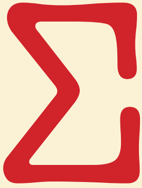

2:2 2016

Diegesis and Mimesis

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi

Silvia Bigliazzi – *Introduction*

Gherardo Ugolini – *Drama and Historiography: the Interaction between Diegesis and Mimesis in Herodotus and Thucydides*

Guido Avezzù – *"It is not a small thing to defeat a king". The Servant/Messenger's Tale in Euripides'* Electra

Flavia Palma – *Between Mimesis and Diegesis in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Girolamo Parabosco*

Luke Wilson – *Between the One and the Nine: Counting and Telling in* Hamlet *and* The Winter's Tale

Alessandra Squeo – *"All my plots and purposes": Staged Diegesis in Shakespearian Drama*

Elena Rossi Linguanti – *The Frame Story in Robert Browning's* Balaustion's Adventure

Barry Allen Spence – *Sophoclean Beckett in Performance*

Małgorzata Sugiera – *Altered Pasts: Mimesis/Diegesis in Counterfactual Stage Worlds*

Zornitsa Dimitrova – *Transmorphisms in Sarah Kane's* Cleansed *and Laura Wade's* Breathing Corpses

Skenè. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

S K E N È

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

2:2 2016

Diegesis and Mimesis

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi

SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

Executive Editor	Guido Avezzù.
General Editors	Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliazzi, Alessandro Serpieri.
Editorial Board	Simona Brunetti, Lisanna Calvi, Nicola Pasqualicchio, Gherardo Ugolini.
Managing Editor	Lisanna Calvi.
Assistant Managing Editor	Francesco Lupi.
Copyeditors	Marco Duranti, Flavia Palma, Antonietta Provenza, Carlo Vareschi.
Layout Editor	Alex Zanutto.
Advisory Board	Anna Maria Belardinelli, Anton Bierl, Enoch Brater, Jean-Christophe Cavallin, Marco De Marinis, Tobias Döring, Pavel Drábek, Paul Edmondson, Keir Douglas Elam, Ewan Fernie, Patrick Finglass, Enrico Giaccherini, Mark Griffith, Stephen Halliwell, Robert Henke, Pierre Judet de la Combe, Guido Paduano, Franco Perrelli, Didier Plassard, Donna Shalev, Susanne Wofford.

Copyright © 2016 SKENÈ
All rights reserved.
ISSN 2421-4353

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means
without permission from the publisher.
SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
http://www.skenejournal.it
info@skenejournal.it

Contents

Silvia Bigliazzi – *Introduction* 5

Gherardo Ugolini – *Drama and Historiography: the Interaction between Diegesis and Mimesis in Herodotus and Thucydides* 35

Guido Avezzù – *"It is not a small thing to defeat a king". The Servant/Messenger's Tale in Euripides'* Electra 63

Flavia Palma – *Between Mimesis and Diegesis in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Girolamo Parabosco* 87

Luke Wilson – *Between the One and the Nine: Counting and Telling in* Hamlet *and* The Winter's Tale 107

Alessandra Squeo – *"All my plots and purposes": Staged Diegesis in Shakespearian Drama* 125

Elena Rossi Linguanti – *The Frame Story in Robert Browning's* Balaustion's Adventure 149

Barry Allen Spence – *Sophoclean Beckett in Performance* 177

Małgorzata Sugiera – *Altered Pasts: Mimesis/Diegesis in Counterfactual Stage Worlds* 203

Zornitsa Dimitrova – *Transmorphisms in Sarah Kane's* Cleansed *and Laura Wade's* Breathing Corpses 223

Silvia Bigliazzi*

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.

* University of Verona – silvia.bigliazzi@univr.it

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 5-33
http://www.skenejournal.it

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 ἑξαμέτροις 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 ὥς 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

Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.
Segnius inritant animos demissa per aurem 180
quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae
ipse sibi tradit spectator; non tamen intus
digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles
ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens.
Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet, 185
aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,
aut in auem Procne uertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

Thomas Drant,
Horace, *His Arte of Poetrie* (1567)

Matters be either done on stage,
  or toulde how they were done,
The things reported to the eares
  move not the mynd so sone, 180
As lively set before thyne eyes,
  in acte for to behold:
Such actes as may be done within
  no reason is they shold
Be shewed abroad: And many thinges
  thou maiste remove from sighte,
Which good, and ready eloquence
  may straight way bring to light.
Medea may not openly
  her tender children slay, 185
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):

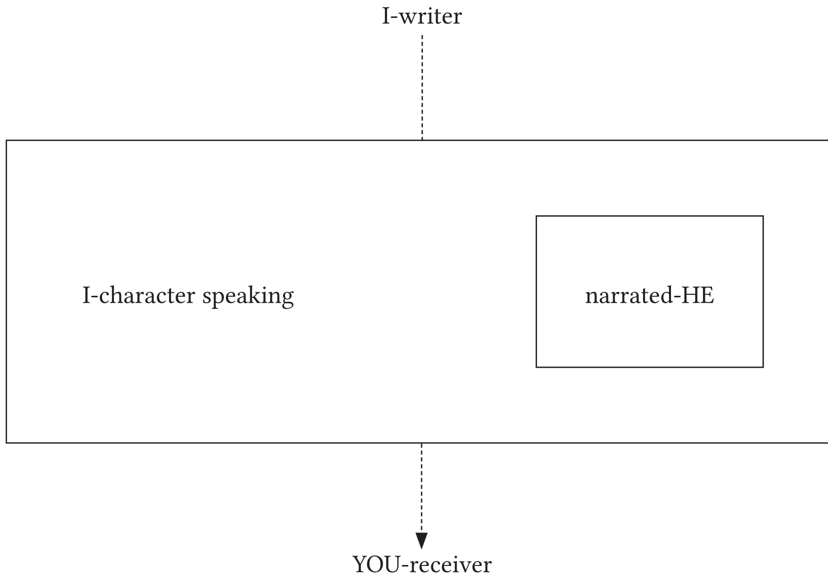

Fig. 1. *Theatrical communication*

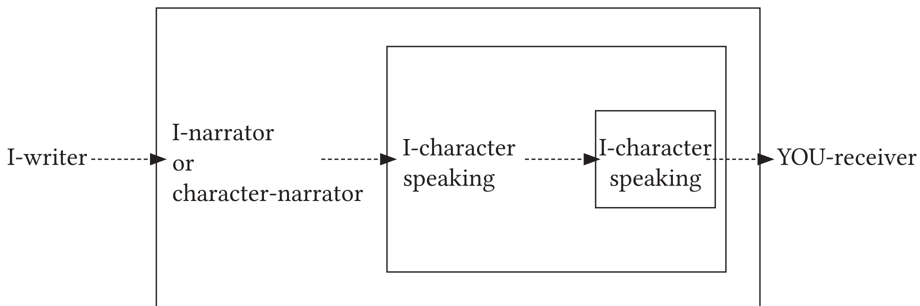

Fig. 2. *Narrative communication*

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'.

Works Cited

Alber, Jan (2016), *Unnatural Narrative. Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama*, Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press.
Aristotle (1966), *De Arte Poetica liber*, ed. Rudolph Kassel, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
— (1987), *The Poetics of Aristotle*, translation and commentary by Stephen Halliwell, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
Bigliazzi, Silvia (2001). *Oltre il genere. Amleto tra scena e racconto.* Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
— (2005), "Transubstantiating the Performance: Towards a Mimetic Narrative in *Hamlet*'s Hecuba Scene", in *The Poetics of Transubstantiation. From Theology to Metaphor*, ed. by Douglas Burnham and Enrico Giaccherini. Aldershot: Ashgate: 44-54.
— (2009) *La vertigine del somigliante; simmetrie tragicomiche in* The Winter's Tale, in *Le ultime opere di Shakespeare*, a cura di Clara Mucci et al., Napoli: Liguori: 121-48.
— (2012a), "L'imperativo narrativo in scena: o della affabulazione tra Shakespeare e Beckett", in *La scrittura romanzesca nella letteratura inglese*, ed. by V. Cavone and L. Pontrandolfo, Quaderni del S.A.G.E.O, Ravenna: Longo Editore: 125-41.
— (2012b), "Il silenzio della disgiunzione: memoria, tempo e com-possibilità in *Old Times* di Pinter", in *La sensibilità della ragione. Studi in omaggio a Franco Piva*, ed. by Laura Colombo et al., Supplemento al n. 36 dei "Quaderni di lingue e letterature", Verona: Edizioni Fiorini: 83-94.
— (2014) "'Dost thou hear?' On the Rhetoric of Narrative in *The Tempest*", in Silvia Bigliazzi and Lisanna Calvi (eds), *Revisiting* The Tempest. *The Capacity to Signify*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 111-33.
Brater, Enoch (1981), "Cinematic Fidelity and Pinter's Betrayal", *Modern Drama*, 24 (4): 508.
Chatman, Seymour (1978), *Story and Discourse*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
— (1990), *Coming to Terms*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
De Jong, Irene J.F. (1991), *Narrative in Drama. The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech*, Leiden, New York, København, and Köln: Brill.
Doležel Lubomir (1979a), *Narrative Worlds*, in *Sound, Sign and Meaning: Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle*, ed. by L. Mateika, Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press.
— (1979b), "Extensional and Intentional Narrative World", *Poetics*, 8: 193-211.
— (1980), "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative", *Poetics Today*, 1: 7-25.
— (1988), "Mimesis and Possible Worlds", *Poetics Today*, 9: 475-96.
Drant, Thomas (1567), *Horace, His Arte of Poetrie*, London: Thomas Marshe.
Eco, Umberto (1977), "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance", *The Drama Review*, 21 (1): 107-17.
— (1979), *Lector in fabula*, Milano: Bompiani.
Elam, Keir (1980), *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, London: Methuen.
Fludernik, Monica (1996), *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, New York: Routledge.

— (2008) "Narrative and Drama", in *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. by John Pier and José Ángel García Landa, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter: 355-84.

Garber, Marjorie (1984), "'The Rest Is Silence': Ineffability and the 'Unscene' in Shakespeare's Plays", in *Ineffability: Naming the Unnameable from Shakespeare to Beckett*, ed. by Peter S. Hawkins and Hanne Howland Schotter, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock: 35-50.

Genette, Gérard (1969), *Figures II*, Paris: Seuil.

— (1976) "Boundaries of Narrative", *New Literary History*, 8 (1): 1-13.

— (1980) *Narrative Discourse* (*Discours du récit*, 1972), Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

— (1988), *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (*Nouveau discours du récit*, 1983), Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Giraldi, Giovan Battista (Cintio) (1864) [1554], *De' romanzi, delle commedie e delle tragedie*, Milano: G. Daelli e Comp. Editori.

Grethlein, Jonas and Antonios Rengakos (ed.) (2009), *Narratology and Interpretation: The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature. Trends in Classics - Supplementary Volumes 4*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Gruber, William (2010), *Offstage Space, Narrative, and the Theatre of the Imagination*, New York, N.Y. and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Halliwell, Stephen (2002), *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

— (2012), "Diegesis – Mimesis", in *The Living Book of Narratology*, http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Diegesis_-_Mimesis (last access 10 November 2016).

Hardy, Barbara (1997), *Shakespeare's Story Tellers*, London & Chester Springs: Peter Owen.

Hogan, Patrick Colm (2014), "Emplotting a Storyworld in Drama: Selection, Time, and Construal in the Discourse of Hamlet, Transmediality Across Media", in *Storyworlds Across Media*, ed. by Marie-Laure Ryan and Jean Noël Thon, Lincoln NE and London: University of Nebraska Press: 50-66.

Horace (1999) [1926; rev. and rpt 1929], *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, with an English translation by H. Ruston Fairclough, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Hün, Peter and Roy Sommer (2009), "Narration in Poetry and Drama", in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. by Peter Hün, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, Jörg Schönert, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter: 228-41.

Jahn, Manfred (2001), "Narrative Voice and Agency in Drama: Aspects of a Narratology of Drama", *New Literary History*, 35: 659-79.

Johnson, Samuel (1908), *Johnson on Shakespeare*. Essays and notes selected and set forth with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh, London: Frowde.

Klauk, Tobias (2014), "Telling vs. Showing", in *The Living Book of Narratology*, http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/telling-vs-showing (last access 10 November 2016).

Kott, Jan (1974) [1964], *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.

McHale, Brian (1987), *Postmodernist Fiction*, London: Routledge.

Margolin, Uri (1990), "Individuals in Narrative Worlds: An Ontological Perspective", *Poetics Today*, 11 (4), *Narratology Revisited II*: 843-71.
McIntyre, Dan (2006), *Point of Views in Plays*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
Morrison, Kristin (1983), *Canters and Chronicles: The Use of Narrative in the Plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Nünning, Angsar and Roy Sommer (2008), "Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity: Some Further Steps Towards a Transgeneric Narratology of Drama", in *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. by John Pier and José Ángel García Landa, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter: 331-54.
— (2011), "The Performative Power of Narrative in Drama: On the Forms and Functions of Dramatic Storytelling in Shakespeare's Plays", in *Current Trends in Narratology*, Berlin: De Gruyter: 232-53.
Nünning, Angsar and Christine Schwaneke (2015), "The Performative Power of Unreliable Narration", in *Unreliable Narration and Trustworthiness*, ed. by Vera Nünning, Berlin: De Gruyter: 189-220.
Pavel, Thomas G. (1975), "Possible Worlds in Literary Semantics", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34 (2): 165-76.
— (1980), "Narrative Domains", *Poetics Today*, 1 (4): 105-14.
— (1983), "Incomplete Worlds, Ritual Emotions", *Philosophy and Literature*, 7: 48-58.
— (1986), *Fictional Worlds*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Plato (1969), *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann.
Puttenham, George (1589), *The Arte of English Poesie*, London: Richard Field.
Rabillard, Sheila (1991), "Destabilizing Plot, Displacing the Status of Narrative: Local Order in the Plays of Pinter and Shepard", *Theatre Journal*, 43 (1): 41-58.
Richardson, Brian (1987), "'Time is Out of Joint'. Narrative Models and the Temporality of Drama", *Poetics Today*, 8 (2): 299-309.
— (1988), "Point of View in Drama: Diegetic Monologue, Unreliable Narrators, and The Author's Voice on Stage", *Comparative Drama*, 22 (3): 199-214.
— (2001), "Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama", *New Literary History*, 32 (3): 681-94.
— (2006), *Unnatural Voices. Extreme Narrations in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.
Ronen, Ruth (1988), "Completing the Incompleteness of Fictional Entities", *Poetics Today*, 9 (3): 497-514.
Rayner, Alice (1988), "Harold Pinter: Narrative and Presence", *Theatre Journal*, 40 (4): 482-97.
Ryan, Marie-Laure (1985), "The Modal Structure of Narrative Universes", *Poetics Today*, 6 (4): 717-55.
— (1991), "Possible Worlds and Accessibility Relations: A Semantic Typology of Fiction", *Poetics Today*, 12 (3): 553-76.
Scholes, Robert and Robert Kellogg (1966), *The Nature of Narrative*, London and New York: Oxford University Press.
Segre, Cesare (1980), "A Contribution to the Semiotics of Theater", *Poetics Today*, 1 (3): 39-48.

— (1981), "Narratology and Theater", *Poetics Today*, 2 (3): 95-104.
Serpieri, Alessandro (1978), *Come comunica il teatro*, Milano: Il Formichiere.
— (1989), *On the Language of Drama*, Pretoria: University of South Africa Pretoria.
Serpieri, Alessandro, Keir Elam, Paola Gullì Pugliatti, Tomaso Kemeny, Romana Rutelli (1981), "Toward a Segmentation of the Dramatic Text", *Poetics Today*, 2 (3): 163-200.
Serpieri, Alessandro, Aldo Celli, Serena Cenni, Claudia Corti, Keir Elam, Giovanna Mochi, Marcella Quadri, Susan Payne (1988), *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare: dalle fonti ai drammi*, vols 4: vol. 1, *Il quadro teorico*, Parma: Pratiche Editrice.
Shakespeare, William (2005), *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. by Jay L. Halio, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sommer, Roy (2005), "Drama and Narrative", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, Marie-Laure Ryan, London: Routledge: 119-24.
Szondi, Peter (1987), *Theory of Modern Drama* (*Theorie des modernen Dramas*, 1956), Cambridge: Polity Press in Association with Blackwell.
Tarán, Leonardo and Dimitri Gutas (eds) (2012), *Aristotle Poetics: Editio Maior of the Greek Text with Historical Introductions and Philological Commentaries*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.
Trissino, Giovan Giorgio (1719) [1529-62], *Le sei divisioni della Poetica*, in *Tutte le opere*, Verona: Iacopo Vallarsi.
Weidle, Roland (2009), "Organizing the Perspectives: Focalization and the Superordinate Narrative System in Drama and Theater", in *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization*, ed. By Peter Hün, Wolf Schmid, Jörg Schönert, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter: 221-42.
Weinberg, Bernard (1961), *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2 vols.
Wilson, Rawdon R. (1989), "Narrative Reflexivity in Shakespeare", *Poetics Today*, 10 (4): 771-91.
— *Shakespearean Narrative* (1995), New York: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press.
Wilson, Thomas (1585) [1553], *The Art of Rhetoric*, London: George Robinson.
Wright, Thomas (1971), *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, a reprint based on the 1604 edition with an Introduction by Thomas O. Sloan, Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press.

Gherardo Ugolini*

Drama and Historiography: the Interaction between Diegesis and Mimesis in Herodotus and Thucydides.

Abstract

This essay explores the presence and dynamic combination of the diegetic and mimetic modes in the writings of Herodotus and Thucydides as typical examples of fifth-century BC Greek historiography. Relying on significant examples, it offers a narratological discussion of diegesis (heterodiegesis, omniscience, and dramatized narration) showing similarities and differences between the two authors. It also investigates the main functions of mimesis, or direct speech, in their narratives, and illustrates its aims and causes, how it contributes to the psychological characterization and the dramatization of the events, as well as their explanation and interpretation. The widespread presence of dialogues in both Herodotus and Thucydides raises a number of intriguing theoretical questions regarding the relation of their prose with the epic model and the composition and oral fruition of historiographical works in the fifth century. Special attention is devoted to specific passages which, while being almost devoid of narrative pieces (Xerxes' Council in Herodotus 7.8-19 and the Melian dialogue in Thucydides 5.85-113), show a peculiar proclivity for dialogue suggestiong a typically dramatic potential.

Introduction

The presence of diegesis and mimesis in classical Greek historiography has received much scholarly attention, with special regard to two great fifth-century BC historiographical models, Herodotus and Thucydides. Several studies have investigated the features, typologies, and functions of these two forms of discourse, but have only occasionally explored their mutual interaction. As a matter fact, the analysis of their relationship and interchange may give rise to interesting conclusions on how these authors consciously used them. It is worth highlighting from the start the fundamental importance of the technique – of which I will provide significant examples later in the essay – that both Herodotus and Thucydides adopted at crucial turning-points of their historiographical accounts, when the narrative tension is at its peak and the historical events take on an intrin-

* University of Verona – gherardo.ugolini@univr.it

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 35-61
http://www.skenejournal.it

sic paradigmatic and universal value in ethical or political terms. In such moments the chronicle switches to a highly mimetic mode which we may safely define as theatrical. The narrator seems to disappear almost completely letting the characters speak for themselves in ways that are closely remindful of dramaturgical scripts and scenic performance. This is the case, for instance, of the so-called Xerxes' Council in Herodotus' Book 7 (8-19): the narrator shapes a debate between king Xerxes and a few of his generals by minimizing the introductory formulae and having only the characters speak in order to endow the episode with the highest degree of dramatic liveliness. Each orator utters a long *rhesis* (speech) illustrating the reasons for and against the war with Greece. Although Herodotus never comments on, nor judges the events, the interlacing of the speeches and the Council's conclusion suggest a clear condemnation of an assembly system which is only seemingly equivalent to Athenian democracy. The adopted procedure is in fact a totally hypocritical fiction, since the decision of attacking Greece has already been made by Xerxes, while the council can only confirm it.[1]

The same applies to Thucydides. He also tends to intensify the presence of the mimetic dimension in crucial passages of the narration, and the *History of the Peloponnesian War* too includes a glaring example of 'acting', totally unrelated to the diegetic frame. I am referring to the Melian dialogue in Book 5 (5-113), in which the messengers of the two parts discuss the matter at stake following a dialogic pattern of confrontation which is completely unconnected to the formulae that normally introduce or conclude the single interventions. This clearly reveals how the historian adopted a technique altogether remindful of coeval Attic tragedy all the more if one looks at the rapid pace of the dialogue that at times consists in short cues seemingly akin to *stichomythia* in drama. Here too, as we have seen with Herodotus, the choice of enhancing the mimetic dimension is related to the purely symbolic meaning with which, from the author's point of view, the incident of the Melian repression had to be endowed: the cruel and cynical logic of dominion proudly displayed in front of the Melian citizens marks the last successful instance of the Athenian military power which will meet its doom shortly thereafter. Opting for this kind of dramaturgical representation proves especially fit to prefigure and underline the Attic city's 'tragic' destiny and its impending reversal of fortune.[2]

Before focusing my attention on this analysis, though, it is worth clarifying a couple of preliminary issues regarding the relationship between historiographical and epic narration and the connection between mimesis and orality.

[1] See § 4 below.

[2] See § 6 below.

1. Historiographical Narration and Epic Narration

When dealing with this kind of investigation, we should first look into the relationship between Herodotus' and Thucydides' historiographical narration and the epic tradition. Aristotelian categorization has always taken its toll on it, and, tracing a sharp division between historiography and poetry, it has unduly obscured the similarities between the two genres. I am referring here to the well-known passage from *Poetics* 9 (1451a36-1452a11); there Aristotle first acknoweldges that the differences do not concern formal aspects, since "Herodotus' work could be versified and would be just as much a kind of history in verse as in prose"; hence, he points out that the true difference between the two genres lies in the object of representation, or better, in the relationship between the object and reality. The historian gives "actual events" (τὰ γενόμενα), while the poet presents "the kinds of things that might occur" (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο) "in terms of probability or necessity" (κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον). Poetry aims at "the universal" (τὰ καθόλου), while history deals with "particulars" (τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον).[3] According to Aristotle, poetry is never a reproduction of the particular *per se*, but of events whose value and comprehension appear as universal. Therefore poetry is "more philosophical and more elevated than history" (καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν).

When Aristotle discusses 'poetry' in generic terms (as is clear in *Poetics* 23), he evidently refers to a form of narration (the one typical of epics), which he sees as a sort of "narrative mimesis in verse" (περὶ δὲ τῆς διηγηματικῆς καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ μιμητικῆς) (1459a17). On this he establishes the quality of the narrated action that should be grounded on a single, coherent (i.e. based on a relationship of mutual necessity among its parts) and accomplished (i.e. with a precise beginning and end) action. These are basi-

[3] By introducing such a clear-cut distinction, Aristotle probably wished to take a stand against the idea according to which historiography and poetry shared a common matrix. Later sources reveal this kind of awareness. Strabo, for instance, asserted that Hecatæus, Pherecydes, and the early prose writers had abandoned poetic metre but had maintained the rest (Strab. 1.26: "Afterwards it was closely imitated by writers in the time of Cadmus, Pherecydes, and Hecatæus. The metre was the only thing dispensed with, every other poetic grace being carefully preserved" (trans. by H.C. Hamilton) (εἶτα ἐκείνην [i.e. τὴν ποιητικὴν κατασκευὴν] μιμούμενοι, λύσαντες τὸ μέτρον, τἆλλα δὲ φυλάξαντες τὰ ποιητικά, συνέγραψαν οἱ περὶ Κάδμον καὶ Φερεκύδη καὶ Ἑκαταῖον· εἶτα οἱ ὕστερον ἀφαιροῦντες ἀεί τι τῶν τοιούτων εἰς τὸ νῦν εἶδος κατήγαγον ὡς ἂν ἀπὸ ὕψους τινός). Fifth-century Latin rhetorician Marcellinus argued that Thucydides' main literary model was Homer, with regard to both the lexical choices and the argument's disposition (*Vita Thucydidis*, 37). On the proximity of historiography and poetry, see Buti de Lima 1996: 79-84.

cally the same requirements he asks of tragedy (1459a17-25);[4] they define a narrative form which clearly departs from the historiographical model (in which the exposition may not concern a single and limited event only, but has to deal with all the events included in a given period of time).

However, the Aristotelian distinction between the two genres and the related epistemological depreciation of historiography appear to be overly artificial and certainly do not do full justice to the works of the great fifth-century Greek historians.[5] Of course historiography and epics differ under many respects. Suffice it to recall here how the epic poets traditionally appealed to the Muses or to a divinity who may inspire their song, while the historians referred to what they had seen, and proudly mention their own investigation. It is, however, a fact that classical Greek historians adopted many elements deriving from the epic narrative format, so much so that many scholars have referred to this phenomenon as to the "historicization of epics" ("Historisierung des Epos", Schwartz 1928).[6] Beyond the differences in methods and aims, epic and historical narrations are linked by absolute proximity and this connection is so strong that it never fails to appear, even in Thucydides, whose approach is extremely pragmatic and rigorous. The Homeric traditional model, in which the characters were very often allowed to speak, made that same technique seem natural also

[4] "As regards narrative mimesis in verse, it is clear that plots, as in tragedy, should be constructed dramatically, that is, around a single, whole and complete action, with beginning, middle, and end, so that epic, like a single and whole animal, may produce the pleasure proper to it. Its structures should not be like histories, which require an exposition not of a single action but of a single period of time, with all the events (in their contingent relationship) that happened to one person or more during it" (Trans. by S. Halliwell) (περὶ δὲ τῆς διηγηματικῆς καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ μιμητικῆς, ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς μύθους καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις συνιστάναι δραματικοὺς καὶ περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν ἔχουσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος, ἵν' ὥσπερ ζῷον ἓν ὅλον ποιῇ τὴν οἰκείαν ἡδονήν, δῆλον, καὶ μὴ ὁμοίας ἱστορίαις τὰς συνθέσεις εἶναι, ἐν αἷς ἀνάγκη οὐχὶ μιᾶς πράξεως ποιεῖσθαι δήλωσιν ἀλλ' ἑνὸς χρόνου, ὅσα ἐν τούτῳ συνέβη περὶ ἕνα ἢ πλείους, ὧν ἕκαστον ὡς ἔτυχεν ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα).

[5] One may even say that in Herodotus' and Thucydides' works – as is in tragedy – the protagonists' παθήματα ['passions', 'affections'] can at times take on ideal and paradigmatic meanings, transforming single events into universal experiences that reflect the human condition. Let us look, for example, at the tales of Gyges and Candaules (1.8-13), Croesus and Solon (1.28-33) or Adrastus and Atys (1.34-45) in Herodotus' *Histories.* On the similarities between Thucydides' works and tragic patterns, see Cornford's 1907 fundamental contribution.

[6] In the Hellenistic period the development of a model of 'tragic historiography' could be associated with the principles of the Peripatetic school which overthrew their founder's theory, conceiving a universal form of historiography that could be similar to poetry. According to Kurt Von Fritz, this model dates back to Duris of Samos, a disciple of Theophrastus'. A contrary opinion on this issue can be found in Walbank 1960.

when introduced in the historians' narration (see Strasburger 1972; Rengakos 2006). In this perspective, we can say that Herodotus' and Thucydides' historical discourse corresponds to a form of diegesis that, in Plato's classification (*Rep.* 392d8), mixes third-person "sheer diegesis" (ἁπλῆ διήγησις) with a narrative mode that follows a mimetic strategy that has the author hide behind the characters (διὰ μιμήσεως).[7] Just like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Herodotus' *Histories* and Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* are examples of an interaction between the mimetic and the diegetic procedures, that is, an account of the events in which the heterodiegetic exposition alternates with the mimetic representation of dialogues and speeches. Scholars are called to verify the presence of these two dimensions, both quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as their functions with regard to the addressee, never losing sight of a general cultural frame which entailed an exclusively oral fruition of the texts.

2. The Relationship Between Mimesis and Orality

Another aspect that we should preliminarily define is the relationship between mimesis and orality. In this regard, we should interrogate how and to what extent the use of mimesis within a basically diegetic narrative form, such as the historiographical one, is connected with the modes of production and use of a work, that is, with its oral consumption. We may think that the audience of the *akroàseis* (public readings) of Herodotus' stories would be inclined to appreciate a livelier and more animated expressive form, rich in direct speeches. If we followed this interpretation, we could imagine that the historiographer, who publicly recited excerpts from his works in public, would have felt the need to involve the audience emotionally, and direct speech may have perfectly served his purpose.

In my opinion, this approach is not wholly correct and it would be misleading to evaluate the presence of direct speeches from such perspective. If the issue may be tackled in this way with reference to the composition and performance of the Homeric poems, the same is not necessarily true with regard to historiography. Herodotus was no rhapsode: his prose, although rich in speeches and oral markers, could not produce the same emotional involvement that epic or lyric poetry (in which prosody, rhythm, and music have a fundamental import) could bring about. Sure enough, Herodotus had to come to terms with the audience's tastes and expectations, which, for instance, may explain his peculiar interest for ethnograph-

[7] "So don't they achieve this either by a simple narrative, or by means of imitation, or a combination of both?" (trans. by C. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy) (ἆρ' οὖν οὐχὶ ἤτοι ἁπλῇ διηγήσει ἢ διὰ μιμήσεως γιγνομένῃ ἢ δι' ἀμφοτέρων περαίνουσιν).

ic aspects (see Dorati 2000); besides, these aspects could very well satisfy the audience's curiosity and were firmly entrenched in logographic tradition (Ion of Chios). Furthermore, Herodotus' work as a book is one thing, the context of its dissemination in the communication system of the time is quite another.

The oral dissemination of the *Histories* is a notorious *vexata quaestio.* Ancient sources tell of 'public readings' of Herodotus' works (Thucydides himself makes such an allusion in 1.22.4),[8] even though this oral dissemination likely concerns an early compositional stage. Scholars agree on the fact that Herodotus early conceived his *Histories* as a written text, and as such it has been acknowledged from Thucydides onwards. Truth to tell, Thucydides' own works, which were never performed (see Morrison 2007) and in which mimesis and diegesis often coexist, prove how much the oral perspective can be misleading in a historiographical context. Finally, we can say that both Thucydides and Herodotus operated within a changing communicative system, characterized by the passage from orality to literacy. Both of them supposed that their texts could possibly have a double destination (reading and listening), but conceived them as books written to be read in a time well beyond their own epoch (we should not forget Thucydides' famous κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί, "perennial possession", 1.2). The presence of direct speeches has nothing to do with the issue of oral composition or with the entertainment of the audience, but is an artistic communication mode which enables a connection with tradition (epos), whose aims are structurally concerned with the narrative organization of the text.[9]

[8] "The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time" (trans. by. R. Crawley) (καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται· ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἕξει. κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται). All translations from Thucydides' *History* are taken from Crawley 1910. See also Thucydides' polemic against the stories that poets and logographers conceived in order to catch the audience's attention rather than to transmit the truth of the matter (1.21).

[9] The way in which Thucydides and Herodotus organize the narrated material and the length of the narration presuppose a separation from the practice of oral composition and fruition. Rösler 2002 clarifies this point by analysing the verbs γράφειν ("to write") and λέγειν ("to read").

3. Diegesis and Mimesis in the Herodotean Model

Over the past few decades, many studies have dealt with the identification of the main narratological features of Herodotus' ἱστορίη (de Jong 1999; 2004). Here we are apparently concerned with an extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, as Genette (1980; 1988) would have it, that is, a story in which the narrator is never present in the world of his/her tale and therefore always stands back from the narrated action. The diegetic axis is cohesive and extremely solid, even though it is often intersected by now longer now shorter excursuses that contribute to detail or broaden the discourse (the most significant and emblematic instance of this are the so-called informative digressions that follow the reference to a new place or to a new people).

Herodotus is a typically omniscient narrator, in that he knows from the start how his tale will end (the outcome of the Persian wars) and also knows what the different characters think or say, their private thoughts and feelings included.[10] A striking example of this stance can be found in the well-known episode of Gyges and Candaules in Book 1 (8-13), in which diegesis and mimesis are skilfully intertwined. In order to convince his favourite bodyguard, Gyges, of his own wife's incredible beauty, the king of Lydia, Candaules, suggests that Gyges spy on her naked. At first Gyges refuses and Herodotus assigns him a direct speech (mimetic level) in which he argues for his decision on the basis of ethic and social principles (a woman who shows herself naked to a stranger loses her modesty, besides one should look at what is his only). Yet, Herodotus adds an underlying consideration to Gyges' *oratio recta* (direct speech), voicing something that the bodyguard had in mind but did not speak out, that is, his fear that such an adventure could "cause him some harm" (μή τί οἱ ἐξ αὐτῶν γένηται κακόν, 1.9.1). Thus, the narrator informs his readers that Gyges' caution depended on personal reasons (fear for himself) rather than on moral concerns (the preservation of the queen's honour).[11]

His omniscient point of view often allows the author to recall past elements through analepsis or to anticipate subsequent ones through prolepsis. In fact, Herodotean diegesis does not generally follow a linear sequence, but revolves around a central chronological core – from 560 to 479

[10] See also Grethlein 2013: 185-222 who relates Herodotus' omniscient narration to a fundamentally teleological conception of time in contrast to the purely empirical approach Thucydides adopted to reconstruct past events. On the narrative modes Herodotus and Thucydides employ in order to build up a picture of the past, see especially Rood 2007a and 2007b.

[11] In this regard, it is interesting to compare this tale to the anonymous papyrus fragment (*POxy* 2382), possibly from a play on Gyges and Candaules (fr. 664 *TrGF* 2), whose form, despite the dramatic context, is purely diegetic.

BC – with frequent use of analeptic and proleptic references that bring in allusions to previous or later periods (from the history of ancient Egypt to the Peloponnesian war).

The Herodotean narrator is also characteristically omnipresent. He is 'present' in all the spaces in which the narration takes place, be they open and public (squares, battlefields, etc.), near (the Greek cities), far (the distant Oriental territories) or even private (royal courts, secluded bedrooms, etc.). One may very well affirm that omniscience and omnipresence makes of Herodotus a Homeric narrator. Indeed, a number of scholars have pointed out several analogies with epic: the above-mentioned presence of direct speeches, but also the presence of catalogues, genealogical lists, digressions, chiastic narrative microstructures, etc.[12] Herodotus differentiates himself from that model in that he presents himself (and is) as a self-conscious narrator, that is, a narrator who is aware of being one, rather than a chronicler who does not go beyond the mere illustration of the events. On the contrary, he organizes them into a specific structure, according to knowingly chosen methods and patterns. In the *Histories*' opening paragraph he even mentions his own name and proudly introduces the ἱστορίη ('inquiry') that he will carry out in the first person.[13] This aspect belittles Herodotus' prerogative as omniscient narrator; indeed, his point of view is not always completely omniscient, as he frequently offers more than one version of the same event without taking sides with one or the other alternative.[14] Yet another indication of this stance is given by the presence of relativizing lexical formulas, such as "I believe", "it seems to me" (ἐγὼ δοκέω, μοι δοκεῖ) through which he conveys the feeling that what he is giving us are hypothetical and not actual representations. These phrases, referring to the first person singular, that is, to himself (authorial interventions), allow the historian to express a personal opinion, to formulate a supposition, at times to allude to a source of information, to endorse or deny a particular version of the events. In these cases,

[12] The anonymous compiler of *On the Sublime* already defined Herodotus as "Homeric to the highest degree" (μόνος Ἡρόδοτος Ὁμηρικώτατος ἐγένετο, *Subl.* 13.3).

[13] In some respects this incipit is an overtly parabatic προλογίζειν ("to speak a prologue"), which is remindful of the Hesiodic (*Theogony*) rather than Homeric narrative model.

[14] For instance, in 1.191.1, with regard to Cyrus' siege of Babylon and the subterfuge he devised in order to penetrate the city (by fording the river that flowed into it), he writes: "Whether someone advised him in his difficulty, or whether he perceived for himself what to do, I do not know, but he did the following", trans. by A.D. Godley (εἴτε δὴ ὦν ἄλλος οἱ ἀπορέοντι ὑπεθήκατο, εἴτε καὶ αὐτὸς ἔμαθε τὸ ποιητέον οἱ ἦν, ἐποίεε δὴ τοιόνδε). Another example can be found in 3.87, where he provides two different and alternative versions of the way in which Darius won the kingdom ("some say that . . . but there is another story, . . .", trans. by A.D. Godley; οἱ μὲν δή φασι . . . οἱ δὲ). All translations from Herodotus' *Histories* are taken from Godley 1926.

one perceives a rift between the world of epic narration and the one of historiography, in which the author must piece together the events by choosing among different and more or less verisimilar options.

The Herodotean model apparently struggles to maintain and compare the testimonies drawn from the sources, introducing them by pointing out their differences (much more than what happens in Thucydides who summarizes the material in a unified discourse). Sometimes Herodotus does not hesitate to compete with his informers showing his readers/listeners how he has elaborated a certain thesis independently from what he has heard or read from other sources. He is interested in underlining his autonomy, and this emerges from certain passages in which he openly tries to relativize the pieces of information he has collected and declares he will look for proofs (τεκμήρια) that may support or deny what he has heard.

One last observation on the Herodotean narrative model and on its narrator needs to be added here. Still employing modern narratological categories, we may say that the Halicarnassian historian is also a 'dramatic' narrator, that is, a narrator who has no share in the events he relates and never appears as a character, and yet speaks sometimes in his own voice, for example when he tells about himself and the journeys he made in order to collect information. In this regard, we may quote a brief excerpt from Book 2 in which he writes:

> Θέλων δὲ τούτων πέρι σαφές τι εἰδέναι ἐξ ὧν οἷόν τε ἦν, ἔπλωσα καὶ ἐς Τύρον τῆς Φοινίκης, πυνθανόμενος αὐτόθι εἶναι ἱρὸν Ἡρακλέος ἅγιον. Καὶ εἶδον πλουσίως κατεσκευασμένον ἄλλοισί τε πολλοῖσι ἀναθήμασι . . . Ἐς λόγους δὲ ἐλθὼν τοῖσι ἱρεῦσι τοῦ θεοῦ εἰρόμην ὁκόσος χρόνος εἴη ἐξ οὗ σφι τὸ ἱρὸν ἵδρυται· εὗρον δὲ . . . Εἶδον δὲ ἐν τῇ Τύρῳ καὶ ἄλλο ἱρὸν . . . Ἀπικόμην δὲ καὶ ἐς Θάσον (2.44)
>
> [wishing to get clear information about this matter where it was possible so to do, I took ship for Tyre in Phoenicia, where I had learned by inquiry that there was a holy temple of Heracles. There I saw it, richly equipped with many other offerings . . . in conversation with the priests, I asked how long it was since their temple was built. I found that . . . At Tyre I saw yet another temple . . . Then I went to Thasos, too.]

The passages in which Herodotus presents himself in the first person as investigator of the sources and facts outside the narrative time frame are not many, but are definitely very significant, since they fundamentally aim at orienting the reception and the comprehension of the text.[15]

[15] Herodotus appears as dramatized narrator also when he expresses his own judgements on the narrated events. For example in 1.60.3, when he defines the stratagem adopted by the Athenians to recall Peisistratus from exile (making a woman disguise as the goddess Athena) "so exceptionally foolish" (εὐηθέστατον). On the direct presence of Herodotus in his *Histories*, see Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 107ff.

Exploring the mimetic dimension of the Herodotean narration, we are essentially concerned with the presence of direct speeches, that is, of moments in which, as Plato would put it, the narrator "hides himself" (ἀποκρύπτοιτο, *Rep.* 3 393d7)[16] behind the protagonists of the tale. As we have already pointed out, this expressive mode – which from Herodotus onwards would establish itself as a structural element of the ancient historiographical genre – derived from the Homeric epos, in which it was largely employed (it has been calculated that, in Homer, almost half of the lines are written in direct speech; see Latacz 1975: 395). After all, it is no surprise that, in order to chronicle an event as important as the Persian wars, the narrator made use of narrative structures similar to the ones Homer employed to tell about the war of Troy. Engaging with this mimetic dimension in a diegetic context was perceived as totally natural and unproblematic by a historian such as Herodotus, nor did he ever interrogate on the nature and characteristics of direct speeches (as Thucydides did). He managed the oscillation between mimesis and diegesis very smoothly, without affecting the narrative flux in terms of interruptions or loss of cohesiveness and solidity.[17]

When a character speaks a direct speech, the narrator maintains his main narrative function, although he momentarily steps aside and gives the focalization over to a secondary focalizer. This instantly makes the tale livelier and more dramatic, and certainly also less objective, and yet more varied and engaging. Of course, the character who pronounces a direct speech is not an extradiegetic omniscient narrator but speaks as one actively involved in the action. Time after time, the interlocutors focalize and understand the events reported by the omniscient narrator from their own specific point of view and may even interpret them in a different way. The

[16] "But if the poet were not to conceal his identity anywhere, the whole of his poetry and narrative would have been created without imitation" (trans. by C. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy) (εἰ δέ γε μηδαμοῦ ἑαυτὸν ἀποκρύπτοιτο ὁ ποιητής, πᾶσα ἂν αὐτῷ ἄνευ μιμήσεως ἡ ποίησίς τε καὶ διήγησις γεγονυῖα εἴη).

