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Introduction

1. Why Diegesis *and* Mimesis?

The topic of this Journal issue is the relation between diegesis and mimesis in drama and in genres which share aspects of drama, consciously and metatextually blending narrative and dialogue. Akin to the showing-and-telling alternative,[1] diegesis and mimesis resonate, though, with aesthetic and theoretical questions which invite specific discussion. As will soon become apparent, their use both past and present is not uncontroversial. According to Plato's argument in Book 3 of his *Republic*, mimesis is the mode of drama, not a component of it, which implicitly leads to its equation with drama tout court (tragedy and comedy are *poiesis te kai mythologia*, poetry and mythology, conducted through mimetic impersonation, *mimesis*). Aristotle, instead, conceived mimesis as a master-concept standing for all representative arts, not as a poetic mode. Although it was Aristotle who focused on drama especially, it is common practice, even in drama studies, to talk about diegesis and mimesis according to Plato, whose main preoccupation, on the contrary, was epics. Such conceptual divergence has been responsible for a good amount of critical debate on whether mimesis was to be taken as meaning the power of art in general,[2] or instead as a peculiar form of narrative derived from the typically dramatic mode.

The articles here collected will not provide an answer to such a theoretical question, but will examine the function of narration and dialogue within a selected number of examples in order to evaluate their generic, performative, and 'ideological' functions over time. Mimesis as artistic representation will also be called into question when theatre comes to interrogate the idea of counterfactuality vis-a-vis its power performatively to construct and deconstruct our memories of the past on stage. It will also be examined when it stretches beyond itself to enter the field of a generative

[1] For a succinct overview of the theoretical debate see Klauk 2014.

[2] For a discussion of mimesis as 'representation', rather than 'imitation' (with a narrow modern sense), see Halliwell 2002: 13ff.

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ontology belying the need to reconsider from scratch what the same notion of representation means (as in the case of postdramatic theatre). In all cases, diegesis and mimesis will be treated as two concepts that need further exploration in both theory and practice, but also, and especially, as two collaborative modes, rather than antagonistic categories. The following articles will investigate the possibilities for their integration in both narrative and dramatic genres, and will test the effects of their uses with regard to their symbolic, performative, as well as ideological impact.

2. Where It All Started and How It Changed

Such an integrated approach has not always been shared by critics. Many examples may be brought, but one of the most glaring cases certainly is Dr Johnson's harsh critique of Shakespeare. Famously, he lamented that narratives in his plays were alien, pompous, declamatory pieces impeding action. In his often quoted 1765 Preface to the Bard's dramas, Johnson clarified that "narration in dramatick poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action"; instead he recommended that "it should . . . always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption" (1908: 22; see also Bigliazzi 2014). Typically, Johnson had no perception of the dramatic potential of diegesis; he neither felt its capacity to contribute to characterization or to the naturalness of the exchanges; nor could he sense the dramatic power of narrative repetition and reflexivity – two devices Shakespeare was a master of (Wilson 1989; 1995: 56-9). Before Neoclassicism, in the early modern period, playwrights knew that if theatre was to offer a mirror up to nature it had to include diegesis as one of its organic components. Their emphasis upon narrative beyond its function of providing connectives, summaries or fillers-in, allowed for an overall reconsideration of the dramatic space, which through story-telling came to be invaded by a plurality of diegetic, extra-dramatic worlds otherwise un-representable through sheer action. Since then, the history of theatre has thrived upon ever-changing balances between narrative and action, and even before then, since the classical times, an interrogation of the meaning itself of mimesis in relation to diegesis has provided the essential ground for an understanding of the deep mechanics of drama.

It is the early modern period, though, that marked a turning point in the history of the theatrical interaction between diegesis and mimesis. As Lorna Hutson (2015: 9) has recently noticed, allegorical theatre simply did not contain reported speeches because the plot was identical with the story. This suggests that, after the classical times, diegesis became prominent in drama as the necessary tool to emancipate the plot from the story well beyond the Middle Ages. At that point, diegesis and mimetic action were both part of

one and the same picture. Not so much debated in theory as tested in practice, the relation between them was nonetheless occasionally mentioned in tracts on the art of writing. To remain within the English context, George Puttenham, for one, stated in his *Arte of English Poesy* that dramatic poetry was to differ from other types of poetry because it was "put in execution by the feate & dexteritie of mans body" rather than by being "recited by mouth or song with the voyce to some melodious instrument" (1589: 27; 1.15 *In what forme of Poesie the euill and outragious bahauiours of Princes were reprehended*). It was bodily action on stage within the multisensory dimension of spectacle that distinguished dramatic gesture from lyrical recitation.

In this respect, scholars and playwrights received instructions from antiquity, which however they had to interpret and adjust to their own performative experiences and cultural milieus. The standard manual for drama of course was Aristotle's *Poetics*. Its Latin version was first published with a substantial commentary by Francesco Robortello in 1548, and it was soon followed by the Maggi and Lombardi edition in 1550; in 1560 Pier Vettori published his *Commentarii in primum librum Aristotelis De arte poetarum* which soon became the standard edition in Europe, and in 1570 Castelvetro put out the first Italian version (*Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta*). The first English edition was instead Thomas Rymer's translation of René Rapin's *Réflections sur la Poétique d'Aristote* and came out at a fairly late date, in 1674. In 1705 there appeared the first English version from the Greek original, with André Dacier's notes (from his *Poétique d'Aristote* 1692). As mentioned above, Aristotle's notion of mimesis embraced a broad conception of representation including both epics and tragedy as well as art in general. Providing "the genus of which the narrative, and dramatic modes are species" (Halliwell 2012),[3] it was cast as a superordinate term in respect to the modes characterizing each art (all equally mimetic). This avoided the terminological ambiguity which could be found in Plato. *Poetics* 1449b made very clear that while tragedy represents men in action (*drôntes*), it does not use narrative (or better say, report: *apangelia*):

[3] In this respect, his use of the term 'mimesis' was similar to Plato's in *Republic*, Book 10, although deprived of the negative evaluation: (605b7-c3) ταὐτὸν καὶ τὸν μιμητικὸν ποιητὴν φήσομεν κακὴν πολιτείαν ἰδίᾳ ἑκάστου τῇ ψυχῇ ἐμποιεῖν, τῷ ἀνοήτῳ αὐτῆς (c) χαριζόμενον καὶ οὔτε τὰ μείζω οὔτε τὰ ἐλάττω διαγιγνώσκοντι, ἀλλὰ τὰ αὐτὰ τοτὲ μὲν μεγάλα ἡγουμένῳ, τοτὲ δὲ σμικρά, εἴδωλα εἰδωλοποιοῦντα, τοῦ δὲ ἀληθοῦς πόρρω πάνυ ἀφεστῶτα. [Precisely in the same manner we shall say that the mimetic poet sets up in each individual soul a vicious constitution by fashioning phantoms far removed from reality, and by currying favor with the senseless element [605c] that cannot distinguish the greater from the less, but calls the same thing now one, now the other]. Quotations and translations from Plato's *Republic* are from Plato 1969.

> (1449b9-12) Epic conforms with tragedy insofar as it is a mimesis, in spoken metre, of ethically serious subjects (*spoudaia*); but it differs by virtue of using only spoken verse and of being in the narrative mode (*apangelia*). . . . Tragedy, then, is a representation (*mimesis*) of an action (*praxis*) . . . in the mode of dramatic enactment (*drân*), not narrative (*apangelia*).[4]

What differentiated tragedy from epics, therefore, was the staged action of "agents" (*prattontes*), as well as the performance of "spectacle" (*opseos kosmos*), of "song" (*melopoiia*) and "diction" (*lexis*):

> (1449b31-4) Since the mimesis is enacted by agents (*prattontes*), we can deduce that one element of tragedy must be the adornment of visual spectacle (*opseos kosmos*), while others are lyric poetry (*melopoiia*) and verbal style (*lexis*), for it is in these that the mimesis is presented. (37)[5]

