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Memory and Performance.
Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals

Edited by Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino,
and Eugenio Refini

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Anne Morvan*

A Capricious Tragedy: Anello Paulilli's Plastic Memory in the Performance of *The Fire of Troy* (*L'Incendio di Troia,* 1566)

Abstract

Naples, July 1566. Some weeks after two tragicomedies, *Paris' Judgement* and *Helena's Abduction*, Anello Paulilli presents a singular tragedy: *The Fire of Troy* (*L'Incendio di Troia*). The performance takes place before a noble court during a celebration, and it appears that this specific context transforms the play extensively, orientating it mainly towards the audience's entertainment. Thus, Paulilli deliberately chooses to draw inspiration from Virgil's *Aeneid* rather than dramatic sources. Bringing epic material to life on stage allows him great flexibility to deal with ancient sources and theatrical practices. In the Prologue, he claims his own freedom, or *capriccio*, as author. Indeed, on the thematic level, Paulilli accommodates patterns which are unusual (if not, foreign) in tragedy, especially with Coroebus and Cassandra's love story. On the formal level, he borrows from eclectic traditions, epic and lyric, both ancient and modern. The Italian poets (Ariosto and Petrarch) take over the Latin ones. The reappropriations of heterogeneous sources, their fusion with modern references, and their impact on the audience will be examined in order to question the justifications for labelling as a 'tragedy' a play which refuses to follow the usual models of the genre. Epic, gallant, musical, unjust, entertaining… All these adjectives count as many oxymorons for this tragedy, which accumulates distancing effects in order to shed a light on its own fictionality and dramatic illusion.

We will investigate how performative memory (awareness of the performance context) and literary memory (borrowings from the tradition) challenge the tragic nature of the play. In fact, the playwright's selective memory, through the reappropriation and fusion of heterogeneous sources, questions the generic classification of a tragedy which appears to be an author's caprice.

Keywords: tragedy; Neapolitan theatre; Anello Paulilli; Troy

1. Introduction: Presentation of the Text and Its Performance

Naples, 1566. An amateur writer named Anello Paulilli stages an atypical tragedy entitled *The Fire of Troy* (*L'Incendio di Troia*), depicting the last day of the mythical city. In this well-known story, the playwright feels free to alter some details, claiming his creative liberty in the Preface: "Following my own

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caprice, I want [Paris] to be alive the last day of Troy" ("io a mio *capriccio*, voglio che [Paride] sia viuo nell'ultimo giorno di Troia").[1] Indeed, he selects this character as protagonist of a trilogy that results in a surprising tragedy composed of 3,079 Italian lines, divided into five acts as follows:

1. The Greek Sinon spies on the Trojan camp while the Trojans celebrate the (apparent) departure of the Greeks;
2. The three wisest of the Trojans (Aeneas, Laocoon, and Panthous) suspect the gift of the wooden horse;
3. Laocoon's death goes unnoticed by the Trojans, who glorify their past deeds on the battlefield;
4. The Trojans celebrate Coroebus' and Cassandra's wedding while the Greeks infiltrate the city;
5. The characters subsequently engage in the battle occurring backstage, leading to the fall of the city.

The ancient tale, largely based on Virgil's epic poem (*Aeneid*, 2), is transposed onto the stage on the occasion of a feast day.[2] Therefore, the author follows a dual imperative: the conciliation of the tragic form with the desire to please the audience. At this time, Naples belongs to a kingdom ruled by viceroys nominated by the King of Spain, Philip II, and, despite the various difficulties which the overcrowded city faces, the court still promotes a spirit of revelry and magnificence.[3] The performance context then invites a reflection upon the influence, potentially determinative, it may have had on the composition of the text.

As such, the concept of 'memory' becomes a useful tool for understanding the reception of ancient literature and the new creative process at work in Paulilli's tragedy. In a reciprocal relationship, not only does the recollection of the past infiltrate the present creation, but the present context as well may orientate us towards a specific use of the past. Consequently, memory can be conceived as a dual principle: passive (encompassing the reception and conservation of a tradition) and active (involving recollection, restatement and reappropriation of such a tradition). Fluidity, selectivity, partiality: these qualities suggest that memory allows for understanding the relationship with the past as free borrowings rather than sterile imitation.