[17] It is unclear whether, before Herodotus, genealogical and geographic prose writers, such as Hecataeus of Miletus, had already used the direct speech form. The few surviving fragments do not allow to answer this question, even though fragment *FGrHist* 1F30 seems to contain a direct speech. According to Marcellinus (*Vita Thucydidis*, 38), the narrations of the logographers and the historians before Herodotus were "always exclusively" composed of "pure narration" (ψιλῇ μόνῃ . . . διὰ παντὸς διηγήσει), so that it was Herodotus who introduced the speeches in order to foreground the characters' peculiarities. A case in point of direct speech embedded in a historical narration can be found in Ion of Chios' *Epidemiai* which presents a mimetic dramatization of a convivial incident during Sophocles' sojourn at Chios (*TGrHist* 392F6 = Athen. 13.603E 3 = Soph. T 75 Radt). The text can be dated between 441 BC and a few years before 421, since in his *Peace* Aristophanes alludes to the fact that Ion had died some time before.

presence of several direct speeches and, as a consequence, of multiple secondary focalizations suggests a polyphonic structure, whilst the author never loses the control of the narration.

In Herodotus, the mimetic mode is widely employed and its presence corresponds to almost the 18% of the whole text (Scardino 2007). The passage from diegesis to mimesis is normally made clear by Herodotus by means of introductory cataphoric formulas, such as τάδε ἔλεγε ("he said these things") and closing anaphoric ones as ταῦτα ἔλεγε ("he said these things"), according to a formal mechanism that once again reproduces the Homeric use. One can further notice that the direct speeches are generally placed at strategic moments of the narration, thus functioning as a bridge joining the narrative segments. They work as pauses, as it were, in the narration and slow down the action. This attracts the audience's attention and raises the tension, since their presence often highlight an impending change in a character's or in a people's destiny or the passage from peaceful tranquillity to active restlessness.

With reference to Lang's enquiry (1984), we may list the following formal typologies of speeches:

a. single speeches (without response), which mainly contain orders, warnings, and announcements;
b. double speeches (antilogies), which normally follow a question-and-answer pattern;
c. a set of three speeches, which generally follow a thesis-antithesis-synthesis agonistic pattern. The third interlocutor normally wraps up the debate by choosing one of the theses that have been previously introduced or advocating a mediation. A classical example of this comes from the so-called *tripolitikòs logos* in Book 3 (80-2) where Otanes suggests abandoning monarchy in the name of isonomy, Megabyzus recommends the adoption of an oligarchic regime, and Darius praises the monarchy.
d. a set of four speeches in which a topic is discussed in two phases: the first starts the argument and the second elaborates on the issue or changes and adjusts the perspective;
e. five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-, or even ten-fold groups of speeches are less frequently used but can be found, for instance, in the well-known conversation (1.30-2) between Croesus and Solon, in Sardis, upon the meaning of human happiness; this exchange is composed of eight direct speech interventions, divided into two tetrads each composed of two question-and-answer pairs.

As regards the functions of direct speech within the narration, the most significant ones may be categorized as follows:[18]

1. *causative* function: when direct speech is placed at the beginning of a chain of events and starts off an action. The speaker's words prompt the action (the speaker's own or someone else's);[19]
2. *explanatory* function: when direct speech is placed at the end of a chain of events and functions as commentary or provides considerations, without initiating a new action. Of course, the orator's ensuing explanations have no authorial value since they do not necessarily coincide with the ones accepted by the historian;[20]
3. *dramatizing* function: it manly serves the purpose of enlivening the narration by having a character express his/her thoughts, announcing events, ask questions, give reasons, explanations or advice. Yet, this is not simply a way to animate the chronicle in order to get the readers'/listeners' attention. In fact, it sometimes looks as if Herodotus were arranging a proper dramaturgical script revolving around typically theatrical turns. It is not easy to determine to what extent theatre, and especially tragedy, may have influenced his use of mimesis, but a few episodes, such as Adrastus' and Atys' 'tragic' vicissitudes in Book 1 (34-5), are based on a series of dialogic scenes in which mimesis naturally prevails, hinting at the text's performative dimension;[21]
4. characters' *typification* function: by quoting the characters' own words in direct form, it provides a psychological portrait of the speaker. It is the so-called *ethopoeia*, a technique used to create specific characters – even though this does not appear to be frequently used in Herodotus. In fact, from a stylistic and expressive point of view, the way ordinary people speak does not differ too much from the one of kings and military commanders. The characters comply with stereotypical and barely individualized features: Xerxes is the

[18] From a functional standpoint, Paavo Hohti (1976) divides direct speech into two fundamental typologies: the "causative" one (the person who speaks illustrates a project, makes a wish, or expresses an idea he/she would like to realize) and the "non causative" one (speeches which are not directly context-related and basically convey the orator's evaluation or interpretation of an event without actually influencing the action).

[19] See, for instance, Herodotus 1.121: Astyages' words persuade Cyrus to leave for Persia.

[20] See, for instance, Herodotus 2.78: the servant's address to the banqueters illustrates the reason why a coffin containing the sculpted image of a corpse is carried around (as a reminder of the inevitability of death).

[21] For a narratological analysis of Adrastus' and Atys' episode, see de Jong 2005. On the comparison between Herodotean dramatization and tragic theatre, see Sancho-Montés 2003a; 2003b.

typically immature and reckless tyrant who acts in the shadow of his father, Darius, without possessing his greatness; in 1.30-1, Solon and Croesus symbolize the wise and the powerful man, respectively. In other words, Herodotus does not aim at outlining specific psychological individualities, but rather at presenting conceptions and behaviours that transcend single individuals;

5. *ideological* function: direct speeches often provide an interpretative key to the deep-rooted meaning of the narration, in the light of reflections on the specificity of the narrated situation and on human condition at large. This does not normally happen in the omniscient narrator's diegetic account, but rather in mimetic direct speeches, which display a secondary focalization. It is within this latter context that Herodotus tends to clarify the key concepts of his *Weltanschauung*, his own ethic conception as well as the values upon which one should evaluate historical events. This function appears to be particularly expedient when the speeches are meant to highlight a deliberative dynamics. In this regard, it does not come as a surprise that in Croesus' and Solon's episode, which is considered one of the key passages for the comprehension of Herodotus' ethic and religious ideas, he mainly employs *oratio obliqua* (indirect speech). On a total of ninety-three lines (see Asheri 1988), fifty-three are direct speech (57%) and the rest is pure diegesis. In the subsequent episode concerning Adrastus and Atys, which is connected with and clarifies the one of Croesus and Solon, we find a large portion of direct speech (fifty-one lines on 111, that is, 46%). The use of direct speech increases at ideologically crucial moments of the narration, when the narrated event takes on a paradigmatic tragic course (as when Croesus tries to prevent the fulfilment of the oracle that predicted his son's death, even though to no avail). Moreover, dialogic mimesis allows the narrator to achieve a problematic dramatization of alternative points of view, thus producing a 'judicial' fruition of the events – similar to the one that is inherent in the dialogues and rhetorical contests represented on stage. As I will try to demonstrate in the following section with reference to Xerxes' Council (7.8-19), the choice of relating an important deliberation with momentous historical repercussions by showing the 'dramatic' procedure which originated that same procedure bears significant ideological consequences. By adopting this strategy, not only does the historian amplify the fictional dimension out of all proportion and engage his listeners and/or readers emotionally, but he also frees himself (or better, pretends to do so) from the responsibility of pronouncing those words, thus producing a supplementary ideo-

logical impact. In other words, by embedding theatrical mimesis into the historiographical narration, the author efficaciously sanctions his own suggested disapproval of the way in which the Persians decree a new assault against the Greeks.

4. Mimesis and Deliberative Dynamics: Xerxes' Council.

One of the most significant excerpts in the whole of Herodotus' work is the set of four speeches that we find in Book 7 (8-19). This passage, in which mimesis prevails and which could be read as a theatrical script, dramatizes Xerxes' Council in Susa, the Persian capital, in 483 BC. Nobles and royal functionaries are discussing the opportunity whether to march against Greece. Xerxes is the first and the last to speak, following a chiastic pattern. His speeches are interpolated by Mardonius' and Artabanus' speeches, which support two antithetical arguments, while the other councillors remain silent and do not influence Xerxes' decision. The imagined setting is the king's palace, a closed rather than public space which is consciously chosen in order to convey to the Greek readers the typical scenario of a self-referential monarchical regime, totally alien to the deliberative dynamics that rule Athens and the Asian Ionic *poleis*. This four-fold sequence of speeches revolves around the Persian perspective and is clearly a Herodotean invention since the Greek historian could not have attended that meeting, nor could have he derived its chronicle from a source. Aeschylus used the same device when he conceived the setting of *The Persians* in Atossa's royal palace.

With his recent victorious expedition to crush the Egyptian rebellion in mind (7.7), Xerxes delivers a long and rhetorically sound introductory speech in which he expounds his invasion plan as if it had already been defined (7.8): he is determined to conquer and submit Greece in order to vindicate his father Darius. He refers to the belligerent tradition that has characterized the Persian people since the days of Cyrus and Cambyses as well as to the Persian innate expansionist tendency. The most important aspect of Xerxes' speech is the fact that he simply announces what should be done ("thus it must be done", ποιητέα μέν νυν ταῦτά ἐστι οὕτω, ibid.), suggesting no alternatives and speaking on the basis of a pre-defined action plan, although hypocritically inviting the council to express their opinion, "so that I not seem to you to have my own way" (ἵνα δὲ μὴ ἰδιοβουλέειν ὑμῖν δοκέω, ibid.). From the very beginning, the readers/listeners understand that this context is not one of a popular open assembly, similar to the Athenian gatherings, but that Xerxes is exclusively looking for the confirmation of a decision which has already been made.

There follow the speeches of the two generals, Mardonius and Artabanus, supporting two opposite points of view. Mardonius (7.9) is wholly in favour of the war; he greatly praises Xerxes and optimistically believes that the Persian army will defeat the Greeks because of their slothfulness and lack of military preparation. Mardonius' speech sounds as an authentic apology of Persian imperialism to which is added a theorization of Greek moral and martial inferiority. For his part, Artabanus, Xerxes' paternal uncle, begins to speak by recalling Darius' disastrous expedition against the Scythians and by warning against the danger that Xerxes too may fail (7.10). He therefore advises for caution, invites the king to think his decision over and take his time to consider all the risks it may imply. He relies on moral arguments that can be traced back to the concept of divine φθόνος (ὁ θεὸς φθονήσας, ibid.), the 'envy of the gods' which moves them to punish the mortals who dare exceed their own limits ("for the god loves to bring low all things of surpassing greatness").[22] As is well-known, this is a concept to which Herodotus often alludes (for instance, in the dialogues between Croesus and Solon, 1.30-3, or in the novella of Polycrates, 3.39-43).

As in a typical *Ringkomposition*, Xerxes takes the floor once again and closes this set of four speeches (7.11) by violently accusing Artabanus of being a coward and declaring that he will not punish him as he deserves only because he is his father's brother. He publicly vilifies him saying that he is unworthy of participating in the campaign and should stay behind with the women. He enumerates once more the reasons of the war, still mentioning one's duty to be faithful to tradition and the necessity to practice revenge; besides, he adds, the conflict with Greece is inevitable, hence they might as well attack them first so that they may avert a Greek expedition against Persia.

The whole passage is presented in a totally mimetic mode and all interventions are punctuated by introductory and closing comments, following a modality which can be frequently found in Herodotus, in Thucydides, and already in epos: "Xerxes spoke as follows" (ἔλεγε Ξέρξης τάδε), "So spoke and ceased" (ταῦτα εἴπας ἐπαύετο), "after him, Mardonius said" (μετ' αὐτὸν δὲ Μαρδόνιος ἔλεγε), "Thus Mardonius smoothed Xerxes' resolution and stopped" (Μαρδόνιος μὲν τοσαῦτα ἐπιλεήνας τὴν Ξέρξεω γνώμην ἐπέπαυτο), "then Artabanus . . . said" (Ἀρτάβανος . . . ἔλεγε τάδε), "Thus spoke Artabanus" (Ἀρτάβανος μὲν ταῦτα ἔλεξε), "Xerxes answered angrily" (Ξέρξης δὲ θυμωθεὶς ἀμείβεται τοῖσδε), "he said these things" (ταῦτα μὲν . . . ἐλέγετο).

In the Herodotean account, Xerxes' expedition against Greece finds yet another justification in the subsequent episode of the king's dreams, which

[22] φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν (7.10).

supplements the Council's debate. However, it is worth examining here what effect this mimetic four-fold sequence of speeches must have had on Herodotus' audience (ideological function). In a specific moment of his chronicle, the narrator interrupts the diegetic frame and leaves the focalization to the 'speaking' characters and, in particular, to Xerxes; this leads to a dramatization of the deliberative process that unfolds under the eyes of the readers/listeners the way in which the Persians reached the decision to attack Greece. This kind of '*mise en scène*' exposes the faults that a Greek eye/ear was likely to perceive as peculiar to an autocratic mentality, according to which the Council's meeting is nothing more than a specious fiction. In fact, the king has already made his decision and would not tolerate to be contradicted, yet he expects his pronouncements to be ratified and praised. Moreover, this almost totally mimetic section also performs an ideological function: Herodotus can efficaciously justify the great political and military event he is illustrating – the second Persian war – by orienting the comprehension of its moral and political meaning. If, on the one hand, the theatrical mimetic mode is functional to the dramatization of the event, on the other hand, it serves the purpose of averring its ideological and pragmatic content thanks to the judicial form, arranged according to a dramatic modality with which the audience was totally familiar.

5. Diegesis and Mimesis in Thucydides

Apart from methodological and conceptual dissimilarities between the Thucydidean and the Herodotean models, their exposition reveals many similarities with special regard to the diegetic dimension. Thucydides' narration is once again mainly extradiegetic (i.e. entrusted to an omniscient narrator who tells the story from outside the universe of the text), with zero focalization, intentionally constructed as a chain of narrative segments following one another according to logical and chronological criteria. These segments are related to each other by means of introductory or transitional formulae as well as instances of analepsis and prolepsis of events not included in the historical period under scrutiny (the years of the Peloponnesian war). The way in which the narrative segments are connected endows the text with a greater sense of cohesion and homogeneity than the Herodotean one (Thucydides especially avoids ethnographic explanatory excursuses and significantly reduces the digressions referring to possible different versions, viewed as alternative to the accepted one). Authorial first-person interventions, through which the writer voices subjective or metanarrative evaluations, are also uncommon (see, for example, the passage on methodological issues in 1.21-2) and so is the expression of personal doubts or uncertainty

about the sources (see, for instance, 6.54-5 on the circulating versions of the tyrannicide committed by Harmodius and Aristogeiton).

In Thucydides, the diegetic dimension also intersects mimesis when, through the insertion of direct speeches, the author hands over focalization to the protagonists of the events. The passages in which mimesis prevails correspond to the 20-25% of the whole text, a slightly higher percentage than what we find in Herodotus.[23] On the other hand, the passage from diegesis to mimesis generally appears to be more elaborate than in Herodotus; in addition to the usual introductory and closing formulae, relying on various *verba dicendi* (verbs of saying),[24] Thucydides also provides rather precise pieces of information about the context and the circumstances of the speech or speeches he reports by adding a synthetic account of the speakers' reasons and of the debate's outcome. In this regard, his narrative organization proves particularly useful in blending mimesis and diegesis, so that the transition from one to the other turns out to be as smooth as possible.[25]

Most speeches belong to the deliberative genre and are related to important decision-making moments which entail the discussion of political issues such as peace, war, alliances, etc. We often find two or more speeches linked together in an antilogic form or in antithetical pairs. On the one hand, this mechanism is remindful of the contemporary (sophistic) rhetorical techniques and, on the other, of a deeply antinomic conception of social, political, and military dynamics (Athens *vs* Sparta, democracy *vs* oligarchy, strength *vs* weakness, past *vs* present, *logos vs ergon*, Nicias *vs* Alcibiades, etc.). The essential functions of Thucydidean speeches are the same we listed for Herodotus, yet, while their use of the *causative* and *explanatory* functions basically coincide, the other three functions (3, 4, and 5 above) are worth exploring with regard to their original employment in Thucydides.

The *dramatizing* function fundamentally conveys the reader in the midst of an agon which produces decisions of great import for the continuation of the events. The reader is called to compare the characters' different stances and evaluate the whole decision-making process. On his part, the

[23] The greatest part of direct speeches can be found in the first books, perhaps because Thucydides managed to endow them with a more accomplished artistic form. The data on the percentage mimetic passages in Thucydides are taken from Scardino 2007: 458, but see also Lang 2011: 156.

[24] Introductory formulas: "he said"; "he said these things"; "he said this"; "he said these words" (ἔλεξε; ταῦτα ἔλεξε; τάδε ἔλεξε; τοιούτους λόγους εἶπεν). Closing formulas: "he said these things" (τοσαῦτα, τοιαῦτα ἔλεξε), etc.

[25] On the way in which Thucydides introduces and concludes his dialogues see Westlake 1973 and Pavlou 2013.

narrator never openly takes sides as to the content of a direct speech and never corrects what the characters say, but rather aims each time at shedding light on the reasons of the disputes. Despite the absence of overt authorial comments, at times the historian hints at his own opinions, for example when he introduces and contextualizes the events. A fine instance of this can be found in Book 6, in the context of the speeches that precede the expedition against Syracuse. After Nicias' (who speaks against the war) and before Alcibiades' intervention in the assembly, the narrator sheds a totally unfavourable light on the latter, presenting him as the one who was "by far the warmest advocate of the expedition" (ἐνῆγε δὲ προθυμότατα τὴν στρατείαν), eager to oppose Nicias, his political adversary (βουλόμενος τῷ τε Νικίᾳ ἐναντιοῦσθαι), and urged by his personal ambition "to become strategos" (καὶ μάλιστα στρατηγῆσαί τε ἐπιθυμῶν) as well as by the hope of improving his finances (6.15.2-3). The Melian dialogue (5.85-113) – which I will discuss further in § 6 below – is a particularly significant example of this dramatizing function, as to which I believe one can legitimately compare historiography to the theatre.

The *characters typification* appears to be underdeveloped in Thucydides, too; generally speaking, no specific linguistic or stylistic features, which may contribute to individualizing one character or the other, seem to emerge in his prose. Rather than offering a psychological portrait of the characters, by using direct speeches Thucydides aims at shaping different types who fulfil exemplary functions: Nicias, for instance, represents the paradigm of the wise and trustworthy political leader, while Alcibiades corresponds to the ambitious, rash, and individualistic one.[26] However, the orators often happen to be anonymous and referred to only by a collective name (the Athenians, the Spartans, the Melians). Also in this regard, Thucydides is much closer to Herodotus than one may suppose. What matters for him is the dynamics of the political and military actions, while the delineation of the characters' different features is actually a strategy he uses to analyze the events, rather than the result of a conscious *ethopoeia*. A clear example of this is Cleon's speech on the punitive expedition against Mytilene in Book 3 (36.6-40), the only one that we find in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*; its context is an Athenian assembly dealing with the opportunity to punish the Mytileneans for the 428 BC revolt. Cleon embodies the demagogic leader, the champion of the so-called radical democracy – much different from the Periclean model. He is always more preoccupied with his personal advantage than with the good of the community

[26] On the characterization of Nicias e Alcibiades, see Tompkins 1972, who rather emphasized the ethopoetic aspects (different expressive and argumentative styles) that Thucydides supposedly employed in order to individualize the two Athenian leaders. With regard to Archidamus' speech in 1.80-5, see also Tompkins 1993.

and, in this case, he supports the tough line. Thucydides is totally unsympathetic towards him and makes his position rather clear. He presents him as "the most violent man at Athens" (βιαιότατος τῶν πολιτῶν), capable of slyly winning the people's favour (3.36.6). Other sources tell us that Cleon would deliver impassioned harangues gesticulating wildly and moving up and down the tribune.[27] Now, Thucydides' Cleon makes a lengthy argument on the Athenians' tendency to be taken in by the orators' fine words and his style is generally calm, measured, and never excessive, just like Pericles' and other orators', such as Diodotus, who is his direct adversary during that same assembly and eventually obtains that Mytilene is spared. All in all, we find no element here that contributes to outlining the character's ethos and personality (see Nicolai 1998: 292-4). In the famous funeral oration for those who had fallen in the first year of the war (2.34-47), Pericles' own language and style betray no individual peculiarity, but homogenously conform to Thucydides' usual language and style.

In the end, there is no doubt that direct speeches perform an *ideological* function in Thucydides too, as they did in Herodotus. This function especially emerges within the speeches that refer to crucial decision-making; they are normally placed at key points of the narration (for example, in view of forthcoming military conflicts) and also establish a connection among the diegetic segments. It is precisely there, in the passages in which mimesis prevails and the author 'conceals' his presence behind the characters, that concepts, hints, and interpretative categories depending on the author's mind-set and vision of the world concentrate the most. Pericles' aforementioned funeral oration (2.34-47) may be taken as a striking example of this function; the oration is an absolutely ideal representation of Athens' political system, entirely based on paradigmatic and hypothetical rather than real premises, which the historian puts into the mouth of the leader of Athenian democracy.

Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides hardly ever calls into cause a supernaturally ordained plan (the will of the gods, fate, oracles); what actually counts is the individuals' psyche, its rational and irrational aspects, together with the concepts of utility, safety, as well as power relationships and the rules of political life.[28] Direct speeches tend therefore to take on a strong paradigmatic value, becoming instruments of analysis of political events, which can be used to understand their import and consequence beyond the state of affairs and endowing them with a universal meaning. They enable the readers to appreciate the inner dynamics of political decisions by differ-

[27] See Ar. *Eq.* 40-72; Plut. *Nic.* 8.

[28] On the philosophical premises of Herodotus' (pre-Socratic) and Thucydides' (Sophistic) historical conception, see López Eire 1990.

entiating what is essential from what is purely incidental, playing a role which is somewhat similar to the tragic choral *stasima*. In other words, it is through the mimetic sections (*oratio recta*) that Thucydides conveys his own ideas on the premises of the Peloponnesian war, on the nature of the protagonists of political life, and on the different circumstances that progressively unfold in the various phases of the conflict.

A comparison between the two historiographers has foregrounded many analogies between the two writers, in the first place the idea that both of them do not reproduce actual speeches, but hypothetical (and more or less faithful to historical reality) reconstructions. Herodotus appropriates and employs this kind of reconstructive mode, which derives from epos, without questioning neither the problem of faithfulness and congruence, nor of verisimilitude. In fact, he has been criticized since ancient times for putting a praise of democratic isonomy in Persian general Otanes' mouth: it was something that sounded scarcely believable to have happened in Susa, years before democracy was established in Athens.[29] Thucydides achieved a higher degree of consideration and self-awareness as is evident in the programmatic and methodological chapter 22 in Book 1, in which he illustrates the criterion he has followed to arrange the different speeches. He has inevitably given up literal exactness and has clung to what, according to him, was their "general sense" (ξυμπάση γνώμη) and overall logic.[30] This is a fundamental passage in that it reveals that Thucydides was conscious that he had to follow a criterion of verisimilitude (and therefore ad-

[29] This criticism is echoed in Book 6 (43.3): "When Mardonius arrived in Ionia in his voyage along the coast of Asia, he did a thing which I here set down for the wonder (μέγιστον θῶμα) of those Greeks who will not believe Otanes to have declared his opinion among the Seven that democracy was best for Persia". On this issue, see Lanza 1977: 225-32.

[30] Here is the complete passage concerning the construction of the speeches (1.22.1): "With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said" (καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθέν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ' εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται). In order to reproduce the overall line of reasoning of each speech, Thucydides must have critically verified all possible testimonies, personal memories, evidences, chronicles, etc.; it is ultimately the same procedure he adopted in order to reconstruct the facts. On the meaning of ξυμπάση γνώμη, see Porciani 1999.

here to a poietic 'mode') in order to present his readers with the illustration of political paradigmatic cases. Hence, he is perfectly aware that, in the mimetic sections, scientific accuracy coexists with a fictional and creative component, while the question of which has the upper hand remains open for debate. However, this is a false problem if one considers the interaction between the diegetic and the mimetic dimensions (see Morrison 2006), since, when located within diegesis, theoretically reconstructed verisimilar speeches grow 'authentic' in their own right, thus becoming an essential component of the narration.[31] Their importance does not proceed from their being historically valid (since they do not contain the orators' very words), but from their having an exegetic function. In a sense, the mimetic sections, the direct speeches in which the authorial voice hides behind the characters have no ancillary or subsidiary function with regard to diegesis, but rather direct and substantiate the narration itself by interpreting and illuminating the events of the historical narrative. When he adopts the theatrical mimetic mode (that is, an alternation of speeches and an extreme reduction of dialogue tags), the historiographer becomes a poet-playwright, as it were, in that he introduces segments of pure fiction, dominated by the rules of probability and verisimilitude which, according to Aristotle, characterized poetry as opposed to historiography (*Poet.* 1451a36-1452a11). Not only does such swerve of the narrative modality strengthen the dramatizing effect, but it also corroborates the ideological import the author wishes to convey. The case of the Melian dialogue in Book 5 is a case in point and deserves to be specifically addressed here.

6. A Case of Total Mimesis: the 'Tragic' Melian Dialogue

One particular section of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* takes on an emblematic value with regard to the relationship between diegesis and mimesis. It is the famous Melian dialogue in Book 5 (85-113), which the 'author-director' placed at a strategic narrative crossroads, as it represents Athens' last show of power before the Sicilian catastrophe. Thucydides tells us how the citizens of Melos, a Spartan colony, had no intention of joining the Delian league and declared themselves neutral. After repelling the first Athenian attempt to subdue them, the Melians had openly

[31] We should note that Thucydides carries out a selection of the speeches actually delivered during the meetings and assemblies of which he writes. Not only is he sparing of information about the details and the context of these gatherings, but he also makes a careful selection by focussing on single orations, which must have had an exemplary value, and completely ignoring the other orators, not even mentioning their names. See on this Canfora 1972: 32-7.

gone to war against Athens (5.84.2) and, Thucydides adds, before attacking the Melians, the two Athenian *strategoi*, Cleomedes and Tisias, sent a delegation to parley with the island's oligarchic authorities (5.84.3). This initiates a long dialogic confrontation divided into two sections, that is, two distinct dialogues; the first, composed of twenty-seven cues (5.85-111), is much longer than the second, which consists in a mere exchange of conclusive statements between the two parts (5.112-13). The two sections are interrupted by a pause during which the Athenians leave the encounter's venue in order for the Melians to deliberate privately.

As an ancient scholium put it, "[r]ather than a speech . . . he dared compose a dialogue" (ἀντὶ γὰρ δημηγορίας διάλογόν τινα . . . ἐτόλμησε συνθεῖναι);[32] the scholiast – who probably echoed a critical tradition unfavourable to Thucydides' choice – emphasized a crucial point here. Mimesis becomes a privileged and exclusive expressive tool as never before in fifth-century historiography. Not only is this dialogue extremely long (a feature we should not underestimate in any case), but it also and especially displays a few formal elements that make it unique. Thucydides adopts an intricate dialogic structure, decidedly different from the usual one; its specificity consists in the almost total absence of diegetic elements in order to give way to mimesis through direct speeches. As was customary on the stage and unlike Herodotus' but also Thucydides' own practice, no introductory formula precedes the interventions. Only the first two cues of the first and the second dialogue are introduced by preliminary statements, such as "the Athenian envoys spoke as follows" and "[t]he Melian commissioners answered".[33] The other twenty-five speeches follow one another, alternating theses and antitheses as in a rhetorical or dramatic agon with no interruption on the narrator's part. The Melians expound their arguments which the Athenians contradict point by point; occasionally the rhythm of this 'cut and riposte performance' is so pressing that the dialogue takes on the pace of a tragic *stichomythia*. Thucydides is unquestionably aware of the mimetic and theatrical organization of the dialogue to the extent that he makes the Athenians suggest to adopt a dialectic procedure right from the start and their interlocutors willingly accept the proposal: "Make no set speech yourselves, but take us up at whatever you do not like, and settle that before going any farther".[34]

Ancient literary critics had not disregarded the peculiarity of this mimetic pattern embedded in a diegetic context as we gather from a com-

[32] See on this Hude 1927: 318, 24-6.

[33] οἱ δὲ τῶν Ἀθηναίων πρέσβεις ἔλεγον τοιάδε, 5.85; οἱ δὲ τῶν Μηλίων ξύνεδροι ἀπεκρίναντο, 5.86.

[34] καθ' ἕκαστον γὰρ καὶ μηδ' ὑμεῖς ἑνὶ λόγῳ, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ μὴ δοκοῦν ἐπιτηδείως λέγεσθαι εὐθὺς ὑπολαμβάνοντες κρίνετε, 5.85.

ment by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his *On Thucydides* (first century BC). In general, Dionysius was scarcely appreciative of this dialogue exactly because, among other reasons, he saw its form as excessively dramatized. At a certain point, he claimed that Thucydides employs "the diegetic arrangement" (τοῦτο τὸ σχῆμα . . . τὸ διηγηματικόν) only in one case, while in the rest of the dialogue "he resorts to the presence of the characters and makes it dramatic" (προσωποποιεῖ τὸν μετὰ ταῦτα διάλογον καὶ δραματίζει).[35] Dionysius' lexical choices, with special regard to the verb δραματίζειν ('to dramatize') and προσωποποιεῖν, that is, resorting to πρόσωπα ('characters'), definitely allude to the world of theatre, drama, and performance. Indeed, thanks to its extreme mimetic mode, which has no precedents in historiographical writing before Thucydides and, as far as I can tell, has never been used again since then, the Melian dialogue gives the impression of having been conceived for the stage. The abbreviations for "Athenians" and "Melians", which we still find in modern editions, were subsequently added in order to partition the different cues, according to a customary mechanism that set in when the readerly consumption of these texts became well-established.[36]

The eccentric features of this dialogue are so clearly atypical that Thucydidean scholars have in turn hypothesized that it could originally constitute a separate work, a single dialogue similar to the contemporary Sophistic ones that Thucydides, or perhaps others, later appended to the *History of the Peloponnesian War*.[37] Following the same line of reasoning, it has been conjectured that the Melian dialogue could be a piece of propaganda meant for oral delivery within some oligarchic Hetairia.[38] There is no space here to discuss issues of authenticity with regard to this text, yet it seems to me reasonable enough to assume that Thucydides consciously chose an ex-

[35] Radermacher and Usener 1899: 325-418 (*De Thucydide*, 37-41).

[36] See on this Canfora 1992: 14. In one of the most ancient testimonies (Heidelberg library, Palatinus Graecus 252), the text presents no subdivision or signs allowing us to distinguish the dialogue's cues, while others (for instance, the Laurentian 69, 2, coeval with the Palatinus, and the Vatican Gr. 126) include a series of abbreviations in the margin that help us decipher the organization of the dialogue. The inhomogeneous attribution of the lines in Byzantine manuscripts shows the same hesitations which one may also find in the manuscript tradition of the playwrights.

[37] Relying on Georg Grote's hypothesis, Georg Busolt defined the Melian dialogue "a fragment of a *Melou Alosis*" (1904: 674); see also Beloch 1916: 14. Henry Dickinson Westlake considers it "a separate minor work" (1968: 317n1). See also Canfora 1971: 409ff., 2011: 166ff., and Neri 2004: 78n6. It has even been suggested that one may identify peculiar linguistic and stylistic features that would characterize the Melian and the Athenian rhetorical stances (see Redondo 1999).

[38] See on this Schmid 1948: 177n3; Canfora 1979: 32ff.

perimental form, which he may have derived from tragic theatre, in order to relate in a particularly dramatic way an event which, according to him, should be endowed with a distinctive symbolic and paradigmatic meaning. In fifth-century Athens tragic theatre must have been perceived as the dominant artistic form, one that could most efficaciously educate a large audience; and it was perhaps for this reason that Thucydides felt the need to employ, at crucial moments of his narration, patterns drawn from stage performance.

In this "splendid example of dramaturgy of power"[39] (Paduano 1991: 2.1463), Thucydides chooses a specific and concrete example – the great Athenian power subjugating a small neutral community – in order to make room for wider historical and political considerations and to reflect upon the dynamics of power relationships as well as on the natural tendency of the strong to prevail over the weak. However, if we read the Melian dialogue in the light of Athens' subsequent Sicilian expedition and its disastrous outcome, we can appreciate the strikingly tragic paradigm of the events that saw the Athenians precipitate from the peak of their power to the misery of defeat (see Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 2.2.3). In the dialogue, they censure their interlocutors' poor rationality and incapacity of drawing up a realistic account of the forces at play, and yet, in the Sicilian military venture, they will make the same mistakes, which will eventually cost them a very great deal. The 'tragic' core of these events may therefore have led the historian to employ extreme (theatrical) mimesis as the most suitable form for his narration.

English translation by Lisanna Calvi

Works Cited

Asheri, David (ed.) (1988), *Erodoto. Le Storie* (*La Lidia e la Persia*), Milano: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, vol. 1.

Beloch, Karl Julius (1916), *Griechische Geschichte*, Berlin: De Gruyter, vol. 2.2.

Busolt, Georg (1904), *Griechische Geschichte*, Gotha: Perthes, vol. 3.2.

Butti de Lima, Paulo (1996), *L'inchiesta e la prova. Immagine storiografica, pratica giuridica e retorica nella Grecia classica*, Torino: Einaudi.

Canfora, Luciano (1971), "Per una storia del dialogo dei Melii e degli Ateniesi", *Belfagor*, 26: 409-26.

— (1972), *Totalità e selezione*, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

— (1979), "*Strutture e funzione del dialogo in Tucidide e in Pseudo-Senofonte*", in *La struttura della fabulazione antica* (Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Filologia classica e medievale 54), Genova: Università di Genova: 37-44.

— (1992), *Tucidide e l'impero. La presa di Mileto*, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

[39] "[S]plendido esempio di drammaturgia del potere".

— (2011), *Il mondo di Atene*, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Cornford, Francis M. (1907), *Thucydides Mythistoricus,* London: Arnold.

Crawley, Richard (ed.) (1910), *Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Richard Crawley, London: Dent / New York: Dutton.

Darbo-Peschanski, Catherine (1987), *Le discours du particulier. Essai sur l'enquête hérodotéenne*, Paris: Seuil.

De Jong, Irene J.F. (1999), "Aspects narratologiques des Histoires d'Hérodote", *Lalies*, 19: 217-75.

— (2004), "Herodotus", in Irene J.F. de Jong, René Nünlist, and Angus M. Bowie (eds), *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, Leiden and Boston: Brill: 101-14.

— (2005), "Narratologia e storiografia. Il racconto di Atys e Adrasto in Erodoto 1, 34-45", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, 80: 87-96.

Dorati, Marco (2000), *Le storie di Erodoto: etnografia e racconto*, Pisa-Roma: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali.

Emlyn-Jones, Chris and William Preddy (eds) (2013), *Plato. Republic. Books 1-5*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Fritz, Kurt von (1956), "Die Bedeutung des Aristoteles für die Geschichtsschreibung", in *Histoire et historiens dans l'antiquité* (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 4), Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt: 85-145.

Genette, Gérard (1980), *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univeristy Press.

— (1988), *Narrative discourse revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Godley, Alfred Denis (ed.) (1926), *Herodotus*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Grethlein, Jonas (2013), *Experience and Teleology in Ancient Historiography: 'Futures Past' from Herodotus to Augustine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halliwell, Stephen (ed.) [1995] (1999), *Aristotle. Poetics*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Hamilton, Hans Claude (ed.) (1854-57), *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. by Hans Claude Hamilton and William Falconer, London: Henry G. Bohn.

Hohti, Paavo (1976), *The Interrelation of Speech and Action in the Histories of Herodotus*, Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica.

Hude, Karl (ed.) (1927), *Scholia in Thucydidem ad optimos codices collata*, Leipzig: Teubner.

Lang, Mabel L. (1984), *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

— (2011), *Thucydidean Narrative and Discourse*, Ann Arbor: Michigan Classical Press.

Lanza, Diego (1977), *Il tiranno e il suo pubblico*, Torino: Einaudi.

Latacz, Joachim (1975), "Zur Forschungsarbeit an den direkten Reden bei Homer (1850-1970). Ein kritischer Literatur-Überblick", *Grazer Beiträge*, 3: 395-422.

López Eire, Antonio (1990), "De Heródoto a Tucídides", *Studia Historica*, 8: 75-96.

Morrison, James V. (2006), "Interaction of Speech and Narrative in Thucydides", in Antonios Rengakos and Antonis Tsakmakis (eds), *Brill's Companion to Thu-*

cydides, Leiden: Brill: 251-77.

— (2007), "Thucydides' History Live: Reception and Politics," in Craig Cooper (ed.), *The Politics of Orality*, Leiden-Boston: Brill: 217-33.

Neri, Camillo (2004), "Le dialogue entre les Athéniens et les Méliens chez Thucydide: une Ur-Form du genre des Questions et Réponses?", in Annelie Volgers and Claudio Zamagni (eds), *Erotapokriseis. Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context*, Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA: Peeters: 71-9.

Nicolai, Roberto (1998), "I discorsi di Tucidide: analisi storico-politica, paradigmaticità, integrazione nella diegesi, verosimiglianza", *Storiografia*, 2: 288-94.

Paduano, Guido (1991), *Il racconto della letteratura greca*, Bologna: Zanichelli.

Pavlou, Maria (2013), *Attributive Discourse in the Speeches in Thucydides*, in Antonis Tsakmakis and Melina Tamiolaki (eds), *Thucydides Between History and Literature*, Berlin: De Gruyter: 409-33.

Porciani, Leone (1999), "Come si scrivono i discorsi. Su Tucidide 1 22 1", *Quaderni di storia*, 49: 103-35.

Radermacher, Ludwig and Hermann Usener (eds) (1899), *Dionysii Halicarnasei quae exstant*, Leipzig: Teubner, vol. 5.

Redondo, Jordi (1999), "Diálogo y retórica en Tucídides: el debate entre atenienses y melios", in Vicente Bécares Botas, M. Pilar Fernández Álvarez, and Emiliano Fernández Vallina (eds), *Kalon Theama. Estudios de Filología Clásica e Indoeuropeo dedicados a F. Romero Cruz*, Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca: 197-207.

Renkagos, Antonios (2006), "Thucydides' Narrative: The Epic and Herodotean Heritage", in Antonios Rengakos and Antonis Tsakmakis (eds), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, Leiden: Brill: 251-77.

Rood, Tim (2007a), "Herodotus", in Irene J.F de Jong and René Nünlist (eds), *Time in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, Leiden: Brill: 115-30.

— (2007b), "Thucydides", in Irene J.F de Jong and René Nünlist (eds), *Time in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, Leiden: Brill: 131-46.

Rösler, Wolfgang (2002), "The Histories and Writing", in Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J.F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees (eds), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, Leiden: Brill: 79-94.

Sancho-Montés, Susana (2003a), "La dramatització a les Històries d'Heròdot: alcun procediments de caire literari", *Ítaca. Quaderns Catalans de Cultura Clàssica*, 19: 27-37.

— (2003b), *Procedimientos de dramatización en las Historias de Herodóto (libros I-IX)*, Amsterdam: Hakkert.

Scardino, Carlo (2007), *Gestaltung und Funktion der Reden bei Herodot und Thukydides*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

Schmidt, Wilhelm and Otto Stählin (1948), *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*. München: Beck, vol. 5.

Strasburger, Hermann (1972), *Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung*, Heidelberg: Winter.

Tompkins, Daniel P. (1972), "Stylistic Characterization in Thucydides' Nicias and Alcibiades", *Yale Classical Studies*, 22: 181-214.

— (1993), "Archidamus and the Question of Characterization in Thucydides", in Ralph. M. Rosen and Joseph Farrell (eds), *Nomodeiktes: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 99-111.

Walbank, Frank W. (1960), "History and Tragedy", *Historia*, 9: 216-34.

Westlake, Henry Dickinson (1968), *Individuals in Thucydides*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1968.

— (1973), *The Settings of Thucydidean Speeches*, in Philip A. Stadter (ed.), *The Speeches in Thucydides. A Collection of Original Studies with a Bibliography*, Chapter Hill: The University of North Carolina Press: 90-108.

Guido Avezzù*

"It is not a small thing to defeat a king".[1] The Servant/Messenger's Tale in Euripides' *Electra*.

Abstract

In Euripides' *Electra*, the narrative of Aegisthus' murder (774-858) is generally appreciated for its vividness. Yet, both the dialogue that precedes the speech and the speech itself constitute an exception among the messenger-speeches in Attic tragedies for their length and emphasis upon dramatized speech, respectively. Furthermore, the unexpected opposition between 'words' and 'deeds' made by Orestes himself after his victory over Aegisthus (893-4) seems to substantially relativize the dramatic convention of the messenger-speech as a whole. This essay aims at exploring (a) the complex way in which the Servant/Messenger establishes a contact with his addressees, and (b) his peculiar interlacing of diegesis and mimesis, narrative and dialogue, which suggests a distinctive metatheatrical function with symbolic implications regarding the offstage/onstage space in relation to Aegisthus' murder.

In the Servant/Messenger's tale of Euripides' *Electra* (774-858) scholars have detected features typical of the 'epic mode', such as "the high incidence of direct speech and of detailed 'word paintings' of scene and routine events" (Cropp 1988: 153). August Wilhelm Schlegel, who defined it as "a long-winded account . . . interlard[ed] with many a joke",[2] noted its many ironic utterances especially in the dialogues between Aegisthus and Orestes. This

[1] *Electra* 760: οὔτοι βασιλέα φαῦλον κρατεῖν. Here I follow Denniston 1939: 145, who preferred κρατεῖν (*kratein*, 'to defeat, to get power over') from MS. P than MS. L's κτανεῖν (*ktanein*, 'to kill'). I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for her/his precious suggestions and Silvia Bigliazzi for discussing with me the several stages of the Servant/Messenger's speech.

