of antique constellations in red-sepia tones, which fill the walls and floor.)

BRECHT

He wants to find the truth of his time.

LAUGHTON

So Galileo has to be a power, a big personality. Someone that can go head-to-head with the Church.

BRECHT

He wants to bring about a new age

LAUGHTON

And then he backs down, he doesn't take the swing. A flawed hero.

BRECHT

He's not sympathetic. That gets in the way of the complexity.

(They freeze)

SCENE: THREE BRECHTS ON MARXISM

THEORIST BRECHT

(To Brecht) I am supposed to be a Marxist.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

So?

THEORIST BRECHT

Galileo... you are putting forward the 'great man' view of history. The idea that history is made by dramatic personalities...

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Interrupting) I change my opinion about Galileo all the time.

THEORIST BRECHT

Individuals don't matter. In the Marxist view.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

And I don't let Marxism get in my way.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

Galileo creates the machines that other men will use... And he doesn't take the social responsibility...

THEORIST BRECHT

Science without conscience?

DIRECTOR BRECHT

... So the Church finds a way to co-opt his work...and the product is... this superfart, this...

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Interrupting) Four hundred years later you blink and the city of Hiroshima is gone.

SCENE: WORK ON GALILEO⁶

(Director Brecht, Theorist Brecht, and Playwright Brecht are onlookers.)

VIRGINIA

The Life of Galileo, scene 1. Galileo with his student Andrea, who is the son of his housekeeper. A domestic interior. Housekeeper and daughter offstage.

LAUGHTON

(Gesturing with his script and handing it to Brecht)
I've been working on Scene 1.

(Blue-gray or sepia projection of an antique armillary sphere and constellations on walls and floor.)

BRECHT

It would go faster if you spoke German.

LAUGHTON

Or if you spoke English. *(Consulting his script)*
There's a problem in the rope section. The masons...
they're argung...

(He switches voices and reads the following text as Galileo.)

After five minutes discussion, out goes a method which had been working for a thousand years. For where faith has been enthroned, doubt now sits. *(He breaks off and speaks as himself, Laughton)* This isn't right.

BRECHT

What's wrong?

LAUGHTON

It's too majestic. It needs a more...

BRECHT

More ordinary?

(They consult Brecht's script together; Laughton scribbling on it as they speak)

LAUGHTON

More rhetorical... pentameter might work.

BRECHT

I see. Yes. For faith deposed by doubt....For blind faith...

LAUGHTON

(Overlapping) For blindly *blinkered* faith, for blind-faced faith... deposed by doubt...

BRECHT

Deposed by *healthy* doubt?

LAUGHTON

Deposed by... When is doubt ever unhealthy?

BRECHT

When it chooses to ignore the evidence.

LAUGHTON

Blind-faced... ugh... blind-*placed* faith deposed by healthy doubt. (*He shakes his head.*) Too Shakespearean. It's a *story* he's telling. (*He gestures.*) Where faith has been enthroned a thousand years... a thousand years of faith...

BRECHT

Too much like the thousand-year Reich. Millennium? Of faith?

LAUGHTON

(*Trying out the variations*) Out goes the millennium of faith... the millennium of faith is ended... the millennium of faith is ended and this is the millennium of doubt.

BRECHT

'And' is weak.

LAUGHTON

The millennium of faith is ended, say I; this is the millennium of doubt. Yes. (*He switches to Galileo*) After five minutes discussion, out goes a method which had been working for a thousand years. The millennium of faith is ended, said I; this is the millennium of doubt. (*He flips through his script.*) And so on and so forth. What's next?

(*Projections fade, to be replaced by the following projected text, which Virginia reads.*)

VIRGINIA

"Letter to the Actor Charles Laughton Concerning the Work on the Play *The Life of Galileo*".

SCENE: POEM⁷

BRECHT

Still your people and mine were tearing each other to pieces when we
Pored over those tattered exercise books, looking

Up words in dictionaries, and time after time
Crossed out our texts

LAUGHTON

and then

Under the crossings-out excavated
The original turns of phrase. Bit by bit—
While the house fronts crashed down in our capitols—
The facades of language gave way. Between us
We began following what characters and actions
dictated:
New text.

BRECHT

Again and again I turned actor, demonstrating
A character's gestures and tone of voice, and you
Turned writer. Yet neither I nor you
Stepped outside his professions.

(Pause)

BRECHT

Laughton, why do you act?

LAUGHTON

What?

BRECHT

Why an actor, why do you act?

LAUGHTON

Because... because people don't know what they are
like... and I think I can show them.

(Blackout)

SCENE: WRITING THE SCRIPT⁸

*(Lights up on Playwright Brecht;
Theorist Brecht and Director Brecht
play the clowns. Laughton is gone;
Virginia off to the side. The clowns
have a kind of Mack Sennett energy;
accompanying music should match. Clowns
can be either male or female.)*

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Show them, yes. Laughton, you see, spoke no German whatsoever. So I would act it for him in bad English or even in German, and then he would act it back to me. Trying it out in different ways until I would say: 'That's it'. We avoided psychological discussion, we were forced to translate gestes. To Laughton, what we were making was not a text but a pretext: the performance was all that counted. It was a curious time. Movies set in Russia were all the rage. Wild east films.

(Clown 3 runs in wearing a furry Russian hat and hides behind Brecht, who is unaware of his and Clown 4's presence throughout)

It is possible to put a love story in a tank.

(Clown 4 enters moving ponderously, concealed under a large Russian flag, with a stick protruding from the front and making heavy-machine noises. He moves in the jerky, back-and-forth way of a tank, trying to get a bead on Clown 3.)

The secret to a successful script is to understand that those who produce the work wish it could be done without writers. So as the writer, you must follow a single commandment: don't tell, show.

(Clown 3 manages to get behind Clown 4 and whips off the flag. He draws it through his hands so that he appears to be holding a loose, floppy bouquet and tickles Clown 4 under the chin in a placatory manner. Clown 4 plays coy, pointing at Brecht and shaking his head.)

You must not allow the character to say 'I love you'. Instead, you must make him stroke his girlfriend under the chin with a red rose.

(Clown 3 drapes the flag round his shoulders like a Superman cape and makes a big display of his muscles, Charles Atlas style. Clown 4 leans against Clown 3 and ostentatiously pretends to go to sleep.)

Don't tell, show. Followed to its logical end, this commandment banishes language entirely from the script; every sentence is replaced by a supposedly equivalent image or action. Hollywood, which despises

silent film as a primitive form, itself pushes every script towards silence.

(Clown 3 steps back suddenly so that Clown 4 slumps to the ground. Infuriated, Clown 4 starts to chase Clown 3 like a dog, growling and snapping at him.)

You must not indicate that a character is saying something— it can be anything—'Oh a red rose'— that he is saying this *sarcastically*. You must use a phrase that the audience will instantly understand as sarcasm: 'Ok Mr. Big Shot'.

(Clown 3 takes off his flag and uses it as a bullfighter might to divert Clown 4, and Clown 4 charges at it several times.)

This reduces the range of what can be said to a handful of current clichés. And the actor too is degraded by this. It does not matter whether he can act sarcasm— 'Ok Mr. Big Shot' does all the work for him.

(At the end of one of the bullfighting passes, Clown 3 whirls the flag around his head and begins a slow, sexy dance. Clown 4 stops being a bull and joins in, grabbing one end of the flag; they whirl together and then apart, pulling the flag taut between them. Suddenly Clown 3 realizes that what he is holding is in fact a flag: the game is over. Clown 3 immediately stops and salutes the flag, and Clown 4 does the same. They freeze in their salute postures.)

The script is a machine whose wheels are greased by the writer and the actor. The producers say, if they think a script is good— 'That was a fast read'. They want get through the whole thing without stopping to think. Every act of successful scriptwriting is a defeat for the writer.

(Blackout)

ACT 2: GALILEO**SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 1-2 / FBI⁹**

(Throughout this and following scenes, Galileo's thoughts are in plain text, while the other characters in Brecht's play are collectively represented by italicized text. FBI Agents 2 and 3 are working; their activities take them around Laughton/Galileo. A rather antiquated telescope is set up onstage, pointed towards the audience. The conversations on the two sides overlap but should both be mostly intelligible. Physically, it should be as if each side is in an unacknowledged competition with the other to claim as much of the stage as possible, or to force the others to go around them.)

VIRGINIA

The Life of Galileo, scenes 1 and 2. Galileo presents the Venetian Republic with a new invention.

(Laughton/Galileo enters from the right. He has a pair of very high-powered, ultra-modern pair of binoculars or night-vision scopes. FBI Agent 3 goes over and looks through the telescope.)