This article aims to investigate the meetings between two types of memory

[1] All the translations are mine. The Italian text transcribes the 1566 edition; the orthography is slightly modernised, but the emphasis follows the original.

[2] On the theatrical representations in the noble courts and the courts themselves as theatrical spaces, see Ferroni 1987, 178.

[3] For a historical and critical synthesis, see Pieri 2013. About the organisation of the Neapolitan society at the turn of the century, see Folin 2011, 397-401.

operating in the composition and performance of *The Fire of Troy*. On the one hand, literary memory includes any references to sources, whether ancient or modern. On the other, the awareness of the performance context, which we can term 'performance memory', leads Paulilli to organise the literary memory from the perspective of a unique event, making it more effective for the audience. The reappropriation of heterogeneous sources, their fusion with modern references, and their impact on the audience will be explored in order to shed a light on the labelling of the play as a 'tragedy' despite its deviation from conventional models of the genre. Memory engages Paulilli in a subjective relationship with the literary legacy, to the extent that the actual tragic nature of the play is questioned.

2. Collective Memory: the Constitution of a Common Experience

The context of Paulilli's play gives rise to tension in the adaptation of past memory to the audience's present expectations. The revival of ancient elements comes second to the creation of a participative event in which the audience is largely involved.

2.1 Performance as Memory, Book as Record

All the clues available for reconstructing the performance lie within the single volume printed by Giovanni Maria Scotto[4] in Naples, 1566.[5] It features a trilogy composed of two tragicomedies, *Il giuditio di Paride* (*Paris' Judgement*) and *Il ratto di Helena* (*Helen's Abduction*) as well as one tragedy, *L'Incendio di Troia (The Fire of Troy).* The book also includes a general Preface "To the Readers" and Dedications, which, along with the Prologues at the beginning of each play, provide information about the author and the context of the plays. Regarding Paulilli, we know that he worked in the Neapolitan law court and composed these plays for his own amusement.[6] This recognisable *excusatio propter infirmitatem* seems to be confirmed by the fact that no other play is attributed to him. The second play (and possibly all three) was staged in the palace of Vicenzo Carrafa d'Arriano, a member of an influential family in the city to whom Paulilli dedicates the second play (Folin 2011, 398). This already speaks volumes about the audience – the elite of Neapolitan society, cultivated

[4] Manzi identifies Scotto's workshop with "a golden age of Neapolitan edition and culture" (1973, 166).

[5] The plays have not been edited since, so we will refer only to the text and page numbers of this printing. The pages are not numbered for the Prologue and the preliminary texts.

[6] See Paulilli, *Paris' Judgment*, <end of the Prologue>.

but not erudite. We can outline the chronology of the trilogy as follows:

a) 1565, August: Writing of the plays;[7]
b) 1566 (?): Staging of *Paris' Judgment;*
c) 1566, Spring (April?): Staging of *Helen's Abduction;*[8]
d) 1566, May the 1st: *Dedication of Paris' Judgment* and *Helen's Abduction;*
e) 1566, May or June: Staging of *The Fire of Troy;*[9]
f) 1566, July the 4th: *Dedication of The Fire of Troy;*
g) 1566, December: Publishing.[10]

The performances appear to have occurred only once, and their transience amplifies the importance of these events. Since the book was published after these occurrences, it is reasonable to assume that we are reading a text closely resembling the original recitations. As such, the printed text is nothing but the remaining trace, the memory of a festive and ephemeral event worthy of remembrance.