[2] "But at the moment a messenger arrives, who gives a long-winded account of the death of Aegisthus, and interlards it with many a joke" (trans. by Black 1815); "Sogleich kommt aber ein Bote, welcher den Untergang des Aegisth weitläufig mit mancherley Scherzen berichtet", Schlegel 1825: 165. Scheglel's opinion on *Electra* is well known: "the very worst of Euripides' pieces" (trans. by Black); "das allerschlechteste Stück des Euripides", 1825: 170-1.

* University of Verona - guido.avezzu@univr.it

comment was in line with Schlegel's general disparagement of *Electra* and his implicit assumption that tragic messengers were required only to provide information impersonally. As Ulrich von Wilamowitz peremptorily remarked, "the messenger is impersonal" ("der Bote ist unpersönlich"; 1922: 186n1). Since then criticism has often defined the tragic messenger-speech (*rhesis angelike*) as a "rational account of objective fact" as opposed to the "irrational and subjective attitudes which characterise the singer of [a] monody" (Barlow 1971: 61). This assumes that the messenger-speech and monodic singing stand on opposite ends of a continuum, suggesting that objectivity and subjectivity are expressible in degrees. However, the contrast between "attitudes" and "fact" belies a conceptual snare. As de Jong has aptly stressed (1991: 63-103, esp. the section "Scholars on objectivity": 63-5), the fact that "the Euripidean messenger reports (fictional) facts" cannot in any case be disjointed from an awareness that "no narrative is ever objective", even when one says that "he [the messenger] does not lie" (1991: 64-5; cf. Bal 1988: 142; more recently Barrett 2002: 14-22). In *Electra* as well as in the other Euripidean plays where a messenger appears, he does not merely deliver a speech, but also prepares his own performance in order to be pragmatically successful. In this particular play, as will be seen, he is both emotionally involved and eager to establish a contact with his addressee, alternatively foregrounding the phatic and the conative functions with a strong dramatic impact.[3] And yet, as Hanna Roisman and Cecelia Luschnig have pointed out, "[o]f all the messengers in Greek tragedy (twenty-six in all) this is the only one who is not believed" (2011: 188).[4] This curious exception calls for inquiry, suggesting that the messenger's preliminaries to his tale (761-73) are not unconnected with the tale itself and his own communicative strategy.[5] It should be recalled that, peculiarly, he is not only a witness, but also takes part in both the narrated action and in the events preceding it and leading towards it. This turns him into an 'actor', and as such, once in front of Electra, he will foreground his 'testimonial function' (Genette 1980: 256), and consequently his own reliability and understanding of the events. He will also connote his report 'ideologically' (ibid.) and in order to establish as close a contact as possible with his addressee he will

[3] Similar examples may be found in *Med.* 1121-3, *Andr.* 1069bis-71, *Su.* 634-40, *HF* 910-20, *Pho.* 1335, *Or.* 852-4, *Ba.* 1024-8; see also *Hcld.* 783-7, *IT* 1284-7, *Hel.* 1512-3. Contact with the addressee/s is especially strived after in *Hipp.* 1153-5, *Ion* 1106-8, *Pho.* 1067-71, *Ba.* 660-2, *IA* 1532-3, *Rh.* 264-5.

[4] Twenty-six is the number both Erdmann 1964 and Rijksbaron 1976 calculated. They amount to twenty-two in the inventory drawn by de Jong 1991: 179-80.

[5] The same remark would fit the interventions of the herald/*keryx*, a peculiar figure we should distinguish from the messenger/*angelos*; on this distinction see below, p. 73-4, and Avezzù 2015: 16-19.

accurately tie his story-telling to the dramatic context of his own speech and narrative gesture.

Before discussing this peculiar narrative performance, though, let us briefly consider the murder plot and the report of Aegisthus' death in the other two plays dealing with the same story: Aeschylus' *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*. It should be remarked from the start that in Euripides' *Electra* the messenger-speech is no less ingenious than in Sophocles' ("a virtuoso display of narrative fireworks", as Patrick Finglass put it, 2007a: 300). However, it is more prominently mimetic, a feature which may be related to both his role in the murder plot and the way the revenge was actually executed. I will argue that this peculiar narrative unveils an attempt to deal with the murder scene onstage,[6] apparently bypassing common practices followed by Sophocles and Aeschylus, but in fact raising more radical metatheatrical questions. Through the messenger's prominent 'narrative ventriloquism' making for vivid story-telling, Euripides brings that scene on stage vicariously. And yet, as will be seen, he only further hides it from view, raising challenging questions on the relation between words (*logoi*), action (*drama*), and deeds (*erga*).

The Murder of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra: Plotting and Reporting in Aeschlylus' *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*

In *Choephori*, the murder plot (555: "this pact with me", τάσδε συνθήκας ἐμάς) is first alluded to at ll. 540-50, although it will be dealt with more precisely a few lines later, at ll. 552-76. Its peculiarity consists not only in being "straightforward, brisk, and somehow prosaic" (Garvie 1986: 197), but also in envisioning an action which, contrary to expectations, will occur in a very different way. Unlike what Orestes foresees here (565-70), he will encounter no difficulty in getting into the royal palace with Pylades. Nor will their meeting with Aegisthus be immediately violent, as vividly prefigured at ll. 572-6. As Oliver Taplin remarked, "the plot of Orestes, as well as being misleading in several details, does not include the essential element of Orestes' 'false death'" (1977: 342n2). Roger Dawe has justly foregrounded the inconsistency between this plot and the subsequent events (652-718, 730-82, and 838-69):

[6] Murder is traditionally not staged (Parker 1996: 13-16, 316-7; Zeppezauer 2011: 6-13, 57-80 on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*), and violent deaths are par excellence the subject of the messengers' report; both Cassandra's prophetic vision in *Agamemnon*, and this messenger-speech bypass, in their own way, the fear that *miasma* ('pollution') resulting from the murder would affect the community.

> in one or two points the plan of vengeance and the actual course of events coincide with each other . . . [b]ut the dissimilarities are much more numerous and weighty. It is impossible to reconcile the two accounts, and it would be misguided even to try. The truth is that the plan has a life of his own, and is developed for its own sake, very much like the description of the chariot race in Sophocles' *Electra*. (1963: 55-6)

However, a couple of observations may be added to Dawe's final remark. In Sophocles' *Electra*, the Pedagogue's tale (680-763) responds to Clytemnestra's question about Orestes' fate ("but do you, stranger, tell me the truth! How did he die?", 678-9).[7] His answer is emphatic and amplifies his previous succinct message of death ("Orestes is dead! There you have it in a word!", 673; "I said and I say now that Orestes is dead", 676) into a narrative 84-lines long.[8] As Marshall has pointed out, "the detail provides a certain amount of a corroboration of an evidentiary nature", which persuades not only Clytemnestra but also, and unequivocally, Electra who "can later affirm . . . that she heard it . . . 'from someone who was there when he died' (927)" (Marshall 2006: 204-5). It may be added that the many autoptical details, on which the Pedagogue dwells at ll. 762-3,[9] are received by Electra as marking the reliability of a tale which rather than having the purpose of being informative was clearly ment from the start to serve a strategy of *captatio benevolentiae*: "Hail, royal lady! I bring to you and to Aegisthus good news from a friend".[10] This will convince Electra to rely upon this tale – and tales in general – even more than on visible proofs such as the offerings on Agamemnon's tomb Chrysothemis mentions as evidence of Orestes' arrival (883-6):

ΗΛ. καὶ τίνος βροτῶν λόγον
τόνδ' εἰσακούσασ' ὧδε πιστεύεις ἄγαν;
ΧΡ. ἐγὼ μὲν ἐξ ἐμοῦ τε κοὐκ ἄλλου σαφῆ 885
σημεῖ' ἰδοῦσα τῷδε πιστεύω λόγῳ.

[7] ἐμοὶ δὲ σύ, ξένε, / τἀληθὲς εἰπέ, τῷ τρόπῳ διόλλυται. Here and below the translation is taken from Lloyd-Jones 1994.

[8] On these anticipations of the whole messages see de Jong 1991: 32-3 (with previous bibliography).

[9] "[*Ped.*] Such was this event, terrible to relate, and *for those that saw it, as we did*, the worst disaster of all that *I have beheld*"; ([ΠΑ.] τοιαῦτά σοι ταῦτ' ἐστίν, ὡς μὲν ἐν λόγοις / ἀλγεινά, *τοῖς δ' ἰδοῦσιν*, *οἵπερ εἴδομεν*, / μέγιστα πάντων ὧν *ὄπωπ' ἐγὼ* κακῶν; emphasis added).

[10] ΠΑ. ὦ χαῖρ', ἄνασσα. σοὶ φέρων ἥκω λόγους / ἡδεῖς φίλου παρ' ἀνδρὸς Αἰγίσθῳ θ' ὁμοῦ (666-7). On the contrary, in Aeschylus' *Choephori*, Orestes, bearer of the false news of his own death (658-9), did not qualify the "news" (καινοὶ λόγοι) he was breaking to the masters of the house. Campbell's translation as "strange tidings" (1893: 84) sounds a little strained.

[El. [F]rom whom . . . have you heard the story to which you give excessive credence? // Chrys. I believe this story because I have seen signs with my own eyes, and have not heard it from another].[11]

The Pedagogue's bravura piece has clearly the function of validating the content of his own message by resorting to the typically messenger-speech form. As Marshall has correctly pointed out:

> The *dolos* will succeed only if this speech is seen as conventional. To succeed dramatically, Sophocles uses the Pedagogue's speech as a representative type for the 'tragic messenger-speech'. (2006: 208)

Looking at *Choephori*, Orestes' pretended plan cannot be defined as a bravura piece: it merely anticipates his later encounter with Aegisthus in a "simple story" (554: ἁπλοῦς . . . μῦθος) devised to produce a sort of emotional autosuggestion.[12] Alerted by the Nurse, Aegisthus will arrive at l. 838, will join Orestes in the palace at l. 854, and will be killed at l. 869 (see Taplin 1977: 346-8). There is neither plan nor report of the murder here, but only, after the event, a fleeting mention of Aegisthus' death on the part of his servant (typologically an *exangelos*),[13] who will also briefly allude to Clytemnestra's forthcoming death at the emotional climax of his speech (875-84, 886).

In Sophocles' *Electra*, prompted by the Pedagogue, Orestes illustrates the plot he has devised before the beginning of the play (29: τὰ δόξαντα, "my decisions"), adding a few considerations on the opportunity to spread the news of his false death (59-66). Here too the trap (*dolos*) hinges upon the false tale of Orestes' death, but Sophocles replaces Orestes' improvisation in *Choephori* with a two-phase scheme, whose preparation has been witnessed by the audience (cf. Marshall 2006: 207). His plan opens with the Pedagogue's lies (ll. 38-50 provide the instructions for its later execution at ll. 660-822),[14] followed by Orestes' arrival in disguise and bearing a funerary urn (this detail is imagined at ll. 51-8 and realized at l. 1098). Nev-

[11] "Chrysothemis insists on giving her (true) report at ll. 892-919, starting with 'I'll tell you *everything I saw*' (καὶ δὴ λέγω σοι *πᾶν ὅσον κατειδόμην*), but this time without any chance of success" (Easterling 2014: 235; emphasis added).

[12] As already mentioned, the plan will not correspond to the actions: instead, Aegisthus' murder will closely follow the 'false death narrative' which Orestes himself has previously told his mother, perhaps without premeditation, if only in the generic allusion to the "news" he is bearing at l. 659, and certainly with neither his sister nor the Chorus being informed.

[13] *LSJ*: ἐξάγγελος (II): "Messenger who told what was doing in the house or behind the scenes (opp. ἄγγελος, who told news from a distance); first used by Aeschylus".

[14] Arrival and establishment of a contact: 660-79; false death tale: 680-763; Clytemnestra's and Electra's reactions to it: 766-822.

ertheless, this plan does not specify the timing of the violent actions that will follow Orestes' arrival at the palace. As is well-known, differently from what we have in Aeschylus and Euripides, Clytemnestra's murder will precede Aegisthus', and the killing of the usurper will not be part of the dramatic action. This final sequence is extremely condensed:[15] Electra, the Chorus, and the audience partake in Clytemnestra's assassination as they hear her screaming off stage;[16] Aegisthus' arrival is suddenly announced by the Chorus (1428); the palace's door is opened (1465), Clytemnestra's corpse is unveiled (1475), Aegisthus enters the palace (1503), followed by Orestes, and eventually meets his death – as it were, final curtain. All in all, this is a rather complex plan, and yet it is deficient in a few fundamental aspects, as well as in reports: both the Chorus and the audience perceive the off-stage events or get an anticipation of those about to happen not from the words of an *angelos* or *exangelos* but thanks to a hectic stage action which is run in real time.

The Plot to Kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in Euripides' *Electra*

Orestes, Electra, and the Old Man meticulously contrive the murder of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra in the course of a tightly woven dialogue at ll. 612-67: the murders of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra – in this order – fill twenty-six and twenty-four lines, respectively; the double murder sequence is implicitly suggested by the Old Man in his short preamble (612-13); at the end of the exchange Electra dismisses her brother and the Old Man (see Appendix). Nothing is left to improvisation, except for the final and more critical phases of the killing of the usurper (639) and of their mother (662). Pylades – who had exited the hut at l. 549 – is present but does not in-

[15] See Taplin 1971: 41n37. It should be noted that, according to Taplin, "the same effect is achieved in Eur. *El.* 986ff. . . . in Sophocles the structural technique is much bolder, which may suggest it is later". I am not sure whether this is entirely convincing.

[16] See *scholium* at l. 1404: "Messengers normally report the things that have taken place inside to those outside, but here he (the poet) did not compose in this way, so as not to waste time in the play, since its main subject is the suffering of Electra. So here the spectator hears Clytemnestra shouting as she is murdered, and the action is more effective than if it were described through the medium of a messenger. The sensationalism of display was absent, but through the shouting he contrived a no less vivid effect." (trans. Easterling 2014: 232); cf. Xenis 2010: ἔθος ἔχουσι τὰ γεγονότα ἔνδον ἀπαγγέλλειν τοῖς ἔξω οἱ ἄγγελοι, νῦν δὲ διὰ τὸ μὴ διατρίβειν ἐν τῷ δράματι οὐκ ἐποίησεν. τούτῳ γὰρ προκείμενον τὸ κατὰ τὴν Ἠλέκτραν ἐστὶ πάθος. νῦν τοίνυν βοώσης ἐν τῇ ἀναιρέσει τῆς Κλυταιμήστρας ἀκούει ὁ θεατὴς καὶ ἐνεργέστερον τὸ πρᾶγμα γίνεται ἢ δι' ἀγγέλου σημαινόμενον. καὶ τὸ μὲν φορτικὸν τῆς ὄψεως ἀπέστη, τὸ δὲ ἐναργὲς οὐδὲν ἧσσον καὶ διὰ τῆς βοῆς ἐπραγματεύσατο.

tervene. There is also at least one of Orestes' servants, the same who will come back as a Messenger at l. 761 and will reveal his identity at l. 766.

The audience witness the devising of the plot just as they listen to the enunciation of Orestes' plan in the prologue of Sophocles' *Electra*. Yet, in Euripides the Chorus, who have been silent since l. 596, are also present and will sing again in front of the empty stage from l. 699 to l. 746. After a sort of invocation in three voices to Zeus "Paternal", the Argive Hera, Agamemnon, and "all the dead" (671-83),[17] and after Electra's last advice to her brother, who is entrusted with the first phase of the revenge plan (668, 685-92),[18] Orestes, the Old Man, Pylades, and one or more of Orestes' servants leave the stage (692). The Old Man will lead Orestes and his companions to Aegisthus' horse-pastures, not far from Electra's hut and "right beside the road" (636: ὁδὸν παρ' αὐτήν), where, upon his arrival, the Old Man had seen the king "preparing a feast for the Nymphs"[19] (621-36). Perhaps before being recognized by Aegisthus and his guard, the Old Man will then leave for Mycenae in order to meet Clytemnestra and start off the second phase of the plot (announced at ll. 650-67). Therefore, Orestes, Pylades, and the servant(s) alone will face Aegisthus.

The Messenger-Speech in Euripides' *Electra*

> There is no strength of messengers
> compared with one's own interrogation of them.
> οὐδὲν ἀγγέλων σθένος
> ὡς αὐτὸν αὐτῶν ἄνδρα πεύθεσθαι πάρα.
> Aeschylus, *Choephori* 849-50[20]

The first three scenes of the third Episode (746bis-1146) are devoted to conveying the outcome of Orestes' mission: (I) distant shouts announce the end of the fight between Orestes and Aegisthus (746bis-60); (II) the Messenger arrives, announces Aegisthus' defeat, and engages in a dialogue with Electra (761-73); (III) he narrates Orestes' exploit (774-858). I will briefly analyze these three scenes in order to show how the focalization of the messenger-speech is anticipated, at least to some degree, in the preceding dialogues.

(I) A cry (*boe*) is heard and is received as the possible sign that the fight

[17] I follow Diggle 1981, and therefore read l. 683 before 682 and l. 693 after 684.

[18] Lines 685-9 sound like an unnecessary anticipation of what will immediately follow and raise many doubts, although negligible as regards our analysis.

[19] Unless otherwise stated, translations of Euripides' *Electra* are from Cropp 1988.

[20] On the text and its interpretation see Garvie 1986: 279.

(*agon*) between Orestes and Aegisthus is over or about to be over. There follows a brief dialogue in single alternating lines (*stichomythia*) between the Coryphaeus and Electra on how one should interpret it. The outcome (at least its gist), unknown to the Chorus as well as to the protagonist, is instead well-known to the audience through the epic, lyric, and dramatic traditions. This produces an "unevenness of information" because the audience not only "know no more than what [they] see, or what the characters say they think and want" (Segre 1980: 46 and 43), but also know the 'core' of the myth (that Aegisthus is not expected to kill Orestes). As we shall see further on, this implies two distinct yet implicit focalizations on the part of the playwright. The sign, which the Coryphaeus describes to her companions and then interprets as the lament of a dying man (752), does not bring the message – high as a beacon and indisputable – that Electra has asked the Chorus for.[21] It is just noise and yelling, coming from the extra-scenic space and is not necessarily meant to be heard by the audience.[22] Nor is it a *symbolon*, like the one that in *Agamemnon* signals the taking of Troy (8: λαμπάδος . . . σύμβολον, "the *symbolon* brought by the torch") and carries a message (φάτις) that, having been prearranged by those who had devised the signalling sequence, is unequivocal. Therefore, if one takes πυρσεύετε at l. 694 ("cry the beacon-news") to be an allusion to the fire-signals of *Agamemnon*,[23] one can only observe that Euripides overturns their communicative principles and problematizes their gnoseological efficacy no less radically than how he had addressed the process of recognition at ll. 508-46. After exiting the hut (751) with the sword with which she is resolved to kill herself, should Orestes fail (cf. 695-8), Electra may only infer that the *agon* is over in one way or another. She expects that her brother will immediately let her know if he is successful, but no messenger has arrived yet, although

[21] Lines 694-5: ὑμεῖς δέ μοι, γυναῖκες, εὖ πυρσεύετε / κραυγὴν ἀγῶνος τοῦδε ("you women, take care to cry out the beacon-news of this encounter").

[22] Likewise, one must not assume that the audience see "the dust whirling in the air", or hear "the blows of hooves", "the sound" of the Argive army, and "the clash of shields", that terrify the Chorus in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* respectively at ll. 81, 84-5, and 100. Whatever be the source and the occasion of it (cf. Hutchinson 1985: 56), Aristocles' (2nd century BC) statement on the self-sufficiency of *orchesis*, 'dancing', as the sum of *lexis*, *melos*, and dance is significant: Aristocles said that "Telestes, the director of Aeschylus' choruses was so great a master of his art, that in managing the choruses of the *Seven against Thebes*, he made all the transactions plain by dancing" (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.22a: Τελέστης, ὁ Αἰσχύλου ὀρχηστὴς, οὕτως ἦν τεχνίτης, ὥστε ἐν τῷ ὀρχεῖσθαι τοὺς Ἑπτὰ ἐπὶ Θήβας φανερὰ ποιῆσαι τὰ πράγματα δι᾽ ὀρχήσεως., trans. by Yonge 1854: 36, slightly modified). On the scenic effects of off stage sounds in Aeschylus' *Seven* see Edmunds 2002.

[23] Cropp sees "[a]n ironic contrast . . . with Clytemnestra 'beacon-speech' (*Ag.* ll. 281-316) on the relaying of the news of the fall of Troy" (1988: 148).

the place of the *agon* is not far (623). This persuades her that he has either been defeated or killed and makes her despair: "we are beaten – or where are our messengers?" (νικώμεσθα· ποῦ γὰρ ἄγγελοι;). The certainty of a negative outcome instils a fear (*deima*, 767) in her which neither the Coryphaeus' sensible reflection may mitigate (760), nor the Messenger's apostrophe dissolve (761-4).

(II) Electra's wait is promptly rewarded by the arrival of a messenger. His entrance immediately after a choral ode, reporting the outcome of an action set up in the previous episode, is a typically Euripidean device.[24] The time elapsing between Orestes' departure and the Servant/Messenger's arrival, corresponding to ll. 693-760, is in keeping with Euripides' spatio-temporal 'realism' and the symmetry between onstage and offstage time we find in *Electra*.[25] Here, however, unlike *Med.* 1116-20, the Messenger's entry is not announced by the Chorus, who do not even seem aware of his coming (as instead they will be of Clytemnestra at ll. 988-97). In turn, the Messenger does not introduce himself, trusting that he will be recognized as the Servant of Orestes. Something similar may be already found in Aeschylus' *Seven*, where Eteocles' wait (36-8) is rewarded by the Scout's arrival at l. 39, with no indication that the latter has been seen by Eteocles prior to his entrance (Taplin 1974: 137). The Messenger addresses the Chorus directly (761-4), thus respecting the 'etiquette' according to which a new arrival should address the choral body first and the female character on stage afterwards (Mastronarde 1979: 21). And yet, he establishes a more direct contact with his addressees than any (true or false) messenger would ever do,[26] conveying the information straightaway to both spectators and internal addressees with a strongly sympathetic attitude that culminates in a friendly and excited address: "to all our friends I bring news that Orestes triumphs" (762: νικῶντ' Ὀρέστην πᾶσιν ἀγγέλλω φίλοις).[27] This provides a sort of internal prolepsis, thorough and complete, characterized by the expressive vividness typical of the messenger-speech.[28] Euripides makes "only [one] exception [at *Or.* 1381-92] to the rule by which the main news is announced in the introductory dialogue" between mes-

[24] See e.g. *Med.* 1002-80 (Fifth Episode), 1081-115 (choral anapaestic interlude and recitative anapaests by the Pedagogue), and 1116-20 (Medea sees the long-awaited Messenger arriving), and Mastronarde's commentary (2002: 350-1).

[25] Cf. Lloyd's introductory remarks (2007: 293). If "the messenger . . . arrives remarkably quickly after Aegisthus' death-cries are heard at 747" (294), the fact is rendered plausible by what has been anticipated at l. 623.

[26] See for instance Sophocles' *El.* 660-1 and *OT* 924-59, but also Orestes in Aeschylus' *Cho.* 653-6, 658-67. It should be noticed that the Messenger in *Medea* 1121ff. urges Medea to flee before telling her about the death of Creon and his daughter.

[27] This may sound like a parody of Soph. *El.* 676.

[28] See the pres. part. νικῶντ[α].

senger and addressee(s); therefore, also the following messenger-speech "is not concerned with the questions *what* or *who*, but *how*" (de Jong 1991: 32-3). Yet the response to the question 'whose wail of murder is this?' should be especially dear to Electra and the Chorus, whereas for the audience it may only mean that the killing of Aegisthus, which the latter may have no doubt about, has already occurred at l. 747. Some scholars have pointed out the dramatic singularity of this arrival, and with Winnington-Ingram (1969: 131-2) we may ask whether the scene was meant to parody the arrival – sometimes even too well-timed – of witnesses to off-stage events. Euripides, however, does not seem to have only a ludic yet generically metatheatrical intent: despite, or rather, thanks to the Messenger's immediate disclosure of the 'what' in a peculiar, four-line-long apostrophe, Euripides manages to intensify Electra's, the Chorus', and the audience's expectations by delaying the account of the 'how', so that the Messenger's initial apostrophe remains effectless. In fact, although he states that he is carrying the message "to all friends (scil.: of Orestes')" (762: πᾶσιν . . . φίλοις), thus implicitly including himself among them, the Messenger is not immediately recognized and is forced to declare his own identity.

Electra's is an unkind welcome and she will have to apologize for it; besides, the Chorus, who have neither announced the arrival scene, nor taken part in it, will remain silent until l. 859: they do not intervene exactly when – being more confident or perhaps less scared than Electra – they might welcome the new arrival. That the Messenger's announcement goes unheeded may be taken as an implicit polemic against the Sophoclean Electra's readiness to believe the Pedagogue's false account. Roisman and Luschnig have pointed out this peculiarity (2011: 188). In fact, criticism has shown little interest in the formal structure of the entire scene, while attention has been paid to that sort of hyperrealism that characterizes the descriptive and narrative devices in the *rhesis angelike*. Electra's reaction – quite telling of her psychology, although it does not add anything to what we already know about it (Winnington-Ingram 1969: 131) – delays the information flow and intensifies the expectation as to the way Aegisthus has been killed. Both these preliminaries and the Servant/Messenger's subsequent report thematize the identity issue that pervades the entire play, rather than the process of recognition only. Roisman and Luschnig have rightly observed that "[t]he epistemological question, how we know things, is a theme in *Electra*" (122), and that "*disrecognition* is something of a theme in the play" (188).[29]

The exchange at ll. 765-8 focalizes the double status of the message, whose verbal content, albeit overloaded with information ("daughters . . . glorious of victory . . . Orestes triumphs, Agamemnon's murderer . . . is

[29] See Electra's admission of her own *dysgnosia* (δυσγνωσία) at ll. 767-8: . . . ἔκ τοι δείματος δυσγνωσίαν / εἶχον προσώπου ("fear made me fail to recognize your face").

laid down . . . offer prayers of thanks to the gods"),[30] turns out not to be self-sufficient. Electra does not recognize the Messenger and this makes his speech unreliable (πιστά ["trustworthy"], 765, is predicative of τάδε ["these things", i.e. what you are saying] and focalizes the narrative act). And yet his words are neither incomprehensible nor ambiguous – like the Chorus' exclamations at ll. 747-9 –, nor do they offer disputable proofs – like the Old Man's report of Orestes' arrival (509-23). Despite consistency between what she expects to hear and what he actually says, fear-induced *dysgnosia* prevents her from believing him.

(III) At l. 772 Electra wants to know from the Messenger not only 'how' Orestes killed Aegisthus, but also in what sequence (*rhythmos*) the actions were carried out – a request more accurate than Clytemnestra's in Sophocles' *Electra*.[31]

The messenger-speech proper (774-858) suggests a potential for narrative impersonation. Now the speaker is an extradiegetic narrator involved in the reported events; now he lends his voice to Aegisthus and Orestes, who, in the direct speeches embedded in the tale, speak for themselves – the latter with an unusual irony typical of the narrative's general tone.[32] Similar to other Euripidean speeches,[33] this speech has not received much attention with regard to its implications concerning the question of identity, which is prominent in the play and crucial in the murder scene, where Orestes is disguised as a Thessalian 'pilgrim'. With regard to his status and function, we may observe the following:

(a) his dependence on Orestes assimilates him to a herald (*keryx*), like Talthybius for Agamemnon (Aesch.'s *Agamemnon*, Eur.'s *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*), Lichas for Heracles (Soph.'s *Trachiniae*), and Copreus for Eurystheus (Eur.'s *Children of Heracles*). In *Electra* he has no name, but this is not an exception: also Talthybius (in *Agamemnon*) and Copreus have no speech headings, although they appear in the list of characters. We must assume that he was present when Orestes plotted Aegisthus' murder (612-93), since there is no textual indication that the only occasion he is on stage is when

[30] 761-4: ὦ καλλίνικοι παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες, / νικῶντ' Ὀρέστην πᾶσιν ἀγγέλλω φίλοις, / Ἀγαμέμνονος δὲ φονέα κείμενον πέδῳ / Αἴγισθον· ἀλλὰ θεοῖσιν εὔχεσθαι χρεών. The Messenger's apostrophe will be echoed by Electra upon her brother's arrival (880-1: ὦ καλλίνικε . . . Ὀρέστα).

[31] 772-3: "What was the way, what was the pattern of murder, by which he killed Thyestes' son? I want to know" (ποίῳ τρόπῳ δὲ καὶ τίνι ῥυθμῷ φόνου / κτείνει Θυέστου παῖδα; βούλομαι μαθεῖν), cf. Soph.'s *Electra* 678-9: ἐμοὶ δὲ σύ, ξένε, / τἀληθὲς εἰπέ, τῷ τρόπῳ διόλλυται" (see above, 66n8).

[32] The same actor (the *deuteragonistes*) could have played both the Messenger and Orestes, cf. Cropp 1988: xxxixn45.

[33] E.g. the already quoted speech in *Med.* 1136-229, on which see above, p. 71n24.

he exits Electra's hut to join the expedition. Although not endowed with a character's identity, such as the Sophoclean Pedagogue's, he acquires one gradually in the course of his own account, where he uses the first person plural (774, 775, 787, 789, and 790) and singular (808), and also voices personal reflections (774-6; de Jong 1991: 45-6):

ΑΓ. ἐπεὶ μελάθρων τῶνδ' ἀπήραμεν πόδα,
ἐσβάντες ᾖμεν δίκροτον εἰς ἁμαξιτὸν 775
ἔνθ' ἦν ὁ κλεινὸς τῶν Μυκηναίων ἄναξ.[34]

[ME. When we started on our way from the dwelling here, we entered a two-tracked wagon-path and come where the illustrious king of the Mycenaeans was.]

(b) The Messenger begins his account with ἐπεί ['after that'], as often in Euripides (Rijksbaron 1976: 294-6; de Jong 1991: 34). Yet this time he does not refer to a piece of information already given, but implies (1) the consultation in which also Electra has taken part and which has led to the vengeance plot, and (2) the entire sequence of events until the departure of Orestes, the Old Man, Pylades and the Servant(s) at l. 693.

The collective pronoun attests his participation in the action, *philos* among Orestes' *philoi*, thus validating his account after Electra's disappointing reception (761-4). This use not only fulfils the "*testimonial function,* or function of *attestation*" necessary for him to be believed (Genette 1980: 256), but it also reflects a proactive involvement different from other collective pronouns indicating witnesses, as in the Messenger's report of Hippolytus's accident (Euripides' *Hipp.* 1173ff.). What clearly emerges is that this Messenger was no mere spectator but an accomplice of Orestes and Pylades.

Finally acknowledged as her brother's Servant (768), he has gradually become more familiar with Electra, and intersperses his speech with sarcasm (776) and tendentious reports, such as the one of Aegisthus' prayer (808-10). Both the rhetorical and stylistic connotations of his speech, and his actual participation in the events make him different from a simple "bystander" (Barrett 2002: 75); his "uses of the first-person clearly place

[34] I follow the MSS and read κλεινὸς ('illustrious'), against the correction καινὸς ('new'), first proposed by Peter Elmsley (see Finglass 2007b) and also adopted by Diggle 1981 (Denniston 1939: 146 maintained κλεινὸς, "simply" as "a title of royalty"). The use of sarcasm has been judged incongruous in a narrative context that is believed to be objective; nonetheless its presence is undeniable, even though it is not as evident as at ll. 326-7 and in *Tro.* 358 or in Soph.'s *El.* 300 and *Ant.* 761; furthermore, Aegisthus could hardly be defined "the new king of the Mycenaeans" seven years after Agamemnon's murder.

[him] within the frame of his story" (ibid.). But he gradually changes tactics and shifts from a strategic use of the first person plural (until l. 791) to an increasingly overt address to Electra through a prominent handling of the first person and second person singular (808: λέγων Ὀρέστην καὶ σέ. δεσπότης δ' ἐμὸς . . . : "meaning Orestes and *you*; but *my* master . . ."), and a final emphasis upon the latter from l. 803 onward.[35] This move from the collective pronoun to an interplay between first and second person brings about a focus upon the dramatic interaction between the two, as well as on the Messenger's own locution (91n65). It also foregrounds his direct contact with Electra as an attempt to persuade her to share his own viewpoint on the events which he reports dramatically through an apt manipulation of mixed digesis (Plato *Rep.* 392c; Halliwell 2013; on deixis and point of view in drama see McIntyre 2006: 96-7). If he later "fade[s] into the background" (de Jong 1991: 5), it will be because of a sudden, and very telling, change in his participation in the events. On this I will return soon.

For now a few remarks on his story-telling: he accurately presents the events in the order in which they happened and without prolepses, "according to his focalization as experiencing character" (de Jong 1991: 45-6, 61). He also concedes much to mimesis by resorting to direct speech in his account of the exchange between Aegisthus and Orestes: this occupies 35 out of the 85 lines of the entire *rhesis*, a "deliciously protracted game of cat and mouse" (Bers 1997: 82) structured as a long dialogue, nowhere to be found in either Aeschylus or Sophocles. Each time the Messenger does different voices – himself, one of the two speakers (as in l. 789, where he impersonates Aegisthus) or both of them (as in the *antilabe* of l. 831) – we may expect some performative change (an expressive pose, a gesture, etc.). Although we know nothing about ancient acting styles, the text shows a potential for variation at this point. Here is how narration and dialogue are organized: after the initial description of the route leading from Electra's hut to Aegisthus' horse pastures (774-8), the messenger-speech alternates lines spoken by Aegisthus (to his servants, to the guests, to Orestes alone, or in form of a prayer) and by Orestes (addressed to Aegisthus alone, and to Aegisthus' servants only at ll. 847-51):

[35] As regards the use of grammatical persons by our Messenger:

- the first person plural is always employed with action verbs (774, 775, 789, 790, and implicitly at 791: τοῖς ξένοις ~ ἡμῖν, "for the strangers" ~ "for us");
- first person singular: 808b δεσπότης δ' ἐμὸς ("but my master");
- second person singular, always with reference to Electra: 803, 808a, 814, 854, 855, 857.

Messenger (* = introduces direct speech)	Aegisthus (O = to Orestes; G = to all the guests; P = prayer; S = to his servants)	Orestes (A = to Aegisthus; S = to A.'s servants)
774-8		
779a*	779b-80 (G)	
781a*		781b-2 (A)
783*	784-7 (G) –	
788-9a		
	–789b (G)	
790*	791-2 (S)	
793a*		793b-6 (A)
797-804a		
804b*	805-7 (P)	
808-14a		
814b*	815-8 (O)	
819-30a		
830b*		831a (A)
	831b-3 (O)	
834a*		834b-7 (A)
838-47a		
847b*		847c-51a (S)
851b-8		

The sections of pure narration, quoted above in bold, provide summaries accelerating the Messenger's report.[36] However, he also intersperses personal evaluations (808a and 845b) and an inference (808b-9), on which I will return later. Proxemical implications are contained in Aegisthus' greeting (he "shouts": 779: ἀυτεῖ), which befits the initial distance between the two groups. They are also embedded in his invitation to Orestes and his fellows to enter the house, which suggests a collective address (ἠγόρευε, 788, "proclaimed") and a closer contact with them (he takes them by the arm). At l. 789b Aegisthus completes the line left suspended at l. 787, when the Messenger had told what he was doing; this shows the narrator's peculiar handling of the narrative, which he may freely interrupt and take up again at a later stage. The remaining part of the dialogue and Orestes' concluding

[36] Lloyd (2007: 301) stresses how the inclusion of a summary at ll. 798-802 endows the Messenger's speech with a narrative acceleration.

lines are instead introduced in a rather formulaic way (ὁ δ' / ἀλλ' εἶπ[ε], "and / but he said", for Orestes; ἐννέπει τάδε, τοιάδ' ἐννέπων ἔπη, ε λέγει . . . τάδε, "declared", "uttering these words", "says . . . these words", for Aegisthus). The only exception is l. 831, where Orestes' and Aegisthus' speeches follow one another in *antilabe*, without the formulaic narrative mediation of the narrator.

In his speech the Servant/Messenger keeps strengthening the mutual understanding he has reached with Electra, while constantly reassuring the audience about the rightness of the murder, and at the same time completely ignoring the Chorus. His effort to establish complicity with Electra occasions his sarcastic remark at l. 776 (see above, p. 74n34), as well as his allusion to Aegisthus as "your mother's consort" (803: μητρὸς εὐνέτης σέθεν); at l. 808a he rekindles Electra's hostility to her stepfather by revealing the identity of the *echthroi* ('enemies') whom he has just cursed in his prayer with a totally pleonastic explanation ("meaning Orestes and you", λέγων Ὀρέστην καὶ σέ) endowed with an almost exclusively phatic function. Contrariwise, his report of Aegisthus' curse against his enemies (805-7) and, then, of Aegisthus' words unveiling his fear of Agamemnon's son – whom he calls "the man most in enmity with me, a foe to my house" (832-3: ἔστι δ' ἔχθιστος βροτῶν / Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς πολέμιός τ' ἐμοῖς δόμοις) – confirms to the audience that Aegisthus deserves the death Orestes is about to give him.[37] At the end of his speech, he has words of appreciation for Orestes and Pylades who, "spurred by courage" (845b: ἀνδρείας δ' ὕπο), face Aegisthus' servants, two against many (844-5: δμώες . . . / πολλοὶ . . . πρὸς δύ[ο]): if at first Electra had not believed that her "bold", "self-confident", or simply "courageous" brother (εὐθαρσής, like Agamemnon in Aesch.'s *Agamemnon* 930) had entered the land "furtively, for fear of Aegisthus" (525-6: κρυπτὸν ἐς γῆν τήνδ[ε] . . . Αἰγίσθου φόβῳ . . . μολεῖν), and then had recommended, on his taking leave from her, that he "play the man" (693: πρὸς τάδ' ἄνδρα γίγνεσθαί σε χρή), now she is definitely reassured about Orestes' valour. More importantly, though, in the eyes of the audience this emphasis on Orestes' test of courage compensates for the vivid narration of the murder of Aegisthus, assailed from behind during a sacrificial rite.

That the way the murder is carried out is perceived as censurable – and the Messenger shows to be aware of this – is proved by his peculiar reticence on this point: although he provides copious visual details, such as those regarding the route, Aegisthus' orchard, or the sacrificial rite, which

[37] As Allen-Hornblower (2016: 226) remarks, "his words invite Orestes to consider the death he is about to inflict as both necessary and justified", and "thus provid[e] Orestes (and the audience) with grounds for indignation".

he describes minutely,[38] or the examination of the bull's entrails by Aegisthus (826-9), the Servant/Messenger seems to withdraw from the scene of murder the moment Orestes deals the deadly blow. Until then he had benefited from a privileged position, almost as if he had been leaning over the eviscerated animal, next to Aegisthus:

(ΑΓ.) ἱερὰ δ' ἐς χεῖρας λαβὼν
Αἴγισθος ἤθρει. καὶ λοβὸς μὲν οὐ προσῆν
σπλάγχνοις, πύλαι δὲ καὶ δοχαὶ χολῆς πέλας
κακὰς ἔφαινον τῷ σκοποῦντι προσβολάς.
χὠ μὲν σκυθράζει . . . 830

[(ME.) Aegisthus took the sacred parts in his hands, and looked. In the liver there was no lobe, and the portal vein and gall-bladder showed onsets of harm to the observer close at hand. Aegisthus scowled . . .]

What is most interesting here is that the Messenger adopts Aegisthus' point of view (829: τῷ σκοποῦντι, "to the observer") and describes the content of the entrails' examination which he himself could not see, at least from the perspective he reports having had at the moment of the murder. And yet, he lingers on it 'as if' he had, providing his narrative with a focalization upon the king. This suggests that following a similar strategy of variable focalization he might have described the murder too, although he could not see it, but only hear it being performed through the victim's wail. His narrative is sufficiently flexible to include alternative perspectives. Thus, his failing to resort to such a device at this point cannot be neutral. His silence seems to suggest that the king's murder, after all, can neither be shown, nor seen, nor told.

In fact his tale is unquestionably conducted from a position in the background, as if he had slipped backward and only perceived the gesture from behind Orestes' shoulders, "raised . . . on the tips of his toes" (840: ὄνυχας ἔπ' ἄκρους στὰς). The deed is accompanied by neither a word nor a cry on the part of the murderer, and is only followed by Aegisthus' wailing and convulsions (843: πᾶν . . . σῶμα, where "all" suggests the disarticulation of his "body", now a "corpse"). As Cropp remarked, the pathos of the scene where Aegisthus is "all convulsed, heaving, writhing in hard and bloody death" (842-3: ἄνω κάτω / ἤσπαιρεν ἠλέλιζε δυσθνῄσκων φόνῳ) is conveyed by the expressive power of pure diegesis, deprived of overt 'ideological' clues, through the asyndeton of two imperfect tenses (ἤσπαιρεν ἠλέλιζε), "which invite effective parallelisms of sound" with l.

[38] The report of the rite is possibly the most exhaustive one that may be found in all Greek literature.

855 χαίροντες ἀλαλάζοντες (1988: 157) but no explicit subjective involvement. Indirect comments, it has been suggested (Easterling 1988: 104; Cropp 1988: 157), are encrypted precisely in that sound parallelism, implying a relation between "espairen *elelize*" (843: Aegisthus dying) and "chairontes *alalazontes*" (l. 855: Aegisthus' servants acclaiming Orestes), as if Aegisthus' death were symbolically and indirectly applauded by the servants (my emphasis). And yet pure diegesis at this point is symbolically endowed with the function of lessening the pathos and detaching the speaker from the scene.