As Halliwell (2012) aptly remarked, "Aristotle curiously does not here use the terminology of *diegesis* at all (a fact obscured by e.g. Genette 1969: 52) but denotes narrative by the verb *apangellein*, 'to relate/report' (cf. the noun *apangelia* at *Poetics* 5.1449b11, 6.1449b26–7; Plato uses the same terms of both the author-narrator and the characters, *Republic* 3.394c2, 396c7)". And yet, *diegesis*, which literally means "'to lead/guide through'", and by extension "'give an account of,' 'expound', 'explain', and 'narrate'", was elsewhere employed by Aristotle "as a term for one of the basic modes or functions of discourse (cf. . . . *Poetics* 19.1456b8–19, where diegesis might mean either 'statement' or 'narration')" (ibid.). Besides, he also used the word *diegesis* to clarify how epics may extend the time frame in respect to tragedy, which instead can only show what happens on stage (*epi tês skenês*), that is, the part performed by the actors (*tôn hypokritôn meros*). Thus, he called mimesis in hexameters[6] (i.e. epics) a *diegematike mimesis* (or narrative representation), making for a hybrid compound alien to the Platonic system, where,

[4] (1449b9-12) ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐποποιία τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ μέχρι μὲν τοῦ μετὰ μέτρου λόγῳ μίμησις εἶναι σπουδαίων ἠκολούθησεν· τῷ δὲ τὸ μέτρον ἁπλοῦν ἔχειν καὶ ἀπαγγελίαν εἶναι, ταύτῃ διαφέρουσιν. . . . (1449b24-7) ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως . . . δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας. Quotations from the Greek original are from Kassel 1966; all English translations are by Stephen Halliwell in Aristotle 1987; the present translation is on p. 36.

[5] (1449b31-4) ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττοντες ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τι μόριον τραγῳδίας ὁ τῆς ὄψεως κόσμος· εἶτα μελοποιία καὶ λέξις, ἐν τούτοις γὰρ ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν.

[6] (1449b20) περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς ἐν ἐξαμέτροις μιμητικῆς καὶ περὶ κωμῳδίας ὕστερον ἐροῦμεν [With the representation of life in hexameter verse (*he en exametrois mimetike*) and with comedy we will deal later.]

as will soon be seen, diegesis was the superordinate term.[7] Aristotle's swaying between *apangellein* and *diegeisthai* for the action of reporting and narrating in epic poems seems to imply areas of overlapping which, however, were excluded from the description of tragedy. This, on the contrary, unfolded through an action (*drân*) (1449b9-12) performed by actors (*tôn hypokritôn meros*) in the here-and-now (*hama prattomena*) of the spectacle (*opsis*), and through diction (*lexis*) (1449b31.4). Although, as Halliwell has remarked, "*Poetics* 3.1448a19–24 . . . is obscured by some knotty syntax and textual corruption", Aristotle had clearly in mind that spoken narrative was not drama, and he conveyed this contrast through the opposition between *apangellein*/*diegeisthai*, on the one hand, and *drân*, *opsis* and *melopoiia*, on the other – not between diegesis/mimesis:

> (1448a19-28) . . . there is a third distinction [besides the media and the objects]: namely, the mode in which the various objects are represented. For it is possible to use the same media to offer a mimesis of the same objects in any one of three ways: first, by alternation between narrative (*apangellon*) and dramatic impersonation (*heteron ti gignomenos*) (as in Homeric poetry); second, by employing the voice of narrative without variation (*me metaballon*); third, by a wholly dramatic presentation of the agents (*hôs prat-*

[7] (1459b22-37) ἔχει δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἐπεκτείνεσθαι τὸ μέγεθος πολύ τι ἡ ἐποποιία ἴδιον διὰ τὸ ἐν μὲν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἅμα πραττόμενα πολλὰ μέρη μιμεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν μέρος μόνον· ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ διὰ τὸ διήγησιν εἶναι ἔστι πολλὰ μέρη ἅμα ποιεῖν περαινόμενα, ὑφ' ὧν οἰκείων ὄντων αὔξεται ὁ τοῦ ποιήματος ὄγκος. ὥστε τοῦτ' ἔχει τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἰς μεγαλοπρέπειαν καὶ τὸ μεταβάλλειν τὸν ἀκούοντα καὶ ἐπεισοδιοῦν ἀνομοίοις ἐπεισοδίοις· τὸ γὰρ ὅμοιον ταχὺ πληροῦν ἐκπίπτειν ποιεῖ τὰς τραγῳδίας. τὸ δὲ μέτρον τὸ ἡρωικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας ἥρμοκεν. εἰ γάρ τις ἐν ἄλλῳ τινὶ μέτρῳ διηγηματικὴν μίμησιν ποιοῖτο ἢ ἐν πολλοῖς, ἀπρεπὲς ἂν φαίνοιτο· τὸ γὰρ ἡρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν (διὸ καὶ γλώττας καὶ μεταφορὰς δέχεται μάλιστα· περιττὴ γὰρ καὶ ἡ διηγηματικὴ μίμησις τῶν ἄλλων) . . . [Epic has a special advantage which enables the length to be increased, because in tragedy it is not possible to represent (*mimeisthai*) several parts of the story as going on simultaneously (*hama prattomena*), but only to show what is on the stage (*epi tês skenês*), that part of the story which the actors are performing (*tôn hypokritôn meros*); whereas, in the epic, because it is narrative (*diegesis*), several parts can be portrayed [lit. 'can be done'] as being enacted at the same time. If these incidents are relevant, they increase the bulk of the poem, and this increase gives the epic a great advantage in richness as well as the variety due to the diverse incidents; for it is monotony which, soon satiating the audience, makes tragedies fail. Experience has shown that the heroic hexameter is the right metre. Were anyone to write a narrative poem (lit. 'a narrative imitation': *diegematike mimesis*) in any other metre or in several metres, the effect would be wrong. The hexameter is the most sedate and stately of all metres and therefore admits of rare words and metaphors more than others, and narrative poetry (*diegematike mimesis*) is itself elaborate above all others . . .].

> *tontes kai energountes †hoi mimoumenoi†*). . . . Consequently, in one respect Sophocles uses the same mimesis as Homer, for in both cases the objects are good men; while in another respect, Sophocles and Aristophanes are parallel, since both use the mimetic mode of dramatic enactment (*prattontas gar mimountai kai drôntas*). (33)[8]

> (1459b7-12) Moreover epic should have the same types as tragedy – the simplex, the complex, the character-poem, the poem of suffering. (And epic shares all the same elements, apart from lyrics [*melopoiia*] and spectacle [*opsis*]). (58-9)[9]

> (1460a11-18) While the marvellous is called for in tragedy, it is epic which gives greater scope for the irrational (which is the chief cause of the marvellous), because we do not actually see the agents (*dia to me orân eis ton prattonta*). The circumstances of the pursuit of Hector would be patently absurd if put on the stage, with the men standing and refraining from pursuit, and Achilles forbidding them; but in epic the effect is not noticed. The marvellous gives pleasure: this can be seen from the way in which everyone exaggerates in order to gratify when recounting events. (60)[10]

The scheme he proposed was fairly restrictive, and did not allow for the presence of basic narrative forms in drama, such as the messenger-speech, although Aristotle knew that "each mode can be used 'inside' the other" (Halliwell 2012). The effect, though, was "to push towards the understanding of mimesis as essentially *enactive*" (Aristotle 1986: 77).

One was to await Renaissance commentators of Aristotle to find speculations on the diegetic potential of drama. Lorna Hutson has pointed out that Castelvetro's glossing on the Greek philosopher's definition of 'epi-

[8] (1448a19-28) Ἔτι δὲ τούτων τρίτη διαφορὰ τὸ ὡς ἕκαστα τούτων μιμήσαιτο ἄν τις. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμεῖσθαι ἔστιν ὁτὲ μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἢ ἕτερόν τι γιγνόμενον ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ ἢ ὡς τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντας ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας †τοὺς μιμουμένους†. . . ὥστε τῇ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἂν εἴη μιμητὴς Ὁμήρῳ Σοφοκλῆς, μιμοῦνται γὰρ ἄμφω σπουδαίους, τῇ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἄμφω. For a fuller discussion see Halliwell 1986: 77-8.

[9] (1459b7-12) ἔτι δὲ τὰ εἴδη ταὐτὰ δεῖ ἔχειν τὴν ἐποποιίαν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ, ἢ γὰρ ἁπλῆν ἢ πεπλεγμένην ἢ ἠθικὴν ἢ παθητικήν· καὶ τὰ μέρη ἔξω μελοποιίας καὶ ὄψεως ταὐτά· καὶ γὰρ περιπετειῶν δεῖ καὶ ἀναγνωρίσεων καὶ παθημάτων· ἔτι τὰς διανοίας καὶ τὴν λέξιν ἔχειν καλῶς.