2.2 *Continuum* between the Stage and the Audience

The prevalence of performance proves favourable for a close contact between the playwright and his audience. Their connection is staged in the Prologue, which, following Terence's model, features a character external to the plot, somehow acting as the author's mouthpiece. On the edge between the characters and the audience, he fosters the elaboration of a common space between the stage and the room, which explains the frequent addresses to the spectators and the use of the first person plural. Author, Prologue, actors, and audience together form a community that not only shares the same city, but also a social proximity that enables them to take part in the same event. The homogeneity between the artists and the audience is affirmed at the end of the Prologue:

> Ringratiarete parimente quei vostri Giovani Napoletani, che così amorevolmente la rappresentaranno, li quali, non per desio d'interesse, ma solo per loro diletto, et per agratarvi.

[7] This information is given in the Prologues of *Paris' Judgment* and of *The Fire of Troy.*

[8] The whole Prologue praises the mildness of spring, which would better fit the context if it were actually performed in this season.

[9] This datation is based on the Dedications and Prologues: those of the first two plays state that the last one is still in preparation, and the last Dedication, recalling the last performance, offers the *terminus ante quem.*

[10] The date figures on the front page. The publication is already announced in the Prologue of *The Fire of Troy.*

> [Be thankful as well to your young Neapolitans who are going to perform it so lovingly – not for idleness, but only for their own leisure and in order to please you.]

The proximity expressed by the possessive "vostri" and the establishment of a playful courtship between the actors and the audience imply the equality of their status which should not exist with professional actors. The emphasis on leisure distinguishes them from professionals: they do not perform to earn a living (which contributes to the professionals' bad reputation), but purely for general entertainment.

The sense of community is further expressed through the mobilisation of a standard culture. In order to be functional, the references to literary memory have to align with the audience's common knowledge. In the *Fire of Troy*, this alignment is facilitated by the fact that the audience has already seen two plays featuring the same characters, as the Prologue of *Helen's Abduction* recalls:

> Così parimente, s'adoprò nella prima Favola del *Giuditio di Paride*, da la quale questa *Rapita d'Helena*, ch'è la seconda, depende . . . già s'apparecchia à la terza, dove co'l vostro usato favore, sì vedrà quasi palesemente, l'*Incendio di Troia.*

> [The author did the same in the first tale of *Paris' Judgment*, on which this *Abduction of Helen*, the second tale, depends . . . He is already preparing the third tale, *The Fire of Troy*, which you will see with your usual indulgence.]

He therefore engages in an act of immediate memory: integrating the present performance into a cycle activates the sense of familiarity but also the participation in a common experience.

The Prologues create the conditions for an adequate reception of the play. The production of a spectacle made by and for the elite transforms the performance into a mundane event in which the members of the aristocracy, greatly involved, display themselves (Kindermann 1984, 126). All these elements abolish the distance between the author and the audience, in a spatial *continuum.*

2.3 The Self-Definition of a Genre: Paulilli's Minimalist Conception of Tragedy

Beyond the scholarly world, this tragedy infiltrates high society; conversely, the courtly destination of the text conditions Paulilli's conception of tragedy. Far from the systematic approach of the treatises,[11] he elaborates his authorial

[11] On the debates around Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Petrocchi 1972, 279-87.

identity through proclamations of independence based on three arguments. First, the unreliability of ancient sources: poets and historians are nothing but liars.[12] Second, the instability of poetic rules and the variety of their applications: scholars never end the debates, deeming it impossible to list the ingredients of a good tragedy, and these rules are even contradicted by the evidence in the ancient texts. Third and foremost, the supremacy of the author's wishes. Therefore, to justify the nomination of 'tragedy', he provides a minimalistic definition for this genre:

> Così parimente non cura punto . . . che l'habbia dato il Titolo di Tragedia, come che in quella si ricerchi stile, & più alto, & più ornato.
>
> [Thus, it does not matter that [the author] gave to it the title of *tragedy*, in the sense that, in this genre, one searches for a more elevated and adorned style. (Emphasis mine)]

Limiting the definition to the stylistic level allows considerable freedom in both content and desired effects. However, a discrepancy persists between the carelessness shown by Paulilli and the knowledge he displays. Indeed, he is well aware of the importance of erudition in maintaining one's credibility. To mention learned controversial debates is the best way to deflect accusations of ignorance. Moreover, for the majority of the play he conforms to the tragic customs which are already in use in Italy: he divides the action into five acts, separated by musical interludes, and does not exceed what could be termed the unities of time and action.