The passages I have discussed are encapsulated within a longer narrative which displays the Servant/Messenger's dramaturgic and expressive ability, and, at the same time, unveils the authorial design behind it, as well as the way this tale relates to it. Two more passages are especially revealing. The first one is at ll. 808-10:

(ΑΓ.) δεσπότης δ' ἐμὸς
τἀναντί' ηὔχετ', οὐ γεγωνίσκων λόγους,
λαβεῖν πατρῷα δώματ[α]. 810

[(Me.) But my master prayed the opposite, not voicing the words: to gain his ancestral home.]

Albeit sometimes defined as "indirect speech", these lines rather narratize Orestes' silent vow, which the Messenger at most could only infer from the context, thus speaking like an omniscient narrator while being a testimony to the scene. Differently from other messengers' "inferences about what other people are thinking", "usually obvious and therefore unobtrusive" (Scodel 2009: 422), this remark is part of his strategy to reassure Electra about Orestes' intent to carry out the action of moral redress through seizure of power (which, incidentally, will not take place). Now, it little matters that Orestes not only was loath to go to the city and to the royal palace, but will also be eventually destined to leave the region for good. The Messenger arbitrarily describes him as the Orestes one may find in *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*, determined to regain his ancestors' power and patrimony. In so doing, he contradicts Euripides' general dramatic design and, with respect to the course of the action, instils into Electra's mind (and the audience's) expectations that will go unfulfilled. Through his virtuoso diegetic performance, the Servant/Messenger' personality gradually comes to the fore, affecting his narration and implicitly orienting his message 'ideologically'. He thus becomes a proper character among other characters. This suggests a comparison with the False Merchant in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (541-627), who had been instructed by Odysseus to guide Neoptolemos' decisions. Likewise, the Servant/Messenger by reassuring

Electra about her brother's intentions seems to orient her decisions and, by extension, also those of her brother regarding crucial choices such as the seizure of Agamemnon's power. To this end he needs to become familiar with her. By adopting the collective pronoun 'we', with no purely testimonial function, but with the intent of gaining favour with Electra, the messenger is eventually acknowledged by her and gradually grows more intimate. He stresses their personal interaction and from being a 'narrative exercise' embedded within drama, his speech at times translates into a sort of drama piece: a play-within-the-play performed for an onstage audience by one character doing different voices. His dramatization of the offstage event of the king's murder makes it 'visible' and 'audible' on stage only to the point of the act itself, which is excluded from view and verbal visualization. It also provides the story with a possible plot of restoration of order – yet doomed to remain unaccomplished.

The other passage I mentioned stands precisely at the centre of this speech and deals with one of the play's fundamental topics: one's identity and its recognizability (and knowability). It constitutes a crucial point in the dialogue between Aegisthus and Orestes, and occurs when the former definitely puts his life into Orestes' hands asking the self-professed Thessalian (781) to prove his skill as such in butchering the bull (814-18):

(ΑΓ.) Αἴγισθος . . .
λέγει δὲ σῷ κασιγνήτῳ τάδε·
Ἓν τῶν καλῶν κομποῦσι τοῖσι Θεσσαλοῖς 815
εἶναι τόδ', ὅστις ταῦρον ἀρταμεῖ καλῶς
ἵππους τ' ὀχμάζει· λαβὲ σίδηρον, ὦ ξένε,
δεῖξόν τε φήμην ἔτυμον ἀμφὶ Θεσσαλῶν.

[(Me.) Aegisthus . . . spoke again to your brother: "The men of Thessaly, so they boast, excel in butchering a bull, and also in breaking horses. Take a knife, stranger, and prove the saying about the Thessalian true".]

Aegisthus' cue is connoted as stylistically high by the use of the keywords φήμην ἔτυμον, "true saying", placed at the caesura, where he significantly asks Orestes to confirm his declaration to be a Thessalian by proving the "saying" (φήμη) "about the Thessalian" to be "true", that is, ἔτυμος. This adjective, just like ἐτήτυμος and its corresponding adverbs ἐτύμως and ἐτητύμως, was apparently used in a lyric or recitative rather than in a spoken context,[39] which makes it stand out at this point. Aegisthus' mental process is hard to define. With Martin Cropp we may ask why "Aegisthus mean[s] to test Orestes' claim to be a Thessalian" (1988: 156); still, as Rois-

[39] One should note that ἐτήτυμος and ἐτητύμως do not appear at all in Sophocles.

man and Luschnig have pointed out, "[i]f he suspects his guest of deception . . . it is odd to supply him with a weapon" (2011: 914).[40] Only later, after he has inspected the sacrificed bull's entrails, will Aegisthus become aware of an impending threat perceived as a hazily defined "alien guile" (831-2 ὀρρωδῶ τινα / δόλον θυραῖον). Jealous and secretive of his identity, which he conceals even to his trustworthy sister (although he actually knows he can count on her at least since l. 155), and unwilling to talk even to the Old Man, who is about to recognize him (558-61), Orestes is here once again put to the test. Yet this time he has to demonstrate to be the man he has declared to be but is not. In the same way, Aegisthus tries to obtain from him confirmation that the Thessalians are good butchers and the demonstration of Orestes' self-proclaimed identity. Various and alternative instances of recognition may be found in *Electra*: from Electra's well-known refutation of the Old Man's proofs of Orestes' arrival, to her failed acknowledgment of the Servant/Messenger and Aegisthus' paradoxical 'experiment'. The demonstration of the truthfulness of a saying (*pheme*) as proof of his fictional identity becomes central in the messenger-speech not only in that it enables them to carry out the revenge plan, but also, and the more so, as the symptom of a pervasive relativization of the identities involved in the drama, be they the ones borrowed from the *mythos* or the ones which are instrumental in the dramatic mechanics.

Soon after the Messenger's performance, our expectations about Electra's and the Chorus' reaction are satisfied by their sudden rejoicing (859-79). And yet, this is no response to his long narrative, but to the bare news of Orestes' success – something which is disclosed early on in his story-telling, about 100 lines before (761). The Messenger out, there enters Orestes with Aegisthus' body (880), and this gruesome evidence of the murder is the silent overwhelming proof of the message's truth, but also of the ephemerality of its words (893: λόγοι) compared to the factuality of the deed done (ibid.: ἔργα, "deeds"):

(ΟΡ.) ἥκω γὰρ οὐ λόγοισιν ἀλλ' ἔργοις κτανὼν
Αἴγισθον· ὡς δὲ τῷ σάφ' εἰδέναι τάδε
προσθῶμεν, αὐτὸν τὸν θανόντα σοι φέρω 895

[(Or.) I have returned; not in word but in deed have I killed Aegist hus. And so we may assign this to the certainty of knowledge, I bring you the man himself who has died.]

[40] In this regard Gilbert Murray remarked that "[t]he unsuspiciousness of Aegisthus is partly natural; it was not thus, alone and unarmed, that he expected Orestes to stand before him. Partly it seems like a heaven-sent blindness" (1907: 93).

Also those who do not follow the text of the MSS with reference to ὡς . . . προσθῶμεν[41] will grasp the metatheatrical contrast between the vivid speech Orestes has not heard and the tangible proof he now offers: Aegisthus' corpse. The self-sufficiency of *logoi* thus seems to be once again questioned, this time by he who has performed the actions (*ergon*) told by the Messenger, and therefore the one who needs the least to mistrust the tale's truthfulness.

In this light we may finally reconsider this messenger-speech. It dramatizes on stage the events that have taken place off-stage during the course of the action, coordinating diegesis and mimesis within a realistic performance. The Messenger not only blends narration and dialogue, as typically in epics (cf. Plato's *Republic* 392c), but is also endowed with a dramaturgic and acting talent that he clearly shows in the *antilabe* at l. 831. This is undoubtedly a high point of virtuosity among messenger-speeches, relying upon a capacity to potentially modulate different voices and discursive registers (no matter how this may have been done), which likely already characterized the preliminary courtesies between Aegisthus and Orestes as well as Orestes' elaborate acceptance of Aegisthus' invitation (787-97). In this context, the narration of the preparations for the sacrifice, which provides for the location and the posture of the 'actors', becomes a complex stage direction. An accomplice in the action since the revenge plot was imagined, the Messenger always shares in it, and when he recounts it he is at the same time an omniscient narrator (808-10), capable of seeing all, as in the case of the examination of the bull's entrails which we have considered above, and a testimony incapable of seeing, as in the case of the murder scene. Through this Messenger's speech Euripides makes visible what Aeschylus and Sophocles instead choose to pass under silence: Aegisthus' end. Euripides' *Electra*, even more than *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*, is above all the tragedy of matricide first and foremost because Orestes is not preoccupied with winning back his father's patrimony and throne: these are the manifest aims of his action in Aeschylus and in Sophocles, while in Euripides it is the Messenger who attributes them to him (808-10). However, Euripides chooses to show what Sophocles chooses to conceal, and Aeschylus only alludes to through Aegisthus' cry. Thus it could be argued that, through this Messenger, Euripides wishes to transcend the taboo on staging violence. The abuse of Aegisthus' corpse, prefigured at 896-8, while it is lying in the foreground, seems to confirm this hypothesis. And yet, the Messenger's withdrawing from the scene, apparently self-effacing at the action's acme, proposes again, this time on stage through its narrative, the

[41] I follow the received text, like Denniston 1939 and Basta Donzelli 1995, while Diggle 1981 expunges it from ὡς to προσθῶμεν.

ban on sight and, therefore, the traditional censure on showing the performance of murder (cf. Zeppezauer 2011: 6-13). What stands out is Orestes' back blocking a clear view. The following exhibition of the corpse, whose suggested vilification on the part of Orestes entails a feeling of shame in Electra, thus foregrounding the cumbersome presence of this body among the characters on stage, goes well beyond that ban, much more than what happens in *Agamemnon* and *Choephori*.[42] However, at the same time it also offers a critique of conventional dramaturgy and perhaps of theatre in general: Orestes' substitution of *logoi* with *erga* seems to question the essence of theatre itself as well as the power of words to represent relations (*praxeis*) rather than the products of doing (*erga*). Since the *ergon* is opposed to the *logoi* that take the place of the action, and since such opposition is thematized by the only *angelos* of himself who is above suspicion, Orestes, one is led to believe that rather than transcending traditional reticence, the tale in fact underlines the unshowability of the action in its unfolding (*drama*). Bypassing the taboo by way of a solo performance of a play-within-the-play mingling diegesis and dialogic mimesis rather reinforces that taboo by excising the only crucial narrative bit concerning the representation of murder. It is the final duplicate on stage of that original ban, which confirms both the unshowability of the murder and its untellability. The display of the corpse/*ergon* not through stage machinery, but directly and bluntly, reifies the action and produces the evidence of the fact beyond all doing and telling – in short, beyond theatre.

[42] As is well known, in Sophocles' *Electra* Clytemnestra's corpse is not brought out of the palace and the drama ends just before Aegisthus' murder.

Appendix - The murder plot

the killing of Aegisthus	*stichomythia* Orestes/Old Man	612-3	– the Old Man implicitly suggests the sequence of actions that will eventually take place: the killing of Aegisthus followed by the murder of Clytemnestra (613).
		614-7	– O.M.: the action cannot take place in the city;
		618-27	– the plan triggered by "[s]omething [that] has just struck [the O.M.]" (619);
			– the O.M. informs Or. about Aeg.'s present where-abouts and business;
		628-33	– the O.M. gives information about Aeg.'s body guard;
		634-9	– the O.M. gives instructions on how to approach Aeg.;
			– afterwards, Or. will have to improvise (639).
the killing of Clytem-nestra	*stichomythia* Or./El./O.M.	640-5	– Or. asks where his mother is;
			– the O.M. explains that Clyt. is not coming with Aeg.
		646-9	– El. suggests that she "[her]self arrange [their] mother's murder" (647) with the help of the O.M. (649);
		650-4	– El. devises her false puerperium plan (652-3);
	stichomythia El./O.M.	655-63	– details of the trap she is laying for their mother.
final instruct.		664-7	– El. recapitulates the O.M.'s task: escorting Or. to Aeg. and then going to Clyt.
	stichomythia El./Or./O.M.	668-70	– Or.'s and the O.M.'s first parting from El.

Abbreviations

LSJ Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott and Henry Stuart Jones (eds) (1968), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Works Cited

Allen-Hornblower, Emily (2016), *From Agent to Spectator. Witnessing the Aftermath in Ancient Greek Epic and Tragedy*, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter.

Avezzù, Guido (2015), "Mediazioni angeliche nella tragedia attica", *Micrologus*, 23: 13-32.

Bal, Mieke (1988), *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto: Uni-

versity of Toronto Press.
Barlow, Shirley A. (2008) [1971], *The Imagery of Euripides: A Study in the Dramatic Use of Pictorial Language*, Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
Barrett, James (2002), *Staged Narrative. Poetics and the Messenger in Greek Tragedy*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
Basta Donzelli, Giuseppina (ed.) (1995), *Euripides. Electra*, Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner.
Bers, Victor (1997), *Speech in Speech. Studies in Incorporated Oratio Recta in Attic Drama and Oratory*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Rowman & Littlefield.
Black, John (trans.) (1815), *A.W. Schlegel. A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, London: Baldwin & Co.
Campbell, Lewis (trans.) (1893), *The Oresteia of Aeschylus*, London: Methuen.
Cropp, Martin J. (ed.) (1988), *Euripides. Electra*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
Dawe, Roger David (1963), "Inconsistency of Plot and Character in Aeschylus", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 9: 21-62 (= Boschetti, Federico and Vittorio Citti (eds) (2007), *R.D. Dawe. Corruption and Correction. A Collection of Articles*, Amsterdam: Hakkert: 17-62).
De Jong, Irene J.F. (1991), *Narrative in Drama. The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech*, Leiden, New York, København, and Köln: Brill.
Denniston, John Dewar (ed.) (1939), *Euripides. Electra*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Diggle, James (ed.) (1981), *Euripidis fabulae*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, vol. 2.
Distilo, Nuala (2012), *Commento critico-testuale all'*Elettra *di Euripide*, Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N.
Easterling, Patricia E. (1988), "Tragedy and Rytual", *Métis*, 3: 87-109.
— (2014), "Narrative on the Greek Tragic Stage", in Douglas Cairns and Ruth Scodel (eds), *Defining Greek Narrative*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 226-40.
Edmunds, Lowell (2002), "Sounds Off Stage and On Stage in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*", in Antonio Aloni (ed.), *I Sette a Tebe: dal mito alla letteratura*, Bologna: Pàtron: 105-15.
Erdmann, Gerd (1964), *Der Botenbericht bei Euripides: Struktur und dramatische Funktion*, Diss. Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel.
Finglass, Patrick J. (ed.) (2007a), *Sophocles. Electra*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
— (2007b), "Unpublished Emendations by Peter Elmsley on Euripides and Aristophanes", *The Classical Quarterly*, N.S., 57: 742-6.
Garvie, Alexander F. (ed.) (1986), *Aeschylus. Choephori*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Genette, Gérard (1980), *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (*Discours du récit*, 1972), Ithaca – New York: Cornell University Press.
Halliwell, Stephen (2013), "Diegesis and Mimesis", *The Living Book o Narratology*, http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/diegesis-%E2%80%93-mimesis (last access 2 October 2016).
Hutchinson, Gregory Owen (ed.) (1985), *Aeschylus. Septem contra Thebas*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Lloyd, Michael L. (2007), "Euripides", in Irene J.F. de Jong and René Nünlist, (eds)

(2007), *Time in Ancient Greek Literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative,* Leiden and Boston: Brill: 293-304, vol. 2.

Lloyd-Jones, Hugh (trans.) (1994), *Sophocles. Ajax, Electra, Oedipus Tyrannus*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Marshall, Christopher W. (2006), "How to Write a Messenger-speech (Sophocles, Electra 680-763)", in *Greek Drama III. Essays in Honour of Kevin Lee*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 87: 203-21.

Mastronarde, Donald J. (1979), *Contact and Discontinuity. Some Conventions of Speech and Action on the Greek Tragic Stage*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

— (ed.) (2002), *Euripides. Medea*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McIntyre, Dan (2006), *Point of View in Plays. A cognitive stylistic approach to viewpoint in drama and other text-types*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Murray, Gilbert (1906), *Euripides. The Electra*, Transl. into English Rhyming Verse with Explanatory Notes, London and New York: Oxford University Press.

Parker, Robert (1996), *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in early Greek Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rijksbaron, Albert (1976), "How does a messenger begin his speech? Some observations on the opening lines of Euripidean messenger-speeches", in Jan M. Bremer, Stefan L. Radt, and Cornelius J. Ruijgh (eds), *Miscellanea tragica in honorem J.C. Kamerbeek*, Amsterdam: Hakkert: 293-308.

Roisman, Hanna M. and Cecelia A. Eaton Luschnig (eds) (2011), *Euripides'* Electra. *A Commentary*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Schlegel, August Wilhelm (1825) [1809-11], *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, Wien: Schade.

Scodel, Ruth (2009), "Ignorant Narrators in Greek Tragedy", in Jonas Grethlein and Antonios Rengakos (eds), *Narratology and Interpretation. The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter : 421-47.

Segre, Cesare (1980), "A Contribution to the Semiotics of Theater", *Poetics Today*, 1 (3): 39-48.

Taplin, Oliver (1977), *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus. The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Xenis, Georgios A. (ed.) (2010), *Scholia vetera in Sophoclis* Electram, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

Wilamowitz, Ulrich von (1922), *Griechische Tragödien übersetzt von Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff*, Berlin: Weidmann, vol. 3.

Winnington-Ingram, Reginald P. (1969), "Euripides: poietes sophos", *Arethusa*, 2: 127-42.

Yonge, Charles Duke (trans.) (1854), *Athenaeus. The Deipnosophists*, London: Henry G. Bohn.

Zeppezauer, Dorothea (2011), *Bühnenmord und Botenbericht. Zur Darstellung des Schrecklichen in der griechischen Tragödie*, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter.

Flavia Palma*

Between Mimesis and Diegesis in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Girolamo Parabosco

Abstract

In Renaissance Italy the debate on literary genres almost ignored the novella form and while this theoretical void allowed for freedom in composition, it also caused generic confusion and brought forth peculiar overlaps between novellas and dramas. Girolamo Parabosco (1524-57) is a case in point of this peculiar commixture. The seventeen tales of his collection, entitled *I diporti*, and his eight comedies partially share common plots, but, if in sixteenth-century Italy tales normally inspired the composition of dramas, Parabosco actually wrote his plays before the novellas, following a quite unusual practice. The employment of dialogues and narrations in these texts is also peculiar; following Boccaccio's example, many writers blended narrations and direct speeches in order to achieve a vivid representation of the events, while the novellas Parabosco derived from his comedies (7, 9, 13, and 15) are sparing in dialogues and may be defined as notably diegetic and particularly attentive to the narrator's 'ideological' function (Genette 1980: 256) which emerges as especially prominent. In order to differentiate his novellas from their dramatic sources, he originally exploited the moods of speech and provided his readers with a 'new' product, thus indulging their tastes. Looking at his comedies, this hypothesis may be further supported by the presence of 'canonical' soliloquies in addition to clearly narrative ones. Parabosco might have considered the latter to be perfectly suitable for dramatic mimesis, a strategy he possibly derived from the contemporary commedia dell'arte scenarios, at which he also looked in order to satisfy his audience's taste for this kind of popular theatre.

Introduction

Born in Piacenza in 1524, Girolamo Parabosco grew up in Venice where he became first organist at the Basilica of San Marco in 1551. His professional career, though, was not exclusively dedicated to music and he early turned out to be an extremely versatile and successful writer, authoring madrigals, letters and, most importantly, a collection of novellas entitled *I diporti*, eight comedies, and a tragedy. The novellas and the comedies are particularly worth investigating since they offer a rather unexpected contribution

* University of Verona - flavia.palma@univr.it

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 87-106
http://www.skenejournal.it

to the contemporary debate on literary genres, indirectly highlighting their relation with the different employments of the moods of speech.[1]

While Italian sixteenth-century playwrights usually drew on novellas to write their dramas, Parabosco peculiarly adopted an opposite practice, as he probably derived the plots of some of his novellas from his own comedies. This is the case of four tales in *I diporti* (7, 9, 13, and 15), which are indebted to a series of dramatic antecedents. Interestingly enough, unlike the other novellas in the collection, which usually display a 'standard' mixture of dialogic and narrative passages, as was customary since Boccaccio, the ones that show a direct filiation from the plays always exhibit a series of strategies apparently aimed at stressing pure narrative and overt narrators as the characteristic mood of the genre (in Genette's terminology, 1980: 161ff.). In this regard, not only does Parabosco's unusual method of composition offer a fine opportunity to analyze how a Renaissance author reshaped his own material, but it also provides us with a stimulating, if indirect, outlook on his ideas about drama and novellas, as well as on his peculiar alertness to the audience's demands and tastes.

In the first part of this article I will suggest that in order to entice ever new readers by offering seemingly fresh literary works, while in fact 'recycling' his own dramatic plots, Parabosco exploited a stylistic device involving the moods of speech. He thus foregrounded narrative manipulation as a fit way to differentiate the two genres. On the other hand, an 'undramatic' use of narrative in some of the soliloquies of his comedies might contradict this assumption, suggesting instead unawareness of the distinctive generic dimension of the moods. As I will show in the second part of the article, however, in following the commedia dell'arte scenarios and their narrative proclivity, Parabosco did not seem to perceive their unrelatedness to the scenic action. This seems further to suggest that the functions of the moods of speech probably became relevant at a later stage, during the process of transmodalization.

[1] As a member of three different literary Academies (Accademia dei Fratteggiani, Accademia dei Pellegrini, and Accademia Veniera), Parabosco was well-established in the Venetian contemporary cultural and literary milieu and his career certainly benefited from the vivacious cultural relationships that he entertained with many sixteenth-century famous literati, such as Pietro Aretino. For a detailed description of Parabosco's life and works see, among others, Di Filippo Bareggi 1988; Feldman 1991; Pirovano 2005a. For more general discussion of Parabosco's *I diporti* see Bragantini 1990; Di Francia 1924; Fido 1988; Guglielminetti 1972; Guglielminetti 1984; Pirovano 2005a.

Renaissance Theories of the Novella

During the sixteenth century, Italy saw a growing interest in the definition of genres.[2] Nevertheless, the novella form, despite its great popularity among readers, did not receive much theoretical attention. Only one treatise, Francesco Bonciani's 1574 *Lezione sopra il comporre delle novelle* [*Lesson on Novellas Writing*], was completely dedicated to a theorization of the novella, while other works were only partially devoted to it. Francesco Sansovino briefly dealt with it in his introduction to the fourth edition of his *Cento novelle scelte* (1571) [*One Hundred Selected Novellas*], entitled *Discorso sopra il 'Decameron'* [*Speech on the 'Decameron'*], and in 1572 Girolamo Bargagli similarly confined his analysis to the final section of his *Dialogo de' giuochi* [*Dialogue on Games*]. The lack of a vivacious debate caused both freedom and confusion. Although he dealt with comical novellas only, in his *Lezione* Bonciani took Aristotle's *Poetics* as a model, and adjusted his discussion of tragedy and epics to comedy and humorous prose tales. Being limited to such texts, Bonciani's contribution had no major theoretical relevance. A couple of years earlier, Bargagli had gone no further when comparing the narrator of a novella to an actor: he considered the performative and oral dimension of storytelling and gave no instruction on how novellas should be written.[3]

In addition to these cross-references to the theatrical performance, many sixteenth-century Italian writers tried their hand at different genres, thus creating peculiar blends.[4] In his collection of novellas *Le piacevoli e amorose notti dei novizi* [*The Pleasant and Amorous Nights of the Novices*] (dating between 1555 and 1561, but published only at the end of the eighteenth century), Pietro Fortini, for instance, encapsulated within the narrative frame a

[2] On the Renaissance theoretical definition of the genre and the influence of the classics, in particular Aristotle, see Weinberg 1961; Javitich 1999; Norton 1999; Villari 2012. For a general discussion of the Renaissance theoretical definition of the novella, see Gibaldi 1975.

[3] "Besides, the person who tells a novella must not always be a mere narrator, but sometimes he must speak as if he were an actor, embodying this or that character of the novella, and also in a way that the character itself could not have done differently, even if it had perfectly spoken" ("Colui oltre a questo, che la novella racconta, non ha da essere sempre puro narratore, ma talora, come se istrione fosse, dee parlare or in persona di questo or di quello di cui si tratta nella novella, e parlare anco in tal modo che colui stesso, quando avesse ottimamente detto, non potesse altrimenti aver parlato", Bargagli 1996: 149-50). Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Italian passages are mine.

[4] In sixteenth-century Italy, connections between the novella form and the drama were not unusual: see on this Baratto 1977; Padoan 1982; Borsellino 1989; Guidotti 2000; Barberi Squarotti 2006.

number of dramas which were to be performed by the characters in front of the *novellatori*. Cinthio too, like Parabosco, employed the same plots in both dramas and novellas, but, as pointed out in his dedicatory letter to cardinal Aluigi da Este in the second part (*deca*) of his 1565 *Gli ecatommiti* [*The Hecatommithi*], he opted for an opposite route – from the novellas to the plays: "As you were very pleased to see the performance of these tragic events, so now reading them in the narrative form, which inspired me to write theatrical versions, should not displease you" (Giraldi Cinzio 2012: 371).[5]

As a matter of fact Parabosco did not clearly say what he wrote first: what is apparent, though, is that all his plays, with the exceptions of *Il ladro*, *La fantesca*, and *La progne*, share plot correspondences with his novellas. For the theatre, he penned a tragedy, *La progne*, published in Venice in 1548, and eight comedies, printed between 1546 and 1556: *La notte* [*The Night*] (1546); *Il viluppo* [*The Tangle*][6] (1547); *L'hermafrodito* [*The Hermaphrodite*] (1549); *I contenti* [*The Happy People*] (1549); *Il marinaio* [*The Sailor*] (1550); *Il pellegrino* [*The Pilgrim*] (1552); *Il ladro* [*The Thief*] (1555); *La fantesca* [*The Maidservant*] (1556). Repeatedly published during the sixteenth-century, these comedies were not written only to be read, but were likely meant for performance, as a few surviving references seem to confirm. In his 1549 cookbook *Banchetti, compositioni di vivande e apparecchio generale* [*Feasts, compositions of food, and general setting*], Cristoforo di Messisburgo recorded how on 14 February 1548 *La notte* was performed at his house on the occasion of a Carnival feast (Padoan 1982: 199; Pirovano 2005a: 37; Vecchi 1977: 6). Textual evidence too points to the same conclusion. The comedies' own prologues often include allusions to the speaker's apparel and to the presence of an audience, frequently addressed as *ascoltatori* [hearers] (in *Il ladro*) or *spettatori* [spectators] (in *La fantesca*, and in *I contenti*), as well as final cues that anticipate

[5] ". . . come ella si prese molto diletto in vedere rappresentare in scena questi avenimenti tragici, così non le debba essere ora discaro leggergli in quella guisa descritti che mi porse materia di dar loro forma di tragedia". A further confirmation of the fact that Cinthio's draw on his novellas to write his tragedies can also be found in the *Lettera del signor Bartolomeo Cavalcanti* [*Letter of sir Bartolomeo Cavalcanti*], addressed to Cinthio himself in 1560 and appended to the *Hecatommithi*'s first edition in 1565: "Besides, your novellas . . . are profitable sources for comedies and tragedies, . . . which I know you have already composed and some of which have already been performed, such as your never enough praised *Orbecche*, the *Altile*, the *Selene*, the *Antivalomeni*, and the others, which I saw performed too" ("Oltre di ciò dalle favole vostre . . . si ha larghissimo campo di comporre e comedie e tragedie, . . . delle quali so che voi n'avete già composte e rappresentate alquante, come la vostra non mai a bastanza lodata *Orbecche*, l'*Altile*, la *Selene*, gli *Antivalomeni* e le altre, delle quali ne sono anch'io in parte stato spettatore", Giraldi Cinzio 2012: 1886).

[6] Viluppo is also the proper name of a servant in the comedy. For further details on Parabosco's production see Pirovano 2005a: 43.

the entrance of other characters.[7] Besides, in *Il viluppo* the prologue takes the form of a dialogue, in which two characters mention that the comedy itself will be subsequently acted in a private house (Vecchi 1977: 7). Thus, one can safely assume that Parabosco conceived his pieces for performance, while the publication of the scripts was probably meant to reach a wider public and to earn the author higher profits (see Pirovano 2005a; Guglielminetti 1984).

Moving to Parabosco's novellas, two editions of *I diporti* were printed while he was alive. The *editio princeps* is undated, but several internal pieces of evidence set its publication during the late spring of 1551; the second edition dates to 1552, and its proximity to the first, as well as to the other reprints issued by the end of the sixteenth century, prove the success of this collection among readers (Pirovano 2005a: 3-5).[8] Donato Pirovano aptly pointed out that, due to the difficulties in dating the single novellas of *I diporti*, one cannot state for sure what came first, the novellas or the plays (2005a: 31). However, the publication dates suggest the novellas' filiation from the plays, with the only exception of *Il pellegrino*, a comedy published in 1552, a year after *I diporti*'s first edition.[9] This would make of Parabosco an exceptional instance in the panorama of Italian Renaissance literature and drama, since, countering the common practice which normally saw playwrights drawing on novellas for inspiration, he plausibly adapted his dramatic plots into narratives, making the novellas flow out of the plays

[7] In *Il marinaio*, for example, we read: "I am here to tell you the argument . . ." ("Io era comparso per farvi l'argomento . . .", Parabosco 1977b: 4r). In *L'hermafrodito*: ". . . I come into view in front of you dressed in this way as you see me . . ." (". . . io comparisco innanzi a voi così vestito come mi vedete . . .", Parabosco 1977d: 4r). In *I contenti*: "These eyes, these tongues, and these ears, by which I am almost wholly covered, are now shown by me to you, spectators . . ." ("Questi occhi, queste lingue e queste orecchie di cui quasi tutto coperto mi vedete sono a voi spettatori da me mostrate . . .", Parabosco 1977a: 4r). In *La fantesca*: "Here is the argument, spectators" ("Eccovi l'argomento spettatori", Parabosco 1556: 5). In *Il ladro*: ". . . this comedy, for which you came here . . ." (". . . questa comedia, per la quale sete venuti . . .", Parabosco 1555: 4r). I slightly modernized the punctuation and the spelling of the sixteenth-century originals.

[8] Four novellas contained in *I diporti* had already been published in 1548 in Parabosco's *Secondo libro delle Lettere amorose* [*Second book of the Amorous Letters*], yet none of the texts there published find correspondences in Parabosco's dramas. The four novellas published in the *Secondo libro delle Lettere amorose* became the fourth, the tenth, the fourteenth, the sixteenth novellas in *I diporti*. See Pirovano 2005b: 661-2.

[9] See, for example, Pellizzaro 1901: 169-70, 178; Padoan 1982: 204, 207-8; Magnanini 2001: 218. While acknowledging the relations between Parabosco's narrative and dramatic production, Fido (1988) focused on the debts of Parabosco's works to the ones written by other authors (such as Boccaccio and Bibbiena), rather than on the mutual relations between Parabosco's own novellas and dramas. For more details about this issue, see Appendix.

(see Guidotti 2000). As I will try to demonstrate, by moving from a dramatic to a strictly narrative context, Parabosco departed from his contemporaries' practice inspired by Boccaccio. He did not resort to mixed diegesis (Plato *Rep.* 392c; Halliwell 2013), but clearly differentiated the two genres stylistically so as to offer his readers two clear-cut products. The moods of speech were key to this.

Rewriting Comedies for the Book: Diegesis in Parabosco's Novellas

Among the seventeen novellas of *I diporti*, one finds a group of tales whose plots closely resemble the sequence of events staged in some of Parabosco's comedies. In particular, the seventh novella recalls one of the storylines of *I contenti* (1549); the ninth is based on a practical joke which can be found in both *Il viluppo* (1547) and *L'hermafrodito* (1549), while the events narrated in novella 13 are remindful of *La notte* (1546), *Il viluppo* (1547), and *Il marinaio* (1550); also, the plot of the fifteenth novella corresponds to a story told by a character in *L'hermafrodito* (1549) (Pirovano 2005a: 31; Magnanini 2001: 208, 218).[10] Pirovano has suggested that these novellas especially display such a reduced use of dialogues that they seem mere diegetic summaries of the corresponding comedies (2005a: 31). Indeed, they privilege either indirect speech (7, 9, 15) or pure narration with no inclusion of conversations (13), clearly departing from the other novellas of the same collection, which often include direct speeches. This transposition of dialogues into narratized or transposed speech in indirect form, as Genette would put it,[11] displays the centrality of the narrator, which Parabosco likely perceived as pivotal in his narrative adaptations. The narrator guides the reader's interpretation of the text by providing an ideological evaluation of the events (Genette 1980: 256); he mediates between the text and the reader, employing both comments and rhetorical devices, such as familiar similes, which allude to a shared cultural background and therefore strengthen the relationship between readers and narrative voice. This negotiation practice clearly distinguishes the novella from drama, which does not allow for the presence of a mediator who may influence the readers/spectators (Segre 1980). One clear example comes from the play *I contenti* and novella 7: in both a young woman is married to an old man who cheats on her, but

[10] Pirovano (2005a: 31) also suggested that novellas 6 and 16 might have been successfully adapted for a stage performance. Besides, for Bianchini, novella 11 derives from *La notte* and *Il viluppo* (see Parabosco 2005: 188n). See also the Appendix.

[11] I am here referring to Genette's tripartite classification with regard to narrative distance: "reported speech", "transposed speech, in indirect style", and "narratized speech" (1980: 169-73). For a specific analysis of diegesis and mimesis, see Genette 1976.

she too is unfaithful and at some point she manages to pass her lover off as a cousin of hers who has just returned home from the East. In the play, the credulous husband delivers a soliloquy centred on his wife's virtue:

> Oh, che donna da bene! Oh, che santa! Oh, che Lucretia! Oh, che Iudit! Con quanto amore ella m'ha ripreso, con quanto tremore perch'io mi rimanga di questo amore! Ma io non so chi sia questo suo cugino. Pure ei m'ha aspetto d'uomo galante, ancora che così vestito egli paia un facchino; egli non si deve, per la fretta del venire costì, ancora aver potuto fare altri vestimenti. (Parabosco 1977a: 23r-v)

> [Oh, what a good woman! Oh, what a saint! Oh, what a Lucretia! Oh, what a Judith! With such love she scolded me, with such trepidation so that I end this new love! But I do not know this cousin of her. However, he looks like a gentleman, despite the fact that, dressed in this way, he seems a porter; he might not have had the time to get dressed otherwise because he was in a hurry to come here.]

In the corresponding novella, Parabosco recast this soliloquy as follows:

> Il quale, *mezo confuso e tutto vergognato*, credette ciò che la moglie detto gli aveva . . . Onde *il buono uomo*, rampognando se stesso e togliendosi la sentenza volontaria contra, col capo basso aspettando di peggio e pareggiando la moglie in onestà con la romana Lucrezia, se ne andò per i fatti suoi . . . (Parabosco 2005: 155; emphasis added)

> [He, half confused and completely ashamed, believed in what his wife had told him . . . Therefore, the good man, blaming himself and thinking he was wrong, with a hanging head expecting a worse fate and comparing his wife with the Roman Lucrece for her honesty, went his own way . . .]

By ironically labelling him as "buono uomo" (good man), the narrator focuses his attention on the old man's shame and confusion in front of his wife's (seemingly) earnest behaviour, thus orienting the readers' views towards the adoption of a positive, Boccaccian approach to young women involved in extramarital affairs. The extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator allows the reader to perceive an ironic distance between his own point of view and that of the old man. A similar narrative irony crops up also at the beginning of novella 9, where again an old man in love with a young woman is presented as excessively forward to the point that he does not care to be "old and readier to have his bread cut, than to cut someone else's flesh".[12] Irony resides in these two 'cutting of food' metaphors which, imbued with

[12] ". . . vecchio e più tosto buono per farsi tagliar il pane, che ad altrui voler tagliar la carne . . ." (Parabosco 2005: 164).

sexual innuendo, unveil his ridiculous presumptuousness and pretended sexual vigour.

The limited presence of dialogues in these novellas makes room for frequent narratorial interventions in the form of either implicit or explicit comments, which makes the narrative voice far from neutral. In novella 7, for instance, he heavily underlines the old man's wife un-Roman preparedness to receive her lover: "The knock was heard by Betta, who would have heard even silence, since Love had made her ears sharp".[13] Also, the employment of parenthetical remarks with commonplaces establishes a mutual understanding between narrator and reader, tacitly suggesting shared judgement: "Thus spoken, she started (as one skilled in doing it) crying her heart out so as if a son had just died at her feet".[14] The histrionic talent of the unfaithful wife is here stressed and she is introduced as a consummate actress, accustomed, when suspected to be unchaste, to putting on feigned shows of sadness in order to cover up her extramarital affairs. The reader is thus indirectly admonished that appearances can be deceptive. Parenthetical remarks, clichés and irony clearly unveil the presence of an overt narrator, who negotiates the message with his readers, guiding their reception.

Due to the different strategies employed in the two genres, the transposition of the plots from drama to narrative also entails some necessary rewriting of the comic scenes in order to make up for the lack of the performative dimension. An example is offered by novella 9, which, based on *Il viluppo* and *L'hermafrodito*, develops a storyline common to both: a servant plays a vicious practical joke on his womanizer master and on a necromancer, whose wife he seduces. After convincing the former, Giuvenale, that the woman he likes will yield to his desire, the servant talks him into hiding into a sepulchre. At the same time, he asks the latter, Nebbia, to fetch a skull there preserved and advises him to disguise himself as a woman in order not to be recognized. Predictably, as soon as Nebbia approaches the tomb, Giuvenale grabs him, mistaking him for the woman he lusts after. The two men are eventually put to flight by the servant's friends who, masqueraded as devils, scare them to death. In the meantime, the servant, disguised as Nebbia, tricks the man's wife into sleeping with him. Later on, coming home to her, the necromancer finds out what has happened and realizes that he has been deceived by the crafty servant. In Act 4 of *L'hermafrodito* the tomb scene is dramatized as follows:[15]

[13] ". . . il quale picchio sentito dalla Betta, che il silenzio avrebbe sentito, così le aveva Amore le orecchie assottigliate . . ." (Parabosco 2005: 153)

[14] "E così detto, incominciò (come quella che sempre lo sapea fare) così dirottamente a piangere, che pareva che un figlio le fosse morto ai piedi" (Parabosco 2005: 154).

[15] Another very similar scene can be found in *Il viluppo* (Parabosco 1977c: 52v).

MINIATO	Bene sia venuto la mia dolce vita, ora mi saziarò pur di te, stella mia rilucente!
NEBBIA	Ahimè! O santo Bolino, o san Bernardo, incatena questo diavolo!
MINIATO	Ove ne fuggi? Sta' salda. Or ch'io t'ho presa, non mi fuggirai. Mille anni è ch'io t'aspetto!
NEBBIA	Croce, croce, acqua santa, qui habitat in adiutorio!
MINIATO	Che acqua! Io ti voglio portar con esso meco. Sta' per virtù di chi ti costringe! (Parabosco 1977d: 40v)

[MINIATO Welcome, my sweet life, I will now glut myself on you, my shining star! // NEBBIA Alas! O saint Bolino, o saint Bernard, chain up this devil! // MINIATO Where are you running? Stand still! Now I have you, you can't escape. I've been waiting for you for ages! // NEBBIA Cross, cross, holy water, qui habitat in adiutorio! // MINIATO What water? I want to take you with me. Stay, I command you!]

Comparing this scene with the corresponding passage in the novella, one may notice how Parabosco expounded the episode, adopting a variable focalization that combines the narrator's point of view, who ironically judges the characters from an extradiegetic 'position', with the necromancer's:

> Il quale [Nebbia], tosto che dove era l'arca fu giunto . . . *il buon vecchio*, che fin allora con grandissimo desiderio in persona d'altri aspettata l'aveva, se 'l prese per lo braccio subitamente . . . uscendo fuor del sepolcro. Sentendosi ritenere il braccio là entro, e appresso vedendone uscir colui, credendo che veramente il diavolo fosse, incominciò Nebbia a gridare *e con mille orazioni e nomi* a volersi aitare, ma il vecchio per ciò non lo lasciava, anzi . . . si sforzava d'accostargli la bocca al viso; per che pareva al negromante che egli *vivo vivo* se lo volesse *inghiottire*. (Parabosco 2005: 168; emphasis added)

> [As soon as the necromancer arrived at the tomb . . . *the old good man*, who with great desire had been waiting for him under someone else's appearance, immediately grabbed him by the arm . . . and jumped out of the sepulchre. Realizing that his arm was being held and seeing him coming out from the tomb, [and] mistaking him for a devil, Nebbia started crying and imploring the blessing of the saints *with a thousand prayers*, but the old man did not let him go, and, on the contrary, . . . made several efforts to put his own mouth to his cheek, so that the necromancer thought that he wanted *to swallow him alive*.]

While in the two comedies the action revolved around a series of funny misunderstandings, here the narratized speech is made livelier by the al-

ternation of the points of view of the extradiegetic narrator and of the necromancer, whose being terrified is conveyed by apt lexical choices, such as the emphatic verb *inghiottire* [to swallow] or the vividly expressive *vivo vivo* [alive, alive]. The laughable tone of the narrative and the derisory representation of both Giuvenale and Nebbia make up for the lack of 'scenic action', making them appear as ridiculous and foolish to the readers' eyes.