[10] (1460a11-18) δεῖ μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν, μᾶλλον δ' ἐνδέχεται ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ τὸ ἄλογον, δι' ὃ συμβαίνει μάλιστα τὸ θαυμαστόν, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁρᾶν εἰς τὸν πράττοντα· ἐπεὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Ἕκτορος δίωξιν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ὄντα γελοῖα ἂν φανείη, οἱ μὲν ἑστῶτες καὶ οὐ διώκοντες, ὁ δὲ ἀνανεύων, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔπεσιν λανθάνει. τὸ δὲ θαυμαστὸν ἡδύ· σημεῖον δέ, πάντες γὰρ προστιθέντες ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὡς χαριζόμενοι.

sode' brought about a new perception of the function of narrative to tie distant times and places to the action. He formulated "a theory of how a mimesis restricted to the here-and-now is able, through a kind of infrastructure of varied forms of diegesis, to offer the illusion of a coherent fictive world encompassing anteriority, exteriority, and psychology" (2015: 21). For Castelvetro, Hutson remarks,

> [t]he first sense of 'episode' signifies events anterior to or postdating the dramatic action; the second sense 'incidents that occur at the time of the action and are part of it, but take place at some distance'; the third sense applies to the things invented by the poet to particularize a plot known only in summary form'; and the fourth is the quantitative part of a tragedy falling between two choral songs. (20)

A theorization of theatrical diegesis was thus clearly set out starting precisely from Aristotle.

As already suggested, Plato's *Republic* was the other major classical influence in Europe, where it was first circulated through Marsilio Ficino's mediation,[11] and, like Aristotle's *Poetics*, it too was translated into English centuries after its European dissemination in Latin or in Italian.[12] If for Aristotle the master-concept was mimesis, for Plato, contrariwise, it was diegesis. Famously, in Book 3 he focused upon mythographers and poets, and classified their work under the subsuming principle of diegesis, which he further specified according to the tripartite scheme of pure diegesis, mimesis, and mixed diegesis:

> (392d) Is not everything that is said (*logos*) by fabulists (*mythologoi*) or poets (*poietai*) a narration (*diegesis*) of past, present, or future things?"
> "What else could it be?" he said.
> "Do not they proceed either by pure narration (*haplê diegesis*) or by a narrative that is effected through imitation (*mimesis*), or by both?"[13]

[11] The first edition of the Latin translation of Plato's works was Marsilio Ficino's (1491); it was then re-edited several times in all Europe (about twenty editions may be counted until 1600). In 1544 a Greek edition of *The Republic* with Ficino's Latin translation was published in Paris; in 1554 it was first translated into German and into Italian. The 1578 parallel Greek-Latin edition by Henry Estienne was to become the reference edition throughout Europe.

[12] It was first published in Greek with a parallel Latin text only in 1713 and finally cast in English at the very late date of 1763.

[13] "Ἆρ' οὐ πάντα ὅσα ὑπὸ μυθολόγων ἢ ποιητῶν λέγεται διήγησις οὖσα τυγχάνει ἢ γεγονότων ἢ ὄντων ἢ μελλόντων;" "Τί γάρ, ἔφη, ἄλλο;" "Ἆρ' οὖν οὐχὶ ἤτοι ἁπλῇ διηγήσει ἢ διὰ μιμήσεως γιγνομένῃ ἢ δι' ἀμφοτέρων περαίνουσιν;".

Differently from Aristotle, who kept the ideas of mimesis and diegesis quite separate, considering the latter as a species of the former, Plato conflated genus and species under the common term of diegesis and set its three species (pure, mixed and in the mode of mimesis) in mutual contrast. The lack of a univocal terminology for genus and species meant foregrounding the overarching concept of diegesis which borrowed one of its modes from drama:

> (393b) "Now, it is narration (*diegesis*), is it not, both when he presents the several speeches and the matter between the speeches?" "Of course." "But when he delivers a speech (*rhesis*) (393c) as if he were someone else, shall we not say that he then assimilates thereby his own diction (*lexis*) as far as possible to that of the person whom he announces as about to speak?" "We shall obviously." "And is not likening one's self to another speech (*phone*) or bodily bearing (*kata skhema*) an imitation (*mimesthai*) of him to whom one likens (*homoioi*) one's self?" "Surely." "In such case then it appears he and the other poets effect their narration (*diegesis*) through imitation (*mimesis*)." "Certainly." "But if the poet should conceal himself nowhere, (393d) then his entire poetizing (*poiesis*) and narration (*diegesis*) would have been accomplished without imitation (*mimesis*)."[14]

Representation (mimesis) here coincides with the kind of narration (diegesis) conducted through a form of impersonation that soon afterwards in the *Republic* Plato would identify with tragedy and comedy:

> (394b) . . . there is one kind of poetry and tale-telling (*poiesis te kai mythologia*) which works wholly through imitation (*mimesis*), (394c) as you remarked, tragedy and comedy; and another which employs the recital (*apangelia*) of the poet himself, best exemplified, I presume, in the dithyramb; and there is again that which employs both, in epic poetry and in many other places, if you apprehend me.[15]

[14] "Οὐκοῦν διήγησις μέν ἐστιν καὶ ὅταν τὰς ῥήσεις ἑκάστοτε λέγῃ καὶ ὅταν τὰ μεταξὺ τῶν ῥήσεων;" "Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;" "Ἀλλ' ὅταν γέ τινα λέγῃ ῥῆσιν ὡς τις ἄλλος ὤν, ἆρ' οὐ τότε ὁμοιοῦν αὐτὸν φήσομεν ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν αὑτοῦ λέξιν ἑκάστῳ ὃν ἂν προείπῃ ὡς ἐροῦντα;" "Φήσομεν· τί γάρ;" "Οὐκοῦν τό γε ὁμοιοῦν ἑαυτὸν ἄλλῳ ἢ κατὰ φωνὴν ἢ κατὰ σχῆμα μιμεῖσθαί ἐστιν ἐκεῖνον ᾧ ἄν τις ὁμοιοῖ;" "Τί μήν;" "Ἐν δὴ τῷ τοιούτῳ, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὗτός τε καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταὶ διὰ μιμήσεως τὴν διήγησιν ποιοῦνται." "Πάνυ μὲν οὖν." "Εἰ δέ γε μηδαμοῦ ἑαυτὸν ἀποκρύπτοιτο ὁ ποιητής, πᾶσα ἂν αὐτῷ ἄνευ μιμήσεως ἡ ποίησίς τε καὶ διήγησις γεγονυῖα εἴη".

[15] ". . . ὅτι τῆς ποιήσεώς τε καὶ μυθολογίας ἡ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἐστίν, ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις, τραγῳδία τε καὶ κωμῳδία, ἡ δὲ δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ —εὕροις δ' ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστά που ἐν διθυράμβοις— ἡ δ' αὖ δι' ἀμφοτέρων ἔν τε τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσει, πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι, εἴ μοι μανθάνεις".

Assuming that impersonation (which Aristotle would relate to the action, *drân*, and the performance of the actors, *tôn hypokritôn meros*) may also be a form of narration implies that the real focus is not so much on theatre and spectacle (Aristotle's *opsis* and *lexis*), as on the use of direct speech and dialogue, which may also be effected in a narrative context, namely epics. Plato's mention of speech (*phone*) and bodily bearing (*kata schema*) only serves the purpose of underlining the ethical inappropriateness of mimesis as a way for the poet to conceal himself behind the mask of imitation. His brief mention of tragedy and comedy at the conclusion of 394d precisely foregrounds an idea of "acting like" involving the perils deriving from practices of emulation (Halliwell 2002: 51ff.):

> (394d) "What I meant then was just this, that we must reach a decision whether we are to suffer our poets to narrate (*diegeseis poieisthai*) as imitators (*mimoumenoi*) or in part as imitators and in part not, and what sort of things in each case, or not allow them to imitate (*mimeisthai*) at all." "I divine," he said, "that you are considering whether we shall admit tragedy and comedy into our city or not." "Perhaps," said I, "and perhaps even more than that. . . .".[16]

As is well known, theatre was neither appealing, nor morally and politically defendable for Plato. The argument he developed, therefore, did not deal with theatrical specifics, as Aristotle would, but accurately criticized acting and story-telling by means of simulating otherness, while laying the basis for an incipient narratology.