<p>FBI AGENT 2 Toss me that new file willya?</p> <p><i>(Brief pause as if both sides hear an echo and then decide to ignore it.)</i></p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 Oh good heavens, look at her. She's bathing on the roof.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 Get over here and find me the damn file. <i>(FBI Agent 3 leaves telescope, goes to desk and rummages)</i></p>	<p>LAUGHTON/GALILEO What is this?</p> <p><i>I got it in Amsterdam. It's some kind of a tube affair. 'See things five times larger than life!'</i> <i>(He gestures a concave shape)</i> I don't quite follow you. <i>(Looking through the wrong end at first)</i> What does one see enlarged? <i>(Turning the binocs around)</i></p>
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<p>FBI AGENT 3 Here it is. <i>(FBI Agent 2 studies the file FBI Agent 3 has handed him)</i></p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 <i>(Reading)</i> Informant advises this office that Charles Laughton is working with Subject B on translating for the stage a play written by Subject based on the life of Galileo.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 Who?</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 The famous actor, numbnuts... This play is said to emphasize the church's persecution of Galileo for his theory that the earth is round.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 No, I mean, who's Galileo?</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 You don't know who Galileo is? <i>(Throughout following it should remain unclear whether FBI Agent 2 actually knows who Galileo is)</i></p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 Sounds like a wop to me.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 You really don't know?</p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 So he thinks the earth is round, so big deal. Could be anybody, you ask me.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 You'll go far with that attitude.</p>	<p>Church steeples, pigeons, boats. Anything at a distance. <i>(He looks through the right end and immediately becomes fascinated)</i></p> <p><i>(Lowering the binocs and examining them)</i> A recent invention? <i>Must be. They only started peddling it on the streets a few days before I left Holland.</i></p> <p>Good morning, Mr. Galilei. I have come to return your petition for an honorarium. Unfortunately I am unable to recommend your request. <i>(Quickly concealing the binocs behind his back)</i> <i>My good sir, how can I make ends meet on 500 scudi?</i> <i>(He passes the binocs off to Virginia, with gestures making it clear Virginia is to conceal them.)</i> Why don't you invent something useful that will bring a little profit? <i>I may have something for you. It's not quite there, but... You've never let me down yet, Galileo.</i> <i>(He gestures to Virginia to hand him the binoculars, which he ceremoniously displays)</i> I have great pleasure in presenting for your approval an entirely new instrument originating from our great arsenal. <i>(Looking through the binocs)</i> <i>My, things look close. I can read the copper letters on the Campanile.</i></p>
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<p>FBI AGENT 3 You're just jerking me around. You don't know either. <i>(He returns huffily to the telescope)</i> I heard he escaped from Germany dressed as a woman.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 <i>(Snidely)</i> Galileo?</p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 Brecht.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 Not Brecht. Subject B! Regulation S-15: "Subject is to be referred to as Subject in all written matter and verbal communications." (FBI Agent 3 pointedly ignores FBI Agent 2) You have women on the brain.</p> <p>FBI AGENT 3 It's what the informant said. Look in the damn file if you don't believe me. <i>(He swings telescope round and focuses it on the documents FBI Agent 2 is looking at.)</i></p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 <i>(Scanning documents)</i> Immigrant visa... but... I don't see... no nationality listed... family lower middle-class... looks like he was in the army last war... what rank? oh, medical orderly... probably used his connections to stay out of the front lines...</p> <p>FBI AGENT 2 OK this looks more like it: Subject B was imprisoned by the Nazis at one time, is believed to have been severely treated by them... yada yada... Here we</p>	<p>I assure you, this optical tube, or telescope, is constructed on the most scientific and Christian principles, the product of seventeen years of patient research. <i>And the washerwomen by the river, I can see their...</i> <i>(He recalls Virginia is listening)</i> <i>... washboards. Has it occurred to you that with the help of this remarkable new instrument the battle fleet of the enemy will be visible to us a full two hours before we are visible to him?</i></p> <p>Last night I turned it on the moon... <i>(A projection of the moon on the back wall showing much detail.)</i> <i>What about the moon?</i> Well for one thing, it doesn't give off its own light. <i>Oh good heavens, look at her. I must tell my wife to stop bathing on the roof.</i> And do you know what the Milky Way is made of? No. I do. <i>Congratulations, Mr. Galilei. Your extra 500 scudi a year are safe.</i> I improved it. <i>(Laughton/Galileo leaves, handing the binoculars to FBI Agent 3 on the way out. FBI Agent 3 abandons the telescope in favor of the binocs.)</i></p>
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are: supposed to have escaped from a concentration camp in Germany disguised as a woman...

FBI AGENT 3
Told you.

FBI AGENT 2
Naturally you had the details wrong. *(Looking at binocs now pointed at his face)* Cut that out.

FBI AGENT 3
(Insistently) Who's Galileo?

FBI AGENT 2
Who the hell is this clown? Subject B's writings advocate overthrow of Capitalism by force of arms and establishment of a Communist State.
(As he speaks he goes over and circles behind FBI Agent 3, who attempts to keep him in the visual field of the binocs. He buffets FBI Agent 3, forcing him to lower the binocs, and hands him the dossier.)

FBI AGENT 2
(Stalking FBI Agent 3 who backs away and ends up at the desk)
I'm authorizing a technical surveillance of Subject B.

FBI AGENT 3
(Putting the binocs to his eyes)
An automobile registered to Charles Laughton is observed at the residence of Subject B.

FBI AGENT 2
(Back at his desk) The battle fleet of the enemy.
(Blackout)

SCENE: THREE BRECHTS ON THEORY

(Lights up on Playwright Brecht, Director Brecht, and Theorist Brecht in conversation as the FBI desk is transformed back into the Inquisition table with chairs, microphones etc. The Brechts are rather in the way of the others. They should behave physically, even violently towards each other.)

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

...don't really have my whole heart behind theories.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

You can't play a theory. If I see an actor do something that might not be in line with my theories but it's good, I'm the first person to say, yes, we're going to use that.

THEORIST BRECHT

Contradiction is... thanks to you it's one of my hallmarks. No thanks to you.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Theories are just to beat up on whatever I dislike.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

The argument still has to be made in the play. It doesn't make itself.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Makes a noise of disgust)

DIRECTOR BRECHT

When they look at the telescope and speculate about how their army is going to be better than other armies, I think that the average audience says okay and moves on to the next thing and doesn't say, my god, technology in service of the power structure! So am I as a director supposed to do something with the staging that causes that bit of information to pop for an audience?

THEORIST BRECHT

Galileo can support any style of theater. If you know what you're doing.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

(Angrily) And that's supposed to mean...?

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

(Breaking in) Like sock puppets?

THEORIST BRECHT

Sock puppets?

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Sock puppets would be very Brechtian.

THEORIST BRECHT

I think the actor has to know what the conflict is. Because the actor is representing a class structure and so the actor is a pawn. And he has to know he is a pawn.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

I once asked this actor to play Mac the Knife; and at first he refused, he said, why should I, I am a middle-aged guy, I am completely wrong for it. And I said, no, that is perfect, you are the mercantile class.

THEORIST BRECHT

At the same time— while he is Mac the Knife the middle-aged guy he is also an actor who works for the Berlin theater, and we have to see that too.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

I've been thinking about the scream in *Mother Courage* when she finds that her son is dead, right.

(Virginia becomes visibly irritated with the Brechts.)

DIRECTOR BRECHT

The silent scream...

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

The silent scream. I've talked about this in a theoretical way, *(nodding to Theorist Brecht)* and then one day I went to a wake and I saw the widow make that exact gesture. The silent scream, when they took her husband's body out of the synagogue. It was the most perfect picture of that...that devastation. So I use

it as a break from naturalism and it turns out to actually *be* naturalistic.

(They move off, still talking.)

DIRECTOR BRECHT

Theory undercut by practice.

THEORIST BRECHT

Again.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Talk about alienation effects.

THEORIST BRECHT

Confusion is the most successful alienation effect of all.

SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 3-6¹⁰

(Virginia and Laughton/Galileo. Laughton's part here is highly condensed version of Scenes 3-6 of Life of Galileo. Again, Galileo's thoughts are in plain text, while his adversaries are collectively represented by italicized text.)

VIRGINIA

The Life of Galileo, scene 3. January 1610. Galileo lets his friend Sagredo look through the telescope at the moon and Jupiter.

LAUGHTON/GALILEO

How do you explain those spots of light? They are high mountains.

On a star?

Yes. The moon is an earth and the earth is a star.

Galileo, this is frightening.

What do you see?

Countless stars.

Countless worlds.

I'm afraid.

The evidence of your own eyes is a very seductive thing.

You are traveling the road to disaster. Can you see the Pope scribbling a note in his diary: '10th of January, Heaven abolished'?