In the shaping of his own *persona*, Paulilli presents himself with a certain *sprezzatura*. He clearly sides with the audience while ridiculing the scholars. Not that he is oblivious to the rules and customs governing the composition of tragedies, but he follows these conventions as long as they do not interfere with his primary scope. The consideration of the audience conditions Paulilli's theatrical conceptions and the use of literary memory.

3. Literary Memory (Ancient and Modern) and the Hybridising of a Festive Tragedy

Despite labelling *The Fire of Troy* as a tragedy, Paulilli does not adhere to a dramatic model. Instead, he draws inspiration from an epic poem, the second book of the *Aeneid*. Unlike the Greek and Latin tragedies on the same subject, such as Euripides' or Seneca's *Trojan Women*, he shifts the focus not to the

[12] Paulilli, "To the Readers": "Poeti, la cui Natura è, d'osseruare le bugie, si come si vede in Verg. In Homero" ("Poets, whose nature is to tell lies, as we can see in Virgil and in Homer").

day following the fall of the city but to the preceding day and to the pivotal moment of the final battle. This relative independency from other established plays enables him to seamlessly adapt the plot to the performance setting, blurring the boundaries of the usual features of tragedy.

3.1 Musical Tragedy: a Bridge between Fiction and Reality

First of all, Paulilli enhances the musical component of his tragedy to align the festivity of Troy with those of the court in Naples. The music, however, is not heavily reliant on choruses. The (traditional) chorus composed of Trojan women exists but, instead of consistently concluding the acts, they appear twice in the middle of them, first to celebrate the wedding (4) and second to lament the fall of the city (5), and once at the beginning of an act: "During the musical interlude, the wall collapses and the horse is drawn inside by the Trojan ladies, singing" ("Mentre ch'è l'intermedio de la Musica, si rumpe il Muro, & si tira il cavallo da le Fanciulle Troiane, cantando"; 4.38*v*). This is the only indication of a proper interlude, but Paulilli implies a musical pause between each act when he states "instead of [the Choruses], we have nowadays pieces of Music and other interludes" ("in vece de i quali [i Chori], hoggi son le Musiche con gl'altri intermedii"; 5*v*).[13] With this historical argument, he acknowledges the evolution of tragic forms and deliberately establishes himself in his time. Aligning with the audience's preference for interludes, he follows the Neapolitan tradition of the Cinquecento.[14] It is noteworthy that the conclusive scenes of the acts consist of lyrical replicas: Coroebus' prayer (1), the shepherds' duets (2), and presumably Coroebus' aria (3). These verses serve as a transition between the act and the musical interlude. Additionally, Paulilli incorporates numerous lyrics into the scenes, indicating four times in the stage directions the insertion of rhythmically autonomous pieces: Coroebus' love vows (1), Laocoon's propitiatory prayers (2), the nuptial song (3), and the Greeks' oath (4). Instead of resorting to choral lyrics, Paulilli offers a variety of songs and singers.

Driven by audience expectations, the music provides the clearest example of "performance memory" while also being organically integrated into the scenes. Coroebus and Cassandra's wedding between Acts 3 and 4 facilitates the convergence of the cheerful music of the plot with that of the interlude. At this juncture, musicality reaches its peak, superimposing fictive and real

[13] About the correspondence between the ancient choruses and the modern interludes, see Lodovico Dolce's *Trojan Women* (1567, 132).

[14] Benedetto Croce recalls other performances in Naples of the same decade, and in particular *Alessandro* by Piccolomini, staged in a palace with "splendid interludes" (1966, 25).

celebrations, as well as preparing for the contrasting sonorous confusion in the final act where the recited hendecasyllable is abandoned in favour of shorter, and more vivid verses, and gradual screams and cries emphasised in the stage directions.[15] Paulilli uses music, a component of the fictive plot as well as an element of the real spectacle, to build a coexistence between the fictive space of the stage and the actual space of the theatre.

