



Brecht and Method (Radical Thinkers)

Fredric Jameson

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The legacy of Bertolt Brecht is much contested, whether by those who wish to forget or to vilify his politics, but his stature as the outstanding political playwright and poet of the twentieth century is unforgettably established in this major critical work. Fredric Jameson elegantly dissects the intricate connections between Brecht's drama and politics, demonstrating the way these combined to shape a unique and powerful influence on a profoundly troubled epoch.

Jameson sees Brecht's method as a multi-layered process of reflection and self-reflection, reference and self-reference, which tears open a gap for individuals to situate themselves historically, to think about themselves in the third person, and to use that self-projection in history as a basis for judgment. Emphasizing the themes of separation, distance, multiplicity, choice and contradiction in Brecht's entire corpus, Jameson's study engages in a dialogue with a cryptic work, unpublished in Brecht's lifetime, entitled *Me-ti; Book of Twists and Turns*. Jameson sees this text as key to understanding Brecht's critical reflections on dialectics and his orientally informed fascination with flow and flux, change and the non-eternal.

For Jameson, Brecht is not prescriptive but performative. His plays do not provide answers but attempt to show people how to perform the act of thinking, how to begin to search for answers themselves. Brecht represents the ceaselessness of transformation while at the same time alienating it, interrupting it, making it comprehensible by making it strange. And thereby, in breaking it up by analysis, the possibility emerges of its reconstitution under a new law.

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