It is no surprise, therefore, that theories of drama in the Renaissance moved from Aristotle and Horace's interpretation of his *Poetics*, rather than from Plato. Horace's *Ars Poetica* – which circulated widely very early and, unlike the Greeks, was translated into English not much later (Drant 1567) – did not limit drama to action and spectacle, but included narration as a viable possibility ("Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur", l. 179). And yet he praised the efficacy of showing in respect to telling, preferring the former for its immediate visual impact and power to move, and offering an evaluative comment absent in Aristotle. According to Gruber, this addition could be indirectly credited to Plato's influence, though, in that,

> [n]ot only does Horace suppose narrative and drama to be incongruous (if not in principle exclusive) but also, therefore, privileges 'showing' for the

[16] "Τοῦτο τοίνυν αὐτὸ ἦν ὃ ἔλεγον, ὅτι χρείη διομολογήσασθαι πότερον ἐάσομεν τοὺς ποιητὰς μιμουμένους ἡμῖν τὰς διηγήσεις ποιεῖσθαι ἢ τὰ μὲν μιμουμένους, τὰ δὲ μή, καὶ ὁποῖα ἑκάτερα, ἢ οὐδὲ μιμεῖσθαι." "Μαντεύομαι, ἔφη, σκοπεῖσθαί σε εἴτε παραδεξόμεθα τραγῳδίαν τε καὶ κωμῳδίαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν, εἴτε καὶ οὔ." "Ἴσως, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἴσως δὲ καὶ πλείω ἔτι τούτων . . .".

> very reasons that Plato scorned it, namely, its efficacy in causing spectators to credit the artistic illusion with truth. It is this view of the fundamental superiority of 'showing' over 'telling' that is handed down as part of the classical tradition of criticism of theatre. (Gruber 2010: 11)

On the other hand, it should also be noticed that Horace was probably among the first to praise the virtues of narrative on stage in particular circumstances. While decrying the incredibility of certain scenes represented on stage ("Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi", l. 188), as before him Aristotle (1460a11-18), more clearly than Aristotle he suggested the use of narration in their place, thus providing it with an ethically and aesthetically subsidiary function ("non tamen intus / digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles / ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens"):

Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll. 179-88	Thomas Drant, Horace, *His Arte of Poetrie* (1567)
Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.	Matters be either done on stage,
Segnius inritant animos demissa per aurem	or toulde how they were done,
quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae	The things reported to the eares
ipse sibi tradit spectator; non tamen intus	move not the mynd so sone,
digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles	As lively set before thyne eyes,
ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens.	in acte for to behold:
Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,	Such actes as may be done within
aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,	no reason is they shold
aut in auem Procne uertatur, Cadmus in anguem.	Be shewed abroad: And many thinges
Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.	thou maiste remove from sighte,
	Which good, and ready eloquence
	may straight way bring to light.
	Medea may not openly
	her tender children slay,
	Nor wicked Atreus mens gutts
	in sethinge vessels play.
	Nor Progne turne into a bird,
	nor Cadmus into a snake.
	I trust nothing thou shewes me so
	but in worst part it take.
	(<Fol 6 r and v>)

Of course, such precepts were not normative in the Renaissance, although both Castelvetro and Horace circulated widely, and Aristotle was more often than not read through them.[17] But their intervention on his restrictive interpretation of drama as *drân* and *prattein*, to include dramatic possibili-

[17] See Weinberg 1961: 1, 47: "As a result, Horace ceased to be Horace and Aristotle never became Aristotle". See, more recently, Tarán 2012: 38-40: "Unfortunately the *Poetics* was then viewed in the same light as that of the *Ars Poetica* and as a welcome sup-

ties for *diegesis*, does tell us something about how the Renaissance, and English theatre and culture especially, where Castelvetro was well known, came to perceive the relevance of dramatic action and its interaction with narration.

One last brief remark should be made upon the influence of ancient rhetoric and oratory. The theory of διήγησις/*narratio* as a part of judicial oratory, put forward by Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Anaximenes' *Rhetoric to Alexander*, Deme-

---

plement and complement to the latter . . . , there was little awareness of the essential differences between the two works, and none at all of the historical context of each and of the different purposes of the two authors". Other Italian contributions to the theory of poetry and drama did not treat extensively the function of narrative on stage. Trissino's *Le sei divisioni della Poetica* (1529-62), for one, did not deviate much from Aristotle, and, more significantly, Giraldi Cintio insisted on the difference between epic poetry and drama on account of the action: "neither of the two [the tragedy and the comedy] tell their action, as we can see done in Epic poetry . . . but introduce the people who enact [*drân*] and carry out [*prattontes*] the action" ("niuna di esse narra la sua azione, come veggiam fare all'epopeia . . . Ma introducono le persone, che fanno e trattano l'azione . . .": Giraldi 1864: 10; translations into English are mine). Revealingly, Cintio discussed Horace's comment on narration in ways that betrayed his focus upon stage business also in cases of murders: "Horace with that precept does not want forbid that those deaths will be carried out on stage, but that those accompanied with cruelty should be avoided" ("Horatio con quel precetto non ci vuole vietare, che le dicevoli morti si facessero palesi in iscena, ma che si fuggissero quelle, che hanno compagna la crudeltà": 38). Intriguingly he further stressed that "what is heard moves the souls more lazily than what is seen. Therefore, the story is less terrible and pitiful if told than if seen" (". . . molto più pigramente muovono gli animi le cose che si odono, che quelle che si vedono. Laonde meno terribile e meno compassionevole fia il caso raccontato, che s'egli fia veduto": ibid.), a comment on the power of visuality which clearly belittled the function of narrative in view of the pathetic and cathartic effect of drama. His strained argument in favour of the showing of deaths on stage, for which he invoked Plutarch's authority, should be read along the same lines: "He therefore says that we greatly like clearly to see deaths as long as they are well represented, and by his authority we can appropriately see that the word φανερῷ concerns the eyes, not the ears" ("Dice adunque egli che le morti allora grandemente ci piacciono che le vediamo fare in palese, purché siano ben rappresentate, dall'autorità del quale si può acconciamente vedere che la voce φανερῷ è degli occhi, e non degli orecchi, in quel luogo della poetica"; ibid. 39). Reference is to Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452b8-13, where however the word θάνατοι refers generically to deaths: δύο μὲν οὖν τοῦ μύθου μέρη ταῦτ' ἐστί, περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις· τρίτον δὲ πάθος. τούτων δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν καὶ ἀναγνώρισις εἴρηται, πάθος δέ ἐστι πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά, οἷον οἵ τε ἐν τῷ φανερῷ θάνατοι καὶ αἱ περιωδυνίαι καὶ τρώσεις καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα ("Well then, reversal and recognition form two components of the plot-structure; the third is suffering. To the definitions of reversal and recognition already given we can add that of suffering: a destructive or painful action, such as visible deaths, torments, woundings, and other things of the same kind", Halliwell 1987: 43). Interestingly, in the following notes included in the 1864 edition, Cintio developed his argument by referring to arts different from theatre through the examples of Aristofale's [sic; i.e. Aristophon] Philoctetes and Silanion's Jocasta – a painting and a statue, respectively. These two references are from Plutarch's *De audiendis poetis* 18C (40).

trius Phalereus' *De interpretatione* and by Cicero's and Quintilian's rhetorical writings reached the Renaissance, contributing to an understanding of the performative power of narrative. Within the pragmatic context of an oration, diegesis was incorporated as a persuasive evidence of the topic under discussion, and it was also thanks to the acting talent of the orator that his speech could be successful. In his 1553 *The Art of Rhetoric*, for one, Thomas Wilson repeated the received teachings on the relevance and position of narratives in orations after the *proemium*, and in his 1604 *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* Thomas Wright acknowledged that orators were required to be good actors, showing "a certain visible eloquence, or an eloquence of the bodie, or a comely grace in delivering conceits" (1971: 176). Once the cooperation between word and gesture had been clearly stated in judicial oratory, the step towards establishing it in the adjacent field of theatre was a short one.

Many reasons stand behind the Renaissance revision of Aristotle in the direction of a dramatic use of narrative on stage. Through Horace, Castelvetro and, indirectly, Plato, but also under the influence of oratory and through a revision of medieval theatre, among other influences, the early modern age brought about new approaches to narration on stage, so that choices undictated by performative technicalities, such as the need to have fillers-in and connectives for questions of space-time unstageability, were seldom unmotivated dramatically.