3.2 Gallant Tragedy: from Tragedy to *Pastorale*

In addition to its entertaining and architectural role, the music supports one of the main thematic threads of the play and even of the trilogy. Love is indeed brought forward through two couples: Helen and Paris, the two main characters of the trilogy, and the new couple of the play, Coroebus and Cassandra. Paulilli follows the narrative recounted by Virgil (Virg. *Aen.* 2.341-6, 403-8) but expands it so that each act progresses toward their bridal night. The wedding serves as the joyful pinnacle of the play which, for the most part, is a festive tragedy.

At the heart of the dialogues, their story allows an ample space for pieces of love poetry in the Petrarchan style, especially when Coroebus reveals to Paris his love for Cassandra (1) or engages in a dialogue with his beloved (3). Motifs from the *Canzoniere* resonate throughout the play, such as the significance of the eyes in the *innamoramento* ("Nostr'occhi, sono due fenestre al core", "Our eyes are two windows to the heart"; 10*r*) or the paradoxes of love, such as the antithesis between life and death ("Vivo morendo", "I live while dying"; 11*v*) or between fire and frost ("d'Amore arso, & gelato", "By Love I burn and freeze"; 9*r*). Paulilli also incorporates more specific metaphors. For instance, when Coroebus says that "like a Salamander, [he] live[s] in the flames" ("io qual Salamandra / vivo a le fiamme"; 11*r*), he echoes Petrarch's verses: "Di mia morte mi pasco, e vivo in fiamme: / stranio cibo, e mirabil salamandra" ("I feed on my own death and I live in the flames: / strange food and marvellous salamander"; *Canzoniere*, 207.40-1). These allusions to Petrarchan poetry awaken in the audience the memory of a more recent tradition, one that directly influenced contemporary productions.

This emphasis on love motifs reshapes the characters, particularly

[15] The act begins with a single voice: "Policrate Troiano solo gridando per la Città" ("The Trojan Polycrates, alone, is shouting through the city"; 46*r*). The rumour is then spreading: "Si parte così gridando, et si senton varii soniti di strumenti militari, pianti, et sospiri per la Città" ("They leave, shouting, and we hear various sounds of military instruments, cries and sighs in the city"; 46*v*). The end of the play reaches an acoustic peak: "si senteno più che mai pianti, & rumori" ("we hear more than ever cries and noises"; 54*v*).

Cassandra, who, unlike her traditional portrayal in tragedy, is presented as Coroebus' lover rather than Apollo's prophetess. Paulilli selectively withholds mythological details to serve his own plot, keeping the circumstances around Cassandra's prophecies and her story with Apollo in the shadows. Thus, two opposing forces coincide in this character: her traditional identity as a prophetess of doom devoted to a god (3.33-4); and her new identity as a lover (3.37-8). From the ancient characters, Paulilli keeps the relationship and reduces them to a small set of qualities to integrate them into his tragedy. Indeed, the audience's taste for love poetry is attested in Naples through the performances of gallant farces (Petrocchi 1972, 311-36) and pastoral poetry in vogue in Southern Italy (Tateo 1980, 39). These themes are clearly expressed in the first two plays of the trilogy but still influence the third one in spite of the generic requalification. The thematic continuity driven by the logic of trilogy, centred around Paris' love story, leads Paulilli to dedicate a large portion of this tragedy to motifs unusual in Cinquecento tragedy, thus redefining the borders of the genre. In a way, performance memory operates at the level of the memory of past representations that occurred a few months before.

3.3 Epic Tragedy: Sumptuous Spectacle

Besides the pastoral influence, Paulilli favours the epic models that resonate throughout the great extent of the spectacle he offers. Right at the beginning of the Prologue, he places his work in the footsteps of Ariosto: "Benche con l'otio ch'egli havesse, potrebbe (e forse potrà) imitare quel savio, che cominciò a cantare. Di Donne, e Cavallier, l'Arme & gli Amori" ("Even though with leisure he has, [the author] may, and maybe will, imitate this wise man who began to sing *Of Ladies and Knights, the Weapons and Loves*; emphasis mine).