VIRGINIA

Scene 4. We move from Venice to the Court of Florence. Galileo's discoveries with the telescope are not believed by court scholars.

LAUGHTON/GALILEO

Your Highness, one can see four stars as large as life.

Mr. Galilei, could I suggest that what one sees in the eyeglass and what is in the heavens are two entirely different things?

You are suggesting fraud?

No.

Are you going to look through it or not?

Where is all this leading?

The truth might lead us anywhere. All anybody has to do is look through the telescope.

It is too soon before his Highness's supper.

VIRGINIA

Scene 5. 1616. The Vatican research institute, the Collegium Romanum, reviews Galileo's findings. The monks revile him.

LAUGHTON/GALILEO

You have degraded the earth. I won't have it! I won't be a nobody on an inconsequential star! The earth is the center of all things, and I am the center of the earth.

(Pause)

Aren't they out yet? Can't they reach a decision? Yes; the chief astronomer has upheld him; Galileo has won.

VIRGINIA

Scene 6. The church puts Copernicus's teachings on the index of prohibited books.

LAUGHTON/GALILEO

His Eminence will be with you in a few minutes.

My heart. It's thumping. I hope I say the right thing.

"The sun riseth and setteth and returneth to its place," saith the Bible.

Appearances are notoriously deceptive.

"Can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" Welcome to Rome, Friend Galileo.

I believe in the brain.

We consider the brain... inadequate. Don't take anything down. This is a scientific discussion among friends. I am charged with cautioning you to abandon these teachings.

Would you repeat that?

I am charged with cautioning you to abandon these teachings.

But the facts!

It is not given to man to know the truth; it is given to man to seek after the truth. Did you make a note of his last sentence? Yes.

SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 7¹¹

VIRGINIA

If in the sixth scene Galileo experiences the No of the church, in the seventh he is confronted with the No of the people.

(During the following speech, the Chief Inquisitor and Inquisitor 2 come in and sit down behind the table and begin reading papers.)

BRECHT

It comes from the lips of the little monk. Who says: How could they stand it if I were to tell the peasants that they are on a lump of stone ceaselessly spinning in empty space, circling around a second-rate star? What would be the use of their patience, their acceptance of misery? There would be no meaning in it. And Galileo says: You talk about them as if they were the moss on their own huts. My new water pumps could work more wonders than their ridiculous superhuman efforts. But naturally if they don't learn to think for themselves, the most efficient irrigation system cannot help them. I can see their divine patience, but where is their divine fury? In the fight against science, it is not the church that defends the peasant, but the peasant who defends the church.

SCENE: HUAC: JEROME ROBBINS¹²

(Lights up on the HUAC table with two Inquisitors and Jerome Robbins in the witness chair.)

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Please state your name and date of birth.

ROBBINS

My name is Jerome Robbins, and I was born in New York in 1918.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

What is your profession or occupation?

ROBBINS

I am a choreographer and dancer.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Will you tell the committee, please, the names of some of your principal productions?

ROBBINS

On Broadway I have done the dances for *On the Town*, *Million-Dollar Baby*, *The King and I*, and *Two's Company*. In the ballet I have done *Fancy Free*, *Facsimile*, *The Pied Piper*, *The Cage*.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Our investigation has disclosed information indicating that you were at one time a member of the Communist Party. Is that correct?

ROBBINS

Yes, it is.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

For how long were you a member of the Communist Party?

ROBBINS

I attended my first meeting in the spring of 1944 and the last one was in 1947.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Now the committee is very anxious to know what use the Communist Party made of you, and what influence it attempted to bring to bear on you.

ROBBINS

At one of the earliest meetings I attended I was asked in what way did dialectical materialism help me do my ballet *Fancy Free*.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

You had not been a member of the Communist Party when you created that ballet?

ROBBINS

No sir.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Will you tell the committee briefly about that ballet?

ROBBINS

It is about three sailors on shore leave in New York for the first time. This ballet was made into the show *On the Town*. It's always been identified everywhere it's played as a particularly American piece, and its theme has great heart and warmth.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

What were the circumstances under which you first joined the Communist Party?

ROBBINS

The Communist Political Organization had been presented to me as very much for minorities. This interested me very much. I had had several very painful moments because of minority prejudice.

CHIEF INQUISITOR 3

It was represented to you that the Communist Party was opposed to anti-Semitism?

ROBBINS

Yes.

INQUISITOR 3

And if you had not had those experiences, you may not have gone to the Communist Party?

ROBBINS

Perhaps not.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Who recruited you into the Party?

ROBBINS

Miss Lettie Stever.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Will you give us the names of other persons in this group whom you can identify?

ROBBINS

Lloyd Gough. Lionel Berman. Madeline Lee.

INQUISITOR 2

Can you recall the names of other persons?

ROBBINS

Elliott Sullivan. Edna Ocko. Jerome Chodorov. And Edward Chodorov.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Now I have a very personal question. You realize, no doubt, that when you volunteered the names of other Communists, that you would be put in the class of stool pigeons and informers by some people?

ROBBINS

Yes sir.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

What is it that makes you willing to come here and testify, in spite of the fact that some people would put you down as a stool pigeon?

ROBBINS

I think I made a great mistake in entering the Communist Party, and I feel that I am doing the right thing as an American.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Well, so do I. I want to compliment you. You are in a wonderful place, through your talent which God blessed you with, to promote Americanism in contrast to Communism.

ROBBINS

Sir, all my work has been acclaimed for its American quality particularly.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Thank you very much, Mr. Robbins. You are excused.

(Jerome Robbins leaves. The two Inquisitors rearrange their interrogation table as a pair of desks placed back to back. FBI Agent 3 comes in and helps the two Inquisitors disrobe to reveal their FBI Agent costumes. The three FBI Agents then sit down around one of the two desks, with FBI Agent 1 somewhat apart from the other two.)

SCENE: SURVEILLANCE¹³

FBI AGENT 2

This file!

FBI AGENT 3

Sir?

FBI AGENT 2

It's a mess, it's pathetic, and I'm holding you personally responsible. "Informant furnishes information to the effect that Subject B was seen at a party and at this time appeared very much encouraged and refreshed." Encouraged and *refreshed*?

FBI AGENT 3

Yes sir. Bre....Subject B attended a gathering for director Billy Wilder. Wilder is the famous director, sir.

FBI AGENT 2

I know who Wilder is. What I want to know is why haven't you come up with anything new? And real? Actual real live information? And where's the basic physical on this guy? Why isn't it here on top?

FBI AGENT 3

I have it right here *(He pulls it out from under a sandwich)*. I was consulting it during lunch. A *working* lunch. *(He reads)* Age 45, height five-nine, weight 130, eyes brown, hair dark brown, complexion dark, scar on left cheek, Social Security number 571-24-8405.

FBI AGENT 2

You think I'm paying you to bird-dog the DMV? What the hell is he doing every day?

FBI AGENT 3

I'll get right on it, sir.

FBI AGENT 2

Apart from writing. *Apart* from going to parties.

FBI AGENT 3

Yes, sir.

FBI AGENT 3

(Taking up the book and offering it to FBI Agent 2)
Sir, a copy of a book of poems written by Subject B was obtained by this office.

FBI AGENT 2

(Accepting the book and mispronouncing the title badly) Svenborcher Gahdish? What is this?

FBI AGENT 3

Swedish, sir.

FBI AGENT 1

(Not looking around; he pronounces the title correctly) German. *Svendborger Gedichte*. The Svendborg Poems.

FBI AGENT 3

(Unblinkingly) German, sir.

FBI AGENT 2

You moron. *(He tosses the book at FBI Agent 3)* Six weeks and this is it? A description that could fit a million guys and a book you can't read?

FBI AGENT 3

(Defensively) Various spot surveillances on the residence of Subject B on November 6, 13, 15 and December 7 met with negative results. Sir.

FBI AGENT 2

Get that thing translated. Have fun. *(To FBI Agent 1)*
Hey, you got anything new for me on this Subject B?

FBI AGENT 1

Take your pick: Informant Q or K?

FBI AGENT 2

Q.

FBI AGENT 1

Informant Q says that Subject B has made efforts to obtain a Czech passport.

FBI AGENT 3

I thought he was German?

FBI AGENT 1

(Ignoring FBI Agent 3) Which he could secure through his connections with the leader of the Czech government in exile.

FBI AGENT 2

(Frowning) We talking Q for quackpot here?

FBI AGENT 1

Why?

FBI AGENT 2

We got some document where Subject B states that he intends to become a U.S. citizen.

FBI AGENT 1

That was three years ago.

FBI AGENT 2

(Reflexively) Frigging commies.

FBI AGENT 1

However. Informant K describes Subject B as a cynic and an anarchist would be just as much opposed to the Soviet Bloc if he lived there as he is to American-style democracy. He says that men like Subject B tend to quote pay lip service to Marxism while preferring to live a rather bourgeois existence themselves unquote.