If reported action is "indispensable to the possibility of projecting or inferring a whole fictional world . . . enabling imaginary inferences" (Hutson 2015: 9-10), the exploitation of "the extramimetic, *imagined* or *conjectured* locations and temporalities" (7) suddenly enlarged the theatrical world. New possibilities were opened by "[w]riting and performing the 'unseen'", an experience that can be "every bit as dramaturgically complex as enactment" (Gruber 2010: 7), investing the role itself "of the imagination in dramatic performance" (ibid.). In this regard, Garber has rightly underlined that, "[b]ecause it is unseen, the unscene remains powerfully and teasingly ambiguous" (1984: 44), enhancing the emotional and imaginative impact of the story recounted on stage. All this underlined the power of narrative to generate more narratives and further open up the stage to embrace questions of meaning- and truth-making.

3. Narrative Performance and 'Pure Theatre'

In book 2, chapter 10, of *Arcadia*, Philip Sidney drew the story of an old King who suffered the ingratitude of his bastard son and was eventually assisted by his other natural son, Leonatus, whom he had unjustly abandoned in infancy. The narrator recounts how, deprived of his kingdom,

turned blind, and left astray in the tempest, the aged King implored from his young son to finish off his days, but instead received affection and promise of protection. This is part of a longer story focused upon the exploits of two valiant princes who, happening to pass by, overheard the two men's exchange and, intrigued by their dismal appearances, asked them who they were. So far the naked plot. The narrative, itself encased within the extradiegetic narration, unfolds with no major time distortion, but foregrounds repetition and revision, while providing for different access points. This example, where the story of the old King and his desire to die is told three times, first by the King, then by Leonatus, and finally by the King to correct his son's tale, thematizes the partiality of all narrative and consequently their retellability. In the Renaissance the rhetorical criterion of *copia*, as Rawdon Wilson has suggested, was "nowhere more evident than in the conceptual distance between a narrative and its story", that is, what can be told and which "is invariably more abstract and larger in potential scope than discourse (how it is told)" (1995: 196). This assumption lies at the basis of the truism that narratives are never exact copies of events. Nor are they, strictly speaking, imitations, but only give an illusion of it. As Genette pointed out some time ago, unless "the object signified (narrated) be itself language", "in contrast to dramatic representation, no narrative can 'show' or 'imitate' the story it tells. All it can do is tell it in a manner which is detailed, precise, 'alive', and in that way give more or less the *illusion of mimesis* – which is the only narrative mimesis, for this single and sufficient reason: that narration, oral or written, is a fact of language, and language signifies without imitating" (1980: 164). Elaborating on this story, Shakespeare perceived the power of Leonatus' tale and reinvented it dramatically. He turned it into a trigger of action in the Gloucester subplot of *King Lear* and in an extraordinary sequence of 'pure theatre', as Jan Kott called it (1964), devised the famous illusory leap. Kott viewed it as a stage event untranslatable into any other medium, nor relatable through story-telling. He claimed that it was an intrinsically theatrical action which needed to be performed on a naked stage by a mime in a non-naturalistic type of theatre:

> In narrative prose Edgar could, of course, lead the blind Gloucester to the cliffs of Dover, let him jump down from a stone and make him believe that he was jumping from the top of a cliff. But he might just as well lead him a day's journey away from the castle and make him jump from a stone on any heap of sand. In film and in prose [sic] there is only the choice between a real stone lying in the sand and an equally real jump from the top of a chalk cliff into the sea. One cannot transpose Gloucester's suicide attempt to the screen, unless one were to film a stage performance. But in the naturalistic, or even stylized theatre, with the precipice painted or projected on to a screen, Shakespeare's parable would be completely obliterated. (1974: 145)

Playing upon the pure gesture of a blind man Shakespeare exposed the entire unreliability of poor Tom's narrative from which that gesture derived, turning the whole scene into a doubly theatrical piece where Tom-Edgar's voice spurs on Gloucester's suicidal leap,[18] and at the same time Gloucester's stage action manifests its own grotesque theatrical dimension. In either case (the false narrative and the illusionary leap), Shakespeare unveiled the unreliability of both word and sightless gesture.[19]

Interestingly, Shakespeare and Sidney both dealt with the same matter from the opposite ends of the scale. Sidney gave story-telling a dialogic cast, as close as possible to 'drama', unveiling the partiality of all narrative; Shakespeare focused on the farcical performance of an illusory action prompted by a vivid narrative, making for an "illusion of mimesis". In either case, story-telling deployed a generative power: on the page, it produced other narratives, on the stage, it prompted pure gesture and pure theatre.

This is but one famous example of how narration may be handled on stage in highly performative ways. Narrators may push the action forward through their persuasive and imaginative ability to select and arrange the matter. They may comment on it and tie it to the pragmatic context of story-telling through deixis. Their narrative worlds transcend the here-and-now of the stage action and make them interact with it. They may open up the stage to necessary, possible, but also impossible worlds, calling in question our knowledge of reality and interrogating its discursive and imaginative construction.[20] As Wilson has aptly remarked,

> [t]he narratives perplex the action and invest it with the consequences of plural worldhood: another action in a different time and space, other characters, each bringing his/her separate potential for narrativization, intrude

[18] "Edgar: Come on, sir, here's the place. Stand still. How fearful / And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low. / The crows and choughs that wing the midway air / Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half-way down / Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade! / Methinks he seems no bigger than his head. / The fishermen that walk upon the beach / Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring bark / Diminished to her cock; her cock, a buoy / Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge, / That on th'unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes / Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more, / Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight / Topple down headlong" (4.5.11-24).

[19] On issues of narrative performativity and unreliability from a narratological perspective applied to drama see Nünning and Sommer 2008; Nünning and Schwaneke 2015.

[20] Criticism on narrative worlds is vast; here are only a few classical references: Doležel 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1988; Eco 1979: 122-73; Pavel 1975, 1980, 1983, 1986; Margolin 1990; Ronen 1985, 1988; Ryan 1985, 1991; on Shakespeare see Wilson 1995: 113-47; on Postmodernist fiction see McHale 1987; more recently, Alber 2016.

> upon the play's main action. The dramatic action is enhanced by narrative, but is also lessened. As the Chorus in *Henry V* knows, narrative, in creating plural worlds, does something that drama cannot do. As the Chorus does not seem to know, narrative abrades drama's claims. (1995: 191-2)

Normally narrative worlds are instrumental in the development of the action, but they may also supersede it, making narration prominent in both the course of drama and by framing it. Szondi (1987) was among the first to discuss the radical transformation of modern theatre towards diegetic drama since the late nineteenth century. He identified its move towards epic theatre through the emancipation of an 'epic subject' from the action and his/her manipulation of the time-frame according to the typically narrative practice of the time-shift. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) was an extreme case. More recently Richardson (2001; 2006) has extensively investigated the effect of narration in postmodern drama, with special attention to three main areas: memory plays; what he calls "generative narrators", or characters on stage whose narration at some point comes to be enacted (as in Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; 2001: 685); and "off stage narrative voices", such as "The Voice in Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine*", which, "omniscient, ironic, and interventionary . . . informs us at the beginning of the second act that it will wind back the clock to represent other events unfolding at the same time as those that have just been displayed" (686). Possibilities of experimentation are numerous;[21] for example:

1) the past may invade the present through the on-stage enactment of the memories of a character, producing friction between the memory worlds and the present one (see for instance Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, 1975, or Christopher Hampton's *Tales from Holliwood*, 1983);

2) the story may follow an *à rebours* timeline, as in Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* (1978), where the past "has been subjected to an 'objective' point of view" (Brater 1981: 508), and rather than being recollected is enacted onstage backward (here along a time span going from 1977 to 1968).

3) contradictory memory worlds may be dramatized as psychic projections of a character (e.g. Harold Pinter's *Old Times*, 1971);

4) the narrative model based upon focalization may also be applied to drama outside of memory plays. This mechanism, which is typical of narratives, allows to see the action from the angle of one or more characters, as famously in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966), whose narrative speeches signify intertextually with reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*;

[21] For a fuller discussion see Bigliazzi 2012a and 2012b; on point of view in drama see Richardson 1988; McIntyre 2006; on the function of time and narrative in drama see Richardson 1987.

