Christoph Menke
Tragic Play - Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett

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About

Tragic Play explores the deep philosophical significance of classic and modern tragedies in order to cast light on the tragic dimensions of contemporary experience.

Romanticism, it has often been claimed, brought tragedy to an end, making modernity the age after tragedy. Christoph Menke opposes this modernist prejudice by arguing that tragedy remains alive in the present in the distinctively new form of the playful, ironic, and self-consciously performative. Through close readings of plays by William Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett, Heiner Müller, and Botho Strauss, Menke shows how tragedy re-emerges in modernity as »tragedy of play«. In Hamlet, Endgame, Philoktet, and Ithaka, Menke integrates philosophical theory with critical readings to investigate shifting terms of judgment, curse, reversal, misfortune, and violence. (book description from the English edition by Columbia University Press)

Praise

»Christoph Menke develops tragedy as a modern mode of understanding in new and interesting ways. His ideas should generate quite a bit of debate not only in philosophy but also in literary studies and social theory.« Fred Rush, University of Notre Dame

»Tragic Play is philosophical while also being informed by classical scholarship and aesthetic and dramaturgical theory. It is ambitious and accessible, as well as exciting.« Martin Donougho, University of South Carolina

»Christoph Menke's theoretical framework is extremely dense and far-reaching, with a powerfully and consistently built argument that includes textual analyses offering interesting insights.« Boris Gasparov, Columbia University