Parabosco's rewriting practice shows that he perceived the need to compensate for the absence of the performative dimension of drama by adopting stylistic strategies specifically devised for the written text: from a variable focalization to the narrator's implicit and explicit comments. At the same time, it should also be noticed that the *I diporti*'s own structure may have played a role in this. The novellas are enclosed by a frame tale about a group of learned gentlemen, members of the Accademia Veniera, who gathered together and recounted stories for recreation (*diporti* meaning pastimes or diversions). Although the single novellas are narrated by different *novellatori*, they share the same point of view, thus providing the reader with a unified outlook. The narrator's frequent ironical interventions might in fact be ascribed to this overarching gentleman-like external perspective.

Although Parabosco did not write any theoretical work on literary and dramatic genres, from his production one may draw a series of implicit suggestions on what his conception of them might have been. His awareness of the specific function of the moods of speech in drama and narrative emerges precisely when he works on the same plots in his plays and novellas. Indeed, struggling not to produce what might be perceived as mere duplicates, in his tales he emphasized the narratized or transposed speech, instead of dialogues – typical of drama –, and at the same time strove to make pure diegesis as lively as possible through vivid lexical choices, effects of focalization, and a subtle handling of the narrator's ideological function. It is not coincidental that in the tales of *I diporti* not derived from his comedies he did not pay the same attention to the moods of speech, while still relying upon the aforementioned narrative *outillage*.

Supporting this view, also in the only case of an ascertained filiation of a play from a novella, he followed a strategy meant clearly to distinguish the play from the tale. As already mentioned, *Il pellegrino* (1552) derives from the twelfth novella of *I diporti*, a tale which included a large number of direct speeches. This made the moods-of-speech device 'unavailable' to his end. Thus, Parabosco had to find another solution, and what he resorted to turned out to be quite extraordinary: he rewrote the whole story in verse, making it stand out within the corpus of his comedies entirely written in prose.

Diegesis on the Stage: Parabosco's Soliloquies and the Commedia dell'Arte

Even though Parabosco often devised his soliloquies as 'standard' self-addresses spoken by solitary characters revealing their innermost feelings, a few of them are shaped as brief narratives, which appear dramatically unjustified at both a psychological and dramatic level. In fact, they actually function as short inserts that, on the one hand, suggest the soliloquizer's character traits, and, on the other, indirectly provide the audience with pieces of information about the characters or the plot. *L'hermafrodito* offers a couple of especially revealing examples. The first one can be found in Act 3, where the servant Cucca recalls his recent imposture at the expense of a gentleman and an old woman:

> Cancaro alla mavagía! So che io per un pezzo ho avuto uno stordimento così fatto. Mai più ne bevo! Ma ora bisogna ch'io mi guardi bene intorno, ché la vecchia mi deve andar cercando e per aventura in compagna de' birri. Cancaro, la fu bella! Venendo da Trevigi così a piè a piè, io ritrovai una vecchiatta in compagnia d'una sua figliuola giovanetta. La quale così ragionando . . . mi disse ch'ella veniva per riscuotere un lasso di una sua patrona morta, che gli avea lasciato per lo maritar di sua figliuola, ma che il gentiluomo ch'avea da sborsare i dinari . . . non voleva darli, se prima non sapeva che la fanciulla fosse maritata e vedeva il marito. . . . E finalmente [il gentiluomo] non vuolse espedir la vecchia prima che l'altro giorno e così si fece una bella cena e volle che io e la fanciulla soli – ha ha ha, io creppo delle risa! – si richiudessimo in una camera. La vecchia fece ogni opera per venirci anco lei, ma mai il buon vecchio gentiluomo non volse, dicendo che non era lecito ch'ella ci turbasse il nostro piacere. La povera vecchia non osava dire ch'io non era suo genero; da l'altro lato dubitava di quello che gli intravenne. . . . La vecchia mi deve andar cercando. Ma ecco ecco Miniato, il mio padrone. Oh, a lui e a quel negromante la voglio anco far bella. Adagio pure, già me l'ho pensata, perché egli m'ha detto di non so che teste di morto. (Parabosco 1977d: 30v-31r)
>
> [Damned malvasia! I know that I have been in a terrible daze for a while. I will never drink it again! But now I have to be careful, since the old woman must be searching for me, maybe even with the watchmen. Oh boy, how cool it was! On my way from Treviso, while I was walking on my own, I bumped into an old woman with her young pretty daughter . . . She said that she would cash in the bequest of a dead mistress of hers, who had left her some money for her daughter's wedding, but that the man who should give her that money . . . would not give it to her until he knew that the girl was actually married and had met the husband. . . . Finally, [the gentleman] did not let the old woman leave before the following day and we had supper

> together, and he wanted me and the girl – ah ah ah, I die laughing! – to lock ourselves alone in a bedroom. The old woman did her best in order to come in with us, but the good old gentleman did not consent, saying that she should not trouble our pleasure. The poor old woman did not dare to say that I wasn't her son-in-law; on the other hand, she suspected what actually happened. . . . The old woman must be searching for me. Here is Miniato, my master. Oh, I want to trick both him and that necromancer. But soft, I have already planned everything, because he told me about some skulls.]

Introduced by the stage direction "Cucca solo" [Cucca alone], the soliloquy initially develops as a normal self-address, at least until Cucca starts talking about the old woman. In fact, he already knows what he has done, and he is not debating within himself a particular issue. His only aim seems to be here to inform the audience about what has just gone by, although indirectly. The passage itself is framed by the expression "la vecchia mi deve andar cercando", and as Cucca pronounces it for the second time, thus closing his tale, he resumes his 'theatrical status' and starts thinking about what he will be doing in the here and now of the dramatic action.

Referring to this same soliloquy, Magnanini noticed that "in Act 3 of *L'hermafrodito*, Parabosco interrupts the action of the plot with a novella narrated by the servant Cucca. Although entertaining, the tale is completely extraneous to the action" (2001: 213). Acknowledging the lack of relations between this tale and the actual plot of the comedy, Pellizzaro also remarked that its main purpose is to make the audience laugh (1901: 172). Yet, even though Cucca's brief tale is self-contained and shares no connection with the dramatized events, it is far from being useless, in that it provides a fine introduction to the character's crafty and malicious nature; the trick he played on the old woman reveals him as the prototype of the smart servant, coherently anticipating the practical joke he will later play on his master and to which he alludes at the end of his soliloquy.

Parabosco tried to make Cucca's tale reflect the point of view of the speaker himself. At the turning point of his narration, Cucca uses a colloquial parenthetical exclamation, "io creppo delle risa" [I die laughing], and also resorts to typically spoken expressions, such as diminutives and hypocoristic terms ("vecchietta", "giovanetta", "figliuola", "il buon vecchio", "la povera vecchia"). In particular, the way he refers to the old woman varies depending on her attitude towards him: before he starts telling what has happened, she is perceived as a potential threat, since she is searching for him in order to take her revenge, and he accordingly calls her "la vecchia" ["the old woman"]; then, when he actually begins his narration, he calls her "la vecchietta" ["the little old woman"], a diminutive which reveals how unprepared she was to what Cucca would do to her and how inferior in wit and powerless she would turn out (she is giving her daughter to a

man whose cleverness she cannot weigh, thus involuntarily allowing him to take advantage of the situation). Later on, when he reports how she tried to oppose him, she is again called "la vecchia", while, after Cucca eventually defeats her, she becomes "la povera vecchia" ["the poor old woman"], a hypocoristic expression which highlights her definitive impotence. Finally, when the story returns to its starting point ("la povera vecchia mi deve andar cercando"), the old woman is once again referred to as "la vecchia", a label that, bringing the tale full circle, also restores to the woman a threatening aura.

At first sight, this attempt to adapt the tale to its speaker's point of view may recall Parabosco's likely source for this plot, that is, Ruzante's *Vaccaria*, a comedy performed in Padua in 1531, and published for the first time in Venice in 1551 (see Getrevi 1983; Padoan 1982).[16] In Act 3, in a dialogue with his young master, his master's beloved, and a fellow servant, Truffo repeats a story similar to Cucca's one.[17] In this case, however, the narrative represents not only a voluntary digression aimed at mocking the lovers and their impatience (see Ruzante 1967: 1540n), but also a prop to foreground the servant's own comic quality. Ruzante successfully adapted the tale into a dialogue, and comically emphasized the disparity between lower and upper classes through the use of dialect in contrast with literary language. On the contrary, Parabosco did not play on the same linguistic variance and used but few colloquialisms, justified by the tale's internal focalization. Thus, if Ruzante should be considered as a possible source for the comic plot of Cucca's narrative, it is not to him that Parabosco looked for his style, which instead appears indebted to another dramatic model: the commedia dell'arte's scenarios. It would not come as a surprise that, living in Venice at the time when the commedia dell'arte was rapidly becoming very popular, Parabosco might have been fascinated by its features.

Analysing sixteenth-century Venetian theatre, Richard Andrews has highlighted that the "comedies which were published in the 1540s and 1550s all show signs of tensions between on the one hand the pressure to imitate literary models (which by now included the more successful Italian come-

[16] It should be remarked that Cucca's tale, whose content later served as a plot for novella 15 in *I diporti*, was in fact a very successful story used by many of Parabosco's fellow-writers: it can be found in Agnolo Firenzuola's *Novelle pratesi* [*Novellas from Prato*] (published in 1548), in Il Lasca's *Le Cene* [*The Dinners*] (composed between 1540 and 1584), and in Pietro Fortini's *Le piacevoli e amorose notti dei novizi* [*The Pleasant and Amorous Nights of the Novices*] (written between 1555 and 1561). However, Parabosco may have known only Firenzuola's text, since Il Lasca's and Fortini's works did not circulate widely at the time and were published only in the eighteenth century (see Getrevi 1983; Guglielminetti 1984).

[17] See Ruzante 1967: 3.4.120-42.

dies, as well as Plautus and Terence) and on the other hand a reluctance to ignore the growing theatrical repertoire which was in demand, and which was based on the discoveries and contributions of Ruzante and the local tradition" (1993: 145). Interestingly enough, Andrews included Parabosco among the dramatists who devoted themselves to an "apparently 'regular' comic writing", but indeed revealed their debt to both the "commedia regolare" and the "teatro popolaresco" (161). Likewise, Magnanini has defined *L'hermafrodito* as "predominantly a 'commedia regolare', being only in small parts 'teatro popolaresco'", and clearly acknowledged other comedies by Parabosco as such, while Lommi, talking about *La notte*, explicitly defined it as "very close to the growing commedia dell'arte" ("molto prossima alla nascente commedia dell'arte", 2008: 11n).

Parabosco may have patterned his 'narrative' soliloquies precisely after the dell'arte scenarios, which often include similar 'narrative' formulas. In Basilio Locatelli's *Il gran mago* [*The Great Wizard*], Zanni tells his own story while he is alone on stage, thus presumably interrupting the comedy's action:

> . . . *Sireno* parte per e. *Zan*[*ni*] resta dicendo dell'esser venuto in Arcadia per fortuna di Mare . . . et haver menato li figlioli delli loro padroni, quali sono fatti grandi et pastori, lui esser bifolco, dicendo dell'essere del paese; havendo detto il tutto, parte per strada D.[18] (Neri 1913: 58)
>
> [. . . Sireno exits through e. Zanni remains and says that he came to Arcadia after a sea storm . . . and that he took with him their masters' children, who are now adults and shepherds; that he himself is a cowhand and describing the land; having said everything, he exits from D.]

As in the case of Cucca's soliloquy, Zanni's does not display the characteristics of a self-address, but resembles a proper narration which does not have any psychological or circumstantial justification. In the same scenario, a similar example is provided by the wizard's soliloquy; alone on stage, he likewise "speaks about his powers and his knowledge, and his having foreseen that he will lose everything if he does not remedy what needs to be changed; he talks about the arrival of strangers in Arcadia" (Neri 1913: 59).[19] Several other examples can be found in Flaminio Scala's scenarios, published at the beginning of the seventeenth century. All these instances show some similarities with Parabosco's narrative soliloquies and might in fact prove that the scenarios provided a model for them. If 'regular thea-

[18] In the scenarios, letters were used to indicate entry and exit points on stage.

[19] ". . . narra le sue virtù, et fra poco la sua scientia, et haver previsto di perdere il tutto, se lui non rimedierà a quanto fa bisogno; dice della venuta de' forestieri nell'Arcadia . . .".

tre' employed the soliloquies as self-addresses aimed at penetrating a character's inward deliberations, Parabosco could have resorted to a different kind of soliloquies, whose structure and function appear to be closer to the commedia dell'arte tradition.

Should further proof of Parabosco's indebtedness to the scenarios' templates be needed, one could consider that narratives are embedded also within the dialogues of his comedies with no apparent relation to the action, precisely as happens in the commedia dell'arte. This is the case of the exchange between Polissena and her servant, Santina, in Act 2 of *L'hermafrodito*; gossiping about a friar, Santina tells of his many affairs, thus temporarily interrupting the dialogue with her mistress.[20] Similar examples can be easily found in the scenarios, where two or three dialoguing characters stop talking in order to listen to a story told by one of them (see Andrews 2008; Neri 1913).

While Parabosco's practice reinforces the idea that he knew and exploited the scenarios in his own dramas, his composition of both 'canonical' soliloquies and 'undramatic' narrative ones might also suggest that he did not perceive a clear difference between them. On the contrary, he likely considered both of them perfectly suitable for the dramatic mimesis, since the commedia dell'arte itself made use of these two kinds of soliloquy. Parabosco might have simply thought that what he found in this popular kind of theatre was perfectly mimetic and he probably did not even realize that his narrative soliloquies were actually undramatically narrative.

This debt to the commedia dell'arte is probably not unintended. Intermingling elements taken from the 'regular' comedy with others deriving from a more 'popular' theatre such as the commedia dell'arte, Parabosco could satisfy an audience who relished what Lommi defined as "hybrid dramaturgy" ("drammaturgia ibrida", 2008: 24). Indeed, as Magnanini pointed out, "while 'the commedia regolare' bestowed a certain amount of literary prestige on the author, the 'teatro popolaresco' assured the approval of Venetian audiences" (2001: 211-12). No playwright would ever disdain the public's favour, and Parabosco, who considered literature (and music) as his main source of livelihood, needed it more than others.

Parabosco's peculiar exploitation of mimesis and diegesis in his narrative and drama production reveals important aspects of his artistic personality. On the one hand, the strategies he employed to highlight narratized and transposed speech in the novellas that he derived from his comedies suggest that he consciously worked on the moods of speech, moving from what he thought could especially denote a theatrical genre (mimesis)

[20] See Parabosco 1977d: 18r-v. For this tale within Santina's speech, see also Pellizzaro 1901: 172.

to what could best identify a narrative genre (pure diegesis). This required the adoption of different stylistic and communicative strategies, replacing character-interaction with the mediation of an overt narrator endowed with a prominent ideological function. On the other hand, the presence of narratives inserted within 'undramatic' soliloquies did not belie Parabosco's wish to differentiate the two genres through opposite uses of the moods of speech. The 'undramatic' narrative soliloquies of commedia dell'arte probably strengthened Parabosco's feeling that they were in fact mimetic pieces. Finally, what justifies Parabosco's stylistic choices is always his great attention to the audience's tastes. His desire to please his readers, providing new literary products, probably led him to exploit the moods of speech as the most appropriate device for distinguishing theatrical and literary texts. At the same time, his comedies imitated the scenarios in order to satisfy his spectators' tastes and expectations. A comparison between the different strategies employed by Parabosco certainly shows that his production is not as simple and plain as it could seem, but entails interesting connections with his contemporary cultural and literary milieu.

Appendix

Chart 1. Parabosco's dramas

Date of first publication	Drama
1546	*La notte*
1547	*Il viluppo*
1548	*La progne*
1549	*L'hermafrodito*
1549	*I contenti*
1550	*Il marinaio*
1552	*Il pellegrino*
1555	*Il ladro*
1556	*La fantesca*

Chart 2. Parabosco's novellas

Date of publication	Literary Work
1548	First edition of *Il secondo libro delle lettere amorose*, containing four novellas which will be published in *I diporti* becoming novellas 4, 10, 14, and 16
1551 (Late Spring)	First edition of *I diporti*
1552	Second edition of *I diporti*

Chart 3. Plot connections between *I diporti*'s novellas and Parabosco's comedies[21]

Novella	Comedy	Details
7	*I contenti*	The practical joke in the second act of *I contenti* is similar to the one narrated in the novella
9	*Il viluppo* *L'hermafrodito*	The novella is based on a servant's practical joke, which appears in both comedies

[21] For further details, see Pirovano 2005a: 31.

12	*Il pellegrino*	Close thematic and lexical similarities between the novella and the comedy
13	*Il marinaio* *La notte* *Il viluppo*	The events experienced by a father and his sons in the novella can be found in *Il marinaio* too. The novella also displays some similarities with *La notte* and *Il viluppo.*
15	*L'hermafrodito*	The novella's plot corresponds to the tale told by Cucca in a soliloquy he delivers in Act 3 of *L'hermafrodito*

Works Cited

Andrews, Richard (1993), *Scripts and Scenarios. The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

— (2008), *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala: a Translation and Analysis of 30 Scenarios*, Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, and Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press.

Baratto, Mario (1977), *La commedia del Cinquecento*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore.

Barberi Squarotti, Giorgio (2006), *La letteratura instabile: teatro e novella fra Cinquecento ed Età barocca*, Treviso: Santi Quaranta.

Bargagli, Girolamo (1996), "Dialogo de' giuochi", in Nuccio d'Ordine (ed.), *Teoria della novella e teoria del riso nel Cinquecento*, Napoli: Liguori.

Bonciani, Francesco (1996), "Lezione sopra il comporre delle novelle", in Nuccio d'Ordine (ed.), *Teoria della novella e teoria del riso nel Cinquecento*, Napoli: Liguori.

Borsellino, Nino (1989), "Novella e commedia nel Cinquecento", in *La novella italiana. Atti del Convegno di Caprarola, 19-24 settembre 1988*, Roma: Salerno: 469-82, vol. 1.

Bragantini, Renzo (1990), "La sorte e il riso (mancati)", in *Il tema della fortuna nella letteratura francese e italiana del Rinascimento. Studi in memoria di Enzo Giudici*, Firenze: Olschki: 373-80.

Di Filippo Bareggi, Claudia (1988), *Il mestiere di scrivere. Lavoro intellettuale e mercato librario a Venezia nel Cinquecento*, Roma: Bulzoni.

Di Francia, Latterio (1924), *Novellistica*, Milano: Vallardi, vol. 1.

Feldman, Martha (1991), "The Academy of Domenico Venier, Music's Literary Muse in Mid-Cinquecento Venice", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 44 (3): 476-512.

Fido, Franco (1988), "Fra 'Decameron' e 'Cortegiano': l'autunno della novella nei 'Diporti' del Parabosco, in Franco Fido (ed.), *Il paradiso dei buoni compagni: capitoli di storia letteraria veneta*, Padova: Antenore: 75-85.

Genette, Gérard (1976), "Boundaries of Narrative", *New Literary History*, 8 (1): 1-13

— (1980), *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method (Discours du récit, 1972)*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Getrevi, Paolo (1983), "Dalla Toscana a Venezia: l'itinerario della sposa cucita", in *Umanesimo e Rinascimento a Firenze e Venezia. Miscellanea di studi in onore di Vittore Branca*, Firenze: Olschki: vol. 3.2: 619-39.

Gibaldi, Joseph (1975), "The Renaissance Theory of the Novella", *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 2 (2): 201-27.

Giraldi Cinzio, Giovan Battista (2012), *Gli ecatommiti*, ed. by Susanna Villari, Roma: Salerno Editrice, 3 vols.

Guglielminetti, Marziano (1972), "Introduzione", in Marziano Guglielminetti (ed.), *Novellieri del Cinquecento*, Milano and Napoli: Ricciardi.

— (1984), *La cornice e il furto. Studi sulla novella del '500*, Bologna: Zanichelli.

Guidotti, Angela (2000), "Novellistica e teatro del Cinquecento", in Gabriella Albanese, Lucia Battaglia Ricci and Rossella Bessi (eds), *Favole Parabole Istorie. Le forme della scrittura novellistica dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*, Roma: Salerno: 395-418.

Halliwell, Stephen (2013), "Diegesis and Mimesis", *The Living Book of Narratology*, http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/diegesis-%E2%80%93-mimesis (last access 10 November 2016).

Javitich, Daniel (1999), "The Assimilation of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Sixteenth-Century Italy", in Glyn P. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 53-65, vol. 3.

Lommi, Antonella (ed.) (2008), *Due commedie patetiche del Cinquecento.* Il Pellegrino *di Girolamo Parabosco.* I Fidi Amanti *di Francesco Pondiani*, Milano: Edizioni Unicopli.

Magnanini, Suzanne (2001), "Girolamo Parabosco's *L'Hermafrodito*: an Irregular *Comedia Regolare*", in Keala Jewell (ed.), *Monsters in Italian Literary Imagination*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press: 203-21.

Neri, Ferdinando (1913), *Scenari delle maschere in Arcadia*, Città di Castello: Casa Editrice S. Lapi.

Norton, Glyn P. (ed.) (1999), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 3.

Padoan, Giorgio (1982), *La commedia rinascimentale veneta*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore.

Parabosco, Girolamo (1555), *Il ladro*, Venezia: Per Francesco e Pietro Rocca Fratelli.

— (1556), *La fantesca*, Venezia: Appresso Stefano di Alessi.

— (1977a), "I contenti", in *L'hermafrodito. I contenti*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

— (1977b), "Il marinaio", in *Il marinaio. Il pellegrino*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

— (1977c), "Il viluppo", in *La notte. Il viluppo*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

— (1977d), "L'hermafrodito", in *L'hermafrodito. I contenti*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

— (2005), "I diporti", in *Diporti*, ed. by Donato Pirovano, Roma: Salerno Editrice.

Pellizzaro, Giambattista (1901), *La commedia del secolo XVI e la novellistica anteriore e contemporanea in Italia*, Vicenza: Stabilimento tipo-litografico G. Raschi.

Pirovano, Donato (2005a), "Nota introduttiva", in Donato Pirovano (ed.), *Girolamo Parabosco: Diporti*, Roma: Salerno Editrice.

— (2005b), "Nota al testo de *I diporti*", in Donato Pirovano (ed.), *Girolamo Parabosco: Diporti*, Roma: Salerno Editrice.

Ruzante (1967), "La Vaccaria", in *Teatro*, ed. by Ludovico Zorzi, Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore.

Segre, Cesare (1980), "A Contribution to the Semiotics of Theater", *Poetics Today*, 1 (3): 39-48.

Vecchi, Giuseppe (1977), "Premessa", in Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi (eds), *Girolamo Parabosco: La Notte. Il Viluppo*, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

Villari, Susanna (2012), "Introduzione", in Susanna Villari (ed.), *Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinzio: Gli Ecatommiti*, Roma: Salerno Editrice, vol. 1.

Weinberg, Bernard (1961), *A History of Literary Criticism in Italian Renaissance*, Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, vol. 2.

Luke Wilson*

Between the One and the Nine: Counting and Telling in *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale*

Abstract

As is suggested by the ambiguity in certain key terms (tell, tale, count, account, recount, and so on), counting and narrative are intimately associated, especially in Shakespeare. This essay considers this association in the opening of *Hamlet* and in a couple of scenes in *The Winter's Tale*. Gaps in dramatic mimesis are often filled diegetically, an operation that is sometimes numerically inflected. Scholars have suggested that Shakespeare's dramaturgy works by a combination of the mimetic and diegetic that points inferentially towards a wider fictional world (*fabula*). I argue that this operation may be understood numerically, as sometimes additive and sometimes multiplicative. Where telling gives way to showing in *Hamlet* 1.1, it does so as if in an attempt to start counting, initiate a movement forward that is both mimetic and diegetic. *The Winter's Tale*, I propose, shows us linear and logarithmic counting set in contrast to one another, raising the possibility that these may be associated with diegesis and mimesis respectively.

I borrow my title from Patti Rothberg, who uses it, as the title of her debut cd, to tell a story. Rothberg, it is said, was 'discovered' busking in the New York City subway, and her title is supposed to allude to the IRT number 1 and number 9 lines, which both ran under Seventh Avenue, where evidently she had spent most of her time (the 9, which was discontinued in 2005, was a skip-stop line that followed the same route as the 1), and the last track on the cd, which bears the same title as the cd itself, tells the story of this discovery. My title is meant to evoke, as hers seems to do, the idea that numbers tell stories, or, better, that stories tell themselves through numbers, through sequence and consecution. In base ten, one and nine mark the beginning and end of the series of the graphically unique natural numbers, and their juxtaposition can be read as invoking the very idea of a

* Ohio State University - wilson.501@osu.edu

bounded sequence, of difference and connectedness.[1] I see the one and nine in Rothberg's title as standing in a relation simultaneously of difference and identity, distance and proximity, which I read as a kind of numeric allegory of her own emergence as a singer/songwriter, so that that particular part of her story is about moving from one to nine, from obscurity to fame (or at least to an appearance on Letterman), which seems like a long way but perhaps equally is not (the two lines follow the same route, though the nine will get you there faster).

My concern here, then, is about how in Shakespeare one gets from one to nine, or from nine to one, or, more generally, from one number to another – how, in the plays, stories get where they are going and, specifically, how they count themselves out across numerically-inflected empty spaces, lacunae or gaps in dramatic mimesis, by means of diegetic passages. I mean this as a contribution to the study of the place of narrative in Shakespeare's dramaturgy: as has often been noticed, Shakespeare has an odd habit of shifting into the narrative mode – "seemingly [as Holger Schott Syme puts it] the least theatrical form of writing" (Syme 2011: 117) – to present some of the most compelling moments in his plays diegetically, rather than staging them before his spectators' eyes, as one might expect.[2] Thus in *The Winter's Tale*, Perdita's reunion with her father occurs offstage, as does Falstaff's death in *Henry V*, Antonio's farewell to Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Cordelia's response when she hears about her father's misfortunes in *Lear*, the exchange between Edgar and his father that results in the latter's death (also in *Lear*) and so on. In each of these cases the choice of diegesis may be attributable to recognizable dramaturgical considerations, chief among them the management of dramatic pacing and the calibration of dramatic emphasis. But to say so is not to invalidate Syme's description of this practice as a sign of Shakespeare's theatre seemingly working against itself by inviting its audience to imagine precisely what is not presented visually on stage.

As Syme himself stresses, however, this apparently divided commitment – on the one hand to make the theatre a space of richly sensuous experience grounded in mimesis, and on the other to generate the possibility of an imaginative escape, through language descriptive of what is not

[1] I certainly do not want to saddle Rothberg with this, but in the two numbers mentioned together we should also be ready to hear an allusion to Luke 17:17, where Jesus expresses annoyance that only one of ten lepers he has cured bothered to return to thank him, so that mention of one *and* nine also potentially suggests the familiar notion of one *in ten*, and thus the relation between the notion of individual exceptionality and 'the rest', and along with that the idea of common and uncommon gratitude and ingratitude.

[2] This remark is extensively developed in Syme 2011.

directly seen, from that very space – is essential to Shakespeare's dramaturgy, which invariably complicates the strict opposition, traditionally attributed to Plato, between mimesis and diegesis, and gives a particular, theatrical inflection to Genette's claim that "*Mimesis* is *diegesis*" (Plato 1963: 637-9 [392d-394c]; Genette 1982: 133). Stanley Cavell and Lorna Hutson, approaching the relation between action and narration in Shakespeare in very different ways, both at once underscore the extent to which narrative is integral to Shakespeare's dramatic practice and equally understand that practice as confronting the idea that either mode shows itself inadequate in relation to the other (Cavell 1987: 193-221; Hutson 2015: 5-10). Cavell's reading of *The Winter's Tale* (to which I shall return) sees the play as struggling to transcend the competition it stages between narrative and mimesis, while Hutson argues, more broadly, that Shakespeare's narrative excurses, far from being signs of theatrical deficiency, as earlier generations of Shakespeare critics supposed, are the outgrowth of a classical mode of drama which, rather than confining dramatic representation within the unities of time and place, is better seen as enabling the diegetic production of an extra-mimetic "world" through imaginative inference.[3]

Narrative in Shakespeare comes in different forms. A preliminary taxonomy might go something like this: we find, in Shakespeare's plays, narratives describing 1) events that happen off-stage but during the temporal span the play covers, whether in continuous dramatic time or during a temporal hiatus; 2) events that happened before the play began; 3) events that are anticipated but will never occur (as in some prophetic narratives); 4) narrated events that never happened (viz., fictions, like Mamillius's "sad tale" that is "best for winter" or Iago's "I lay with Cassio lately . . ."); 5) events that are first presented mimetically, and thereafter are reported in narrative form; and 6) explanations that do not happen but are promised for the future, usually at the end of certain plays, where there is the implication that events that have been shown, mimetically, require further narrative explanation.[4]

[3] Holger Schott Syme's argument (2011) about mediated authority in early modern theatre and law has a similar implication for the relation between the mimetic (visual) and the diegetic in Shakespeare, with neither one independent of the other, and each relying on the other for authorization; at the same time, Syme's argument amounts to a rehabilitation of narrative authority on the stage against the supposed precedence of the visual, a position that places him in broad agreement with Hutson.

[4] One observation suggested by this taxonomy is that narrative passages in Shakespeare's plays probably follow a kind of barbell pattern, with a preponderance occurring early (in first and second acts) and late (in fifth acts). I have not tested this hypothesis, but it seems reasonable, and appears to be the case at least in *The Tempest*, as Bigliazzi 2014: 116 has shown.

Each of these present a distinct relation to the mimetic, and ought properly to be treated separately. Marjorie Garber describes the first kind (narratives of events that happen off-stage but during the temporal span of the play) as "unscenes" typically oriented towards a formal visuality suggesting the literary genre of the emblem and implying an affective content irreducible to language (thus when the Gentleman tells Kent about Cordelia learning of her father's fate, what she *says* is emphatically trivialized in favour of her reported behaviour; or, when the dishevelled Hamlet visits Ophelia in her bedroom, neither, judging from Ophelia's account, speaks a word) (Garber 1984: 35-50; Syme 2011: 241-4). But this logic – a dramatic economy in which the choice between mimesis and diegesis is determined by the effects Shakespeare is after, as for example using diegesis to preserve an ambiguity that would, mimetically, emerge differently or not at all – seems inapplicable in cases where mimesis is not, for whatever reason, an alternative. Similarly, the epistemological difficulty that narrative may be said to introduce – we know what we see in ways qualitatively different from our belief in the truth of what we are told – sometimes matters, in Shakespeare (as when Prospero's account of his history with Ariel and Caliban arouses our suspicions), but often enough does not; certainly, we do not ask whether the gentleman telling Kent about Cordelia is telling the truth (though we may in the case of Edgar telling of his father's death, largely because we have learned to mistrust this teller's pieties and bromides).[5]

Additionally, in Shakespeare, one may distinguish between the story behind the mimesis and the mimesis itself. Hutson does so in terms of the structuralist distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, in which *fabula* is the story as it exists outside of any telling, the sequence of events, perhaps as a kind of back-formation from the *sjuzhet*, which is the "discursive presentation in narrative of those events" (Jonathan Culler, qtd in Hutson 2015: 8). Edward Costigan, comparably, speaks of "the relationship of enacted events to the history they form" (1996: 327). Here "mimesis is diegesis" in the sense that we need, and we supply ourselves inferentially with, a telling in order to understand what we are shown, so that there is no mimesis that is not shadowed by diegesis. Hutson uses the language of inference and projection to describe how we get from the one to the other. Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists, she says, "began to write in a way that invites actors, audiences, and readers to project, from the slightest textual hints, the fabula of the play as an extramimetic world expanding both inwardly (into 'character') and outwardly, into the 'unscene' of imagined

[5] But see Syme 2011, who puts pressure on the assumption that the early modern period saw a crisis of representation in which scepticism about mediated reports predominated.

places and times", and later she refers to the same process as metonymic, parts working to elicit the whole (Hutson 2015: 19, 142).

My suggestion here is that, in Shakespeare, we can also describe the relation between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, as well as between instances of telling and showing in the plays, as one that is articulated *numerically*. In this hypothesis, numbers in Shakespeare would tend to appear where the relation between mimesis and diegesis is being negotiated. Numeric and narrative sequence share a common vocabulary in words of ambiguous reference like tell, tale, account, accounting, count (cf. French *conte*, tale or story), counting, recounting and so on, suggesting a deep association between counting and telling a story. This association is perhaps nowhere more alive than it is in Shakespeare. Rather than testing this hypothesis as a general proposition, which would be too much to take on here, I will read a few relevant passages in *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale* where the connection seems to be present.

Where narrative works supplementally in a strict sense, in the theatre, it registers as supplying missing steps in a sequence, as if counting out or marking points along a number line; but numbers work in different ways in the plays, and linear counting is only one of them. Notice, for example, the *multiplicative* supplementation imagined in the *Henry V* Choruses, where *fabula* is produced out of *sjuzhet* not so much by inference, projection, or metonymy as through a kind of numeric generativity: "this great account" owes its effect to the arithmetic of place value (crooked figures attesting "in little place a million"), and to the division of "one man" "into a thousand parts" (*Henry V,* Prologue 15-17, 24). In Shakespeare, I will argue, narration is sometimes linear and sometimes multiplicative or, as I will call it, logarithmic.

I begin with the opening scene of *Hamlet*, where mimesis and diegesis are combined with striking effects that seem to arrange for the inception of the plot itself. Early in 1.1, the sentry Barnardo begins to explain to the newly arrived Horatio what he and Marcellus have seen the night before.

BARNARDO Last night of all,
When yon same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course t'illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one –
(*Enter the Ghost*)
MARCELLUS Peace, break thee off. Look where it comes again.
(1.1.34-9)

The simplest way to read this moment is as one in which mimesis replaces diegesis, with telling and showing in competition, and the actual ghost up-

staging a story about the ghost. In a marvellous reading of these opening scenes, Stephen Booth long ago accounted for this particular moment as part of a systematic manipulation of affective states he saw as characteristic of the beginning of the play, the simultaneous satisfaction and frustration of the desire for explanation: just when we are ready to hear the story of what Marcellus has called "this thing" (1.1.19) we instead see it appear before our eyes, a shift to mimesis that supplies both more and less than we have been hoping for and expecting (Booth 1969: 141-2). A moment later the Ghost's reentrance enacts a similar displacement, though in this case Horatio's story (1.1.78-124; augmented in Q2 with an extra nineteen lines absent in F) has wandered further and further from the point at hand rather than closing in on it; and the Ghost seems to wait politely for him to finish before entering again.

For Costigan, the moment of the "bell then beating one" marks the convergence of the (narrated) past and (performed) present, as if the story has at just this moment caught up with action on stage (1996: 328). Yet the past only catches up in the special sense that what happened happens *again*: it is a coincidence, or a repetition, at the same time that this repeated appearance (it is in fact the third time the ghost has appeared) is marked by the clock striking one, as if the concern is about moving from singularity to plurality. The sense of repetition is reliant upon marks of cyclicality in the natural and human worlds: the star was then (last night) where it is now (tonight); and the bell then beat one just as now, we are perhaps to suppose, it beats one again, though no one on stage says it does, and there is no stage direction. It is the word "beating" that stands out; its use here is not idiomatic and is not found elsewhere in Shakespeare, where it is mostly hearts, pulses and brains that beat, and people and drums that are beaten; nowhere else in the plays do bells (or clocks) beat. The association is distinctly corporeal, as if the ills and disorders of the kingdom, like the disjoint time so familiar in this play, are represented as though they were occurring inside a human body.[6] More to the point here, "beat" is a word that renders the singular as plural; as editor Harold Jenkins offers in his gloss of this line, "the suggestion is rather of rhythmic repetition than of a single stroke" (1982: 1.1.42n).[7] In short, the very

[6] See OED, *v.* 33, citing as first of two mentions this passage in *Hamlet*: "There is often a combination of the notions of the beating of the heart, the pulse, or chronometer (senses 13, 14) with that of the beating of a drum, the beating of time, etc.".

[7] "Beat" seems invariably to carry the sense of repetition, repeated blows or strikes rather than a singular blow or strike. See OED. It is worth noting that Q1 *Hamlet* has "towling" instead of "beating," though whether this is an indication that whoever wrote Q1 remembered beating as (the more familiar though not particularly Shakespearean) tolling, or whether there is some other explanation, can only be conjectured. Although etymologically distinct, tolling resembles telling in having a counting dimension when used, as it often was, to denote the sound of a clock striking the hour (OED, s.v. toll *v.* 2).

word that signals the single stroke of one multiplies that stroke into a beat, a rhythm, of repeated strokes, just as the bell that beat one last night beats one again tonight, and just as it signals the ghost's third appearance: we have begun to count – one, two, three – and in the act of counting the plot is afoot.[8] And I mean that as a pun, since the Folio stage direction – "Enter the Ghost" – not only substitutes grammatically for what would have been the completion of Barnardo's sentence in some such statement as "the ghost appeared" ("the bell then beating one, enter the ghost"), but also supplies the four syllables missing from the pentameter line Barnardo has begun (though it does so with the trochee of "Enter", disturbing for a single metrical foot the iambic rhythm of an otherwise seamless transition from narrative to performance).[9] If as a script prescribing a performance the text of *Hamlet* here marks a shift from diegesis to mimesis (from telling a story about the Ghost to the entrance of the Ghost itself), on the page the same moment can also present itself as a grammatical continuation of the diegetic across dialogue and stage direction. Stage directions do not usually work in this complicated way, and although it is impossible to tell whether any such effects were planned, whether Shakespeare was counting on any of this being noticed, he seems clearly to be thinking here about telling as counting in the same breath as he is about telling stories through a juxtaposition of the diegetic and the mimetic.

[8] This moment in the play asks to be linked to others where traumatic repetition is associated with the initiation of counting, as with Claudius's reference to the "first corse" (1.2.105), and those that followed after it. See Hirschfeld 2003. But whether the impulse to count represents a resistance to the repetition compulsion or a particular manifestation of it, or both, is unclear.

[9] In both Q1 (sig. B1v) and Q2 (sig. B1v), the stage direction reads "Enter Ghost", leaving the line one syllable short of completion. It seems clear from all three texts that the speech following, Marcellus's "Peace, breake thee of: / Looke where it comes againe" (F TLN 51-52), represents a full line of pentameter verse, even though F's lineation places the stage direction to the right on TLN 51; both Q1 and Q2 give the stage direction its own line, and run the two halves of Marcellus's speech together on the same line after it. This is a more complicated issue that can be managed here, but it may be worth noting that Maguire 2016: 152 mentions a Q *Lear* stage direction ("*She takes a sword and runs at him behind*") that, as was first noticed by Peter Blayney, is a perfect iambic pentameter line and therefore likely to be authorial. My point here is simply that in reading any of the three texts, the stage direction, although clearly identified as such, also makes itself available as the metrical extension of spoken narration, resulting in a delicate ripple in the otherwise placid surface of the distinction between mimesis and diegesis. The argument that stage directions have found their way into dialogue through errors in transcription is not uncommon. For one example, in *The Tempest*, where a single-word stage direction may have been mistaken for dialogue, see Craik 1997 – a particularly germane instance because it too involves counting and telling: the word in question is "Tell" (*Tempest* 2.1.15).

In *Hamlet*, in short, the senses of telling seem bound up with the play's broader preoccupation with mimesis and diegesis. This is an association perhaps even more emphatically present in *The Winter's Tale*, with the notorious crux presented by its inclusion of one narrated *anagnorisis* (the revelation of Perdita's identity) and one performed *anagnorisis* (the revelation that Hermione has remained alive). These scenes are themselves mostly beyond my reach here, where I can only consider in detail two less complex passages. First, at the beginning of act four, Time enters to explain that sixteen years have passed since the end of the previous scene. In language that plays on the unorthodoxy of this move, Time asks that the spectator (or reader)

> Impute it not a crime
> To me or my swift passage that I slide
> O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
> To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
> To plant and o'erwhelm custom.
> (4.1.4-9)

Here, Time is managing the passage between one and sixteen – at once between birth and marriageability and between represented time (the sixteen years said to have passed) and the time it takes to represent that interval ("one self-born hour"). Cavell is surely right to imply, in his reading of *The Winter's Tale*, that "the concept of telling is used both to cover the progress of relating a story and to cover the progress of counting or numbering, as if counting numbers were our original for all further narration" (1987: 205). For Cavell, however, Time's intervention is about the divergence between telling as counting and telling as narrating, between numeric and non-numeric "counting", suggesting that in the former, times, sizes and distances are fixed ahead of time, where "in telling tales it is their pleasure to work these things out as part of the telling, or as part of a mode or genre of telling – it is why what the teller of a story does is to recount – count again – so you needn't be making a mistake if you let lapse a space of sixteen years in your account of certain kinds of things" (ibid.). And it is true that in one sense what Time is doing in "leav[ing] the growth untried Of that wide gap", is *not* counting, marking the passage of sixteen years without, as it were, counting them out, or, indeed, recounting much of what happened during them. But "recounting" here is not, as Cavell implies, non-numeric counting, since Time's speech consists of sixteen couplets, as if to show that Time's generativity is both narrative and numeric (Truth as the daughter of Time): a conversion of time into form that appears here as a counting and a recounting not by ones but by twos

(thirty-two lines in sixteen couplets, but also that couplet-to-come, Florizel and Perdita). This process, by which lost years are replaced by couplets that avoid actually depicting what happened in them, obtrudes itself again where Time somewhat oddly refers to what we have seen performed, the mention of Polixenes' son, as his own narration: "Gentle spectators . . . remember well I *mentioned* a son o'th' King, which Florizel I now name to you . . ." (emphasis added) – as if the play is a story that Time is telling. Mimesis, again, seems to become diegesis, in a move that is everywhere in the play threatened or promised.[10] Cavell asks "why a play is being called a tale" (*The Winter's Tale*), and this is a deep question, one having to do with Shakespeare's dramatic explorations of the romance form. *The Winter's Tale* was a tale before it was a play, namely Robert Greene's immensely popular narrative romance, *Pandosto*. It is surely no accident that in this play, where the source was (it has been claimed) the single most popular story in early seventeenth century England, Shakespeare departs so radically from that text in the matter of Hermione's apparent reanimation (which does not happen in Greene) (Newcombe 2002). And, conversely, we are told that the reunion of Perdita and her father – which is narrated rather than performed before our eyes – is so strange as to be "hooted at like an old tale" (5.3.17): surely it is no accident that this scene *does* occur in Greene's narrative.