5) finally, drama may entirely coincide with the narrative act; Beckett's *Play* (1962-63) and *Not I* (1972) are extreme examples of how the disarticulation of the narrative texture through the destructuring of the syntactic, anaphoric and semantic narrative connections may eventually coincide with the destructuring of drama itself.

There may be other ways in which narration affects drama in contemporary theatre. But what this short list already suggests is that focalization, temporal reversal, and narrative voice combine with action in new ways in respect to the past, bringing about a fresh awareness of the mechanics of drama.[22] In plays like Beckett's and Pinter's, story-telling has definitely become the privileged vehicle of the characters' psychology (Morrison 1988), and "the narratives told by . . . characters arrest the forward motion of events and refuse to signify" (Rayner 1988: 490; see also Rabillard 1991). What it certainly brings about is an interrogation of theatre inviting reflection upon the same idea of representation.

4. The Debate

Recent contributions on narration in drama have often contested a diegesis/mimesis clear-cut distinction, very prominent in Genette (1976; 1980; 1988), between drama and non-dramatic fiction. As Richardson argued in his 1988 contribution on "Point of View in Drama",

> major theorists of both narrative discourse and the semiotics of theater generally agree that drama is exclusively a mimetic genre, while fiction combines mimesis and diegesis. Scholes and Kellogg assert: "By narrative we mean all those literary works which are distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a story-teller. A drama is a story without a story-teller; in it characters act out directly what Aristotle called an 'imitation' of such action as we find in life" [Scholes and Kellog 1966: 4]; Keir Elam similarly states that drama is "without narratorial mediation" and that it is "mimetic rather than strictly diegetic – acted rather than narrated" [Elam 1980: 119]. (193)

Like most narratologists, Richardson adopted here the Platonic interpretation of mimesis as 'dialogue', in contrast to Aristotle's mainly superordi-

[22] Early modern theatre, and Shakespeare, in particular, raise similar metatheatrical, metacommunicative, semiotic, and hermeneutic questions. However, the collaboration between *diegesis* and *drân* never leads to a reversal of functions, nor, as Hardy suggests, to a solipsistic memorial alienation of the subject, except, perhaps, in *King Lear* (5.3.9-19), when Lear prefigures his reunion with Cordelia (1997: 199). On the use of narrative in Shakespeare see also Richardson 1987; Wilson 1989 and 1995; Bigliazzi 2001, 2005, 2009; Hogan 2014.

nate use of it. But more often than not, what we assist to is the collapsing of differences between the Platonic and the Aristotelian approach. What is often claimed, in fact, is that Aristotle's own *Poetics* provides for an interpretation of poetry as the action of arranging plots (*mythoi*) transcending epics and drama (see e.g. Segre 1981: 96):

> (1451b27-29) It is clear, then, from what has been said that the poet should be a maker of plot-structures (*mythoi*) rather than of verses, in so far as his status as poet depends on mimesis, and the object of his mimesis is actions (*mimeitai tas praxeis*). (41)[23]

In this regard, Chatman famously remarked that although "at the level of actualization, a play and a novel are quite different",

> at the textual level they resemble each other far more than either resembles any other text-type – say, Argument or Description. Indeed, Aristotle wrote that both tragedy and epic "imitate" the "lines of action"; thus, "imitation" is not limited to words alone, but includes larger structures – in particular, structures of plot. (1990: 110)

Although, as seen above, the word 'mimesis' for Aristotle stands for poetic representation in general, it should also be noticed that Aristotle here seems to have in mind drama, as the word *praxeis* might suggest (see above reference to 1449b9-12 where epic matter is defined in terms of ethically serious subjects, *spoudaia*, not action, *praxis*). It is undeniable, however, that, as Chatman has argued, at the level of story, rather than discourse, "there is no great difference between the structures of the 'what', the story component told by epics and enacted by dramas" (ibid.). And yet, although "[b]oth rely on sequences of events" (ibid.), one could further discuss whether "both present a chronology of events different from the chronology of discourse". If the here-and-now of the stage action includes ostension[24] and the sum of speech-acts that push drama forward, including nar-

[23] (1451b27-29) δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν μᾶλλον τῶν μύθων εἶναι δεῖ ποιητὴν ἢ τῶν μέτρων, ὅσῳ ποιητὴς κατὰ τὴν μίμησίν ἐστιν, μιμεῖται δὲ τὰς πράξεις.

[24] "In order to refer to, indicate or define a given object, one simply picks it up and shows it to the receiver of the message in question. Semiotization involves the *showing* of objects and events . . . to the audience, rather than describing, explaining or defining them. This ostensive aspect of the stage 'show' distinguishes it, for example, from narrative, where persons, objects and events are necessarily described and recounted": Elam 1980: 19.

ratives, perhaps there is still room for debate.[25] Contrary to narratological approaches to drama and taking into account precisely the 'what' peculiar to drama, Serpieri et al. (1981) have argued that

> [i]nstitutionally, narrative is diegesis, as opposed to theatrical mimesis; it is self-sufficient, privileges the statement and has no need to refer to a pragmatic context; it has a temporal axis based on a single perspective, generally directed toward the past, and the capacity to pass actively from one temporal level to another. The theater, on the contrary, is institutionally tied to the speaking process; it requires a pragmatic context, and has a temporal axis always based on the present; its space is deixis (this series of distinctions is not invalidated by the fact that, due to cultural and epistemological tendencies prevalent in certain periods, the theater can shift toward narrative and vice versa). Such a distinction underlines the inappropriateness of a narratological découpage of the theatrical text. The theater is not narration from one perspective, i.e., it is not in any sense a "story," but is rather the dynamic progression of intersecting speech acts. In order to trace its semiological units, therefore, one should not segment the "story," but rather identify what will be termed here its indexical-deictic-performative segments and their iconic self-display. (65)

On such assumptions, Serpieri et al. (1988) drew a theoretical frame which they then tested on Shakespeare's History and Roman plays in relation to their narrative sources. One of the premises was that drama lacks "an all-embracing perspective, in both cognitive and ideological terms", since "[n]o extradiegetic focalization is possible" (1964; my translation).[26]

[25] See for instance Szondi 1987; Segre 1980: 42: ". . . we have an identity of discourse-time and utterance-time. . . . Non-coincidence of the time-span of the performance and the supposed time-span of events themselves is effected either by breaks (the intervals) during which temporal coincidence no longer holds good by convention, or else by means of 'analeptic' interpolations, which restore stretches of the past. Thus, in theater it is the present in its unfolding which is predominant; both the past which is referred to, and intermediate periods, are incorporated into the present of the act of uttering. If unnamed, they are reconstructed implications. In narrative, on the other hand, it is the past which predominates, so much so that it may be consigned to a book. The present is merely a mode of evoking the past when it is intended that the evocation of the past is taken as direct". For a contrary perspective endorsing Chatman's position see e.g. Jahn 2001.

[26] ". . . in the diegetic text the relationship between actions and motivations is in whole or in part elaborated by the writer; the unfolding of the events may well be, at one and the same time, their explication. The superimposed HE is also an expedient for judging the statements of the various I's. In the theater we know no more than what we see, or what the characters say they think and want. It is for the spectator, then, to rearrange and discriminate between causal drives, although the author may, of course, propel him toward one interpretation rather than another through a variety of expedients, connotative in nature, or by use of a spokesman (chorus, etc.). Hence, the fascinatingly enigmatic nature of the theatrical act, and the lively conflict of our interpretations" (Segre 1980: 43).