FBI AGENT 2

All the comforts of home.

FBI AGENT 3

I don't get it, is he gonna flee the country or is he gonna stay?

(Blackout)

SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 8¹⁴

VIRGINIA

The Life of Galileo, scene 8. After keeping silent for eight years, Galileo resumes his researches into the forbidden area.

(Laughton/Galileo enters and begins working at the other desk. He sees the book left by the FBI Agents and picks it up.)

A book on the sun spots came in today.

Fabricious says the spots are clusters of planets between us and the sun.

Doubtful.

Aren't we going to take this up?

At the moment we are investigating floating bodies.

The question is whether you can afford to remain silent.

I cannot afford to be smoked on a wood fire like a ham.

(He sets the book down.)

The Pope is on his death bed!

What about the succession?

All the talk is of Cardinal Barberini.

A mathematician! This means change. A toast to the future!

(He pulls out a pint of liquor. He sings a drinking song as Laughton:)

One two three four

Dad needs one pint more.

Four three two one

Mum don't need none.

(He breaks off; he is not quite sober as he returns to Galileo)

We crawl by inches. What we find today we will wipe from the blackboard tomorrow. And if we find anything which would suit us, that thing we will eye with particular distrust. In fact, we will approach our observations with the implacable determination to prove that the earth stands still and only if hopelessly defeated in this pious undertaking can we

allow ourselves to wonder if we may not have been right all the time: the earth moves.

(He sings again, even less soberly, as Laughton:)

One two three four
The old year is no more.
Four three two one
Our love is just begun.

(Laughton/Galileo falls into a stupor.)

SCENE: VIRGINIA¹⁵

(Virginia waits until Brecht appears, as if against his will.)

I thought you were so kind, you let me get engaged to Ludovico. It was such a *relief* not to have be a nun anymore. In the play. But then he broke it off, you made him... why? Did you write my engagement just for that, to break it off? In the play? Was my father in on it too? No. No. Everything is so different... Antoinette—the writer?—has been trying to explain the script to me but... I'm not complaining. I do understand that I am nothing unless I serve the greater good. If you need me to spy on my father, I will do it. I missed him so much during all those years in the convent. I thought that you would prefer the truth, but I will do... try to forget how... all the letters we wrote each other. It is a pitiful life you are asking. Please write it so that I can still pray for my father as I always did. If I can pray, I can accept all the rest. *(Pause)* She told me what you did when you lied to that committee. And told them you weren't a communist? And then two days later, gone! You ran away! I understand the need for concealment, but I do not see why you should shame my father for this very exact same kind of thing. Antoinette asked me to say this, even though I really don't know anything about your life except what she tells me. Between her writing one thing for me to say and you another, it is very confusing. I don't know if I can trust Antoinette; I don't understand her either—an art professor? a feminist?—and I don't think she likes you very much either. Those mistresses you had? Did they really do as much of your work as she says? The one who died and the other one? Margarete— Grete. Elizabeth. I remember their names. *(Pause)* Of course I will do as you wish. I have to do what you want, you

and Antoinette. I have already forgotten who I was. I will be your Virginia. I will be so quiet, you will hardly know I am here unless you need me.

(Virginia and Brecht freeze)

SCENE: THE LIFE OF GALILEO 10-11¹⁶

(Two Inquisitors enter and regard Laughton/Galileo.)

INQUISITOR 2

This is taking a long time.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

It is clearly understood; he is not to be tortured.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

He is not to be tortured. At the very most... show him the instruments.

(Blackout)

SCENE: THE LIFE OF BRECHT¹⁷

(Lights up; two FBI Agents are now standing where the Inquisitors were, and Brecht is sitting where Galileo/Laughton was; Virginia watches.)

FBI AGENT 2

This is taking a long time.

FBI AGENT 1

It must be clearly understood: surveillance only. He is not to be arrested.

BRECHT

For nearly a year I have been feeling severely depressed. Up to now I have avoided thinking at all deeply about it. I'm not frightened so much of feeling pain, it's more that I'm ashamed of it. All I can do is close my eyes to it. This is a problem I don't see how to resolve internally. Death is no good for anything. There is no inscrutable wisdom to be seen in this kind of thing. Nothing can make up for it.

FBI AGENT 1

He is not to be arrested. At the very most... he can
suspect we're watching.

(Blackout)

SCENE: OF LIVES THE LUCID¹⁸

*(Sung by Virginia to a somewhat
medieval air.)*

VIRGINIA

Of joys: the unweighed.
Of skins: the unflayed.
of greens: the emerald.
Of messages: the herald.

Of enemies: the delicate.
Of friends: the unsophisticate.
Of the elements: fire.
Of the gods: the higher.

Of lives: the lucid.
Of deaths: the rapid.

ACT 3: HUAC**SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 12a (ASYLUM)¹⁹**

(Laughton has come to a military hospital to do a test reading of a scene from Life of Galileo. It should not be immediately apparent that this is a hospital-cum-asylum. The atmosphere is informal; the inmates have been through this before with Laughton. These roles need not be played by the same performers who play the Galileo characters in other scenes. The HUAC table is set up in another part of the stage.)

VIRGINIA

Charles Laughton holds test readings of *The Life of Galileo* in a military hospital.

LAUGHTON

Good afternoon; it's a pleasure to see you all again. Here are your scripts and...

INMATE 2

(Interrupting) Scripts! Don't tell me scripts!

LAUGHTON

Today we're doing scene 12. The setting is...

INMATE 2

I wrote a letter, I wrote a letter to the Kaiser!

INMATE 1

Who gave you writing things?

(Laughton gives up trying to introduce the scene and listens.)

INMATE 2

The nurse. I told him all the battles I was in, like a list. 1914, Mons and the Marne. 'Fifteen, Artois, Vimy Ridge, 'Sixteen, Verdun, Harcourt.... Malancourt.

INMATE 1

You weren't at Malancourt.

INMATE 2

(Ignoring Inmate 1) One thing, I asked for one thing, I said, "in recognition of services rendered to the Fatherland, a set of mother-of-pearl buttons for my uniform." Sincerely...

INMATE 1

(Insistently) You weren't at Malancourt.

INMATE 2

And do you know what? They put me in the bin.

INMATE 1

(Sneers) Saved your big gut.

INMATE 2

(To Inmate 1) I was too at Malancourt!

LAUGHTON

(Trying to calm things down) You know, Brecht— during the war, this last war, not your war— he wrote an appeal to the German people— begging them to force Hitler to abdicate. The only thing...

INMATE 3

But he didn't abdicate?

LAUGHTON

...only thing left that could.. possibly.. have saved Germany.

INMATE 3

(Insisting) But he didn't abdicate?

LAUGHTON

Hitler? No.

INMATE 2

Did they put him in a hospital?

LAUGHTON

No.

INMATE 2

Brecht.

LAUGHTON

No. He got out in time. To America.

INMATE 2

It was a different war.

INMATE 3

I wrote the Kaiser a letter too.

INMATE 2

(Furious) You're just saying.

INMATE 3

I did. I did.

INMATE 1

You're all a bunch of shirkers.

LAUGHTON

(To Inmate 3) What did you say, in your letter?

INMATE 3

Dear Kaiser Karl, I wrote, I wrote very respectful,
Dear Kaiser Karl, Please be so kind as to abdicate
forthwith. Yours faithfully, Private Frank. I wrote
that and I sent it. Next thing I know...

LAUGHTON

In the bin?

INMATE 1

(Gesturing to his fellow inmates) Practically all of
them. Cowards and loonies.

INMATE 2

You shut your face.

INMATE 3

I would of taken it all back if they'd of let me.

LAUGHTON

Why don't we turn to scene 12. The garden of the
Florentine Ambassador in Rome. Galileo's assistants
are gathered in a garden. They're anxious because
Galileo has been on trial before the Inquisition, and
they're waiting to see if he will recant his views.
(To Inmate 1) If you will kindly read Andrea as you

did last time, and (to Inmate 2) you were the Little Monk, yes? and... where's our Federzoni?

INMATE 1 / ANDREA

(Snidely) "Sicked" out.

LAUGHTON

I see. (To Inmate 3) Well, if you don't mind? (Inmate 3 takes the script) And I'll read Galileo, though as you'll see Galileo is hardly in this scene. Now. "June twenty-second, sixteen thirty-three..."

INMATE 3

Excuse me?

LAUGHTON

Yes?

INMATE 3

What about Viriginia? Has something happened to her?

LAUGHTON

Oh. No. I forgot to say, she's in the garden with the others. She only has one line so I thought we'd leave her out today. Now. (He shifts into another voice) "June twenty-second, sixteen thirty-three / A momentous date for you and me. / Of all the days that was the one / An age of reason could have begun."