The Winter's Tale, then, seems to go out of its way to make it hard to tell how it feels about both being and not being a "tale". For me, this difficulty is bound up with the sense that this play also presents us with mul-

[10] It may be that, as Tiffany Stern suggests, the appearance of diegetic language where it ought not to be is explained by the loss of an appearance of Time earlier in the play (so that, as Stern speculates, *The Winter's Tale* at one time more closely resembled *Pericles* in featuring a narrator who reappears); see Stern 2004: 52; Stern 2009: 107. Stern shows that omissions of choruses and other 'interim texts' were not unusual. If *The Winter's Tale* did in fact resemble *Pericles* in this respect, of course, the Folio text would have had to lose at least *four* such appearances, one at the beginning of each of the other acts, and one at the conclusion of the fifth. These would have been significant omissions indeed; they would have constituted post-authorial skirmishes in the struggle Cavell identifies in the play as a whole, between its origination as a tale and its destiny as performance, their cumulative effect being to draw the play further in the direction of the latter than it had in an earlier form been willing to go. It is also striking that, since we *have* heard, from Polixenes himself, about Florizel, this information need not have been, and could not only have been, delivered by Time. Are we to imagine then accompanying revisions that shifted the delivery of content from diegesis to mimesis? Similarly, although the opening scene (1.1) is richly performative in a way possible only through mimesis (and resembling, in this respect, other Shakespearean openings, for example, *Lear* 1.1), it does do significant narrative work, as though it is standing in for some Chorus-like opening speech.

tiple ways of counting. If the numeric expression of the relation of the mimetic to the diegetic is how to get sixteen years out of "one self-born hour", or the extravagant and wheeling temporalities of a prose romance narrative into three hours of stage time, the opening scenes of this play, like those of *Hamlet*, approach the same problem as that of *beginning* to count, beginning to tell. As Cavell observes, the last word of *Winter's Tale* 1.1 is "one", and the first word of *Winter's Tale* 1.2 is "nine", so that the play's opening challenge is how we get from the one number to the other, what falls between them (1987: 109).[11] At 1.1.39-40, Archidamus remarks that "If the king had no son they [the people of the kingdom of Sicilia] would desire to live on crutches until he had one". The king at this point does have a son, but soon enough he will not, and the play performs the duration (with a sixteen year gap in the middle) until he has one again, or rather until he has a son-in-law. Whether the son-in-law replaces the dead son – whether this substitution *counts* – is, you could say, the play's first and last preoccupation. King to son to son-in-law: this is an arithmetic of succession in which what counts (if it does) is always singular; it resembles Time's later counting by twos, even as the latter doubles it, as if the conversion of time into form has twice the force. But in opening the immediately following scene with the last graphically unique Arabic numeral in base ten, instead of the first, Polixenes seems to be exploring other ways of counting.

Nine changes of the wat'ry star hath been
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
Without a burden. Time as long again
Would be filled up, my brother, with our thanks,
And yet we should for perpetuity
Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher,
Yet standing in rich place, I multiply
With one We thank you many thousands more
That go before it.
(1.2.9)

Purely linear counting, it would seem, will not get you anywhere – it is too slow, it fills up time, and you incur new debt faster than you can pay off the old – and the power of numerical place in the Arabic number system is necessary to escape the absorption of life into accounting for life.[12]

[11] Cavell also notices, "for fun", that Polixenes' speech is itself nine lines, "the last not (yet) complete", and that "of Polixenes' seven speeches before he accedes to the command to stay, all but one are either nine lines or one line long" (209).

[12] A great deal has been written about the power of the zero, or cipher, in Shakespeare and in mathematics generally. See for example Sheerin 2013; and, in *The Winter's Tale* specifically, Raman 2008.

Polixenes of course is not the only one who is multiplying here; his language of burdens and filling up and enriched zeroes registers his awareness that his hostess is poised to give birth at any moment. He is eager to be off, and his mention of his nine month's stay, which makes plausible Leontes' suspicion that his friend is the father of his wife's child, makes him seem uncomfortably if imperfectly aware of this motivation. The "burden" his throne has lacked is at once himself; anticipatorily his own son, who will succeed him on it; by analogy Leontes' son, the one who will not live to succeed him; Hermione's pregnancy; and his own sense that accounting for living threatens to become coextensive with living itself, as if, as in Time's speech, diegesis threatens to displace mimesis.

Not all counting is linear counting, then, and there is more than one way to get from the "one" of 1.1 to the "nine" of 1.2, as Polixenes suggests as he moves from the implicit linearity of "nine changes of the wat'ry star", which hints at a multiplicative logic it has yet to attain (and which like Barnardo's "Last night of all . . ." involves an enumeration deriving from the repetition of natural cyclical patterns), to the explicitly multiplicative logic of his ciphers standing in rich place.

I suggest that *The Winter's Tale* is about this shift, but more importantly about getting from one to nine, from the problem of the succession of the heir to the problem, which is also a solution, of sexuality, and equally about getting from nine to one, which is surely what Polixenes is trying to do as the play opens: to get free of the threesome he finds himself uncomfortably a part of, to go back to being one or at least to the linear order of fathers and sons, kings and heirs; Leontes wants the same thing, but in a different way. This is the unfortunate arithmetic of jealousy and suspicion that here intervenes between the singularity of the heir and the multiplicity of the heir's production; nine is the figure of pregnancy: it is three to the second power, three pregnant with itself.

But how *do* you get from one to nine and, equally, from nine to one? By way of what? To put it another way, what stands, numerically, midway between them? In a *linear* numeric sequence, the answer is five: four more than one and four less than nine. This is in effect the approach Polixenes recognizes the futility of. But the *logarithmic* midpoint between one and nine is not five but three, because $\log_3(1)=0$, $\log_3(3)=1$, $\log_3(9)=2$ and, conversely, $3^0=1$, $3^1=3$, $3^2=9$ (Hardesty 2012). In human (as well as animal) perceptions of quantity, this kind of logarithmic scale appears to be innate and is only, and only partially, replaced by means of an educational model that emphasizes instruction in the operations of addition and subtraction and also practical exercises in measurement by fixed numerical units applied to different spatial situations. The theory that, neurologically speaking, the scaling of numerical magnitudes is logarithmic rather than linear derives

from the work of Ernst Heinrich Weber and Gustav Theodor Fechner in the mid-nineteenth century; the Weber-Fechner law states that "linear increments in sensation *S* are proportional to the logarithm of stimulus magnitiude *I*" (Nieder and Miller 2003: 149), that is, that over a wide dynamic range, the threshold of discrimination between sensations of different magnitudes (loudness, duration, or numerosity, for example) increases logarithmically as magnitude increases (Dehaene 2003: 145); more simply, "increasingly larger quantities are represented with proportionally greater imprecision, compatible with a logarithmic internal representation with fixed noise" (Dehaene, Izard, Spelke and Pica 2008: 1217). Nieder and Miller have since concluded that this "compressed scaling of numerical information" describes "both behavioral and neural measures of visual quantities" (2003: 149).[13] The concept of the logarithm was introduced by the Scotsman John Napier in his *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio* (1614) (Clark and Montelle n.d.). But if we are prepared to accept the evidence supporting the Weber-Fechner law as demonstrating that logarithmic scaling is innate, the historical emergence of logarithmic *mathematics* is strictly speaking irrelevant.

In what therefore may be described as a logarithmic logic of counting in *The Winter's Tale*, the intermediate step between one and nine is not five (a number mentioned only four times in the play), but *three*, of which there are twenty-one mentions (a greater number than in all but two other plays by Shakespeare), with sixteen of them coming in Act 4.[14] For Leontes, the (linear?) counting that saw him paired in his youth with Polixenes is broken by the jump from one to three, in the form of the "three crabbed months" that intervened between his proposal and Hermione's consent; these prepare in turn for the next (logarithmic) step, the nine of Hermi-

[13] Dehaene, Izard, Spelke, and Pica 2008 show that like young children in Western cultures, both adults and children of the Mundurucu, in Amazonian Brazil, locate the spatial placement of numeric values logarithmically rather than linearly, as do Westerners of any age when thinking about larger numbers spatially, a "compressive response" that follows a logarithmic distribution of points on a line; "A shift from logarithmic to linear mapping occurs later in development, between first and fourth grade" (1217).

[14] Whether or not *The Winter's Tale*'s preoccupation with numbers and counting is quantifiably greater than what we find in Shakespeare's other plays (I have not done the necessary counting), its affinity for the number three ranks it third, exceeded only by *Love's Labour's Lost* (with its "three years' fast", 1.1.24, undertaken by its three protagonists), and *The Merchant of Venice* (with its three thousand ducats for three months). A graph of the frequency of the numbers from one to ten in all of Shakespeare's works collectively shows a continuous decline from one through six, followed by an upswing at nine and again at ten. In *The Winter's Tale*, in contrast, the comparable graph shows an uncharacteristic spike at three, followed by a return to the pattern of the average across all the plays.

one's first (and second) pregnancies. Act 4, with its sixteen threes, can be seen as working backward from nine to one, repairing the damage by supplying in effect new links between the one and the nine. All of the threes of Act 4 – the songs, parts, carters, dancers, shepherds, neatherds, swineherds, and so on – work in effect to undo the toxic threesomes of the first three acts – not only the implicit threesome of Leontes, Hermione, and Polixenes, but the "three crabbed months" (1.2.104), as well as the "three great ones" (viz., Leontes, Hermione, and Mamillius; 2.1.130) Antigonus warns will suffer if Leontes persists in the prosecution of Hermione, and the "three daughters" whom, Lear-like, he says he would geld (2.1.146) – as if marking the way back (and forward) to the singularity of the heir, the "one" that ends 1.1. The play also aligns the twenty-three years Leontes looks back on his younger self (1.2.157), the twenty-three days it takes for Cleomenes and Dion to return with the Oracle's answer (2.3.198), and the twenty-three years after which, the Old Shepherd says, young people stop being so much trouble (3.3.198); and these (twenty-) threes seem poised between problem and solution, between a stalled narrative and one that moves forward towards its resolution.

I would argue then that there is a deeply logarithmic engagement with counting in the play, in which moving between one and nine involves three as the logarithmic midpoint between them. Arguably, too, logarithmic sequence is the numeric ordering natural to mimesis in contrast to diegesis, which is perhaps more closely associated with the linear. I have tried to show that where diegesis and mimesis share the stage, a preoccupation with counting seems to hint at the sequentiality of narrative, the intimacy between counting and recounting. The final act of *The Winter's Tale* notoriously involves *two* recognition scenes, one that is primarily diegetic (5.2, in which we hear the story of Leontes and Perdita being reunited) and one that is primarily mimetic (5.3, in which the statue of Hermione is revealed to be Hermione herself). Rather than mimesis and diegesis jostling directly up against one another, then, in this play each has its own space in which to operate. Why this should be the case is a question too large for me to attempt to answer here. Syme has persuasively upended the conventional claim that Shakespeare cannily omits representing as spectacle the reunion of Perdita and her father in order to avoid upstaging the revelation of Hermione that is to come: these readings, Syme argues, assume that presence trumps representation, that "it is the specific *presentational* mode of the theatre that supposedly allows us to forget that we are witnessing fiction and puts us in touch with something like a miraculous, breathtaking reality. The visual in such an account ultimately wins out over the verbal as the true locus of theatricality, and the audience is figured as expecting, even hungering for scopic

satisfaction, so that the withholding of such stimulus is understood as a form of aesthetic starvation" (Syme 2011: 207). Syme argues, in contrast, that the play "repeatedly affirms the centrality of credit and undercuts the power of faith" (208), and that 5.2, which trades in the credibility of report, is in many ways the more important of the two scenes, supplying as it does the existence of an heir for Sicilia, after which the return of the mother is, dynastically speaking, irrelevant. As Syme notes, Simon Forman, writing in 1611, considered 5.2 the climax and resolution of the plot of the play and does not mention 5.3 at all (205).

Syme's reading of 5.2 shows how carefully constructed this scene is, and how integral to the play's overall design. Perhaps because it is (through line 110) devoted wholly to filling out the story of events that have occurred off-stage, however, it would not appear to be concerned with articulating the relation between mimesis and diegesis, at least not numerically. But – just "for fun", as Cavell (1987: 209) says in noting other numerical surprises in the play – we may observe that this scene of sustained narration reads pseudo-palindromically *in its Folio speech prefixes* through line 110, just before the entry of the Old Shepherd and the Clown. In other words, there is strong point symmetry around the middle speech prefix, as follows, with the three Gentlemen designated in the Folio text by their numbers (Gent. 1., Gent. 2., Gent. 3.), and Autolycus designated as A:

A1A1232323131313121A

To make clear the symmetrical organization of these exchanges, we can divide them into segments, leave off the opening exchange between Autolycus and Gent. 1., and isolate the middle point:

A123 - 2323 - 1 - 3131 - 321A

This is undoubtedly good dramaturgy, with the less-than-reliable Autolycus requesting a reliable, authoritative report, and each gentleman in succession supplying more detail and more proof, with Gent. 1. occupying the central position with six speeches, engaging with each of the other two in turn, first with Gent. 2., and then, symmetrically, with Gent. 3., who is the best informed of all. Then, after the others leaves the stage, Autolycus rounds things off by narrating his own role in having set the reunion up by getting the Old Shepherd and his son on board the ship bound for Sicilia. Judged strictly with respect to numerical sequence, however, this organization of the scene's narrative suggests, roughly speaking, a linear counting (A123), recounting (232313131) and uncounting, that is, counting down (321A). Numeric sequence seems to pin down narrative development, map it out, recursively rather than progressively – rather like the way the

iPhone learns your fingerprint, making successive passes to fill in the missing bits – but nevertheless according to a linear model of counting.

It is possible to imagine stagings of the scene that would elicit some of the symmetries involved here, but obviously the numeric dimension of the pattern emerges only in the speech prefixes in the Folio text; the spoken words themselves tend, as Syme notes, in the other direction, away from abstraction and towards individualization, with each gentleman more precisely characterized (and thus able to speak more authoritatively) than the one before him (2011: 233-4). Like the stage direction we have considered in *Hamlet*, the numerical story is one that can be told only partially in performance. But in a play so patently interested in numbers it is a story not quite as easy to dismiss as it may at first seem; and, again if only "for fun", we may note that the total number of the numbered gentlemen's speeches in the scene is the play's magic number, sixteen: the number of couplets in Time's speech, the length in years of the wide gap in time, and, of course, Perdita's age.

But if recursive linearity here works to move the story ahead decisively, we have seen that it can also express an impasse, a stalling of forward movement, as it appears to do for Polixenes in 1.2, where linear counting at once threatens to stop the story (Polixenes cannot get his thanks said and get out of Sicilia) and precisely in this obstruction determines the unhappy direction in which it will move forward. In this, 1.2 is mirrored not in 5.2 but in 5.3, which, as the play rapidly draws to a close, acknowledges the structural possibility of a similar stall. Using language that recalls Polixenes' initial expression of frustration at the linear mechanics of giving thanks, Paulina in 5.3 says that the royal visit to her house "is a surplus of your grace which never My life may last to answer" (7-8), hinting simultaneously at delay and the imminence of ending: her life (she says) will be over before she can express the proper gratitude; and the play is almost over too. Similarly, Leontes, seconded by his daughter, insists that they could continue to gaze at the statue for another "twenty years" (84), a stall that seems to prompt Paulina to offer, for the first time, to "make the statue move indeed" (88); no one, after all, can at this point spare another twenty years. If the "statue" qua statue is the stall, eliciting an anti-kinetic wonder, to make it move is to end the play by moving the plot along, mimetically, to its resolution. In a way consistent with arguments like Hutson's and Syme's for the complementarity of mimesis and diegesis in Shakespeare's theatre, we might say that the numeric sequencing of dramatic enactment will always involve both the linear and the logarithmic. But if diegesis restores us to the singularity of the heir in 5.2, mimesis reproduces in 5.3, gratuitously as it were, the original threesome, with what possible consequences we are not invited to ask. Greene's *Pandosto*, which not only kills

off Pandosto's wife early on but dispatches him, too, at the end, may have had the better idea.

Works Cited

Bigliazzi, Silvia (2014), "'Dost thou hear?' On the Rhetoric of Narrative in *The Tempest*", in *Revisiting* The Tempest: *The Capacity to Signify*, ed. by Silvia Bigliazzi and Lisanna Calvi, Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave: 111-33.

Booth, Stephen (1969), "On the Value of *Hamlet*". *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama*, ed. by Norman Rabkin, New York: Columbia University Press.

Cavell, Stanley (1987), "Recounting Gains, Showing Losses: Reading *The Winter's Tale*", in Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 193-221.

Clark, Kathleen M. and Clemency Montelle (n.d.), "Logarithms: The Early History of a Familiar Function: John Napier Introduces Logarithms", Mathematical Association of America, http://www.maa.org/press/periodicals/convergence/logarithms-the-early-history-of-a-familiar-function-john-napier-introduces-logarithms (last access 7 August 2016).

Costigan, Edward (1996), "Aspects of Narrative in Some Plays by Shakespeare", *English Studies*, 4: 323-42.

Craik, Thomas Wallace (1997), "'Tell' in *Tempest*, II.i.15: Speech or Stage Direction", *Notes and Queries*, 44 (4): 514.

Dehaene, Stanislas (2003), "The Neural Basis of the Weber-Fechner Law: A Logarithmic Mental Number Line", *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 7 (4): 145-7.

Dehaene, Stanislas, Véronique Izard, Elizabeth Spelke and Pierre Pica (2008), "Log or Linear? Distinct Intuitions of the Number Scale in Western and Amazonian Indigene Cultures", *Science*, 320: 1217-20.

Garber, Marjorie (1984), "'The Rest Is Silence': Ineffability and the 'Unscene' in Shakespeare's Plays", in Peter S. Hawkins and Anne Howland Schotter (eds), *Ineffability: Naming the Unnamable From Dante to Beckett*, New York: AMS Press: 35-50.

Genette, Gérard (1982), "Frontiers of Narrative", in Gérard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Columbia University Press.

Hardesty, Larry (2012), "What number is half way between 1 and 9? Is it 5 – or 3?", *MIT News*, http://news.mit.edu/2012/thinking-logarithmically-1005 (last access 7 August 2016).

Hirschfeld, Heather (2003), "Hamlet's 'first corse': Repetition, Trauma, and the Displacement of Redemptive Typology", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54: 424-48.

Hutson, Lorna (2015), *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, Harold (ed.) (1982), *Hamlet*, London: Methuen.

Maguire, Laurie (2016), "The Value of Stage Directions", in Dympna Callaghan and Suzanne Gossett (eds), *Shakespeare in Our Time: A Shakespeare Association*

of America Collection, London: Bloomsbury: 149-53.

Newcomb, Lori Humphrey (2002), *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Nieder, Andreas and Earl K. Miller (2003), "Coding of Cognitive Magnitude: Compressed Scaling of Numerical Information in the Primate Prefontal Cortex", *Neuron*, 37: 149-57.

Plato (1963), *The Republic* in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Raman, Shankar (2008), "Death by Numbers: Counting and Accounting in *The Winter's Tale*", in Diane E. Henderson (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, London: Routledge: 158-80.

Sheerin, Brian (2013), "Making Use of Nothing: The Sovereignties of *King Lear*", *Studies in Philology*, 110: 789-811.

Stern, Tiffany (2004), *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page*, London: Routledge.

— (2009), *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Syme, Holger Schott (2011), *Theatre and Testimony in Shakespeare's England: A Culture of Mediation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

— (2016), "The Theater of Shakespeare's Time", in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd ed., ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et al., New York: Norton.

Alessandra Squeo*

"All my plots and purposes": Staged Diegesis in Shakespearian Drama

Abstract

The relevance of narrative as a fundamental, although long undervalued aspect of Shakespearean plays has been increasingly explored by scholars in the last few decades (Rees 1978; Richardson 1988; Wilson 1995; Hardy 1997; Holland 2000). Further inquiries into the playwright's assorted repertoire of diegetic elements (Nünning and Sommer 2011) have also been encouraged by the most recent contributions of post-Genettian, cognitive and trans-medial narratology (Fludernik 1996; Hermann 1999; Ryan 2004) that have re-conceptualized narrativity as an all-embracing human construct crossing literary genres and media. In the light of the ongoing academic debate, this article explores the dynamic interplay of diegesis and mimesis in *The Merchant of Venice*. A fascinating contamination of the two competitive but complementary modes pervades indeed the whole play, from Bassanio's long narration in the opening scene (1.1.120-75) to the micro-narratives embedded in Lorenzo and Jessica's moonlight dialogue in act five (5.1.1-24), that ironically insert the play's supposedly happy ending within a disturbing parade of stories of unhappy lovers. Along with the numerous instances of narration in the whole Shakespearean corpus, *The Merchant of Venice* offers a remarkable standpoint, as this article argues, to explore the potential applications to drama of the narrative categories of perspective focalization and point of view. Shylock's peculiar report of the Biblical story of Jacob and Laban (1.3) or Solanio and Salarino's mocking account of the Jew's despair after Jessica's escape (2.8) particularly illustrate how 'performed narrations' may become powerful dramatic instruments for contrasting perspectives or directing sympathies. Going far beyond the mere purpose of providing off-stage information and connecting actions, the play's several instances of staged diegesis perform a variety of dramatic functions that deserve particular attention in relation to the socio-cultural, economic, and ethical conflicts underlying the play.

1. Narrative in Shakespeare

The deep-rooted critical view that dismisses 'narrative' elements in Shakespeare's plays as tedious interruptions slowing down the forward moment of dramatic action dates back to Samuel Johnson. As he argued in his 1768 *Preface to Shakespeare*: "In narration he [Shakespeare] affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and

* Università degli Studi di Bari - alessandra.squeo@uniba.it

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 125-48
http://www.skenejournal.it

tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatick poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive and obstructs the progress of action; it should therefore always be rapid and enlivened by frequent interruption" (Johnson 1908: 22). Echoes of such a view are discernible in a long critical tradition that has been reluctant to recognize the role of storytelling in the playwright's dramatic technique. As Bradley claimed: "the process of merely acquiring information is unpleasant, and the direct imparting of it is undramatic. Unless he uses a prologue, therefore, he must conceal from his auditors the fact that they are being informed, and must tell them what he wants them to know by means which are interesting on their own account" (1904: 54).

Positing the intrinsic difference between narrative and dramatic forms, Francis Berry has gone so far as to argue that, despite Shakespeare's ability to insert narrative 'insets' in his plays and "to render the narrative complementary to the dramatic", the two modes "are nevertheless theoretically opposed: they are opposed in theory, as are objective and subjective" (1965: 14). This incompatibility has long been sustained, in a wider perspective, by influential normative theories of the two genres, based on the Aristotelian distinction between narration (*diegesis*) and drama (*mimesis*) and starting from the assumption that the former *tells*, whereas the latter *shows* by means of action (Genette 1980). Identifying the presence of a mediating narrative instance as a constitutive quality of narrative texts, Franz Stanzel concludes that "mediacy is the generic characteristic which distinguishes narration from other forms of literary art" (1986: 4). Likewise, semiotic-based analyses of the communicative processes in plays are rooted on the assumption that "dramatic worlds are presented to the spectator as 'hypothetically actual' constructs, since they are seen in progress 'here and now' without narratorial mediation" (Elam 1980: 111).

This view has been widely problematized by influential investigations into the mediating strategies of drama. As Manfred Pfister most notably points out, in many periods "playwrights have preferred to integrate some sort of mediating communication system or 'narrative function'" (1993: 59). In a wider perspective, it is indisputable, as Chatman has claimed, that "plays and novels share common features of a chrono-logic of events, a set of characters, and a setting. Therefore, at a fundamental level they are all stories. The fact that one kind of story is told (diegesis) and the other shown (mimesis) is of secondary importance" (1990: 117).

A far more fluid theoretical perspective of the two forms has been introduced by recent trends of post-Genettian, cognitive and trans-medial narratology (Fludernik 1996; Hermann 1999, 2013; Ryan 2004; Olson 2011) that

have radically re-conceptualized narrativity as an all-embracing construct characterizing all human cognitive processes and crossing literary genres and media (Ryan and Thon 2014; Igl and Zeman 2016). Positing a more comprehensive notion of narrativity that includes both diegesis and mimesis, Monika Fludernick contends that drama is "the most important narrative genre whose narrativity needs to be documented" (1996: 348), thus highlighting the indisputable, though hitherto disregarded fact that modern narrative theory emerges from Aristotelian dramatic theory:

> It is a little remarked-upon fact that the discourse vs. story distinction is fundamental to the drama, too, and in the wake of narratology one has to remind oneself that, actually, Aristotle's model set out to discuss Greek drama and not narrative. Thus, paradoxically, narratology has taken its origin from a text of drama criticism, but this foundational frame has been repressed so successfully that drama has now frequently come to occupy the position of narratology's non-narrative Other. (Fludernick 1996: 250)

Following Chatman's notion of 'narrative agency' and his taxonomy of diegetic and mimetic storytelling (1978: 90), a distinction between "mimetic and diegetic forms of narrativity" (Jahn 2001; Nünning and Sommer 2008) has been recently introduced as "a rough yardstick that allows one to determine the respective portions of mimetic and diegetic narrative features that a given play or novel displays" (Nünning and Sommer 2011: 208). Above all, it permits investigation of various forms of overlapping and interaction, as Marie-Laure Ryan has claimed: "A diegetic narration is the verbal storytelling act of a narrator . . . a mimetic narration is an act of showing, a 'spectacle' . . . But each of these two modes can intrude into a narration dominated by the other" (2004: 13).

A new 'narratology of drama' has been accordingly proposed (Nünning and Sommer 2011: 212), starting from the assumption that "plays have a narrative world (a diegesis), which is not distinct in principle from any other narrative world" (Jahn 2001: 674). As Brian Richardson has persuasively pointed out, "specific categories of narrative theory need to be expanded or modified to encompass the many salient examples from drama" and, on the other hand, "drama provides a great number of compelling examples that can greatly enrich our understanding of key elements of narrative theory" (2007: 154).

The challenging implications of a by no means uncontroversial view that "allows for potential attributions of narrativity to practically any text" (Fludernik and Olson 2011: 15) go far beyond the aim of this essay. What is relevant for the purpose of our inquiry is the theoretical frame that such views provide to explore more fluid interpenetrations between *mimesis* and

diegesis. It is a relation denied by Genette (1980), but already described by Plato who draws a distinction, as Stephen Halliwell remarks, "not so much between 'telling' and 'showing' in the standard (if problematic) modern opposition, as between two modes of 'telling' (itself not a bad translation of the Greek *diegesis*): telling in the voice of an authorial narrator *versus* telling in the voice of the agents . . . : 'it is *diegesis* both when the poet delivers character-speeches *and* in the section between these speeches', which underlines the fundamental point that *mimesis* is not opposed to, but one type of *diegesis*" (2014: 130-1). The *diegesis/mimesis* terminology of Plato's *Republic* Book 3, as Halliwell remarks, is "the vehicle of an embryonic narratology which posits connections between narrative form (including narrating person, voice and viewpoint) and the psychology of both performer and (by extrapolation) audience" (130). It openly treats *diegesis* as an overarching category in its tripartite typology:

> 1) *haple diegesis*, 'plain' or 'unmixed' diegesis, i.e. narrative in the voice of the poet (or other authorial 'storyteller', *mythologos*, 392d); 2) *diegesis dia mimeseos*, narrative 'by means of mimesis', i.e. direct speech (including drama, *Republic* 394b–c) in the voices of individual characters in a story; and 3) *diegesis di' amphoteron*, i.e. compound narrative which combines or mixes both the previous two types, as in Homeric epic, for example. (129)

Against such a manifold theoretical background, the pervasiveness of storytelling in Shakespeare's drama has gained increasing prominence in the academic debate of the last few decades. On the one hand, pointing out the fundamental role that narrative played in the Renaissance educational system, Rawdon Wilson has highlighted the ineradicable patterns it left 'in the mind': "The narrative mind print helps construct the world . . . For Renaissance thinkers, the world is a story to be told, a nest of stories, parts and motifs of stories to be reassembled, and in all respects the patient subject of the storyteller's art" (1995: 23). Traces of this frame of mind are discernible, as Joan Rees already claimed, in Shakespeare's mastery of storytelling techniques and in his distinctively 'narrative' articulation of the events of his sources: "Shakespeare's plays have stories at their core, stories which can be extracted and retold, as he himself extracted them from his sources and retold them" (1978: 6). It has not gone unnoticed, on the other hand, that narrative dominates Renaissance literary production in a variety of forms including "epic, Ovidian epyllia, history, romance, pastoral, allegory, hagiography, anecdote, and yarn, biographical, geographical and exploratory report", as Wilson argues, without forgetting that "*narration*, the second and major move in forensic oration, comprises the fundamental act of collocating incidents into an effective sequence so that a compelling case may be

made" (1995: 21).[1] Such influential texts as George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* or Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* most notably celebrate narration, and especially the tales of heroes, as a fundamental instrument of human education that exceeds both history and philosophy in the transmission of virtues through *exempla* that invite emulation (Wilson 1995: 21-4).

In opposition to "a nearly overwhelming disposition to ignore, even to dispraise, the narrative aspects of Shakespeare's drama or to assimilate the embedded narratives, naturalizing them as 'lines', 'speeches', or 'declamations' to the model of drama" (20-1), Wilson has thus called attention to the playwright's remarkable command of narrative conventions in plays that are not only punctuated by 'embedded stories' but, "in several important respects, they *are* narrative" (1989: 771). As the scholar more explicitly argues: "In most urgent moments characters interrupt the dramatic action to tell stories that evoke a different action, a different place and time, even an absent fictional world, and they do this with an extensive and varied range of the storyteller's traditional skills" (Wilson 1995: 18).

Claiming that "drama need not apologize when it is narrative but handles narrative in special ways to make it theatrical" (1997: 29), Barbara Hardy has identified a number of forms and functions of Shakespeare's dramatic storytelling in *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* that go far beyond providing off-stage information, explaining chronological gaps or merely connecting actions (177-221). More specifically, as she points out, Othello's use of storytelling as an instrument for seduction or 'witchcraft' ("my story being done / she gave me for my pains a world of sighs . . . this only is the witchcraft I have used", 1.3.157-8, 169), epitomizes the deceitful power of narration to which he himself ironically falls victim, in a play entirely focused "on the ethics of narration" (Hardy 1997: 23, 58). To some extent, as Nünning and Sommer have more recently pointed out, Iago's malicious hint at Desdemona's supposed unfaithfulness "exemplifies the performative power of char-

[1] The influence of forensic orations in Renaissance drama, and above all in Shakespeare's plays, has gained increasing prominence in the academic debate of the last few years. As Lorna Hutson argues: "the very rhetorical techniques for evaluating probabilities and likelihoods in legal narratives were perceived by dramatists in London of the late 1580s and 1590s to be indispensable for their purposes in bringing a new liveliness and power to the fictions they were writing for the increasingly successful and popular commercial theatres" (2007: 2). The scholar has more recently shed light on Shakespeare's distinctive use of the topics of 'circumstance' of forensic enquiry (in terms of Time, Space, and Motive) to create his dramatic and narrative universes. Circumstance, as Hutson points out, was a "word . . . powerfully associated with narrative, with the forensic invention of so-called artificial or technical proof (*probationes artificiales*), and with descriptions so vivid that they conjure up visual and auditory illusion (*enargeia*) and evoke strong emotions" (2015: 2).

acter narration that stems from its reality-constituting potential" (2011: 201).

On the other hand, following a deep-rooted scholarly investigation into Shakespeare's weaving of narrative and dramatic forms, above all in the complex texture of his *romances* (Mowat 1976) – "a *dramaturgical* term" that "functioned as a *narrative* form" in the early modern period (Henke 2014: 66) – it has been pointed out how narration is also skillfully used by the playwright as a vehicle for accessing other worlds, raising metatheatrical issues or introducing epistemological instability. This is most clearly exemplified by *The Tempest*, where narration "profitably breaks the theatrical boundaries . . . tests the limits of the representative potential of theatre and illustrates the instabilities of meaning thus casting truth as a problematic category" (Bigliazzi 2014: 112).

Set within such a multifaceted scholarly debate that encourages further enquiries into Shakespeare's assorted repertoire of diegetic elements (Holland 2000), this essay investigates the distinctive use of storytelling in *The Merchant of Venice*. Along with the more pervasive and widely studied instances of narration in Shakespeare's corpus, this play offers a remarkable standpoint, as I will argue, from which to explore the potential applications to drama of the narrative categories of perspective focalization and point of view (Richardson 1988; McIntyre 2006). If it is unquestionable that narrative elements do not "stand in contrast to the performative quality of Shakespeare's plays", but rather serve "to enhance their performativity", and that "the act of narration on stage is a performance in its own right", since "the verbal performances by the characters are as important as their actions" (Nünning and Sommer 2011: 206, 220), the several instances of staged *diegesis* in *The Merchant of Venice* perform a variety of dramatic functions and establish distinctive aesthetic structures that deserve particular attention, as I will point out, in relation to the social, economic, and ethical conflicts underlying the play.

2. "*Plots* and *Purposes*" on the Stage

The inherently narrative core of *The Merchant of Venice* is primarily testified to by its inventive interweaving of the three plots of its main source, Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone*, with a variety of tales and anecdotes regarding cruel Jews and usurers that were circulating in early modern England, within the context of a lively debate on moneylending (Le Goff 1990; Shapiro 1996; Biale 2002). Before outlining the major narrative sequences and identifying the principles of dramatic development that underlie their designed distribution in the play, it is to be underlined that *The Merchant of Venice* begins and ends with a demand for narrative, like many

other Shakespearean texts, including *Othello, Hamlet* or *The Winter's Tale* (Wilson 1989: 787). The play starts with Bassanio's promised account, solicited by Antonio ("*Tell* me what lady is the same / To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage / That you today promised to *tell* me of", 1.1.120-3; my emphasis) and ends with Portia's announced clarification of the events at the very end of Act 5 ("I am sure you are not satisfied / Of these events at full. Let us go in, / And charge us there upon inter'gatories, / And we will answer all things faithfully", 5.1.296-9).

As soon as Antonio confesses his obscure melancholy in the opening lines ("In sooth I know not why I am so sad", 1.1.1), Salarino and Solanio perform an expository function that they will carry on throughout the play. By means of a "single tightly woven sea-metaphor" (Raffel 2006: xix) that conjures up the theatrical quality of Venetian majestic argosies, they try to explain Antonio's anxiety for his sea business:

SALARINO Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies with portly sail,
Like signors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.
(1.1.8-14)

In the light of Richardson's taxonomy of narrative roles in drama, they perform the function of 'internal narrators', namely characters in the fictional world of the play "who recount to other characters events which occur off stage or prior to the first act" (1988: 209). Salarino and Solanio, however, go far beyond framing and elucidating the events that are about to be enacted, as happens in Egeon's long narration at the beginning of *The Comedy of Errors*, or in Prospero's extensive recounting in the first act of *The Tempest*. Besides offering the audience essential information about Antonio's sea ventures within the context of a thriving centre of trade, they go so far as to imagine their own state of mind if they were in Antonio's place:

SOLANIO Believe me, sir, had *I* such venture forth,
The better part of *my* affections *would*
Be with *my* hopes abroad. *I should* be still
Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind,
Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads;
And every object that might make *me* fear
Misfortune to *my* ventures, out of doubt
Would make *me* sad.
(1.1.15-22; my emphasis)

A few lines later Salarino acts out similar fantasies, following the images conjured up in his own mind:

Salarino *My* wind cooling *my* broth
Would blow *me* to an ague, when *I* thought
What harm a wind too great at sea might do.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,
But *I* should think of shallows and of flats,
And see *my* wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs
To kiss her burial. *Should I* go to church
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink *me* straight of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but *my* gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with *my* silks,
And, in a word, but even *now* worth this,
And *now* worth nothing?
(1.1.22-36; my emphasis)

It is unquestionable, as Genette has pointed out, that "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). The imaginative narrative that Salarino and Solanio construct through an extensive use of deictic terms (*I*, *my*, *me*, *now*), offers, in this perspective, an interesting instance of interaction between the two competing but complementary languages of *diegesis* and *mimesis.*

If the performativity of drama is mostly articulated along deictic orientations related to the various ways in which characters move and address each other (Serpieri 1978), the careful orchestration of Salarino and Solanio's "deictic fields" (McIntyre 2006: 99)[2] is here dramatically used to enact the process whereby their 'possible worlds' – as the conditionals *would*, *should* testify – are gradually constructed and take shape within the minds of the

[2] Following the study of deixis initiated by linguistic and semiotic approaches to drama (Lyons 1977: 636-724; Serpieri 1978: 11-54), and carrying on a long scholarly tradition (Groff 1959; Barnard 1984) that has introduced "in drama the analysis of point of view usually reserved for modern fiction" (Richardson 1988: 194), McIntyre has recently proposed a 'cognitive theory of deictic shifts' to explain "how readers/audiences are made aware of different viewpoints and how particular points of view might be foregrounded within dramatic texts" (2006: 90).

two characters. The audience is thus allowed to 'visualize' the potential perils of mercantile ventures through the amplifying filter of two emotionally involved diegetic instances in ways that action on stage could never achieve.

The overall effect of this scene is to lay emphasis on the crucial theme of risk, and to introduce the interwoven semantic areas of 'venture', 'hazard' and 'fortune' that have far reaching implications in a play constructed within the context of the sixteenth-century transition from feudal economy to early-modern capitalism (Squeo 2012: 93-107). As Ian MacInnes points out: "To miss the play's persistent focus on risk and hazard is to miss its connection with critical contemporary debate on chance and fortune, which turned from a manifestation of divine Providence into a way of knowing and controlling the world by evaluating probability and assessing risk" (2008: 42-3). Although Antonio refuses to acknowledge risk as the main cause of his sadness, the uncertainty of his 'ventures' definitely accounts for his choice of diversifying them: "My *ventures* are not in one bottom trusted / Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate / Upon the *fortune* of this present year" (1.1.42-4; my emphasis). Indisputably, the play's emphasis on the hazard inherent in mercantile activities bears the traces of sixteenth-century debates supporting legitimate trade profit on account of its intrinsic perils, against the detestable practice of usury: "risk was then believed to be a necessary factor in legitimate enterprise, and usury violated that condition because it was calculated, certain gain ensured by bonds and pawns" (Holmer 1995: 36). As Thomas Wilson claimed in his *Discourse Upon Usury*:

> In buying and selling, your gaine is not alwayes certayne, as it is in usurie: for he that buieth lande thys day for five hundreth poundes, shall not alwaies be sure to gaine a hundreth pounds by the burgayne, but sometyme hee loseth, and cannot have hys own againe; wheras the usurer is alwayes suer to gaine, whosoever loseth, having good and sufficient assurance alwayes for hys money. (1925: 271)

The most relevant instance of intradiegetic narration in the opening scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, however, is provided by Bassanio's promised account to Antonio. His recount covers a broad period of time as he competently constructs his 'plot' by arranging a variety of events according to his own criteria of relevance. He starts by acknowledging the consequences of his frivolous life and admitting that he is now unable to pay off his debts to Antonio:

> BASSANIO 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
> How much I have disabled mine estate
> By something showing a more swelling port
> Than my faint means would grant continuance.
> (1.1.121-4)

Then he moves back to the time of his boyhood, and accounts for the request of a new loan by means of a long and elaborate metaphor taken from archery:

BASSANIO In my schooldays, when I had lost one shaft
I shot his fellow of the selfsame flight
The selfsame way, with more advised watch,
To find the other forth; and by adventuring both
I oft found both.
(1.1.139-43)

In order to encourage Antonio to help him "shoot another arrow" (1.1.147), he shifts his narration forwards and anticipates a possible future evolution of the events: "I will watch the aim . . . bring your latter hazard back again / And thankfully rest debtor for the rest" (1.1.149-51), and then he finally comes back to a more recent past to introduce the long promised tale of his "secret pilgrimage":

BASSANIO In Belmont is a lady richly left;
And she is fair, and fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages.
(1.1.160-4)

Breaking the chronological order of the events in the story through a clever use of both *analepsis* and *prolepsis* (Genette 1980), Bassanio's narration performs a number of dramatic functions. His recounting primarily becomes an instrument of indirect characterization, as frequently occurs in Shakespeare (Hardy 1997: 20-5; Nünning and Sommer 2011: 218), as it portrays the young man as an Elizabethan *gallant*, one of those rich, aristocratic and unmarried squanderers whose cheerful existence ("my time, something too prodigal", 1.1.128) made them the most likely victims of usurers (Pettet 1969: 101). Furthermore, in so far as Antonio is immediately persuaded to help him ("therefore go forth, / Try what my credit can in Venice do, / That shall be racked even to the uttermost / To furnish thee to Belmont to fair Portia", 1.1.178-81), Bassanio's story epitomizes "the theatrical power of narrative, its capacity to change events" (Hardy 1997: 60) and affect the further evolution of action.