This lack of a single superordinate viewpoint in line of principle is responsible for the fact that characters are necessarily 'internal', and are both 'focalizers' and 'focalized'. In fact, perspective in drama can but be internal and multiple, contrary to narrative, where it may be variable and does not take place simultaneously, as in theatre, but in a linear sequence (ibid.). Semiotic approaches to drama (e.g. Eco 1977; Serpieri 1978, 1989; Segre 1980, 1981; Elam 1980) have focused precisely upon the different modes of communication typical of non-dramatic and dramatic texts. Segre, for instance, clearly set out their distinctive features in the following diagrams (1980: 41; 1981: 96):

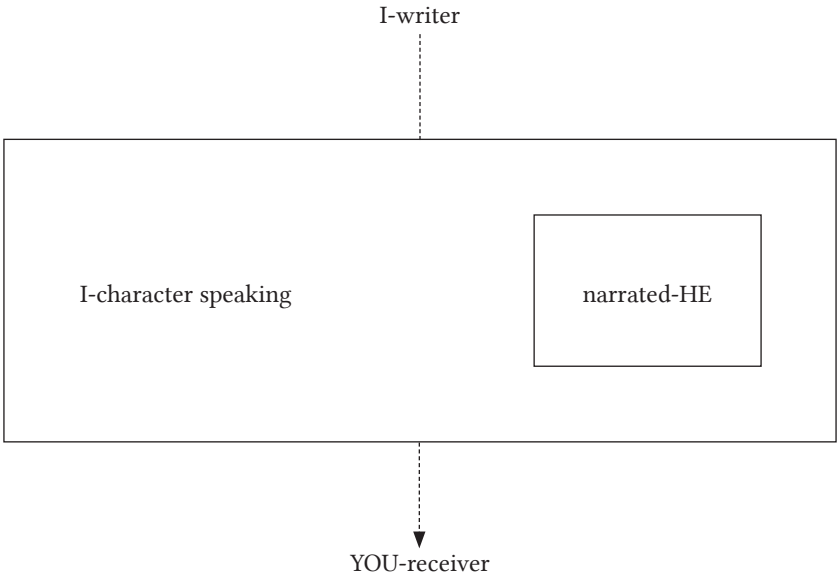

Fig. 1. *Theatrical communication*

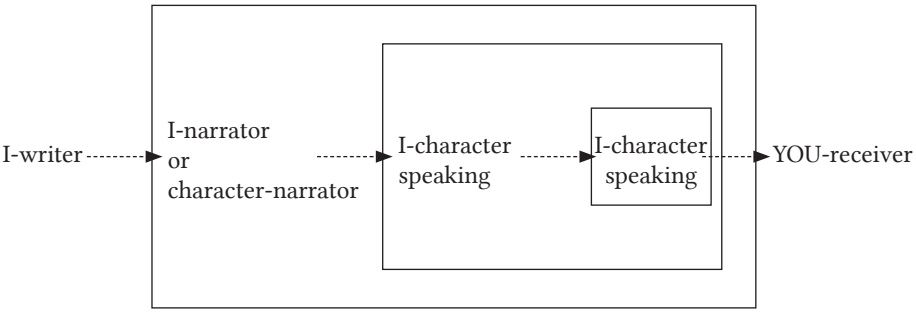

Fig. 2. *Narrative communication*

Here is how he explained them:

> In the case of narrative, the subject of the utterance (the I-sender), possibly through the mediation of an I-writer or an I-character-narrator, expounds in the third person (HE/THEY) events concerning the characters (HE/THEY, leaving aside a possible I-character-narrator). It is within this HE/THEY, dominated by the sender, that the various I's of the characters' discourses make their appearance. On the other hand, it is these very I's which actually make up the theatrical text, for the subject of the utterance has been hidden. (If there is prologue, chorus or epilogue, it exercises a merely collateral narrative function, and this ceases when the representation begins.) The mediation of the I-writer has been eliminated (a character-narrator, who sometimes appears in modern texts, enjoys a status no different from that of the other characters), and diegetic exposition dominated by the writer is absent . . . This does not mean that diegetic elements are not present in theater. I, however, is superimposed on HE, whereas in narration it is HE which is superimposed on I. The mimesis, in fact, arises from the absence of a superimposed HE: HE elaborates the reality narrated, replacing it with a discourse; I, or, rather, the various I's which the addressee is given with no mediation, are obliged to be real (flesh-and-blood actors) and move within a reality (the stage, which is more or less illusory). It is not reality, however, that we are dealing with, but a reality-index, specifically set up as such, hence the scenic functions: the actor stands for a character, the stage stands for an indoor or outdoor scene, etc. The sign functions as a symbol when the signifier (actor, set, etc.) is not completely imitative, but retains traces of its pre-theatrical function (priest as actor; altar, crypt, etc., as the scene for a miracle play, or again, public square, palace, etc.). Mimetic elements are the functional equivalents of mimetic elements. (1980: 40)

Recent narratological approaches, however, have tended to refocus the attention upon the assumedly common narrative dimension of both drama and non-dramatic fiction. Following Chatman (1978, 1990), they have argued in favour of a narratology of drama based upon the assumption that "[p]lays have a narrative world (a 'diegesis'), which is not distinct in principle from any other narrative world" (Jahn 2001: 674), and as such they may be treated alongside other narrative texts within a broader transmedial approach (e.g. Ryan 2014). Fludernik has gone so far as to call drama "the most important narrative genre whose narrativity needs to be documented" (1996: 348). In such cases, the idea of a narrative common to all arts, drama included, seems to conflate the Platonic superordinate notion of *diegesis* and the Aristotelic concept of *mythos*, while assuming the Platon-

ic acceptation of *mimesis* as dramatic dialogue.[27] Jahn (2001), among others, has argued in favour of one such superordinate stance in drama, holding it responsible for the selection, segmentation and arrangement of the matter.[28] Although, like other narratologists (e.g. Fludernik 2008: 358-9; Weidle 2009), he considered that stance as an example of covert extradiegetic narrative, what this description calls to mind is in fact the idea of implied author (Hün and Sommer 2009: 229), which arouses a whole range of different questions concerning the relation between author and text, rather than internal and external diegesis – or even viewpoint.

Stage directions have also been considered as part of a diegetic texture that calls for narratological attention (Jahn 2001). As McIntyre has summarized:

> In dramatic texts the speech of the characters is always mediated to some extent by narrative devices in the stage directions, and by the fact that the *sjuzhet* has been organised by the author. What appears to be a mimetic genre, then, is not. Instead, the *illusion* of mimesis is created by diegetic means, and the diegetic elements of a drama may be foregrounded or backgrounded. In the case of reading a dramatic text, the diegetic elements will be more foregrounded than in a dramatic performance, since the text provides access to the stage/screen directions, many of which will not be obviously apparent in performance. Since dramatic texts are mediated, then, point of view effects can arise. (2006: 60)

Finally, different degrees of narrativity have been identified according to a basic distinction between mimetic and diegetic narrativity:

> Mimetic narrativity could be defined as the representation of a temporal and/or causal sequence of events, with the degree of narrativity hinging upon the degree of eventfulness. Diegetic narrativity, on the other hand, refers to verbal, as opposed to visual or performative, transmission of narrative content, to the representation of a speech act of telling a story by an agent called a narrator. Whereas diegetic narrativity presupposes the presence of a speaker, a proposition, a communicative situation, and an addressee or a recipient role, mimetic narrativity does not. Similarly, while diegetic narrativity presupposes an underlying 'communicational paradigm', mimetic narrativity does not. (Nünning and Sommers 2008: 338)

[27] As Halliwell (2012) noted with regard to *Republic* 393b, "'it is *diegesis* both when the poet delivers character-speeches *and* in the sections between these speeches' (which underlines the fundamental point that mimesis is not opposed to, but is one type of, *diegesis*)". As a matter of fact Plato was not talking about theatre, as Aristotle was to do. Assuming this statement as suggesting that drama is itself diegetic in being one of its types clearly paves the way for a narratology of drama.

[28] For a narratological approach to mechanisms of emplotment in drama, with special regard to *Hamlet*, see Hogan 2014.

In this light, it has been assumed that it is possible "to provide an overview of the main diegetic narrative elements in drama, including, e.g., audience address, messenger reports, and metalepsis as well as modern narrator figures" (332). All this would suggest that "drama by no means lacks a communicative level of narrative transmission" (ibid.).[29] Further research in the narratology of drama with regard to messenger speeches and other issues in Greek theatre has been carried out for example by de Jong (1991) and, more recently, Grethlein and Rengakos (2009: 337-446), testifying to a renewed interest in narrative questions that have traditionally engaged scholars of modern theatre also in classical quarters. However, much still remains to be done, especially in terms of integrating within a consistent critical frame theoretical approaches thus far very little conversing with each other.

5. The Articles: from Ancient Historiography to Contemporary Postdrama

This Journal issue has not such a theoretical ambition. It wishes instead to contribute to the debate by offering a significant range of studies dedicated to the function of narrative on stage and, contrariwise, to the interaction between diegesis and mimesis in non-dramatic texts in order to identify relevant loci of exploration. The articles, which cover a time span stretching from ancient to contemporary times, follow a diachronic line, starting with the threshold perspective of ancient historiography and its relation with contemporary theatre, and then moving on, across the centuries, to the Renaissance, down to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and contemporary postdramatic theatre. In most cases, diegesis and mimesis are treated as synonyms of narration and dialogue, according to the Platonic view, and occasionally with reference to the Arisotelian broader conception of mimesis, finally challenged by postdramatic theatre.