(Several inmates laugh. Those who have been chosen as readers turn and frown at them.)

INMATE 2 / LITTLE MONK

The Pope didn't even grant him an audience.

INMATE 1 / ANDREA

The *Discorsi* will never be finished. They will kill him.

INMATE 3 / FEDERZONI

Do you really think so?

INMATE 1 / ANDREA

He will never recant.

(Brief silence)

INMATE 2 / LITTLE MONK

(Looking up) You know when you lie awake at night how your mind fastens on something irrelevant? Last night I kept thinking...

INMATE 1

Stick to the script!

INMATE 3

We don't want to hear about your night *again*.

INMATE 2

This *is* the script.

LAUGHTON

It is. Please continue.

(Pause; inmates look inquiringly at Laughton)

I see I forgot about the Informer. I'll read it. *(He changes voices to become a minor functionary)* Mr. Galilei is expected to recant at 5 o'clock. The big bell of San Marco will be rung and his recantation will be read out.

INMATE 1 / ANDREA

I don't believe it. You can't make a man unsee what he has seen.

INMATE 2

(Lapsing out of character) Amen to that.

INMATE 3 / FEDERZONI

5 o'clock is one minute.

(The hospital inmates listen for the bell.)

SCENE: THREE BRECHTS (SHOW TRIALS)

(The three "extra" Brechts enter. The light slowly changes to shift focus from the inmates to the HUAC table, where the three Inquisitors are taking their places.)

DIRECTOR BRECHT

Am I really going to leave this offstage? The big moment?

THEORIST BRECHT

You mean the Inquisition?

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Of course.

THEORIST BRECHT

Bad idea.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

If Galileo is as strong as the Inquisition why isn't it on stage?

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Heightens the drama.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

Cheap.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

If it works... (*Shrugs*)

DIRECTOR BRECHT

If someone wrote a piece of American realism about Galileo, they wouldn't use the offstage device.

THEORIST BRECHT

What if the folks doing this piece had put the HUAC hearings offstage?

DIRECTOR BRECHT

(*Diverted from the argument*) There'd be a lot of tight close-ups.

THEORIST BRECHT

All the audience sees is people outside closed doors talking about what's going on inside.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

Laughton the beleaguered lawyer arguing a hopeless case...

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Idiot. It's because I started this thing during the Stalin trials.

DIRECTOR BRECHT

...and winning in the end.

THEORIST BRECHT

The show trials.

PLAYWRIGHT BRECHT

Yes, the "staging" of justice. Putting the Inquisition trial offstage says—the sentence was written before the drama began.

THEORIST BRECHT

This couldn't have happened any other way.

(The three "extra" Brechts leave as Bertolt Brecht enters and goes to the witness chair.)

SCENE: HUAC: BRECHT (1947a)²⁰

(Inquisitors should make a point of ostentatiously covering their microphones when they address each other instead of Brecht, but this should not make any difference to the audio levels in the room. Brecht tends to take his time over his answers.)

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Mr. Brecht will you please state your full name and present address for the record.

BRECHT

My name is...

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Speak into the microphone.

BRECHT

My name is Bertolt Brecht. I am living at 1063 26th St. in Santa Monica. I was born in Augsburg, Germany, on...

CHIEF INQUISITOR

We didn't ask where you were born.

INQUISITOR 2

Mr. Brecht, the Committee has a few...

INQUISITOR 3

(To Chief Inquisitor) What was that name again?

BRECHT

Bertolt Brecht

CHIEF INQUISITOR

(Simultaneously, ignoring Brecht) Brecht

BRECHT

Bertolt Brecht

INQUISITOR 3

No, the first name.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Bertolt

BRECHT

Bertolt

INQUISITOR 2

Gentlemen, if you are...

INQUISITOR 3

(Riffling papers with one hand) I have it here somewhere as "Bert", a letter, something. "Bert Brecht."

(He passes some papers to Chief Inquisitor)

BRECHT

Bert, it is a name by which I am sometimes called.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

(Ignoring Brecht) It's a nickname I think.

(He passes papers to Inquisitor 3)

INQUISITOR 3

Mr. Brecht, is your name Bertolt or Bert?

(He passes papers back to Inquisitor 2; paper passing among the Inquisitors continues through next few lines)

BRECHT

Bertolt is my given name. Bert is my nickname.

INQUISITOR 2

Mr. Brecht, the Committee has here an interpreter if you desire the use of an interpreter.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

(Simultaneously) Would you like an interpreter?

INQUISITOR 3

(Simultaneously) Do you desire an interpreter.

BRECHT

Yes.

INTERPRETER

(Patiently) Bert is Mr. Brecht's nickname.

INQUISITOR 3

What was that date again?

INQUISITOR 2

What date?

INQUISITOR 3

When Mr. Brecht was born.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

We don't know when he was born. Now, can we...

INQUISITOR 3

Mr. Brecht, when were you born?

BRECHT

I was born on February 10th, 1898, in Augsburg, Bavaria.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

We didn't ask where you were born.

INQUISITOR 3

Would you give that date again?

INQUISITOR 2

1888.

1898
BRECHT

1888?
INQUISITOR 3

1898
INTERPRETER

INQUISITOR 3
Bavaria? But you said you were born in Germany before.

INQUISITOR 2
(Triumphantly) Bavaria is in Austria!

INTERPRETER
Bavaria is in Germany.

INQUISITOR 3
Ah, when Mr. Brecht was born, it was in Austria?

INTERPRETER
Bavaria was in Germany when Mr. Brecht was born. You have perhaps heard of its capital city, Munich?

INQUISITOR 2
You were born in Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany, on February 10th, 1888, is that correct?

BRECHT
Yes.

INQUISITOR 2
And you entered this country... I am reading from the immigration records here...

INTERPRETER
Sir, it was 1898.

1898
BRECHT

INQUISITOR 2
I beg your pardon?

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I think the witness tried to say 1898.

INQUISITOR 2

Well was it '88 or '98?

BRECHT

'98

INQUISITOR 2

And when exactly did you enter the United States?

BRECHT

May I find out exactly? (*He consults with Interpreter*)
I arrived in San Pedro, California, on July 21, 1941.

INQUISITOR 3

And where had you resided prior to that?

BRECHT

May I read my statement? In that statement...

INQUISITOR 3

First, Mr. Brecht, we are trying to identify you. The identification won't be very long.

BRECHT

I had to leave Germany in '33, in February, when Hitler took power. Then I went to...

INQUISITOR 3

We can't take the witness's word on a matter of this importance.

INTERPRETER

This is all documented.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

(*Ignoring him*) Mr. Brecht, you say you were 33 when you left Germany?

BRECHT

I did not say I was 33, I said I left Germany in '33, that is, 1933. The day after the Reichstag fire. I was at the time 35 years old. I went to Denmark, then to Stockholm. When Hitler invaded Norway and Denmark, I had to leave Sweden and I went to Finland, then to Russia for my ship to the United States.

INQUISITOR 2

Now, Mr. Brecht, what is your occupation?

BRECHT

I am a playwright and a poet. May I read my statement now?

INQUISITOR 3

Would you submit your statement to the Chairman?

BRECHT

Yes.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

All right, let's see the statement.

(He accepts the statement, glances at it for a bare second; passes it to Inquisitor 2, who does the same and passes it to Inquisitor 3, who does the same and then drops it on the floor)

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Mr. Brecht, the Committee has carefully gone over your statement. It is a very interesting story of German life, but it is not at all pertinent to this inquiry. Therefore, we do not care to have you read the statement. Now, Mr. Brecht, is it true that you have written a number of very revolutionary poems and plays?

BRECHT

I have written a number of poems and plays in the fight against Hitler, and they can be considered therefore as revolutionary because I, of course, was for the overthrow of that government.

INQUISITOR 2

We are not interested in any works that you might have written advocating the overthrow of Germany.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I have here an article, *(He badly mispronounces the title)* *Die Massnahme*, which I will hand to the interpreter and ask him to identify it.

(Brecht looks puzzled, having no idea what the Inquisitor is talking about)

INTERPRETER

This is not an article but a play that Mr. Brecht wrote in 1930, *Die Massnahme*. The title means, measures to be taken. Or steps to be taken, measures.

INQUISITOR 3

Could it mean disciplinary measures?

INTERPRETER

No, not disciplinary measures, no. It means measures to be taken. Sometimes translated, the measures taken.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

All right. You tell the Committee now, Mr. Brecht, what this play dealt with.

INQUISITOR 3

(Interrupting) What about measures of distance, for example, measuring tape?