Far more relevant, however, is that the biased arrangement of happenings in the *ordo artificialis* of Bassanio's narrative betrays a carefully designed 'plan'. His intention to unburden himself to Antonio of "my *plots* and *purposes* / How to get clear of all the debts I owe" (1.1.131-3; my emphasis) only too explicitly relates *plot* and *purpose*, thus hinting at the powerful resonances of the polysemic status of *plot* in early modern English, as testified by the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

> . . . 1. A fairly small piece of ground . . . 1574 T. Tusser *Points Huswifrie* . . . 1598 J. Florio *Worlde of Wordes* . . . 1600 Shakespeare *Midsummer Night's Dream* . . . 2. a ground plan, a map; a nautical chart. Later also: a representation on a chart of the movements of a ship or aircraft . . . 1579-80 T. North tr. Plutarch *Lives* . . . 3. A plan made in secret by a group of people, esp. to achieve an unlawful end; a conspiracy . . . 1579 G. Fenton tr. F. Guicciardini *Hist. Guicciardin* vii. 378 . . . 1597 Shakespeare *Richard III* I. i. 32 . . . 4. A design or scheme for the constitution or accomplishment of something. 1587 A. Fleming et al. *Holinshed's Chronicle* . . . 1599 Spenser *View State Ireland* . . . 5. The plan or scheme of a literary or dramatic work . . . 1613 F. Beaumont *Knight of Burning Pestle* . . .

Bassanio reveals how any narrative inherently implies a degree of 'manipulation' in view of a 'design': it is, to borrow Peter Brooks' definition, a 'plotting' process, "a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress towards meaning" (1992: xiii). The young man's secret aims and his distinctive view of his 'pilgrimage' to "the lady richly left", as a decisive solution to his financial problems, are thus shared with the audience by means of his own carefully constructed 'plot' in ways that exceed the effectiveness of the purely mimetic mode. In this sense, the scene explores the dramatic potentialities of the intrinsic 'opacity' of narratives: ". . . being artifacts and also representations, narratives have a purpose and their design is in service of that purpose" (Lamarque 2014: 9).

Besides introducing the parallel developments of action in Venice and Belmont, Bassanio's narrative unfolding foregrounds his own view of the connection between human relations and profit, love and money ("To you Antonio / I owe the most in money and in love", 1.1.129-30) within a universe in which the spirit of calculation casts an oblique ray of light on all human actions, where traces of commercial lexis are disturbingly discernible even in the language of lovers (3.2.139-40, 3.2.149-65). By unburdening himself of his "plots and purposes" in the opening scene, he calls attention to the pervasiveness of money in a play where the servant Lancelot abandons the miserly Jew for free-spending Bassanio, who "indeed gives rare new liveries" (2.2.89), where Jessica steals her father's ducats and jewels before fleeing with her lover ("I will make fast the doors, and gild myself / With some more ducats, and be with you straight", 2.6.50-1), and even her conversion to the Christian faith is eventually seen in terms of its monetary effects, through Lancelot's joke about the increase of the price of pork: "This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we grow all to be pork eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money" (3.5.18-20).

The distinctive lexical choices in Bassanio's narration acquire further relevance when he hints at Portia's *virtues* and at her numerous suitors,

thus embedding a second narrative level by introducing the story of the Greek hero Jason, who sailed to Colchis in search of a fabulous treasure:

BASSANIO Her name is Portia, nothing under*valued*
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her *worth*
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
Which many Jasons come in quest of her.
(1.2.164-72; my emphasis)

Beyond reiterating the sure 'profit' he envisages in his expedition (1.2.174-5), Bassanio's tale foregrounds two of the play's key words – *worth* and *value* – whose polysemic status bears all the traces of the semantic fluidity of early modern English, where many words that still bore a strong moral meaning were gradually acquiring new economic significance under the socio-cultural forces of an emerging capitalist system (Thomas 2008: xxiv). The relevance of the *worth*/*value* motif introduced by Bassanio's narration finds indeed abundant testimony throughout the play where a number of characters are confronted with the difficulty of assessing 'value' or 'worth' by establishing shared standards of commensurability. It is a condition clearly epitomized by Morocco and Aragon, who unsuccessfully weigh the 'value' of gold, silver and lead against Portia's 'worth', their own merits and what they 'deserve' on account of their love (2.7.23-34). In the trial scene, in the highest moment of dramatic tension, Bassanio himself weighs the 'value' of his own life and of his love for Portia against the 'worth' of Antonio's existence:

BASSANIO Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is *dear* to me as life itself;
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me *esteemed* above thy life.
(4.1.278-81; my emphasis)

He is then eventually persuaded to give Balthazar his own wedding ring by acknowledging a form of 'commensurability' between the man's merits and Portia's command:

ANTONIO My lord Bassanio, let him have the ring.
Let his *deservings* and my love withal
Be *valued* 'gainst your wife's commandment.
(4.1.445-7; my emphasis)

This pervasive logic of "exchanges, purchases and pledges, among a remarkable range of physical, abstract and personal entities" (Turner 1999: 55) finds its most disturbing instance in the well known equation established by Shylock's bond between 'money' and 'human flesh' (1.3.142-4), whose absurdity the Jew himself proclaims by paradoxically remarking on their different market 'value':

> SHYLOCK A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man,
> Is not so *estimable*, *profitable* neither,
> As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. . . .
> (1.3.158-60; my emphasis)

3. News and Reporters: Performing the Instability of Meaning

If the narrations embedded in the opening scene are largely functional to the construction of the characters' distinctive world models (Herman 1999) and to the introduction of the thematic core of the play, Shylock's appearance on stage in 3.1. exemplifies Shakespeare's weaving of *diegesis* and *mimesis* as a means to raise epistemological issues and cast truth as an unstable category.
In his opening dialogue with Bassanio, the Jew embodies an emerging cultural and economic frame, whose 'modern' meanings resonate in an 'old' vocabulary, as his peculiar definition of *good*, merely signifying financial reliability, unmistakably confirms:

> SHYLOCK Antonio is a *good* man.
> BASSANIO Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?
> SHYLOCK Ho no, no, no, no: *my meaning* in saying he is a *good*
> man is to have you understand me that he is
> *sufficient*.
> (1.3.11-14; my emphasis)

As soon as Antonio arrives, Shylock's long aside further reveals the unbridgeable gap between them ("I hate him for he is a Christian . . . he hates our sacred nation", 1.3.34, 40) and creates an apparent feeling of complicity with the audience, according to a widely explored dramatic convention of Elizabethan drama: "This 'complicity through shared information' is often put to use by Elizabethan dramatists who want to make the villain of the play less repugnant" (Pavel 1985: 68). Antonio's generous munificence towards Bassanio ("my purse, my person, my extremest means / Lie all unlocked to your occasions", 1.1.137-8) appears foolish from the Jew's perspective ("in low simplicity / He lends out money gratis, and brings down / The rate of usance here with us in Venice", 1.3.36-7) and their conflict is openly

set within the context of the sixteenth-century dispute on money lending, as their discrepant terminology testifies: "my *bargains*, and my well-won *thrift* / Which he calls *interest*" (1.3.42-3; my emphasis).

A new narrative is embedded in dramatic action a few lines later, when Shylock tells the story of Jacob's agreement with Laban, detailing all the conditions of their covenant as reported in the Genesis:

Shylock . . . Mark what Jacob did:
When Laban and himself were compromised
That all the eanlings which were streaked and pied
Should fall as Jacob's hire, the *ewes* being rank
In end of autumn turned to the rams
And when the work of *generation* was
Between these wooly *breeders* in the act
The skilful shepherd pilled me certain wands
And in the doing of the deed of kind
He stuck them up before the fulsome *ewes*
Who then *conceiving*, did in *eaning* time
Full parti-coloured lambs, and those were Jacob's.
(1.3.69-80; my emphasis)

By citing the Bible and mentioning "*our* holy Abram" (1.3.64) – thus ironically hinting at the common roots of Christianity and Judaism –, Shylock calls attention to a text that was crucial in the debate on usury, and whose prohibitions against usury were given conflicting interpretations by Jews and Christians (Geisst 2013: 55). Furthermore, the scene explores the theatrical potentialities of the narration of biblical *exempla*, which early modern audience were more used to finding in sermons (Streete 2011). Introducing a biblical anecdote to provide a moral justification for his thrift, Shylock shrewdly delves into the powerful imagery of the story of Laban to highlight the essential philosophical and theological problems underlying the sixteenth-century debate on moneylending. By comparing Jacob's cunning method for gaining Laban's sheep with his own practice of usury, the Jew forcefully establishes a similarity between animal reproduction ("the act *generation* . . . woolly *breeders* . . . *conceiving* . . . in *ewing* time") and the multiplication of his money ("I make it *breed* as fast", 1.3.88). He thus calls attention to one of the most controversial issues in the emerging capitalist debates in which, under the influence of Aristotle (Meikle 1995), usury was condemned as *unnatural*, starting from the assumption that 'barren' metal cannot 'breed' (Langholm 1984) or, as Bacon claimed: "It is against nature for money to beget money" (2008: 123).

Equally relevant for the purpose of our enquiry is the shift the scene marks from *diegesis* to *exegesis*, from the narration of the biblical epi-

sode to its inconsistent interpretations. "Was this inserted to make interest good? / Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?" (1.3.88-9), asks Antonio, warning that "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose" (1.3.90). Displaying the instability of meaning inherent in storytelling, the scene becomes paradigmatic of the play's extensive exploration of what Mieke Bal defines the paradoxical potential of narration: ". . . all narratives sustain the claim that 'facts are being put on the table. Yet all narratives are not only told by a narrative agent, the narrator, who is the linguistic subject of utterance; the report given by the narrator is also, inevitably, focused by a subjective point of view, an agent of vision whose view of the events will influence our interpretation of them" (1997: 97). This is most notably exemplified by the characters' conflicting reports on different occasions. The Jew's accounts of the iterated episodes of cruelty he has endured ("you have rated me", 1.3.99; "You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, / And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine", 1.3.103-4; "You that did void your rheum upon my beard", 1.3.109) are thus contrasted with a variety of reported instances of his malice, as Jessica's memories, among others, testify: "When I was with him, I have heard him swear / To Tubal and to Chus, his countymen, / That he would rather have Antonio's flesh / Than twenty times the value of the sum / That he did owe him", 3.2.283-7). An interesting contribution in this respect is provided by the dramatization of Launcelot Gobbo's inner conflict in 2.2. Though not technically a narrative, the scene lingers on the character's indecision whether to leave Shylock's service or to be faithful to him, thus exemplifying the "dramatic equivalent of thought presentation in prose fiction" that "permits the dramatist to explore certain areas of human experience generally thought to be more accessible to the novelist" (Groff 1959: 274).

A remarkable use of narration as a device to introduce contrasting perspectives occurs in 2.8, where Shylock's desperation after discovering Jessica's escape is not performed on stage by the character himself but is reported through the narrative filter of Salarino and Solanio, who provide a satiric account of the furious Jew, hounded by laughing boys through the streets of Venice:

SOLANIO I never heard a passion so confused,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
"My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stolen by my daughter! Justice! find the girl;

> She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats".
> (2.8.12-22)

This diegesis embedded in dramatic action intriguingly incorporates a further mimetic level in that Salarino and Solanio imitate Shylock's hysterical gestures and furious voice in a deliberately exaggerated fashion that ridicules his acquisitive nature ("my ducats . . . my Christian ducats . . . a sealed bag, two sealed bags . . . and stones, two rich and precious stones"), in a performance that prevents the audience from sympathizing with him. Shylock's unrestrained passions ("confused", "strange", "outrageous", "variable"), explicitly associated with the animal world ("the dog Jew"), are then effectively contrasted with the filters' parallel account of Antonio's composed sadness on Bassanio's departure:

> Salarino . . . his eye being big with tears
> Turning his face, he put his hand behind him
> And with affection wondrous sensible
> He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.
> (2.8.47-50)

The preference for the diegetic mode in a scene which would not have been difficult to stage, exceeds the mere reasoning of dramatic economy and allows Shakespeare to explore the theatrical potential of what Culler defines the double nature of narration "as a fundamental form of knowledge (giving knowledge of the world through its sense-making)" and as "a rhetorical structure that distorts as much as it reveals" (1997: 92). Going far beyond the necessary "compensation for the well-known restrictions of the Shakespearean stage" (Nünning and Sommer 2011: 217), the dynamic interaction of mimesis and diegesis in 2.8 responds to precise aesthetic purposes. The narrative filter of Salarino and Solanio, through whose perspective the Jew's grief is visibly caricatured, becomes a way of directing sympathies and reinforcing Shylock's isolation. It is, furthermore, also functional to shifting attention away from 'events' to 'reported accounts', 'information' and 'news', through a process that acquires increasing relevance within the play.

Starting from Portia's question in the opening act ("How now! *What news*?, 1.2.309; my emphasis) up to her final promise in the last scene ("I have better *news* in store for you", 5.1.274; my emphasis), the whole play is indeed full of references to an intricate texture of reported information and news that enhance uncertainty and instability and involve many characters, including Solanio ("Now, *what news* on the Rialto? . . . Now now, Shylock, *what news* among the merchants?", 3.1.1, 19; my emphasis), Shylock ("How now, Tubal *what news* from Genoa?", 3.1.64; my emphasis), Gra-

ziano ("What's *the news* from Venice?", 3.2.237; my emphasis), and Lancelot Gobbo ("There's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good *news*", 5.1.46-7; my emphasis). The most interesting instance in this respect is provided by the reported accounts on the sinking of Antonio's ships. Fragmented and uncertain news is initially introduced by Salarino's second-hand report:

> SALARINO I reasoned with a Frenchman yesterday
> Who told me in the Narrow Seas that part
> The French and English, there miscarried
> A vessel of our country richly fraught
> I thought upon Antonio when he told me
> And wished in silence that it were not his
> (2.8.28-33)

New pieces of information are added in the following act, where Salarino's unwillingness to accept bad news – "it leaves there unchecked" (3.1.2), "as they say" (3.1.5), "If my gossip report be an honest woman of her word" (3.1.5-6) – is contrasted with Solanio's rough realism: "I would she were as lying a gossip . . . But is it true without any slip of prolexity . . . he hath lost a ship" (3.1.7-15). Through a skilful slowing down of the pace of 'narration', the scene displays what Irene de Jong defines the "experiencing focalization" of the messenger who "recounts the events as he understood, or failed to understand or misunderstood them at the time" (1991: 61). The characters' anxiety about Antonio's destiny ("I would it might prove the end of his losses", 3.1.16) is thus foregrounded, enacting the "implicit prolepsis" of the messenger (46). A further iteration of the same news occurs in 3.1., where Tubal's account of Antonio's losses acquires sharper focus: "Antonio, as I heard in Genoa . . . hath an argosy cast away coming from Tripolis" (3.1.77-80), "There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice that swear he cannot choose but break" (3.1.89-90), and finally "Antonio is certainly undone" (3.1.98). A new repetition occurs in the following scene, when a letter from Antonio erupts into Bassanio's bliss in Belmont (3.2.314-9), announcing the loss of all the merchant's ventures. It is only at the end of the play that such news proves partially false, when Portia announces that three of Antonio's ships are safe, as reported by a mysterious letter: "You shall not know by what strange accident / I chanced on this letter", 5.1.278-9).

Unquestionably, such passages highlight the crucial role that news had in Venice, the leading centre of information and communication in early modern Europe and "a natural center for economic information about the East, especially about the Ottoman Empire" (Burke 2000: 392). It was one of first cities to adopt a system of resident ambassadors, spies and diplo-

mats, and to develop early forms of a postal system, all set within "a new regime of information and communication" (ibid.). The urgent "news" mentioned by Solanio, Graziano and Shylock had a primarily economic relevance on the Rialto, where the credit of merchants largely depended upon assessment of their risk and the likelihood that they would be able to repay their debts. Circulating news and detailed information about the merchants' potential losses had an even more crucial value in all those policies of insurance and re-insurance, which late sixteenth century England imported from Venice (MacInnes 2008: 43).

On the level of narrative, however, the disjointedly reported news, reports and letters in the play acquire further significance as devices functional to exhibit the complexity of an intricate universe where the objectivity of 'facts' is increasingly replaced by biased accounts allowing multiple viewpoints. It is a technique extensively explored in many other Shakespearean plays, such as *Antony and Cleopatra* or *Macbeth* through "unreliable manipulative and dangerous communications of rulers, spies, secret agents and reporters. The process of every play depends on the intricate cellular structure of narrative exchange" (Hardy 1997: 23).

The epistemological implications of the intrinsic instability of narrative gain particular relevance in the final scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, when Jessica and Lorenzo provide a curious recapitulation of their story in their famous "in such a night" exchanges (5.1.1-24). At first sight, the scene seems to follow a dramatic convention widely used by Shakespeare. A concluding recapitulation occurs indeed in a great number of his plays, as in the last scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, where Friar Laurence's promise "I will be brief" (5.3.228) most notably introduces a long summary of the dramatic events that effectively adds nothing new to the audience, as Samuel Johnson famously commented: "It is much to be lamented that the poet did not conclude the dialogue with the action and avoid a narrative of events which the audience already knew" (1908: 187-8). Shakespeare also seems to have invented the "figure of the total future recapitulation", as Barbara Hardy argues, that takes a variety of forms including "a demand, or request, or invitation at the end for someone to recall and relate the story of the play" (1997: 72-3). Fourteen of his plays end with an explicit demand for a final account (Meek 2009: 181) including *All's Well That Ends Well*, where the king asks to hear the events of the play from beginning to end ("Let us from point to point this story know / To make the even truth in pleasure flow", 5.3.325-6) and *The Tempest*, where Prospero himself eventually promises to tell "the story of my life, / And the particular accidents gone by / Since I came to this isle" (5.1.305-7).

To some extent, Lorenzo and Jessica offer an interesting variation of those "narrative injunctions" (Hardy 1997: 72) that posit an oral afterlife for

the play, imagining a future narrative retelling of the events, as happens in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Mistress Page suggests "let us every one go home, / And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire" (5.5.241-2), or in *Richard II*, where the queen is invited to imagine a familiar place by the fire where she will listen to "woeful tales of long ago" and then tell the tragic story of Richard II in the context of other tragic narratives:

> KING RICHARD In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
> With good old folks and let them tell thee tales
> Of woeful ages long ago betid;
> And ere thou bid good night, to quit their griefs,
> Tell thou the lamentable tale of me
> And send the hearers weeping to their beds.
> (5.1.40-5)

Following this model, Lorenzo and Jessica also position their story within the context of other tales of lovers, but the narrative frame they choose proves to be inappropriate and sheds a sinister light on the seemingly happy ending of the play. Their accounts "sound to innocent ears like lyrical evocations of great lovers past", Jonathan Bate argues, but "to the mythologically literate members of Shakespeare's audience, the allusions would be shot through with irony appropriate to the sharpness that underlies the relationship between Lorenzo and Jessica" (1989: 134). Beyond the surface music of their words, a disturbing similarity is indeed established with the tragic tale of Cressida, who eventually betrayed Troilus ("in such a night / Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls / And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents / Where Cressid lay that night", 5.1.3-6), the cruel destiny of Pyramus and Thisbe, who killed herself when she found her lover dead ("In such a night / Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew / And saw the lion's shadow ere himself / And ran dismayed away", 5.1.6-9) and the sad story of the queen of Cartage, abandoned by her lover Aeneas ("In such a night / Stood Dido with a willow in her hand / Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love / To come again to Carthage", 5.1.9-12). Even more sinister is the reference to the story of Medea and Aeson, "In such a night / Medea gathered the enchanted herbs / That did renew old Æson" (5.1.12-14), narrated in book seven of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "a peculiarly disgusting plot to take vengeance of the family of Pelias for the wrong done by him to Jason's family" (134-5).

Through an imaginative metaleptic intrusion (Genette 1980) into such a frame, as the iteration of the "in such a night" refrain confirms, Lorenzo and Jessica provide a third-person narrative of their own story, replacing the deictic *I*/*my* of the mimetic code with the anaphoric *he*/*her* of diegesis. This

allows them to introduce an inconsistent perspective on their love, as the lexical choices hinting at deceitfulness and falseness unmistakably testify:

LORENZO In such a night
Did Jessica *steal* from the wealthy Jew,
And with an *unthrift* love did run from Venice
As far as Belmont.
JESSICA In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear *he* loved *her* well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And *ne'er a true one.*
LORENZO In such a night
Did pretty Jessica, like a little *shrew*,
Slander *her* love, and *he* forgave it *her.*
(5.1.14-22; my emphasis)

Dynamically interacting with the mimetic level, these micro-narratives unveil significant incongruities within the seemingly happy conclusion of dramatic action and undermine the harmony eventually restored to the ideal world of Belmont that the sweet music of the spheres seems to suggest (5.1.54-88). Furthermore, the narrative universes conjured up by Jessica and Lorenzo cast a threateningly relativistic light on the entire play, thus epitomizing "the capacity . . . narratives have to make audiences imagine a story world refracting multiple perspectives" (Korthals Altes 2014: viii).

Along with the purposes of introducing off-stage information, connecting actions, foregrounding crucial themes or directing sympathies, diegesis in *The Merchant of Venice* is thus to be explored in its epistemological potential (Lamarque 2014), as a powerful instrument to perform the undecidability of truth and show the unsteadiness of any interpretative and signifying process. As Korthals-Altes points out: "engaging in literary narratives leads readers into taking perspectives on perspective taking, assessing the value of values" (2014: viii), a notion that is mostly epitomized in the famous trial scene in Act 4, imbued with an extraordinary perceptiveness of duplicity (Locatelli 1988). Testifying to Shakespeare's parallel interest in "the theatre as a medium of storytelling and in narrative as a mode of representation" (Nünning-Sommer 2011: 221), *The Merchant of Venice* epitomizes Shakespeare's remarkable command of narrative conventions and his extensive use of the inherent instability of narration, so heavily submitted to a subjective "perspectival filter" (Jahn 2007: 94), as an ideal dramatic instrument functional to voice his deeply rooted preoccupations with questions of 'viewpoint' (Thorne 2000).

If "narrative designs prompt the construction . . . of different sorts of storyworlds . . . and the process of building storyworlds in turn scaffolds a

variety of sense making activities" (Herman 2013: x), the narrative 'insets' brought onto stage foreground the very process of making sense in the increasingly unintelligible early modern universe. In this perspective, Shakespeare's use of storytelling in drama is functional to enact the "great structural and epistemological crisis that occurred between a *symbolic model* of the world (a classical-mediaeval-Renaissance heritage) and a *syntagmatic model* of the world, inaugurating the relativism of the modern age" (Serpieri 1985: 127). Within the cultural conflicts of a rapidly changing world, the various instances of staged diegesis in Shakespearean plays – as *The Merchant of Venice* testifies – may be said to "anticipate several forms and epistemological functions in the dramatic genre, which, from the eighteenth century onward, were increasingly taken over by the novel" (Nünning-Sommer 2011: 22).

Works Cited

Bacon, Francis (2008), *Complete Essays*, Mineola, New York: Dover Publications.

Bal, Mieke (1997), "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting", in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds), *The Cultures of Collecting*, London: Reaktion Books: 97-115.

Barnard, John (1984), "Point of View in *The Man of Mode*", *Essays in Criticism*, 34: 285-308.

Bate, Jonathan (1989), "Ovid and the Mature Tragedies: Metamorphosis in *Othello* and *King Lear*", *Shakespeare Survey*, 41: 133-44.

Berry, Francis [1965] (2005), *The Shakespearean Inset: Word and Picture*, London: Routledge.

Biale, David (ed.) (2002), *Cultures of the Jews. A New History*, New York: Schocken.

Bigliazzi, Silvia (2014), "'Dost thou hear?' On the Rhetoric of Narrative in *The Tempest*", in Silvia Bigliazzi and Lisanna Calvi (eds), *Revisiting the Tempest. The Capacity to Signify*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 111-33.

Bradley, Andrew Cecil [1904] (1991), *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Brooks, Peter (1992), *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Burke, Peter (2000), "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication", in John Martin and Dennis Romano (eds) (2000), *Venice Reconsidered: the History and Civilization of an Italian City-State 1297-1797*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press: 389-419.

Chatman, Seymour (1978), *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Narrative and Film*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

— (1990), *Coming to Terms: the Rhetoric of Narrative Fiction and Film*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Culler, Jonathan (1997), *Literary Theory. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Jong, Irene J.F. (1991), *Narrative in Drama. The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech,* Leiden, New York, København, and Köln: Brill.
Elam, Keir (1980), *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, London and New York: Routledge.
Fludernik, Monika (1996), *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, London and New York: Routledge.
Fludernik, Monika and Greta Olson (2011), "Introduction", in Greta Olson (ed.), *Current Trends in Narratology*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter: 1-33.
Geisst, Charles (2013), *Beggar Thy Neighbor: A History of Usury and Debt*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Genette, Gerard (1980), *Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Groff, Edward (1959), "Point of View in Modern Drama", *Modern Drama*, 2: 268-82.
Halliwell, Stephen (2014), "Diegesis-Mimesis", in Peter Hühn, Jan Christophet et al. (eds), *Handbook of Narratology*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter: 129-37.
Hardy, Barbara (1997), *Shakespeare's Storytellers*, London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen.
Henke, Robert (2014), "Pastoral Tragicomedy and *The Tempest*", in Silvia Bigliazzi and Lisanna Calvi (eds), *Revisiting The Tempest, The Capacity to Signify*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 63-76.
Herman David (ed.) (1999), *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
— (2013), *Storytelling and the Science of Mind*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Holland Peter (ed.) (2000), *Shakespeare and Narrative. Shakespeare Survey*, 53.
Holmer, Joan Ozark (1995), *The Merchant of Venice: Choice, Hazard and Consequence*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Hutson Lorna (2007), *Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
— (2015), *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Igl, Natalia and Sonja Zeman (eds) (2016), *Perspectives on Narrativity and Narrative Perspectivization*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
Jahn, Manfred (2001), "Narrative Voice and Agency in Drama: Aspects of a Narratology of Drama", *New Literary History*, 32 (3): 659-79.
— (2007) "Focalization", in Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 94-108.
Johnson, Samuel (1908), *Johnson on Shakespeare*. Essays and notes selected and set forth with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh, London: Frowde.
Korthals Altes, Liesbeth (2014), *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation. The Negotiation of Values in Fiction*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
Lamarque, Peter (2014), *The Opacity of Narrative*, London: Rowman & Littlefield.
Langholm, Odd Inge (1984), *The Aristotelian Analysis of Usury*, New York: Columbia University Press.
Le Goff, Jacques (1990), *Your Money or Your Life. Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages* (*La bourse et la vie. Economie et religion au Moyen Age*, 1986), New York: The Mitt Press.
Locatelli, Angela (1988), "Dialettica e ideologia in *The Merchant of Venice*", in Angela Locatelli, *L'eloquenza e gli incantesimi. Interpretazioni shakespeariane*, Mi-

lano: Guerini e Associati: 73-88.
Lyons, John (1977), *Semantics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 2.
MacInnes, Ian (2008) "Ill Luck? Ill Luck? Risk and Hazard in the Early Modern Marketplace", in Barbara Sebel and Stephen Deng (eds), *Global Traffic. Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature from 1550 to 1700*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 39-55.
McIntyre, Dan (2006), *Point of View in Plays*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
Meek, Richard (2009), *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
Meikle, Scott (1995), *Aristotle's Economic Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mowat, Barbara (1976), *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances*, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
Nünning, Ansgar and Roy Sommer (2008), "Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity: Some further Steps towards a Narratology of Drama", in John Pier and José Angel Garcia Landa (eds), *Theorizing Narrativity*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter: 331-54.
— (2011), "The Performative Power of Narrative in Drama: on the Forms and Functions of Dramatic Storytelling in Shakespeare's Plays", in Greta Olson (ed.), *Current Trends in Narratology*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter: 200-31.
Olson, Greta (ed.) (2011), *Current Trends in Narratology*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.
Pavel, Thomas (1985), *The Poetics of Plot: The Case of English Renaissance Drama*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Pettet, E.C. [1945] (1969), "*The Merchant of Venice* and the Problem of Usury", in John Wilders (ed.), *The Merchant of Venice, A Casebook*, London: Macmillan: 100-13.
Pfister, Manfred [1977] (1993), *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Raffel, Burton (2006), "Introduction", in *The Merchant of Venice*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
Rees, Joan (1978), *Shakespeare and the Story; Aspects of Creation*, London: Athlone.
Richardson, Brian (1988), "Point of View in Drama: Diegetic Monologue, Unreliable Narrators, and the Author's Voice on the Stage", *Comparative Drama*, 22 (3): 193-214.
— (2007), "Drama and Narrative", in David Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 142-55.
Ryan, Marie-Laure (2004), *Narrative Across Media*: *The Languages of Storytelling*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
Ryan, Marie-Laure and Jan-Noël Thon (eds) (2014), *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
Serpieri, Alessandro (1978), "Ipotesi teorica di segmentazione del testo teatrale", in Alessandro Serpieri et al. (eds), *Come comunica il teatro: dal testo alla scena*, Milano: Il Formichiere: 11-54.
— (1985), "Reading the Signs: Towards a Semiotics of Shakespearean Drama", in John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeare*, London and New York:

Methuen: 119-43.
Shapiro, James (1996), *Shakespeare and the Jews*, New York: Columbia University Press.
Squeo, Alessandra (2012), *Shakespeare's Textual Traces. Patterns of 'Exchange' in The Merchant of Venice*, Bari: Edizioni dal Sud.
Stanzel, Franz (1986), *A Theory of Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Streete, Adrian (ed.) (2011), *Early Modern Drama and the Bible. Contexts and Readings, 1570-1625*, Leipzig: Springer.
Thomas, Vivian (2008), *Shakespeare's Political and Economic Language. A Dictionary*, London and New York: Continuum.
Thorne, Alison (2000), *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking through Language*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Turner, Frederick (1999), *Shakespeare's Twenty-First-Century Economics. The Morality of Love and Money*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wilson, Rawdon (1989), "Narrative Reflexivity in Shakespeare", *Poetics Today*, 10 (4): 771-91.
— (1995), *Shakespearean Narrative*, Newark: University of Delaware Press.
Wilson, Thomas [1572] (1925), *A Discourse Upon Usury by way of dialogue and orations . . .* , in Richard Henry Tawney (ed.), *A Discourse Upon Usury by Thomas Wilson*, London: G. Bell & Sons.

Elena Rossi Linguanti*

The Frame Story in Robert Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure*

Abstract

This essay examines the way in which narrative diegesis and dramatic mimesis interact in Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure, Including a Transcript from Euripides*, a long poem in blank verse made of 2705 lines. The complex structure of this poem may be divided into four main sections: 1) an opening narrative frame, where Balaustion tells her four friends how she saved herself by reciting Euripides' *Alcestis* at Syracuse; 2) the full version of *Alcestis*, which is not only recited by Balaustion but also commented upon; 3) a personal version accompanied by a new interpretation of the play; 4) a closing narrative frame, where Balaustion affirms *Alcestis*' extraordinary value. In particular, the essay focuses on the frame with the aim of exploring the structural originality of the poem and its hybrid texture: with regard to the literary genre, the frame blends drama, historical narratives and epics; as for the mode, mimesis and diegesis alternate in almost every section. What lends continuity to the text is Balaustion, narrator and main character, spectator and performer: with her performative speech-acts, it is she who directs the succession of diegesis and mimesis. Finally, the poem has also a metapoetic function, that consists in the glorification of the extraordinary power of poetry.

1.

In its most typical form the dramatic monologue presents a first-person narrator who tells a story to one or more implicit and silent listeners. In this sense it can be considered exemplary of the interaction between narrative diegesis and dramatic mimesis: in fact, both modes of narration are present in this complex poetic form.[1] The aim of this essay is to examine Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure, Including a Transcript from Euripides* from this specific perspective. The author presents his work – a long po-

[1] All essays that deal with the dramatic monologue (the definition of the genre, its formal characteristics, the audience) notice, in a more or less explicit way, the presence of both modes of narration. Without pretending to be exhaustive, I will only mention the still fundamental contributions by Sessions 1947 and Langbaum 1957, and the more recent studies by Pearsall 2000 and 2008; Morgan 2007; Martens 2016; Luu 2016.

* Pisa University - elena.rossi.linguanti@unipi.it

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 149-75
http://www.skenejournal.it

em in blank verse made of 2705 lines – as an occasional *divertissement*: in the dedication to the countess Cowper, who suggested him to translate Euripides' *Alcestis*, he calls it "the most delightful of May-month amusements" (Browning 1999: 7) and, in a letter to Isabella Bladgen, "my little new Poem" (Browning 1951: 362). Nevertheless, it reveals a considerable level of complexity when compared to classical dramatic monologues.

As far as its structure is concerned, *Balaustion's Adventure* is made up of four sections: 1) an opening narrative frame, in which Balaustion, a young Rhodian woman with profound admiration for Athens and Euripides, tells her four friends of an adventure she had a short time before: she tells the story of how, together with a group of her fellow citizens, she sailed from Rhodes to Athens, of how they landed at Syracuse – a city allied to Sparta – after being driven away from their course by a storm and pursued by pirates, and of how she saved herself and her companions by reciting Euripides' *Alcestis* (ll. 1-357); 2) the full version of *Alcestis,* which is not only recited by Balaustion, as she had done in Syracuse, but also commented upon: as a result, her additions interrupt the translation and infuse it with critical observations ranging from didascalic remarks to passages in which she introduces the characters and interprets their words (ll. 358-2396); 3) a personal and alternative version of the tragedy in which Balaustion uses the previous comments as a starting point for reshaping the characters and changing the ending of the story: a strategy which allows her to formulate a new interpretation of the play (ll. 2397-660); 4) lastly, a closing narrative frame where Balaustion once again affirms *Alcestis*' extraordinary value: this play has not only saved her life and that of her fellow citizens, but also inspired many artistic and literary works (ll. 2661-705).

Among Browning's works, *Balaustion's Adventure* is neither the best known nor the most studied. Scholars have identified its sources (Los Hood 1922; DeVane 1935): the framework is based upon Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*, the central section reproduces Euripides' *Alcestis*, and many other classical references deepen its texture. Needless to say, Browning had a great knowledge of Greek drama and in particular of Euripides: his *Artemis Prologizes* (1842) draws inspiration from *Hippolytus*, in *Aristophanes' Apology* (1875), he translates *Heracles* and in 1877 publishes the translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Critics have also frequently focused on the intertextual relations between *Balaustion's Adventure* and *Aristophanes' Apology* – a poem that develops Balaustion's story and narrates her return trip from Athens to Rhodes[2] – and between *Balaustion* and Browning's masterpiece *The Ring and the Book*, which precedes the poem by a short span of years only (1868-

[2] See Brooke 1902; Jackson 1909; DeVane 1935; Policardi 1946; Marucci 1991; Hair 1999; Riley 2008.

69). What has often been foregrounded is, on the one hand, the affinity between Balaustion and Pompilia and, on the other, Euripides' apology (Langbaum 1970; de Loach Ryals 1975; Marucci 1991).[3] The most extensive field of enquiry is the autobiographical one: the story told in Euripides' *Alcestis* is, supposedly, analogous to Browning's, who lost his wife Elizabeth in 1861. In this case, the focus is on the alleged identification of Browning with Admetus and of Elizabeth with Alcestis or with Balaustion; of course, the identification with Balaustion might be applied to Browning himself.[4] Apart from the widespread opinion that *Balaustion's Adventure* is not to be considered a mere translation of Euripides' *Alcestis* (an idea which is already suggested by the subtitle, "Transcript from Euripides"),[5] scholars have identified the relationship between the frame and Plutarch, and yet the central section is usually ignored and very little has been said about the specificity of the translation and its techniques.[6]

In my opinion, *Balaustion's Adventure* can be regarded as Browning's attempt to integrate a dramatic structure within a narrative discourse (as is well known, theatre was one of his abiding, but fruitless passions). What I would like to focus on in this essay is the analysis of the narrative frame (I will come back to the central sections on another occasion) and of the narrative aspects grouped by Genette under the categories of "mood" (chapter 4 in Genette 1980: 161-211) and "voice" (chapter 5 in Genette 1980: 212-62). To my knowledge, this kind of investigation has never been carried out before: the aim of this essay is to illustrate the hybrid texture of the frame and the way in which it moves between mimesis and diegesis in order to explore the poem's structural originality.[7]

2.

Normally, the dominant "mood" of a text is influenced by the literary genre to which it belongs. Nevertheless, as the previous segmentation of *Balaustion's Adventure* shows, it is quite arduous to define the genre of the poem.

[3] Of great interest DeVane's remarks about the connection between Browning's two works as for the rescue theme (DeVane 1966: 108).

[4] See DeVane 1935; Highet 1949; Fairchild 1951; Friend 1964; Hair 1999; Sanders Pollock 2005; O' Gorman 2007.

[5] According to Moulton's famous definition, *Balaustion's Adventure* is a "beautiful misrepresentation of the original" (qtd in Berdoe 1909: 58). See also Dowden 1904; Butler 1937-38; Friend 1964; de Loach Ryals 1975; Hair 1999.

[6] Some interesting observations are to be found in Tisdel 1917; DeVane 1935; Albini 1961 and Paduano 2004. See also Riley 2008, who compares Browning's translations of Euripides (*Alcestis* and *Heracles*) and Aeschylus (*Agamemnon*).

[7] See also Richardson 1988.

This persistent difficulty in classifying Browning's poem is at the centre of various critical assessments of the text.[8] Its narrative structure incorporates a tragedy, *Alcestis*, or, to say it better, quite a faithful translation of Euripides' play (section 2) and then an alternative version of the story (section 3). And yet, it is not a dramatic piece: the recital of *Alcestis* is not recorded in the text in its original drama form (mimetic), but through Balaustion's narrative of her own performance of the play, where the girl plays all the parts and smoothly intermingles her own comments with the original text.

We might affirm that the first section of the poem is chiefly diegetic because it narrates events which have already taken place in the past; that the second and the third sections are mostly mimetic, since they consist in the text of the tragedy of *Alcestis* (even though mimesis is, in fact, interspersed with narrative comments); and that diegetic narration is resumed once again in the fourth section.

However, on a closer look, we find that the frame blends and hybridizes many literary genres: it shares some features with drama, with historical narratives (there are several references to real events, circumstances, places and characters drawn from Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*), and with epics (this is implied in the temporal distance of the narrated events from the moment when the narration takes place).

Also, what emerges clearly from the analysis of its subsections is the continuous shift from the narrative to the dramatic-dialogical dimension. The initial frame, which constitutes a kind of prologue, may be divided into eight segments of different lengths: 1. the first and longest section (ll. 1-137) densely interweaves events and discourses: the narrative parts portray the various incidents of the voyage from Rhodes to Syracuse, whereas the discursive parts include two speeches delivered by the Rhodians, two speeches by Balaustion, one by the Captain and, in the end, the dialogue between the Captain and the Syracusans; 2. an analeptic digression concerning an analogous event in Syracuse (ll. 138-81); 3. a speech made by the Captain to introduce Balaustion to the Syracusans (ll. 182-216); 4. Balaustion's third and last speech in which she promises to recite the entire *Alcestis* (ll. 217-34); 5. the clarification of the performance's effects and the narration of the journey to Athens (ll. 235-74); 6. the introduction of Euripides (ll. 275-88); 7. the narration of Balaustion's visit paid to the tragic poet and the speech by the crit-

[8] In his analysis of Browning's monologues Righetti (1981: 29) examines the "precarious and magical equilibrium between storytelling and drama" (my translation). DeVane (1935: 313) calls *Balaustion's Adventure*, "a play within a play within a play", Hair (1999: 226) speaks about "nested plays", Sanders Pollock (2005: 207) about "double-framed, narrative-dramatic story", "clearly a narrative adaptation of a dramatic work", he also affirms (215) that "*Balaustion's Adventure* is novelistic"; see also Woolford 2012: 564-5.

ic who disapproved of Balaustion's Syracusan recital (ll. 289-335); 8. the preamble to the new performance in front of Balaustion's friends (ll. 336-57).

The closing frame of the poem – a kind of brief epilogue – is made up of four sections, which are composed of just a few lines: 1. Balaustion's interpretative conclusions about her version (ll. 2661-3); 2. the second speech by the Syracusan critic and a reprise from Elizabeth Barrett's epigraph (ll. 2664-71); 3. the description of a painting by Frederic Leighton (ll. 2673-97); 4. the final praise of *Alcestis* (ll. 2698-705).

It is clear that none of these segments is immune from the combination and interconnection of mimesis and diegesis: we find diegesis in the narration of an "adventure" (4) – a story about remarkable events – and mimesis in the dialogical dimension and in the interference of second-degree dramatization. So, it seems quite interesting to explore the reason that lies behind Browning's decision to include two versions of *Alcestis* within a narrative frame made up of a vast diegetic structure and constellated by many mimetic parts.

3.

To date no agreement has been reached as to what literary genre *Balaustion's Adventure* belongs to, and, as suggested above, its mood of narration continuously sways between diegesis and mimesis. Textual continuity is only guaranteed by the presence of Balaustion, who first narrates her "adventure" (4) and then recites and makes comments on *Alcestis*: from the beginning to the end of the text it is her words that mark the alternation of moods and voices.