In "Drama and Historiography: the Interaction of Diegesis and Mimesis in Herodotus and Thucydides", Gherardo Ugolini explores the relation between fifth-century BC chronicles and the epic model, as well as the absence of compositional reasons tying them to issues of oral performance. Ugolini investigates the interaction between different forms of speeches and originally identifies a significant clue of the impact of theatre upon this genre in the foregrounding of dialogue at crucial moments of Herodotus' and Thucydides' narratives, leading to an interrogation of the reasons and

[29] For a summary of recent trends in the narratology of drama and some counterreactions to it, see Hün and Sommer 2009; see also Sommer 2005.

effects of such peculiar 'mimetic' intensification – an issue which will crop up again in the course of this Journal issue. The question of the performative power of narrative, especially in its mixed form, is in fact soon taken up by Guido Avezzù in his discussion of the messenger-speech in Euripides' *Electra*, where we are presented with a peculiar performance of the report of the off-stage murder of Aegisthus. In "'It is not a small thing to defeat a king': The Servant/Messenger's Tale in Euripides' *Electra*", Avezzù interrogates the problem of representing or not representing the murder of a King on stage, a question which, albeit not openly forbidden by Aristotle, was commonly avoided in Greek theatre. Compared to Aeschylus' *Coephori* and Shophocles' *Electra*, Euripides here thematizes this issue by having the Messenger dramatize on stage that scene up to the moment of the enactment of the revenge plot. At that point, pure diegesis replaces the dramatized report, significantly, and unexpectedly, passing under silence the details of the act. This silence is read by Avezzù as a final comment on the impossibility of 'showing' that act on stage and as a prelude to Orestes' own denial of the diegesis (pure and dramatized) of that same act by finally ostending the body of Aegisthus – a thing, or a fact, which denies the power of theatre to stage either actions (*drân*) or tales (*diegesis*).

In "Between Mimesis and Diegesis in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Girolamo Parabosco", Flavia Palma deals with relatively unknown Renaissance material in treating transgeneric practices of transmodalization of one and the same plot from the comedy to the novella form. The case study is Parabosco's peculiar treatment of stories derived from his comedies which he passed off as entirely new creations. By exploiting the moods of speech (Genette 1980), Palma argues, he consciously marked a neat divide between the two genres, which he treated as characterized by pure diegesis and pure mimesis, respectively. Nor do his 'undramatic' narrative soliloquies in his comedies prove this hypothesis wrong. In those cases, Palma contends, he clearly showed the influence of the commedia dell'arte scenarios, suggesting, if anything, an awareness of pure diegesis as a distinctive feature of the novellas when he came to translate his comedies into a different, distinctly narrative genre. This example casts light on practices of transgeneric composition in Renaissance Italy when theories of novellas and reflection upon different modes in relation to different genres were still scarce.

With the following two articles, we move to Shakespeare. In "Between the One and the Nine: Counting and Telling in *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale*", Luke Wilson explores the connections between counting and recounting (i.e. telling) as both related to an idea of linear sequence based upon succession and consequence. Wilson argues that, contrary to linearity, mimesis rather suggests a multiplicative and logarithmic conception of

numbers, which prompts examination of Shakespearean loci where diegesis and mimesis interact 'numerically'. The focus is on the convergence of the narrated past and the dramatic present when the Ghost appears in *Hamlet* 1.1, but also on several instances of diegesis and mimesis in *The Winter's Tale*, with special attention to the two final scenes of recognition, where each has its own space on stage. Numbers and narratives are shown to be especially relevant when drama negotiates the relation between diegesis and mimesis, unveiling a tension between the creation of a world on stage and an imagined escape from it.

From the standpoint of the narratology of drama, in "'All my plots and purposes': Staged Diegesis in Shakespearean Drama" Alessandra Squeo conducts a close inquiry into the dramatic potential of the narrative categories of perspective and focalization in *The Merchant of Venice*. On the assumption that narration serves the purpose of enhancing the play's performativity, Squeo attentively examines the variety of functions storytelling has in foregrounding the instability of meaning and multiple perspectives within the context of the socio-cultural, economic and ethical conflicts traversing the play.

With Elena Rossi Linguanti's "The Frame Story in Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure*" we jump to the late nineteenth century and to the genre of the dramatic monologue. Rossi Linguanti offers a close reading of the framing portion of this long poem discussing the various ways in which the dramatic structure of Euripides' *Alcestis* is integrated within the narrative text, with a focus upon Genette's categories of mood and voice. Interestingly, Euripides' drama is here incorporated within Balaustion's tale of her own performance of it, showing Balaustion playing different parts and interspersing the recital with her own comments. The solo performance of a highly dramatized, or mixed narrative, along with Balaustions' own reference to her performance as a 'tale being told', not as a 'play being enacted', are revealing of an idea of drama that makes no conscious distinction between diegetic and mimetic (dialogic) performance. At the same time, Rossi Linguanti highlights Balaustion's awareness of the persuasive power of dialogue, presented as an emotional intensifier at crucial moments of the narration. Browning's handling of narration and dialogue as the focus of the framing portion of this poem thus seems to reflect his own coming to terms with the hybrid form of the dramatic monologue he was experimenting on.

Barry Allen Spence brings the discussion to invest one of the most renowned examples of twentieth-century 'diegetic' drama: Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. In "Sophoclean Beckett in Performance" Spence proposes to consider Beckett's own debt towards Greek theatre more seriously than generally done. Aware of what he calls 'the continuous text' of *Krapp's Last Tape*, i.e. its numerous revisions for the stage constituting its postpublication

history, Spence considers the play's similarities with *Oedypus' Rex*, a drama which Beckett saw performed at the Abbey Theatre in W.B. Yeats' translation (1926-27). The mimetic use of diegetic ekphrasis, the role of distant time and circumscribed space, the focus upon a dyadic storyworld, the function of the narrating voice (in some way oracular even when reduced to that of the continuously rewound tape), suggest closer links than are normally noticed between these two plays, unveiling how modern practices of blending telling and showing may in fact have illustrious antecedents in ancient theatre.

In "Altered Pasts: Mimesis/Diegesis in Counterfactual Stage Worlds", Malgorzata Sugiera moves a step forward and tackles the delicate issue of counterfactuality and storyworld manipulation in contemporary historical drama. Sugiera selects three case studies to discuss the ways in which theatre's mimetic potential to represent the past may be challenged: Helene Cixous's *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge* (1985), Suzan-Lori Parks' *The America Play* (1994), and the 2005 performance at the ArtBoom Festival (Cracow) of *MS 101* by the Polish performer and filmmaker Karol Radziszewski. From the vantage point of performance studies, Sugiera examines the involvement of the audience, at a cognitive and epistemological level, in assessing the power to represent the past by relying upon their own factual, and historical, memories set against, and interacting with, the stage world and the site-specific implications of the performance. Contemporary historical drama through counterfactuals built upon an interplay between telling and showing raises questions on the extent to which theatre may produce historical knowledge as well as on whether it may mean without the active collaboration of the audience.

A critique of the idea itself of representation – Aristotle's mimesis – is brought yet a step further by Zornitsa Dimitrova in "Transphormisms in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* and Laura Wade's *Breathing Corpses*". By tackling the issue of post-dramatic theatre from a Deleuzian perspective, Dimitrova interrogates the possibilities of diegetic and mimetic interaction within plays where mimesis no longer represents reality but is conceived of as a self-generative drive, enacting processes of 'expression', not representation. Conflating 'the world in which one tells' and 'the one of which one tells', postdramatic theatre erases the boundary between narration and representation, obliterating the idea itself of narrative 'distance' and frustrating our expectations of fictional worlds. As Dimitrova argues and exemplifies through the analysis of two works by Kane and Wade, with the collapse of the act of telling and of impersonating in the traditional Platonic and Aristotelian senses, we are led beyond all possibilities for diegesis and mimesis (in their various acceptations) to conflict and/or cooperate. We are eventually led beyond representation itself, to access self-generative, expressionist 'events of sense'.

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