BRECHT

In this play I tried to express the feelings and the ideas... *(He breaks off for his Interpreter)*

INTERPRETER

(Simultaneously) No, not measures in that sense. Steps to take.

BRECHT

...the ideas of the German workers who fought against Hitler.

INQUISITOR 2

We are not interested in anything you may have written advocating the overthrow of Hitler.

BRECHT

It had as a background the Russian-Chinese situation of the years 1918 or 1919 or so.

INQUISITOR 3

(Who has been consulting a very large book) Could it have to do with music, that is to say, "a group of metrical units located between two bars on a staff"?

BRECHT

Excuse me?

INQUISITOR 3

The measures you refer to, are they musical measures?

BRECHT, INTERPRETER

No no no. No. Not at all.

INQUISITOR 2

You say it was about China and Russia. So it really has nothing to do with Germany?

BRECHT

You will find that it is about this young man who dies, because he is convinced that he has done damage to the mission he believed in.

INQUISITOR 2

He was murdered?

BRECHT

He wanted to die.

(Projections showing silent footage from the Fritz Lang film "Hangmen Also Die.")

INQUISITOR 2

So they kill him?

BRECHT

He wanted to die.

INTERPRETER

Excuse me. Have any of you gentlemen seen the film "Hangmen Also Die"?

(Inquisitors cover their microphones and whisper to one another; perhaps trying to determine relevance of the question, searching their papers, dropping their pens, etc. Shift of focus to FBI Agent 1, elsewhere on stage.)

SCENE: THE MEASURES TAKEN²¹

(Projections continue throughout.)

FBI AGENT 1

"Hangmen Also Die." Yes. During the war, Subject worked on this film by Fritz Lang. It deals with the Czechoslovakian Underground, which was instrumental in effecting the assassination of Gestapo chief Heydrich. According to our Informants, Subject was largely responsible for the authenticity of this film, by reason of his personal experience of the Underground. Yes. You see in this film echoes of Subject's educational plays, in that it emphasizes the sacrifices required. For instance. The heroic characters never tell the police anything. They work secretly, they establish alibis. They guard against informers. They lay aside all personal commitments for the sake of the group. Especially— they lay aside all personal commitments. Most people don't understand what this means. You might have to follow your neighbor's car. Open your wife's mail. Show them the instruments. "He who fights for Communism must be able to tell the truth and not to tell the truth, to keep promises and fail to keep promises, to meet danger and avoid danger." It is in the nature of principles to be eternal. "He who fights for Democracy must be able to tell the truth and not to tell the truth..." It is only the fight that changes. The devotion to an ideal unto death. "He who fights for Communism has only one virtue: that he fights for Communism." That is from Subject's famous play *Die Massnahme*. An adaptation of an old religious Japanese play, a Noh play, except it advocates Communist world revolution by violent means. *Die Massnahme*. The measures taken. Or, the measures to be taken; a subtle difference. Is it the decisions we must now live with or those still to be faced? This play deals with four Communist agitators who go from Moscow to Mukden to support the Chinese Communists. The proletarian class struggle. The play takes place after the four agitators have returned to Russia to report to their control committee. They have to account for the fact that they killed a young Communist comrade who went with them. For the committee's benefit, the four agitators re-enact everything that happened in Mukden. A play within a play. The young comrade acts on impulses of sympathy like any ordinary decent person. He helps a coolie, he defends strikers from the police. By the end of their

stay in Mukden, the agitators all in danger of being exposed by this reckless behavior. They decide to kill him, but first— they tell him. They explain how his impulsive humanity is harming the cause. He understands. He consents to it. He is shot. The devotion to an ideal unto death. And even... they throw his body into a lime pit to destroy it. So that he will— in effect— never have existed all. How much is necessary to transform the world. Anger and tenacity. A grasp of detail. The will to strike quickly. Cold patience. Endless waiting. We can only change reality when taught by reality. (*Fade projections*) It is in the nature of principles to be eternal. (*Long Pause*) We do not believe in the proletarian class struggle. It is our job to ensure that no proletariat arises. Most people don't understand what this means. Most people don't understand what this requires.

(*Chief Inquisitor returns his attention to Brecht.*)

SCENE: HUAC: BRECHT (1947b)²²

CHIEF INQUISITOR

(*Interrupting*) Could we move this along? We have a very heavy schedule this afternoon.

(*Inquisitor 3 waves; his nose is back in the book; Inquisitor 2 nods*)

Mr. Brecht, since you have been in the United States, have you attended any Communist Party meetings?

BRECHT

No, I don't think so.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

You don't think so?

BRECHT

No.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Well, aren't you certain?

BRECHT

No... I am certain, yes.

INQUISITOR 2

You are certain you have never been to any Communist Party meetings?

BRECHT

I do not think so, no.

CHIEF INQ. and INQUISITOR 2

You are certain?

BRECHT

I think I am certain.

CHIEF INQ. and INQUISITOR 2

You think you are certain?

BRECHT

Yes, I have not attended any such meetings.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Mr. Brecht, have you ever applied to join the Communist Party?

BRECHT

No, no, no, no, no, never.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Mr. Brecht, are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party of any country?

BRECHT

I was not a member, or am not a member, or any Communist Party.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

You are certain?

BRECHT

I was, I am an independent writer. I wrote my plays not only for the German Communists. Social Democrat workers were at these performances, so were Catholic workers, so were workers which didn't want to go into any party at all.

INQUISITOR 3

(Emerging from his book) I would like to ask Mr. Brecht whether he wrote a poem, a song rather, entitled, "Forward, We've Not Forgotten."

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Forward, what?

INQUISITOR 3

"Forward, We've Not Forgotten."

BRECHT

I am not sure. I think I never saw this translation.

INQUISITOR 3

(Reading) "Forward. March on to the tower, through the city, by land the world." What does that mean, "by land the world"?

BRECHT

Excuse me, that is not a correct translation.

INQUISITOR 3

(Displeased) Not correct?

BRECHT

Just one second. *(Turns to the Interpreter)* He will translate for you.

INTERPRETER

That line should be: "Forward. March on to power..."

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Power?

INQUISITOR 3

(Simultaneously) Not tower?

INTERPRETER

"March on to power."

INQUISITOR 3

But it says tower here.

INTERPRETER

That is not correct. And it continues this way: "Through the city, the land, the world."

INQUISITOR 2

What the hell tower is he talking about?

INQUISITOR 3

(Ignoring Inquisitor 2) It says here "by land the world".

BRECHT

That is not correct. "Forward. March on to power, through the city, the land, the world."

INQUISITOR 3

But how do we know what you say is any more correct?

BRECHT

Only this way does it make any sense.

INQUISITOR 3

Did you write this, Mr. Brecht?

BRECHT

No, I wrote a German poem that is very different from this.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

One translation is no differant than another.

BRECHT

If I, if she might just speak the entire poem?
(He nods to the Interpreter)

INTERPRETER

(Sings) "Forward. March on to power
Through the city, the land, the world.
Just whose city is the city?
Just whose world is the world?"

INQUISITOR 3

What city is he talking about?

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Thank you very much, Mr. Brecht. You are excused.
(Chief Inquisitor raises his gavel but pauses for Inquisitor 2, who has interrupted him.)

INQUISITOR 2

Wait, I have it here. (*shuffles papers*). Bavaria....
no, Augsburg!

(Chief Inquisitor slams his gavel down loudly. Brecht and Interpreter leave as focus shifts to Laughton/Galileo elsewhere on stage.)

SCENE: LIFE OF GALILEO 12b (RECONTATION)²³

LAUGHTON

I, Galileo Galilei, Teacher of Mathematics and Physics, do hereby publicly renounce my teaching that the earth moves. I foreswear this teaching with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith and detest and curse this and all other errors and heresies repugnant to the Holy Scriptures.

SCENE: DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN

VIRGINIA

(Sung to a tune similar to traditional folks ballads using the "down among the dead men" refrain. Inquisitors leave their table and reprise the Dance of the Inquisitors in the background and also sing the refrain.)

I'll sing you the song of a playwright named Bill,
Who swore by the red white and blue.
So the blacklist is out, it's got some of his friends—
Now what if they put Bill on too?

Down among the dead men,
Down among the dead men,
Down among the dead men let him lie.

Bill quakes and Bill shakes and Bill cooks up a plan:
He'll hire a gumshoe today
To investigate him up and investigate him down
And investigate him every which way.

His strategy works, he gets a clean bill of health—

There is nothing of note in his past.
 He gets a certificate, it's signed and it's sealed—
 They'll see he's no commie at last.

Down among the dead men,
 Down among the dead men,
 Down among the dead men let him lie.

And then a few weeks and Bill's life it turns strange:
 There's no work to be had anymore.
 He goes to his boss; what's the deal? he inquires—
 His boss laughs as he shows him the door.