The first verse of *Orlando Furioso* introduces the tragedy as a sketch for an epic poem. It is no coincidence that Paulilli draws inspiration from the second book of the *Aeneid* whose most emblematic episodes are transposed on stage from Laocoon's death (Virg. *Aen.* 7.40-56, 199-227; Paulilli, 3.30*v*-31*r*) to Venus' apparition to Aeneas (Virg. *Aen.* 2.588-621; Paulilli, 5.53*r*-54*r*). An entire scene is dedicated to recalling the deeds of battle (3.31*v*-35*r*), offering a *compendium* of the Trojan war.

The epic spread influences the aesthetic of the play, distinguished by a scenic profusion typical of epic narratives. Most notably, the number of characters is so considerable that Paulilli feels compelled to explain it in the Preface: "Nella Tragedia dell'*Incendio*, eccederò alle Regole, in sopravanzar il numero delle persone, con tutto che questo sia anco indiciso trà i giudici della Poesia" ("In the tragedy of the *Fire*, I will exceed the rules with an

excessive number of characters, even though this is still debated by poetry specialists"). In fact, in addition to the twenty-three characters listed before the play, we should include the Furies who escort Juno, the chorus of Trojan women, and the numerous extras. Unlike the precepts of Horace, Paulilli even features in some scenes more than three speaking characters.

The scenery, as far as can be discerned through the stage directions, lives up to the expectations surrounding such a monumental event. Far more than a painted background, Paulilli develops a plethora of scenic effects, proving that he exploits all available technical possibilities. The set features the door of Priam's palace (the destination of most exits) and the walls of Troy (on which Laocoon climbs in act 3). Above all, the wooden horse, a "great marvel" ("alta merauiglia"; 2.16), is not a mere decorative element, but rather a genuine theatrical machine, typical of the ingenuity displayed in the spectacles of this century (Leclerc 1965, 582). This threatening presence in front of the walls is drawn into the city, which implies that "the wall collapses" ("si rumpe il muro"; 4.38*v*): in other words, the destruction of Troy begins. Even more spectacularly, the mechanism should be big enough to serve as a hiding-place for Menelaus, Agamennon, Odysseus, Pyrrhus, and other anonymous Greek soldiers until they "descend with ropes and scales" ("scendeno per le funi, et per le scale"; 4.43*v*).

Similarly, the final fire, from which the play derives its title, is not merely reduced to an account in the characters' dialogues. The stage directions in the final act allow to trace its progression, starting from the end of Act 4 where "we begin to see smoke in the Trojan houses and the fire begins" ("si comincia a veder il foco per le case Troiane, & comincia l'Incendio"; 45*v*), then "the fire is growing" ("l'Incendio accresce"; 52*v*) until the final destruction where "the doors of the castle fall and the fire is to be seen inside" ("cadeno le porte del Castello, et dentro vi si vede il foco"; 54*v*). The technicity required by the staging illustrates the taste and mastery of the city in machines and pyrotechnics (Iannella 1993, 171; Steadman 2021, 95).

These sensational techniques bring the epic material to life on stage. They create the impression of a play where the spectacular may be, if not an end in itself, at least an essential component of the theatrical experience, both visually and acoustically. They justify the adjective "cumbersome" ("macchinoso") used by Petrocchi (1972, 317) to describe the play, but they also reveal the budget of the event and part of the societal involvement in it. The prominence of the audience conditions the eclectic assembly that permeates this oxymoronic tragedy. This, however, raises a question: what effect does the playwright seek to evoke in the audience? Is the spectacularity still in harmony with the feelings (pity, horror, stupefaction…) typically assigned to tragedy?

4. Memory Against Actuality: Distancing and the Tragic Effect

The accumulation of numerous elements in the play, both unusual and external, if not entirely foreign, to tragedy, risks compromising its very nature, but it may also defuse the tragic effect to make the play match the festive atmosphere. In many respects, Paulilli displays different levels of distancing from the plot represented on stage, prompting the audience to consider it an entertaining tale.

