

# Epic Theatre as a Form of Platonic Drama

İhsan Gürsoy 

*Given Aristotle's response to Plato's views by positing a cathartic function for tragedy, it is understandable that an author opposing him through the development of a non-Aristotelian theatrical theory would spontaneously draw closer to Platonic thought. However, Brecht's stance goes beyond this spontaneous proximity in this debate. This article challenges those critics who have overlooked the direct relationship between Plato and Brecht, and it offers a reasoned decision on Walter Benjamin's verdict that epic theatre is a form of Platonic drama. Moreover, it argues that Brecht's endeavour aimed to create a theatre that remained impervious to Plato's critiques. The article analyzes Brecht's achievements in epic theatre as an expression of disenchantment, demonstrating how, through the techniques he developed, he radically dismantled the magical effect that was essential to Aristotelian theatre.*

## References

- Benjamin, Walter (1998) *Understanding Brecht*, tr. Anna Bostock (ed.) London: Verso.
- Brecht, Bertolt (1961) 'On Chinese Acting', tr. Eric Bentley, *The Tulane Drama Review*, 6: 130–36.
- Brecht, Bertolt (1966) *Über Theater*, Leipzig: Reclam.
- Brecht, Bertolt (1991) *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner Und Frankfurter Ausgabe. Band 24: Schriften 4*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Brecht, Bertolt (1993) *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner Und Frankfurter Ausgabe. Band 22: Schriften 2*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Brecht, Bertolt (1994) *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner Und Frankfurter Ausgabe. Band 26: Journale 1*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Brecht, Bertolt (2014) *Brecht on Theatre*. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn (eds), London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Buehler, George (1978) *Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator: Ein Vergleich. Ihrer Theoretischen Schriften*, Bonn: Bouvier.
- Freud, Sigmund (1930) *Civilization and Its Discontents*, tr. Joan Riviere, (ed.). London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at The Hogarth Press, and the Institute of Psycho-analysis.
- Gruber, William E. (1987) 'Non-Aristotelian' Theater: Brecht's and Plato's Theories of Artistic Imitation', *Comparative Drama*, 21/3: 199–213. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.1987.0007>
- Halliwel, Stephen, (2002) *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Haşlakoğlu, Oğuz (2008) 'Platon Düşüncesinde Aletheia', *Kaygı*, 11: 205–09.
- Haşlakoğlu, Oğuz (2016) *Platon Düşüncesinde Tekhne: Sanat ve Felsefenin Ortak Kökeni Üzerine Bir İnceleme*, Bursa: Sentez Yayıncılık.
- Hyland, Drew A (2004) *Questioning Platonism: Continental Interpretations of Plato*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Knopf, Jan (1980) *Brecht-Handbuch: Theater: Eine Ästhetik Der Widersprüche*, Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Mitchell, Stanley (1998) 'Introduction', in Walter Benjamin (ed.), tr. Anna Bostock, *Understanding Brecht*, London: Verso.
- Plato, (1925) *Theaetetus*, tr. W. R. M. Lamb, *Plato in Twelve Volumes vols*, p. ix. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Plato, (1966) *Phaedo* tr. Harold North Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes vols*, p. i. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Plato, (1969) *Republic*, tr. Paul Shorey, *Plato in Twelve Volumes vols*, pp. v & vi. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Puchner, Martin (2010) *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy*, OUP.
- Robinson, Douglas (2008) *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Schumacher, Ernst (1955) *Die dramatischen Versuche Bertolt Brechts: 1918-1933*, Berlin (West): Rütten & Loening.
- Steinweg, Reiner (1976) *Das Lehrstück: Brechts Theorie Einer Politisch-Ästhetischen Erziehung*, Metzler Studienausgabe, 2., verb. Aufl, Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Thomson, Peter, and Gardner, Vivien (1997) *Brecht: Mother Courage and Her Children*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.