"That gumshoe came round, and he asked me some stuff,
 And you know what I think about that?
 Wherever there's smoke there's gonna be fire!
 You're a commie, you're through, here's your hat!"

Down among the dead men,
 Down among the dead men,
 Down among the dead men let him lie.

So Bill he goes home and he writes a short note:
 "I love you, goodbye, gotta go."
 Well, Bill's off the blacklist, he's a free man at
 last—
 Certificate in hand and a tag on his toe.

Down among the dead men,
 Down among the dead men,
 Down among the dead men let him lie.

*(Virginia steps aside; Laughton and the
 inmates leave. The Inquisitors resume
 their place at the table as Seeger
 enters and takes the witness chair.)*

SCENE: HUAC: PETE SEEGER²⁴

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Please state your name and date of birth.

SEEGER

My name is Pete Seeger, and I was born in New York in
 1919.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

What is your profession or occupation?

SEEGER

Well, I have worked at many things, and my main profession is a student of American folklore, and I make my living as a banjo picker— sort of damning, in some people's opinion.

INQUISITOR 3

I have before me a photostatic copy of the June 20, 1947, issue of the *Daily Worker*, in which appears this advertisement: "Tonight—Bronx, hear Peter Seeger and his guitar, at Allerton Section housewarming." W the Allerton Section a section of the Communist Party?

SEEGER

Sir, I refuse to answer that question.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I direct you to answer.

SEEGER

Sir, the whole line of questioning...

INQUISITOR 3

You have only been asked one question so far.

SEEGER

I am not going to answer any questions as to my association, my philosophical or religious beliefs, or my political beliefs, or how I voted in any election, or any of these private affairs. I think these are very improper questions for an American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I direct you to answer the question.

SEEGER

I have already given you my answer, sir.

INQUISITOR 2

Let me understand. You are not relying on the Fifth Amendment, are you?

SEEGER

No sir, although I do not want to in any way discredit or depreciate or depredate the witnesses that have used the Fifth Amendment, and I simply feel it is improper for this committee to ask such questions.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

Did you participate in a program at Wingdale Lodge in the state of New York, on July 4th of this year?

SEEGER

I will be glad to tell what songs I have ever sung, but I decline to say who has ever listened to them.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I direct you to answer the question.

SEEGER

Sir, my answer is always the same.

INQUISITOR 2

Did you sing at functions of the Communist Party?

SEEGER

I have sung for Americans of every political persuasion, and I am proud that I never refuse to sing to an audience, no matter what religion or color of their skin or situation in life. I have sung in hobo jungles, and I have sung for the Rockefellers.

INQUISITOR 3

Wait a minute. You sang for everybody. Then are we to take it that you sang at Wingdale Lodge?

SEEGER

I decline to discuss, under compulsion, where I have sung, and the people I have known. I love my country very dearly, and I greatly resent this implication that some of the places that I have sung, and some of the people that I have known, and some of my opinions, make me any less of an American.

INQUISITOR 2

Are you a member of the Communist Party now?

SEEGER

I must give the same answer as before.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I direct you to answer that question.

SEEGER

The same answer, sir.

INQUISITOR 2

I think the record should show that the witness remains mute, following direction by the chairman to answer that question.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I direct you to answer that question.

SEEGER

Sir, my answer is the same.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I think it is my duty to inform you that we don't accept the answers or the reasons you gave.

SEEGER

That is your prerogative, sir. My answer is always the same.

CHIEF INQUISITOR

I have no further questions. The witness is excused.

*(All freeze in position as Brecht and
FBI Agent 1 enter.)*

SCENE: CROSSING THE BORDER²⁵

VIRGINIA

Scene 13. Galileo's book, the Discorsi, crosses the Italian frontier on its way to publication.

BRECHT

Here in East Germany we receive the almost incredible news that some of American's best writers will be sent to jail for standing up to the House Un-American Activities Committee. What saved me was not that no un-American activities could be proved in my case, but rather that I was not an American.

Everything changes. You can make
A fresh start with your final breath.

But what has happened has happened.
 The fight has been fought, let us eat.
 I escaped. I have crossed the frontier and arrived at
 a place of...

FBI AGENT 1

An empty gesture. The knowledge it contains has
 already been surrendered to the authorities to use and
 abuse at will. *The Life of Galileo* was written in the
 last dark months of 1938. It was being rewritten with
 Laughton as the first atomic bomb was tested in New
 Mexico. What becomes of the dawning of a new age when
 everything points to night's arrival? Am I lying down
 for the night and thinking of mornings that have
 already passed, in order to avoid thinking of the
 mornings that are to come?

*(Treat this as the formal end of the
 piece: lights out, then back up as
 performers take their bows. After a
 short interval, but before bows would
 normally be finished, Clown 1 pushes
 officiously through the line and
 pompously takes position at dead center
 stage, waving the other performers away
 to either side of the stage.)*

SCENE: BRECHT ON THEATER AND FILM²⁶

*(Four clowns, all made up as obvious
 variations on Brecht, with mannerisms,
 hairstyles, costumes, etc., borrowed
 from early 21st century types,
 especially fellow Europeans such as
 Peter Lorre, Charlie Chaplin, Kafka,
 Marlena Dietrich, Lotte Lenya. Clowns
 are referred to as 'he' for convenience
 but should be a mix of male and
 female.)*

CLOWN 1

Walter Benjamin...

*(Clown 2 rushes in, holding up an
 imperative hand to stop Clown 1 from
 speaking. He points to a different spot*

on the floor and Clown 1 walks over to it.)

CLOWN 1

Walter Benjamin...

(Clown 2 whacks him on the back to shut him up, goes offstage, and returns with a chair, which he arranges neatly. He points for Clown 1 to sit in the chair. Clown 1 sits; Clown 2 begins to walk away.)

CLOWN 1

(Firmly) Walter...

(Clown 2 holds up his hand without turning around; Clown 1 is quiet; Clown 2 exits.)

CLOWN 1

(Tentatively) Walter...

(Clown 2 rushes back onstage and glares at Clown 1; Clown 1 is quiet; Clown 2 exits.)

CLOWN 1

(Teasingly) Whhh...

(Clown 2 rushes onstage with a flask in one hand with which he threatens Clown 1. Clown 1 cringes so hard he tips his chair over backwards and rolls or somersaults out of it as it lands. Clown 2 points to the chair. Clown 1 obediently crawls to the overturned chair and 'sits' in it, that is, on his back with his legs in the air. Clown 2 turns away.)

CLOWN 1

(Teasingly) Whhh... *(Clown 2 whirls on him)* whhh whhh whhh water!

(Clown 2 takes the flask and pours it into Clown 1's mouth. Clown 1 makes horrible gagging noises and mimes sudden death. Clown 2 pushes Clown 1's legs aside and perches on the edge of the overturned chair.)

CLOWN 2

Walter Benjamin (*He pauses as if for a response from Clown 1 and then continues*) has poisoned himself in some little Spanish border town.

(Clown 3 enters while he is speaking and begins to drag away Clown 1).

CLOWN 3

(Pausing) What? Who?

CLOWN 2

Walter Benjamin. Critic. Prophet. Seer. Who poisoned himself because he thought the Nazis were about to arrest him. Who rejected the idea of progress as a mighty enterprise undertaken by cool, clear heads.

(Clown 3 realizes this is a lecture. He props up Clown 1's knees and sits on them. He pulls out a pad and begins taking notes. Clowns 2 and 3 should be roughly facing each other at this point.)

Who championed my work. Whom I miss.

CLOWN 2

Whom I... used to play chess with him. Once we invented a new kind of chess in which the moves do not stay the same. Every piece changes to another after a while. This I took for the model of my theater.

(Clown 4 enters briskly and sits awkwardly in Clown 3's lap; he is almost sliding off. He leans forward, chin in hand, as if studying a chess move, and occasionally reaches out to make a move but changes his mind before it happens. Clown 3 is still trying to take notes, muttering to himself as he tries to keep up.)

CLOWN 2

I dreamed that I told him about *Galileo*. It was like remembering a strange, sunken theater in ancient times on a submerged continent.

CLOWN 3

(Scribbling furiously) Good old days...

CLOWN 2

Nobody is writing serious plays anymore.

CLOWN 3

Nobody plays the whore...

CLOWN 2

Art is ashamed of its usefulness, but not of its exchange value.

CLOWN 3

Art something something something..

CLOWN 2

Broadway has triumphed and demonstrated that it has a stomach like Mithridates for minor poisons.

CLOWN 3

*(Triumphantly) ...has a stomach!
(Hearing the word 'poisons', Clown 1 groans loudly and twitches. Clown 4 leaps up in horror. Seeing his reaction, Clown 3 also leaps up in horror and looks wildly about for the cause.)*

CLOWN 2

All they are concerned about is selling an evening's entertainment. Here you are either a buyer or a seller.