4.1 Distancing from the Characters: the Mirror of the Enemies

Referring to the actors as "your young Neapolitans" (see above) underlines the playfulness of the performance, where the members of the elite disguise themselves and, in fact, the few allusions to the costumes in the text suggest the contrary of sobriety, as illustrated by Laocoon's clothing (2) or Athena (Pallade)'s recognisable *aegis* and spear (2). In the other two plays, the Trojan costume is distinguished by its opulence. For instance, when thinking of Helen in Troy, Paris pictures her "crowned to the fullest with gold and oriental gems" ("coronata / D'oro, & di gemme orientali a pieno"; *Helen's Abduction*, 21*r*). Paulilli suggests the Trojans resemble oriental princes, hinting at rich clothing in the last play featuring mostly Trojan characters.

Yet, this depiction of the characters tends to position them within the enemy camp. Naples belonged at the time to the realm of Spain, a Catholic monarchy continually involved in a struggle against Turkish ships for maritime control over the Mediterranean Sea.[16] The orientalisation of Troy facilitates the identification of this city as an adversary to Naples. The audience does not have to feel concerned, at least not in a mimetic way, by what is performed, and politics is largely absent in the trilogy.

4.2 Distancing from the Gods: the Possibility of Divine Injustice

The distancing is also supported by the presence of pagan gods in a way that further enhances the gap between modern values and an artificial Antiquity. Their cruelty is a *leitmotiv* in the play, especially in the opening scenes of the acts, when Juno (1), Athena (2), and then Achilles (3) acknowledge the

[16] Allusions to this context are to be found in the Dedication to "don Perafan di Ribera" (surely to be identified with don Pedro Arafan de Ribera, the current vice-king from 1559 to 1571), in particular with the phrase "l'ira del Gran Tiranno d'Oriente" ("the wrath of the Great Tyrant in Orient"; 3*r*).

violence of the Trojan fate, as well as its legitimacy. In doing so, Paulilli questions divine justice.

Certainly, in order to prove that the cruelty of the gods is somehow fair, the playwright presents the fall of the city as the punishment for Trojan faults. Indeed, a lot of characters recall Paris' impiety (staged in the preceding plays), but also that of their ancestors: Athena (2.14*r*), as well as the Trojan Laocoon (2.20*r*), allude to Laomedon's broken promise. Similarly, Paulilli makes sure he announces the punishment of the human characters responsible for the miseries displayed on stage through Cassandra's anticipation of Agamemnon's and Helen's death.[17] While the playwright does not explain their demise, he assures that the bad will face retribution, thus perpetuating a logic of revenge.

Nevertheless, this does not solve the problem of disproportion between the faults of a few Trojans and the destruction of the whole city.[18] The collective fate of Troy raises the same question as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, when Abraham questions God: "Will you destroy the just with the unjust?" ("numquid perdes iustum cum impio"; *Genesis* 18:23), but there are two points of difference between this and the biblical episode.

Firstly, the biblical narrative implies that the city could have been saved if a single man had been proven just, suggesting that all the inhabitants deserved their fate, unlike the unjust deaths of Troy. It is true that the Trojans seem responsible for not listening to the wisest characters, in particular Laocoon and Cassandra, but Paulilli deliberately chooses to put these two at the forefront. The deaths of Laocoon with his sons, as well as Coroebus' slaughter and Cassandra's enslavement, two pure and innocent lovers, serve as examples of blatant injustice since even the righteous among the Trojans endure a harsh fate.

Secondly, the destruction of Sodom is decreed by the biblical God, unique and omnipotent, whereas that of Troy is decided by Juno and Athena seeking revenge because they have been injured by Paris' judgement, not as a response to an affront against justice. Even the divine characters appear selfish, biased, and overly sensitive, defending their personal interests above

[17] Helen's death is an interesting case study. Paulilli mentions that she will be "hung from a tree", which seems to refer to the Helen *dendrophoros*. However, her death is not at all notorious (in the *De mulieribus claris*, 36, Boccaccio confesses that he ignores it), it is almost never related nor depicted. It is mentioned in Pausanias (3.19.9), an author rarely found in scholarly programs, therefore it is difficult to assume that the audience already knew the story (unlike that of Agamemnon) and it is surprising enough that Paulilli did.

