

Brecht and Tragedy: Points of Contact

(Martin Revermann, University of Toronto)

Brecht always considered Greek tragedy, and the kind of theatre which in his perception Greek tragedy so prominently exemplified (especially Schiller and the naturalist playwrights of the late 19th century), as deeply problematic, politically naive and artistically flawed. But Brecht very much needed Greek tragedy, and Tragedy in general, as an art form to engage with polemically, and the relationship between the two can be described as both dialogical and dialectical: without Greek tragedy as a target and an anti-model to work against (in both practice and theory) Brechtian drama would lack a vital means of creating its own artistic autonomy and uniqueness.

In this paper I would like to take separate yet inter-connected looks at various points of contact between Brecht and Greek tragedy: his engagement with Aristotle's *Poetics* (including the machine-written comments, only recently published, which Brecht inserted into his personal copy of the *Poetics*); his *The Antigone of Sophocles*, written and produced in Switzerland in 1948 (integrating the colour photos of this production taken by Ruth Berlau, which will be published for the first time in a forthcoming monograph of mine); and Brecht's notion of tragic heroism (with his *Galileo* functioning as one central case study).