(Clown 4 gestures at Clown 1. Clown 3 makes reassuring gestures, and when Clown 4 seems unconvinced, goes over and pees on Clown 1. Clown 1's legs flop down to the ground.)

CLOWN 2

You sell your piss, as it were, to the urinal.
(Clowns 3 and 4 shake hands)

CLOWN 3

Sell your piss!

CLOWN 4

To the urinal!

CLOWN 2

(He stands and rights the chair, setting it to one side.) I sent a piece about Hitler to *Reader's Digest* for their series 'My Most Unforgettable Character.'

CLOWN 3

(Shaking hands again with Clown 4) Sell your Hitler!

CLOWN 4

To the Digest!

CLOWN 3

To the urinal!

CLOWN 2

It came back very promptly. I hear that Thomas Mann had his contribution sent back too.

CLOWN 3

(Shaking hands again with Clown 4) Back!

CLOWN 4

To back!

(They stand back to back, initially in solidarity, but then some mutual shoving develops)

CLOWN 2

Reader's Digest submits readers' contributions to half a dozen experts.

CLOWN 3

Urinal!

CLOWN 4

To urinal!

(They turn and face each other and pee on each other gleefully)

CLOWN 2

One checks whether the thing is brown,
(Clowns 2 and 3 rush over to where Clown 1 is lying)

CLOWN 3

Brown?

CLOWN 4

Check!

CLOWN 2
...a second whether it stinks,

CLOWN 3
Stinks?

CLOWN 4
Check!

CLOWN 2
...a third that there are no solid lumps in it.

CLOWN 3
Lumps?

CLOWN 4
None!

CLOWN 2
That is how strictly it is checked to see that it is
real shit before they accept it.

CLOWN 3
Shit?

CLOWN 4
Yes!

*(They shake hands again and then turn
and haul Clown 1 to his feet. They put
their arms around each other and sway
mournfully as they recite the
following. Clown 1 does not recite; he
seems still semi-dead.)*

CLOWNS 3,4
And then when it was the month of May, / A thousand-
year Reich had passed away.

CLOWN 2
What theater has and film does not have...

CLOWN 1
(Slurring) Whhh...

CLOWNS 3, 4

(Picking up on Clown 1) Whhh... ? Whhh... ? Whhh...
Whhh... Whhh...

CLOWN 2

...is drama, that is, the separation of play and performance.

(In the following section, the clowns should speak simultaneously and over each other in an increasingly noisy and aggressive competition that Clown 2 loses as Clowns 3 and 4 increasingly gang up on him.)

CLOWN 2

In theory it would of course be possible to make any number of films about one subject, but up till now nothing of this type exists. With film, the public no longer has a chance to affect the actor's performance. There is no longer a production, a play, but an end product that has been produced in its absence.

CLOWN 3

Whhh... What life has and death does not have is drama, that is, the pursuit of play and paternity. In theory it would of course be possible to live any number of lives, but up till now nothing of this type exists. With life, death no longer has a chance to affect your sexual performance. There is no longer a potential but a person that has been produced in the absence of abstention.

CLOWN 4

Whhh... What performance has and drama does not have is film, that is, the play of production and theater. In performance it would of course be drama to make any theater of films about the possible performance, but up till now no play of this production exists. With film, the play no longer has a film to affect the actor's drama. There is no longer a production, a play, but a performance drama that has been produced in its performance.

CLOWN 1

Whhhhh...thhhhhh....dddd....
nnnn....dddd...ssss....ppppp.... ppppp....tttt....
cccc...sss...nnn....ppp...nnn... ttt...
www...fffff...lllll...chhhh...ssss....

ppppp....thh... nggggg.... prrrrrr.....
 pllll.....nnnnn.....prrrrrr..... psssss.....whhhhh.....
 sssss.....pllllllll..... nnnnnn..... whhhhh.....
 llllllll..... thhhhhh....shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

*(There is moment of dead silence as
 Clowns 3 and 4 menace Clown 2.)*

CLOWN 1

*(With utmost clarity) Nobody is writing serious plays
 anymore.*

*(Clowns 3 and 4 relax. They are
 delighted with Clown 1's recovery. They
 check him over to make sure his limbs
 are working, his eyes can see, etc.)*

CLOWN 2

*(Sadly) Laughton has to work on a pirate film for
 eight weeks. I never cease to marvel at how primitive
 the structure of films is. They scramble from one
 situation to the next and introduce any old character.
 The assumption is that the actors can't act and the
 public can't think. I was working on a film comedy
 with another writer... (Clown 4 perks up) I think I
 won't mention his name... (Clown 4 frowns) He would
 ramble without any plan, (Clown 4 perks up again)
 spewing ideas that he evidently thought were of equal
 consequence. The hero must now make a choice: he can
 either slap his wife (Clown 4 slaps Clown 1) or get
 her pregnant (Clown 3 pretends to have sex with Clown
 1) or ask for money (Clown 4 acts contrite and begs
 for money) or save her life. (Clown 3 throws Clown 1
 over his shoulder and staggers off.)*

CLOWN 2

Let's assume he does the first...

*(The other clowns run back together and
 go through the preceding routine all
 over again. Through the next section,
 they repeat the routine as quickly as
 possible, making it shorter and more
 cursory as they get exhausted and
 bored. By the end, it all happens
 simultaneously—Clown 1 leans on Clown
 3's shoulder while Clown 3 wriggles his
 hips and Clown 4 slaps Clown 1 and
 picks his pocket.)*

CLOWN 2

These 'surprises' which consist in impossible things actually happening... these 'moments of suspense' which consist in simply withholding information from the audience... these eruptions of sentimentality... they blur the images you took such pains to work up, the characters get distorted— the clever become stupid, the progressive reactionary, the noble despicable, the despicable attractive.

(Clown 2 pauses; the others keep going.)

CLOWN 2

(Loudly) The despicable attractive!

(The other clowns slump on each other in a standing heap of exhaustion)

CLOWN 2

You sell your piss, as it were, to the urinal.

CLOWN 3

(Faintly and muffled) Sell!

CLOWN 4

(Faintly and muffled) Urinal!

CLOWN 2

For an author to succeed, his public must be defeated.

CLOWN 3

(Faintly and muffled) Author!

CLOWN 4

(Faintly and muffled) Public!

CLOWN 3

(Faintly and muffled) Defeat!

CLOWN 4

(Faintly and muffled) Author!

CLOWN 3

(Faintly and muffled) Author!

CLOWN 2

You should forget your successes but not your failures.

CLOWNS 3, 4

(Louder and repeatedly) Author! Author!

(The heap breaks apart as Clown 1 steps forward and takes a magnificent bow.

Lights out. No further bows.)

---END---

NOTES

- ¹ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and Brecht's journals and other writings.
- ² Includes material adapted from Brecht's "American Poems".
- ³ Includes material adapted from Flanagan's testimony before House Un-American Activities Committee, Dec. 6, 1938. In Eric Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, pp. 3-47.
- ⁴ Includes material adapted from Brecht's journals, poems ("Hollywood Elegies"), and other writings.
- ⁵ Includes material adapted from Brecht's journals and other writings.
- ⁶ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and other writings by Brecht.
- ⁷ From "American Poems".
- ⁸ Includes material adapted from Brecht's journals.
- ⁹ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and FBI files on Brecht.
- ¹⁰ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo*.
- ¹¹ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and other writings by Brecht.
- ¹² Adapted from Robbins's testimony before House Un-American Activities Committee, May 5, 1953. In Eric Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, pp. 625-634.
- ¹³ Includes material adapted from FBI files on Brecht.
- ¹⁴ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and Brecht's journals.
- ¹⁵ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo*, Brecht's journals, and writings about Brecht, Galileo, and Galileo's daughters.
- ¹⁶ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo*.
- ¹⁷ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and Brecht's journals.
- ¹⁸ Includes material adapted from Brecht's poems.
- ¹⁹ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo* and Brecht's journals and other writings.
- ²⁰ Includes material adapted from Brecht's testimony before House Un-American Activities Committee, Oct. 30, 1947. In Eric Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, pp. 207-220.
- ²¹ Includes material adapted from FBI files on Brecht.
- ²² Includes material adapted from Brecht's testimony before House Un-American Activities Committee, Oct. 30, 1947. In Eric Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, pp. 207-220.
- ²³ Includes material adapted from *Life of Galileo*.
- ²⁴ Adapted from Seeger's testimony before House Un-American Activities Committee, Aug. 18, 1955. In Eric Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, pp. 686-700 and from Brecht's writings.
- ²⁵ Includes material adapted from Brecht's journals and other writings.
- ²⁶ Includes material adapted from Brecht's journals and other writings.