[18] On Troy as the paradigm for the destruction of the cities and the symbolics of fire, Hills 2007, 190-1. The choice of this specific episode may reflect the fears of a city shaken by earthquakes and plagues.

all else.[19] The absence of Christianisation of the pagan gods is a hint to their lack of authority, which leaves the audience in a loophole. The event may be excessive and not fully justified, but poses a minor problem since it is caused by foreign gods acting in a fictive world.

4.3 Fake Tragedy: Fiction Against Identification

In addition to the characters, the distancing effect extends to the plot itself. Right from the beginning of the performance, the Prologue reduces the whole story to its fictional essence, pretending that the playwright created it by "stealing from poets and historians, Latin and Greek, their caprices and their lies in order to represent them with his own" ("rubando, & da Poeti, & da Historici Latini, et Greci, i loro capricci, et le bugie di quelli, [per] ridurre in apparenza insiememente con le sue"). The unreliability of the ancient sources betrays their frivolity.

Furthermore, the Prologue leverages reality against fiction before leaving the stage. To mitigate the horrors that the Furies are supposed to provoke Paulilli contrasts them and Juno with the ladies he addresses in the audience:

> Ne prenderete spavento di sua apparenza, perché non potrà mai ella con le sue faci Infernali, recarne tanto, che non sia maggiore il diletto, che date voi bellissime Donne, con le vostre Angeliche figure.
>
> [Neither will you be afraid of her appearance because she will not be able, with her infernal torches, to arouse more fear than the pleasure you give, most beautiful Ladies, with your angelic faces.]

By no means does fiction take over reality. Paulilli echoes here the prologue of Cinthio's *Orbecche* (1548) in which the author's mouthpiece already balance the negative feelings caused by the display of horrors with the fictionality and the remoteness of the events. The performance context and the audience counteract the horrific vision presented on stage. Relegated to the fictional realm, fear should not overcome the spectators, and the festivity of the event is not spoiled by a message of doom. The author contains the emotions in the spectators by distracting them with theatrical stunts. In fact, spectacularity seems to redeem violence in order to preserve entertainment. In a sense, beyond the fake walls of Troy, the final fire destroys an ephemeral

[19] On the contrary, Lodovico Dolce resolves in the *Trojan Women* the impossibility of imputing injustice to divine will since God (with a capital G) does not tolerate cruelty: "Andromaca Voglia Dio, come giusto: a cui dispiace / La crudeltà via più, ch'altro peccato" ("Andromache For God's will, is just: he is displeased / with cruelty more than with any other sin"; 5.120).

setting that reveals the actual building of Vicenzo Carrafa d'Ariano: thus, the destruction of the fictional space marks the end of the dramatic illusion.

5. Conclusion

In this conclusive play of the trilogy, Paulilli's text is exemplary for the potential concepts of 'memory' towards the understanding of literature in the Cinquecento, in the balance between a return to ancient stories and genres, and the experimentation of new forms. The tragedy provides an overall framework that encompasses a mosaic of heterogeneous inspirations. Within this context, the story of the fall of Troy undergoes transformations: represented on stage, it becomes contaminated with Italian poetry and Neapolitan theatre according to contemporary tastes. The combination of various traditions generates new poetical forms, defying repetitive rigidity. In a pastiche of literary memories, ancient but mostly modern, Paulilli transforms the very volatility of memory into a creative matrix for his own tragedy.

However, the fictitious nature of the play, designed for the audience's entertainment, gains the upper hand over its tragic effect, diffused by playful leisure. The theological debates should not be taken too seriously, overshadowed as they are by the entertaining nature of the event. The various distancing effects mitigate the audience's emotional attachment to the characters' fates in order to preserve the success of the performance. The playwright's selective memory (that is, the reappropriation of heterogeneous sources), challenges the generic classification of a tragedy that appears to be, above all, the author's *capriccio*.

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