The starting point is dialogical, since the text is presented as a speech made by Balaustion and since – according to the stylistic conventions of the dramatic monologue – it is addressed to an internal audience composed of four silent Greek girls, mentioned at the beginning ("Petalé, / Phullis, Charopé, Chrusion!", ll. 4-5)[9] and at the end of the opening frame ("we five", l. 340) and then in the closing frame ("you, friends", l. 2703), and who must have implicitly expressed their willingness to listen to their friend's adventure. Therefore, Balaustion's acknowledgement of her audience (Genette 1980: 232) serves as a pretext to give credibility to her own narrative.

[9] These names are drawn from the letters of Alciphron, an Athenian sophist of uncertain epoch: Petalé's name is mentioned in the *Letters of Courtesans*, Letter 8 [1.35] and Letter 9 [1.36]; Phyllis' in the *Letters of Farmers*, Letter 13 [3.16] and in the *Letters of Parasites*, Letter 9 [3.45]; Charopé's in the *Letters of Fisherman*, Letter 11 [3.1]; Chrysium's in the *Letters of Courtesans*, Letter 14 [1.39] (Benner and Fobes 1949). Cfr. Deane 1914 and Los Hood 1922.

Balaustion has a double status: she is both a narrator who creates a story featuring many other characters, and the main character of the narrative; that is to say, in Genettian terms, she is an extradiegetic-homodiegetic and autodiegetic narrator. Moreover, her character plays two different roles, as the use of personal pronouns shows: sometimes she assumes the function of protagonist and speaks in the first-person ("I"),[10] at other times she identifies herself with the collectivity she represents and disguises her role by creating an effect of shared focalization ("we").[11] Balaustion's narrative fiction, with its blending of diegesis and mimesis, has some parallels both in Odysseus' narration of his adventures to the Phaeacians in Books IX-XI of *Odyssey* (even though, in this case, we find a second-level story embedded within a heterodiegetic narration) and in the *rheseis* of tragic messengers (from which it differs in two important details, such as omniscience and the fact of having a protagonist).[12]

Lastly, Balaustion is both a spectator and a performer: when she was a girl, she attended the performance of *Alcestis* in the city of Kameiros, in Rhodes ("I, when a girl, heard in Kameiros once", l. 2); then, assuming the role of performer, she declaims the play for three days before her Syracusan audience ("Told it, and, two days more, repeated it", l. 252), recites it once again to her friends ("Hear the play itself!", l. 336) and, finally, offers them a personal version of the story. It is a very peculiar performance, in which Balaustion plays all the roles, a performance that is closer to the narrative than to the dramatic dimension. This ambiguity is revealed by her own expressions ("and plain I told the play", l. 246; "Told it, and, two days more, repeated it", l. 252; "while I told my tale", l. 2703): the idea of a play that is so similar to a tale perfectly fits the hybrid structure of the dramatic monologue and seems to anticipate the modern experience of narrative theatre (on which see Szondi 1987).

The other agents are represented by singular or collective voices, who can be locutors or listeners, supporters or opponents. Balaustion introduces their discourses and temporarily hands over the narration to them or, more rarely, reports their words indirectly. The length of these talks can vary from a few to thirty lines, covering more than one third of the frame story: the ship's Captain makes four speeches (three in a direct, ll. 59-66, 93-6, 183-216, and one in an indirect way, ll. 109-16), the Rhodians speak twice (ll. 13-16, 53-4), the Syracusans deliver three speeches (ll. 91-2, 97-108, 128-37) and make some

[10] Lines 2, 11, 19, 22, 41, 74, 181, 217, 218, 224, 231, 232, 233, 245, 246, 247, 248, 254, 256, 257, 263, 264, 267, 271, 272, 275, 276, 277, 305, 344, 345, 351.

[11] Lines 46, 49, 51, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 69, 73, 83, 87, 89, 90, 91, 117, 125, 129, 139, 181, 234, 249, 253, 268, 271, 275, 279, 289, 340.

[12] On the messenger's *rheseis* see Paduano 1978; de Jong 1991; Barrett 2002; de Jong, Nünlist and Bowie 2004.

brief observations (ll. 238-40, 242), the Syracusan critic speaks on two occasions (ll. 308-16, 2664-6) and so do Euripides' detractors (ll. 159-60, 283-5).

The three speeches pronounced by Balaustion (ll. 23-41, 77-80, 217-34),[13] are particularly important since they provide precious clues for the interpretation of the text: each of them is a performance addressed to an audience (the first two unfold in front of the Rhodians, while the third is delivered to the Syracusans), with the aim of persuading by arousing the emotions and affecting the opinions of the listeners. In fact, Balaustion's words are followed by diegetic comments focused on the operative efficacy of her remarks (ll. 41-9, 81-9, 235-74)[14].

The multiplication of voices and audiences bestows a mimetic dimension upon the story: everybody speaks aloud, just as actors do in a play (the verb that most frequently introduces the speeches is "cry");[15] the characters "hear"[16] and "see",[17] like spectators in a theatre. Here, as in every mimetic representation, sight and hearing are the privileged communication channels.

Therefore, it is Balaustion who, with her performative speech-acts, directs the combination and succession of diegetic and mimetic moments, it is she who chooses the events that are to be narrated and the ones that are to be represented through direct discourse.

4.

This peculiar structure of the text contributes to the introduction – in both the mimetic and diegetic parts – of some passages of literary criticism. In

[13] To these it is possible to add a discourse reported by the Captain and embedded in his speech (ll. 202-5).

[14] See Mermin 1983: 2: "His words [the speaker's] are intended to have an immediate effect on his auditor"; 47: "What interests him [Browning] is why, how, and to what effect the speaker speaks"; Pearsall 2000: 68: ". . . a major feature of this poetic genre is its assumption of rhetorical efficacy. Speakers desire to achieve some purpose, looking toward goals that they not only describe in the course of their monologues, but also labor steadily to achieve through the medium of their monologues".

[15] "cried", l. 13; "cried", l. 22; "cried", l. 60; "cried", l. 129; "cried", l. 159; "I cried", l. 217.

[16] "heard", l. 2; "hear", l. 22; "hear", l. 70; "heard", l. 96; "we heard", l. 97; "we heard", l. 98; "to hear", l. 294; "to hear", l. 321; "hears", l. 323; "hear", l. 333; "hears", l. 335; "Hear", l. 336.

[17] "he saw", l. 56; "seeing", l. 73; "saw", l. 83; "saw", l. 83; "Saw", l. 84; "I see", l. 171; "I saw", l. 224; "I saw", l. 247; "I saw", l. 248; "I saw", l. 248; "to see", l. 270; "I saw", l. 275; "saw", l. 289; "she saw", l. 309; "to be seen", l. 309; "she had seen", l. 315; "sees", l. 321; "seen", l. 326; "see", l. 333; "sees", l. 335; "see", l. 350.

fact, the frame contains a series of reflections through which the speaker expresses a value judgment on Euripides (on the characteristics of his poetry and on his relationship with the Athenian public, ll. 275-304), formulates a theory of aesthetic reception (ll. 305-35) and a performance theory (ll. 343-57), and establishes an intertextual dialogue with other literary and artistic works (epigraph, ll. 2667-97).

The narrative fiction of the frame is preceded by an epigraph from Elizabeth Barrett's *The Wine of Cyprus* (ll. 89-92).

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres.

What we find here is an extremely meaningful definition of Euripidean poetry. The first line recalls a well-known epigrammatic remark of Aristotle's *Poetics*, according to which Σοφοκλῆς ἔφη αὐτὸς μὲν οἵους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδην δὲ οἷοι εἰσίν, 1460b33-5, ("Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be, Euripides, as they are"; my translation). The second line sees in the emphatic representation of suffering the central tenet of Euripides' play. The last two lines show the ability of the tragedian to transpose everyday matter into myth and humanity into the divine. The paratext can be viewed as a kind of declaration of intent: indeed, the poem is generated by the desire to explicitly state and confirm its meaning (in fact, as we shall see later, Barrett Browning's words recur several times in the text).

At the poem's centre is *Alcestis* and Balaustion reveals the reasons for choosing it: it is a love story which glorifies the overcoming of death ("that strangest, saddest, sweetest song", ll. 1 and 220); its perfection is rooted in beauty and, again, in the power to elicit the spectator's emotional identification ("the perfect piece / Its beauty and the way it makes you weep", ll. 226-7).

By analyzing each single section we will see that the metapoetic function consists in the glorification of the extraordinary power of poetic diction.[18] Indeed, all the strategies used in the frame story contribute to enhancing this idea.

[18] See de Loach Ryals 1975: 34: "The first 357 lines of the poem . . . are . . . devoted chiefly to proclaiming the redemptive power of poetry". In his 1940 essay Smalley refers to the metapoetic value of *Aristophanes' Apology*: ". . . this piece affords us some of our most interesting, and not our least valuable, evidence of what Browning himself thought and felt about poetry" (Smalley 1940: 823). More recently, this same idea has been advanced by Woolford in relation to *Balaustion's Adventure*: ". . . *Balaustion's Adventure* not only responds to his contemporaries' readings (and writings) of the classical drama on which it is based, but also plays a critical role in the evolution of Browning's aesthetics, and makes a significant contribution to nineteenth-century debates over the value of Euripides and classical drama" (2012: 564).

5.1

In the opening lines of the poem Balaustion assumes her role as narrator and announces the narration's retrospective and proleptic features. Her intention is to tell her friends the story of an adventure which has saved her life.

> About that strangest, saddest, sweetest song
> I, when a girl, heard in Kameiros once,
> And, after, saved my life by? Oh, so glad
> To tell you the adventure!
> Petalé,
> Phullis, Charopé, Chrusion! You must know,
> This 'after' fell in that unhappy time
> When poor reluctant Nikias, pushed by fate,
> Went falteringly against Syracuse;
> And there shamed Athens, lost her ships and men,
> And gained a grave, or death without a grave.
> (ll. 1-10)

The diegetic elements are foregrounded through the use of specific temporal and spatial coordinates: as time references and verbal forms show, the adventure belongs to the past and takes place in the period of the Athenian expedition to Sicily (415-13 BC); an expedition which had disastrous consequences for Athens and led to the capture and execution of the strategist Nicias. Historical events are not presented in a neutral denotative way. They are, instead, filtered through the narrator's emotional perspective, intensifying thus the pathos of the story.

The opening lines also indicate the place in which the story unfolds: "I was at Rhodes – the isle, not Rhodes the town, / Mine was Kameiros – when the news arrived" (ll. 10-11). A revolt breaks out when the news of the Athenian defeat reach Rhodes ("Our people rose in tumult, cried", l. 13) and Balaustion uses direct speech for reporting the people's reaction.

> "No more
> Duty to Athens, let us join the League
> And side with Sparta, share the spoil, – at worst,
> Abjure a headship that will ruin Greece!"
> (ll. 13-16)

The inclusion of the words pronounced by the Rhodians transforms narrative diegesis into dramatic mimesis.

5.2

Balaustion attempts to oppose the uprising by urging the Rhodians to stay loyal to Athens. This is the reason why she introduces herself: "Girl as I was, and never out of Rhodes / The whole of my first fourteen years of life, / But nourished with Ilissian mother's milk" (ll. 19-21). And it is precisely her characteristics (her young age, her inexperience, her passion for Athens) that mark her as an orator who is able to influence her fellow-citizens. Her personal involvement also determines the tone of her first speech, which is introduced by the expression "passionately cried" (l. 22). The girl addresses a small audience, chosen by her from the people with whom she shares an affinity ("to who would hear / And those who loved me at Kameiros", ll. 22-3).

"No!
Never throw Athens off for Sparta's sake.
Never disloyal to the life and light
Of the whole world worth calling world at all!
Rather go die at Athens, lie outstretched
For feet to trample on, before the gate
Of Diomedes or the Hippadai,
Before the temples and among the tombs,
Than tolerate the grim felicity
Of harsh Laconia! Ours the fasts and feasts,
Choës and Chutroi; ours the sacred grove,
Agora, Dikasteria, Poikilé,
Pnux, Keramikos; Salamis in sight,
Psuttalia, Marathon itself, not far!
Ours the great Dionusiac theatre,
And tragic triad of immortal fames,
Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides!
To Athens, all of us that have a soul,
Follow me!"
(ll. 23-41)[19]

Her peroration is rooted in the idea that the predilection for Athens is incontestable and the existence in Sparta impossible (ll. 23-7). According to Balaustion, the contrast between the two cities embodies the opposition between the light emanating from the cult of beauty and the darkness of aridity: a clash of civilizations that cannot but lead to the Athenian hegemony.

What follows is a fiery tribute to Athens' architectonic, military and theatrical glory in which Balaustion recurs to visual suggestion and to the

[19] Browning uses the standard Victorian transliteration of Greek names: Aischulos instead of Aeschylus, Sophokles instead of Sophocles, etc.

rhetoric figure of accumulation. She attempts to persuade her fellow-citizens by recalling the monuments (ll. 27-35), the victories against the Persians (ll. 35-6) and, eventually, the triad of great tragic authors (ll. 37-9).

Her awareness and sense of belongingness to the city is underlined by the recurrence of the possessive adjective "Ours" (ll. 32, 33, 37), and is strongly affirmed by the imperative forms which culminate in the final exhortation (ll. 40-1).[20]

Moving back to the diegetic dimension, Balaustion emphasizes the persuasive efficacy of her own speech: "And I wrought so with my prayer / That certain of my kinsfolk crossed the strait / And found a ship at Kaunos" (ll. 41-3). The effect produced by her words is highly subversive because the Rhodians – a small group of people who attach great importance to Athenian culture and civilization – are persuaded to change their minds: they leave for Kaunos, in Asia Minor, and from there they embark for Athens and sail on a ship steered by a pro-Athenian captain (ll. 41-9).

From this moment onwards Balaustion will not use the first-person pronoun for a long time; moved by a profound emotional sympathy, she completely identifies with the community she belongs to ("A few like-minded as ourselves", l. 46; "We", l. 46; "our heart", l. 49). This identification is necessary since it paves the way for the diegetic narration that will follow: in fact, the concealment of personal identity is a strategy that turns the attention to the events.

5.3

Three climactic narrative moments contribute to the compelling description of the journey which first puts the Rhodians in danger and then determines their survival (ll. 49-89). The first one (ll. 49-55), which opens on the adversative "But" (l. 49), is centered on the change of direction caused by the adverse winds that sweep the ship off course near the promontory of Malea and on the following days of dead calm: the Rhodians address the Captain with brief, anguished and insistent questions that are left unanswered ("'But whither bound in this white waste?' we plagued / The pilot's old experience: 'Cos or Crete?'", ll. 53-4).

[20] Ll. 27-36 recall two letters by Alciphron: ll. 27-31 recall Letter 15 [3.51], in which the parasite Laemocyclops parodies the heroic speech on suicide; ll. 32-6 recall Letter 11 [3.1], in which Menander, who lies sick in Piraeus, writes to the courtesan Glycera of Athens; he declines the invitation to go to the Egyptian court of Ptolemy I Soter and justifies his refusal on the grounds of his strong attachment to Glycera and Athens and concludes by listing the city's most significant sites (the Kerameikos, the Agora, the courthouses, Salamis, Psyttalia and Marathon). See Deane 1914.

The shift to the second episode (ll. 56-9) is introduced and marked by the conjunction "While" (l. 56). A warning shout of the Captain, to whom Balaustion hands the narration over, signals a pirate assault on the ship ("The Captain's shout startled us", l. 57). In order to avoid the risk of being captured by the pirates, in his first speech ("the Captain cried", l. 60) the Captain exhorts his crew to row in the direction of what he thinks is the island of Crete (ll. 59-66).

The feeling of terror, the frantic rowing of the seamen and the hideous threats of the pirates – ("That we could hear behind us plain the threats / And curses of the pirate panting up / In one more throe and passion of pursuit", ll. 70-2) – provide the context for Balaustion's second oration. She thus assumes, once again, a guiding role ("I", l. 74) and chooses the altar of the ship as the solemn place from which to address the audience:

> I sprang upon the altar by the mast
> And sang aloft – some genius prompting me, –
> That song of ours which saved at Salami.
> "O sons of Greeks, go, set your country free,
> Free your wives, free your children, free the fanes
> O' the Gods, your fathers founded, – sepulchres
> They sleep in! Or save all, or all be lost!"
> (ll. 74-80)

The song reproduces the exhortation which, according to the Messenger in Aeschylus' *Persians*, was pronounced by the Greeks after their victory at Salamis.

> 'ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων ἴτε,
> ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ', ἐλευθεροῦτε δὲ
> παῖδας, γυναῖκας, θεῶν τέ πατρῴων ἕδη,
> θήκας τε προγόνων: νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών.
> (Aeschylus, *Persians*, ll. 402-5)

> ["On, you men of Hellas! Free your native land. Free your children, your wives, the temples of your fathers' gods, and the tombs of your ancestors. Now you are fighting for all you have." – Trans. by H. Weir Smyth, Aeschylus 1926]

While in her first speech Balaustion invoked the values of culture and civilization, in this case her argumentation rests on the authoritative lines written by Aeschylus, which symbolize a confident assertion of the Greek society's self-awareness. The second oration acquires an injunctive power and produces the effect of making the seamen row faster until they catch sight of land (ll. 81-9): the lasting power of poetry is transfused from the

Greeks, who have defeated the Persians, to the Rhodians who manage to escape from the pirates.

Once again Balaustion merges her individual self with the collectivity ("We", l. 83) and provides an accurate and detailed *ekphrasis* of what she sees ("saw", ll. 83 and 84): after a wide panoramic view of the land, she gives a close-up picture of the hills, of the city and its towers and, eventually, of a large and a small bay (ll. 83-7). The aim of the description is not only to emphasize the objectivity of the narration, but also to create suspense by slowing down the action and showing the places as they appear to the eyes of the characters. The third episode comes as quite a surprise to the Rhodians when they realize that the ship has reached neither Crete, let alone Athens, but Syracuse, an ally of Sparta ("We ran upon the lion from the wolf", l. 89).

The narrative-descriptive passages (the stormbound voyage, the attack of the pirates, the mistake in making landfall) build up an emotionally tense situation which preludes to the unexpected reversal of events and are, therefore, distinctly propulsive.

5.4

The narration of the landing at Syracuse opens up an entirely dialogical scene. Having introduced the first two remarks (ll. 90-1 and 93), Balaustion momentarily disappears from our view: when the ship enters the harbour the Captain is asked a series of questions and the dialogue between him and the Syracusans is of fundamental importance for the survival of the Rhodians (ll. 90-137). When the Syracusans ask him to reveal his identity and explicitly state his standpoint ("'Who asks entry here / In war-time? Are you Sparta's friend or foe?'", ll. 91-2) the Captain tries to convince them that Rhodes has lined up with Sparta (ll. 93-6). But the hunted fugitives are denied entrance because the Syracusans, who have heard Aeschylus' song ("'Ay, but we heard all Athens in one ode / Just now! we heard in that Aischulos!'", ll. 97-8) and have understood that the ship is carrying pro-Athenian citizens, are well aware of the mesmerizing power exercised by poetry: "We want no colony from Athens here, / With memories of Salamis, forsooth, / To spirit up our captives" (ll. 104-6).

The Captain's speech assumes then a prayerful tone ("prayed them", l. 109) and is reported through indirect discourse (ll. 109-16). Both its indirect form and its formal style ("Then the grey Captain prayed them by the Gods, / And by their own knees, and their fathers' beards", ll. 109-10) reveal its communicative inefficaciousness, which is later explicitly confirmed ("Vain! / Words to the wind!", ll. 116-17): the failure of his attempt shows that his persuasive abilities are inferior to those of Balaustion.

In this atmosphere, the tension builds up further ("So were we at destruction's very edge", l. 125) until the Syracusans ask the Rhodians if, apart from knowing Euripides' verses, they are acquainted with those of Aeschylus as well.

> "That song was veritable Aischulos,
> Familiar to the mouth of man and boy,
> Old glory: how about Euripides?
> The newer and not so famous bard,
> He that was born upon the battle-day
> While that song and the salpinx sounded him
> Into the world, first sound, at Salamis –[21]
> Might you know any of his verses too?"
> (ll. 130-7)

The two authors stand in clear contrast to each other because they belong to different temporal horizons ("Old" / "newer"), and have achieved a different kind of fame ("glory" / "not so famous bard"). In the first phase of the journey it was the appeal to the cultural values of Athens that led the Rhodians to change their minds and it was the authority of Aeschylus that motivated them to row faster. Now, it is the poetry of Euripides that brings them good luck.

6.

The request made by the Syracusans – to which Balaustion responds as if guided by divine inspiration ("Now, some one of the Gods inspired this speech", l. 138) – provides her with the opportunity to introduce a new story. The episode she refers to had taken place in the same city of Syracuse; its opening and closing narrative segments are indicated by the chronological expression "last year", which moves the episode back in time; it has not been experienced first-hand, but is well-known by the community ("Since ourselves knew what happened but last year", l. 139; "I say, we knew that story of last year", l. 181). What we have here is an analepsis within the analepsis, which revisits the paragraphs of Plutarch's *Life of Nicias* dealing with the consequences of the Athenian defeat and the vicissitudes of the prisoners in Syracuse (29.1-4).

[21] The common tradition fixes Euripides' birth on the day of the battle of Salamis (23 September 480 BC), even though he was probably born around 485 BC. The information Browning draws on is contained in various biographical writings on Euripides such as γένος Εὐριπίδου and Satyrus, *Life of Euripides*; see Arrighetti 1964; Jackson 1909.

τῶν δ᾽ Ἀθηναίων οἱ μὲν πλεῖστοι διεφθάρησαν ἐν ταῖς λατομίαις ὑπὸ νόσου καὶ διαίτης πονηρᾶς, εἰς ἡμέραν ἑκάστην κοτύλας δύο κριθῶν λαμβάνοντες καὶ μίαν ὕδατος, οὐκ ὀλίγοι δ᾽ ἐπράθησαν διακλαπέντες ἢ καὶ διαλαθόντες ὡς οἰκέται. καὶ τούτους ὡς οἰκέτας ἐπώλουν, στίζοντες ἵππον εἰς τὸ μέτωπον: ἀλλ᾽ ἦσαν οἱ καὶ τοῦτο πρὸς τῷ δουλεύειν ὑπομένοντες. ἐβοήθει δὲ καὶ τούτοις ἥ τ᾽ αἰδὼς καὶ τὸ κόσμιον: ἢ γὰρ ἠλευθεροῦντο ταχέως ἢ τιμώμενοι παρέμενον τοῖς κεκτημένοις. ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ δι᾽ Εὐριπίδην ἐσώθησαν. μάλιστα γάρ, ὡς ἔοικε, τῶν ἐκτὸς Ἑλλήνων ἐπόθησαν αὐτοῦ τὴν μοῦσαν οἱ περὶ Σικελίαν: καὶ μικρὰ τῶν ἀφικνουμένων ἑκάστοτε δείγματα καὶ γεύματα κομιζόντων ἐκμανθάνοντες ἀγαπητῶς μετεδίδοσαν ἀλλήλοις. τότε γοῦν φασι τῶν σωθέντων οἴκαδε συχνοὺς ἀσπάσασθαι τὸν Εὐριπίδην φιλοφρόνως, καὶ διηγεῖσθαι τοὺς μέν, ὅτι δουλεύοντες ἀφείθησαν ἐκδιδάξαντες ὅσα τῶν ἐκείνου ποιημάτων ἐμέμνηντο, τοὺς δ᾽, ὅτι πλανώμενοι μετὰ τὴν μάχην τροφῆς καὶ ὕδατος μετέλαβον τῶν μελῶν ᾄσαντες.

[Most of the Athenians perished in the stone quarries of disease and evil fare, their daily rations being a pint of barley meal and half-pint of water; but not a few were stolen away and sold into slavery, or succeeded in passing themselves off for serving men. These, when they were sold, were branded in the forehead with the mark of a horse, – yes, there were some freemen who actually suffered this indignity in addition to their servitude. But even these were helped by their restrained and decorous bearing; some were speedily set free, and some remained with their masters in positions of honour. Some also were saved for the sake of Euripides. For the Sicilians, it would seem, more than any other Hellenes outside the home land, had a yearning fondness for his poetry. They were forever learning by heart the little specimens and morsels of it which visitors brought them from time to time, and imparting them to one another with fond delight. In the present case, at any rate, they say that many Athenians who reached home in safety greeted Euripides with affectionate hearts, and recounted to him, some that they had been set free from slavery for rehearsing what they remembered of his works; and some that when they were roaming about after the final battle they had received food and drink for singing some of his choral hymns. – Trans. by B. Perrin, Plutarch 1916]

Plutarch adds another example which celebrates the Syracusan passion for Euripides (29.5):

οὐ δεῖ δὴ θαυμάζειν ὅτι τοὺς Καυνίους φασὶ πλοίου προσφερομένου τοῖς λιμέσιν ὑπὸ λῃστρίδων διωκομένου μὴ δέχεσθαι τὸ πρῶτον, ἀλλ᾽ ἀπείργειν, εἶτα μέντοι διαπυνθανομένους εἰ γινώσκουσιν ᾄσματα τῶν Εὐριπίδου, φησάντων ἐκείνων, οὕτω παρεῖναι καὶ καταγαγεῖν τὸ πλοῖον.

[Surely, then, one need not wonder at the story that the Caunians, when a vessel of theirs would have put in at the harbour of Syracuse to escape pur-

> suit by pirates, were not admitted at first, but kept outside, until, on being asked if they knew any songs of Euripides, they declared that they did indeed, and were for this reason suffered to bring their vessel safely in. – Ibid.]

Balaustion uses many of the details contained in the first part of the story – although heightening the pathetic tone of the whole[22] – and focuses mainly on the means through which the prisoners achieved their freedom: what saved them was neither wealth nor wisdom or the poetry of the ancient tragedies (ll. 146-54), but their ability to recite some passages from Euripides' plays (ll. 154-76). Plutarch juxtaposes the two episodes (the account of how the prisoners were released thanks to their knowledge of Euripides and how the ship from Kaunos, which happened to be pursued by pirates, ran into the harbour of Syracuse and was received for the same reason), so that the latter might provide evidence for the former. Contrary to Plutarch, Browning uses the episode of the ship from Kaunos as the main frame-story and introduces the vicissitudes of the Athenian prisoners as a preamble that occurred the year before. The two episodes are linked by a mirroring effect which foregrounds the transformation of the past into legend (ll. 139, 181) and the continuity with the present moment (both the prisoners of Syracuse and Balaustion with her fellow-citizens save themselves by reciting Euripides and eventually pay him a visit in Athens).

In addition, the analepsis contributes to the hermeneutical line: Balaustion's first speech (ll. 23-41) already contains a glorification of Greek theatre (ll. 37-9); what is praised in this case is the supreme grandeur and the universal dissemination of tragic writing ("Old glory, great plays that had long ago / Made themselves wings to fly about the world", ll. 153-4).

So, after having openly acknowledged their preference for Euripides over Aeschylus, the Syracusans delineate their relationship with Sophocles:

> Not one such man was helped so at his need
> As certain few that (wisest they of all)
> Had, at first summons, oped heart, flung door wide
> At the new knocking of Euripides,
> Nor drawn the bolt with who cried "Decadence!

[22] She also takes the chance for including another quotation, this time from Sophocles: when mentioning the horse-head brands she introduces a brief interjection "– ah, 'Region of the Steed'! –" (l. 145), which echoes a line from *Oedipus at Colonus* in praise of Athens ("Stranger, in this land of fine horses you have come to earth's fairest home, the shining Colonus", ll. 668-70). The inclusion of the Sophoclean line intensifies the pathos of the narration.

And after Sophokles, be nature dumb!"
(ll. 155-60)

In the end, the prisoners who gain freedom are not the ones who distrust innovation, but the few who are able to appreciate Euripides – an emblematic figure of modernity.

By reflecting itself in Balaustion's speech the retrospective story produces two significant effects: it proves the salvific power of poetry and heightens its authenticity and truth.

7.

The following two sections are still mainly mimetic in style and focus on the moment when the Captain delivers his longest discourse (ll. 183-216) and Balaustion speaks for the third time (ll. 217-34). After the flashback (ll. 138-81), the story resumes from the point where it was interrupted: the Captain responds enthusiastically to the Syracusans' request (l. 137) – ("Therefore, at mention of Euripides, / The Captain crowed out", ll. 182-3) – and introduces Balaustion (ll. 182-6). At this point the layering and interweaving of voices becomes rather complicated because a secondary character undertakes the task of introducing the protagonist-narrator: in presenting Balaustion, the Captain throws a new light on her and places the character in a new perspective (a perspective which is slightly different from the one suggested by Balaustion herself). He uses a series of metaphorical images for conjuring up the girl's extraordinary abilities and natural talent, and for demonstrating that she is able to fulfill the Syracusans' request (ll. 189-91, 195-9, 200-1).

The Captain, in turn, directly reports Balaustion's words and her suggestive definition of Euripidean poetry:

"So sang Euripides", she said, "so sang
The meteoric poet of air and sea,
Planets and the pale populace of heaven,
The mind of man, and all that's made to soar!"
(ll. 202-5)

Thus, he confers on her a sort of investiture and asks her to save her fellow-citizens by singing a strophe from Euripides (ll. 214-16).

Hence, she emerges, once again, from invisibility and definitively distances herself from the community. She takes the floor for the third time and brings the proposal forward.

But I cried "Brother Greek! better than so, –
Save us, and I have courage to recite

the main of a whole play from first to last;
That strangest, saddest, sweetest song of his,
ALKESTIS; which was taught, long years ago
At Athens, in Glaukinos' archonship,
But only this year reached our Isle o' the Rose.
I saw it, at Kameiros, played the same,
They say, as for the right Lenean feast
In Athens;[23] and beside the perfect piece –
Its beauty and the way it makes you weep, –
There is much honour done your own loved God
Herakles, whom you house i' the city here
Nobly, the Temple wide Greece talks about!
I come a suppliant to your Herakles! [24]
Take me and put me on his temple-steps
To tell you his achievement as I may,
And, that told, he shall bid you set us free!"
(ll. 217-34)

What she had to do in the first two cases was to convince a group of fellow-citizens; now that she has to persuade the hostile Syracusans she will not limit herself to reciting just a few lines (as was the case with Aeschylus' *Persians*) but will declaim the whole play of *Alcestis.*

The Captain's lack of persuasive abilities (ll. 116-17) is now replaced with Balaustion's *ars rhetorica*, which is acknowledged as a proof of sublime eloquence.

8.

According to Balaustion's artistic conception, poetry is a shared universal value which has the power to settle conflicts and generate harmony, which stirs up and transmits emotions: "Then, because Greeks are Greeks and hearts are hearts / And poetry is power" (ll. 235-6).[25] In fact, her third speech is greeted with great jubilation by the Syracusans and their joyful reaction is narrated both in an indirect way and through brief direct statements:

[23] The second Argument to *Alcestis*, attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium, states that the tragedy was staged when Glaucinus was archon and was not performed during the Lenaia but during the Great Dionysia of 438 BC.

[24] Neither of the two temples of Syracuse was consecrated to Hercules; but Plutarch mentions a temple dedicated to this god and refers to the way the Syracusans honored and worshipped him (*Life of Nicias* 24.6). See Los Hood 1922.

[25] These lines will reappear in *Aristophanes' Apology*, 496-7.

– they all outbroke
In a great joyous laughter with much love.
"Thank Herakles for the good holiday!
Make for the harbour! Row, and let voice ring,
'In we row, bringing more Euripides!'"
All the crowd, as they lined the harbour now.
"More of Euripides!" – took up the cry.
(ll. 236-42)

Thus, placed upon a kind of stage near to the temple of Heracles ("there they stationed me / O' the topmost step", ll. 245-6), – an act that consecrates her as a performer – Balaustion recites the tragedy for three days in a row ("Told it, and, two days more, repeated it", l. 252). The choice of Heracles' temple is important because the demigod saves Alcestis in Euripides' tragedy, and acquires even greater importance in Balaustion's version; furthermore, since Heracles is the pan-Hellenic hero who had to travel all over Greece while performing his labours, his temple is the most appropriate place for a performance intended to generate harmony between the Rhodians and the Syracusans.

Balaustion also clarifies the relationship between her recital and the theatrical performance and several times underlines the fact that it perfectly corresponds to the performance she attended at Kameiros ("I saw it, at Kameiros, played the same", l. 224; "and plain I told the play, / Just as I saw it; what the actors said, / And what I saw, or thought I saw the while", ll. 246-8): therefore, the act of reproducing the play is both a receptive activity – substantiated by the autopsy ("just as I saw it", l. 247), – and an interpretative one ("or thought I saw", l. 248). To say it in other words, the fact that Balaustion has personally seen the play makes her credible and reliable as a performer.

Apart from the freedom for the Rhodians, three more elements are closely related to her: a wealthy Syracusan gives her as a gift a talent and Balaustion decides to leave it in Hercules' temple as a thanks-offering to the god (ll. 254-60);[26] a group of Athenian prisoners give her a crown of wild-pomegranate flowers (ll. 260-4); a young man falls in love with her and follows her to Athens to marry her (ll. 265-74).[27]

The tension, which had steadily been building up to the point where the ship entered the Syracusan harbour, is now eased; it is resolved with a happy ending involving both the Rhodian and Syracusan communities and Balaustion's personal destiny.

[26] What is made explicit here is the parallelism between her personal story and that of Alcestis "– For had not Herakles a second time / Wrestled with Death and saved devoted ones? –" (ll. 258-9).

[27] The text refers here to Euthukles, a character from *Aristophanes' Apology*.

9.

The metapoetic reflection and the narrative discourse are intertwined even further, almost inextricably, as the character of Euripides enters the scene. Once in Athens, Balaustion pays a visit to "The master" (ll. 275, 290), and approaches him with a feeling of profound reverence ("held the sacred hand of him / And laid it to my lips", ll. 290-1).

This literary device provides the opportunity for Balaustion to express her views on Euripides, and it is worth pointing out that the stance she takes is in stark contrast to the general disapproval of the playwright (a disapproval which, by the way, was widely shared by the members of the society to which Browning belonged).[28]

The collective thought ("They", l. 280) associates Euripides' figure with misanthropy ("A man that never kept good company, / The most unsociable of poet-kind, / All beard that was not freckle in his face", ll. 286-8) and isolation ("Meantime, / He lives as should a statue in its niche; / Cold walls enclose him, mostly darkness there, / Alone", ll. 297-300),[29] and counterposes him not only to Aeschylus and Sophocles ("He was not Aischulos nor Sophokles", l. 282), but also to more recent tragedians ("Then, of our younger bards who boast the bay, / Had I sought Agathon, or Iophon, / Or, what now had it been Kephisophon?", ll. 283-5).[30] In the end, this intense aversion is directed towards Socrates as well ("Nor do they much love his friend

[28] Many of the comedies written by Aristophanes adopt an attitude of derision towards Euripides (see the *Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and, above all, *The Frogs*) and of disapproval towards Socrates (*The Clouds*). This sharp criticism is revived and revised during the Romantic period: in fact, in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1808) A.W. Schlegel formulates what has been called the *damnatio* of Euripides and argues that tragedy reached its apogee in the plays of Sophocles, while Euripides precipitated its decline. In 1872, a year after the appearance of *Balaustion's Adventure*, Nietzsche publishes *The Birth of Tragedy* where he levels his charge against Euripides and Socrates and holds them responsible for the death of tragic art. On the nineteenth-century interpretations of Euripides see Jenkins 1980; Michelini 1987. DeVane (1935: 31) argues that "Even *Balaustion's Adventure* seems to have risen out of a desire to vindicate the reputation of Euripides from the aspersions of contemporary scholars". Smalley (1940), O'Gorman (2007: 162), Riley (2008) see *Aristophanes' Apology* as another work which calls for a reassessment of Euripidean art.

[29] The description of Euripides' aspect (including the bushy beard) and personality and the legend that he lived in a solitary cave near the sea in Salamis correspond to the information contained in γένος Εὐριπίδου and in Satyrus' *Life of Euripides* 39, ix-x. See Jackson 1909.

[30] These three poets are mentioned in Aristophanes' *The Frogs*: Iophon (ll. 73 and 78) and Agathon (ll. 83-4); in particular, as can be deduced from some passages (ll. 944, 1408, 1452-3), Kephisophon was believed to have collaborated with Euripides, who is mocked and treated with contempt.

/ Sokrates", ll. 292-3), who is Euripides' friend, his privileged interlocutor and spectator of his plays (ll. 293-7).

For Balaustion, on the contrary, this separateness reveals the unacknowledged wisdom of the poet: ". . . unless some foreigner uncouth / Breaks in, sits, stares an hour, and so departs, / Brain-stuffed with something to sustain his life, / Dry to the marrow's mid much merchandise" (ll. 300-3). Nevertheless, the disaffection shown by his fellow-citizens ("Men love him not: / How should they?", ll. 291-2; "How should such know and love the man?", l. 304) is countered by the high esteem accorded to the poet outside Athens ("The story how he saved us made some smile: / They wondered strangers were exorbitant / In estimation of Euripides", ll. 279-81).

Balaustion herself perceives the narrow-mindedness of the spectators during her recital of *Alcestis* at Syracuse: a malevolent detractor, who gives a predetermined and one-sided interpretation of the play, disagrees with her comments on the emotions conveyed by the characters' faces; he objects to the fact that she talks as if she had seen their expressions *through* the masks ("The girl departs from truth! / Pretends she saw what was not to be seen / Making the mask of the actor move, forsooth!", ll. 308-10; "As she had seen each naked fleshly face, / And not the merely-painted mask it wore!", ll. 315-16). The critic's intervention has some far-reaching consequences for the hermeneutical line. In my opinion, rather than drawing attention to the historical truthfulness of the performances in the fifth century BC, his remarks on the masks worn by the actors highlight the gap between the conventional and stereotypical conception of the critic – "a brisk little somebody, / Critic and whippersnapper" (ll. 306-7), unable to go beyond appearances – and Balaustion's understanding, which intends to prove the power of poetry: her idea is that her peculiar form of performance is capable of transcending the masks and of capturing the emotions and feelings that underlie them.[31] Here she hints at her role as an interpreter and commentator, the one that, in the following section, she will claim for herself, and that will soon emerge in her performance.

Balaustion, who had already proclaimed the absolute power of poetry (l. 236), now defines the language of poetry as the language of poiesis, as a creative and productive ability ("What's poetry except a power that

[31] See Marucci 2006: 70 ". . . Balaustion, per bocca della quale Browning assolve – esalta, anzi – la licenza poetica, la legittimità di ogni alterazione purché funzionale, e di ogni manipolazione che incrementi la pregnanza e serva l'espressività" [". . . Balaustion, through whom Browning condones – or rather exalts – poetic licence, and the legitimacy of any change as long as it is functional, and of any manipulation that increases meaningfulness and serves expressiveness"; my translation].

makes?", l. 318).[32] She conceives art as an indivisible unity where all languages converge and whose condition of intelligibility is grounded upon the mutual exchange between the senses of perception (ll. 319-34).[33]

The conclusion Balaustion arrives at is that her recited performance parallels the dramatic representation of the play: "Who hears the poem, therefore sees the play" (l. 335). In other words, the distance between the action of listening and seeing is dissolved in a dimension which embraces both.

10.

The closing part of the frame (ll. 336-57) is still diegetic and metapoetic in nature; it is the only one (apart from the direct discourses and the hermeneutical passages) to be formulated in the present tense. So, the purpose of narrating the adventure is to generate a new action: the recital which will be presented in the following sections.

Standing on her third stage – described as a *locus amoenus* ("Under the grape-vines, by the streamlet-side, / Close to Baccheion", ll. 337-8) – Balaustion gets ready to start the performance in front of her friends and addresses them with an exhortation to listen ("Enough and too much! Hear the play itself!", l. 336). Now, she claims her last role, that of the interpreter who is free to link her personal words with the Euripidean text.

> 'Tis the poet speaks:
> But if I, too, should try and speak at times,
> Leading your love to where my love, perchance,
> Climbed earlier, found a nest before you knew –
> Why, bear with the poor climber, for love's sake.
> (ll. 343-7)

Balaustion's transformation from a performer into an interpreter who makes remarks and adds her own comments is conveyed by an elaborated metaphor (ll. 344-57): she invites her friends to look at the temple of Dionysus, where the ivy grows up and spreads over the pillars, festoons about the marble, enriches the roof, plays with the bees and the birds. If the tem-

[32] In *The Defence of Poetry* (1840) Shelley defines the nature of poetry as follows: "it reproduces all that it represents" (Shelley 1852: 16). On the relationship between Browning and Shelley, see Drew 1963 and Collins 1964.

[33] Typical of the period before Romanticism, this way of conceiving art foregrounds the analogies between painting, music and poetry; the triumph of the synesthetic blend of different sensorial spheres will then be fully developed during Symbolism and Aestheticism.

ple represents Euripides' play, then the ivy corresponds to Balaustion's voice: this is a proud assertion of the originality and the specificity of one's voice, which is able to enlighten the old text, enrich it with new values and new meanings, restore its vitality and generate deep aesthetic delight.

The closing part of the frame presents, therefore, a situation completely different from the one outlined at the beginning: Balaustion has turned from an inexperienced, fourteen-year-old young girl into an acknowledged orator, skilled in the art of persuasion, from a spectator into a performer, interpreter, and commentator.

11.

The closing frame at the end of the poem (ll. 2661-705) plays a conclusive and a more explicitly hermeneutical role. Balaustion believes that her version of the tragedy has warded off criticism against Euripides and offered an answer to it: "So might our version of the story prove, / And no Euripidean pathos plague / Too much my critic-friend of Syracuse" (ll. 2661-3). But here the voice of the detractor again waves her words away and belittles the *Alcestis* by saying that it won the second prize in the tragedy competition after Sophocles – "'Besides your poem failed to get the prize: / (That is, the first prize: second prize is none). / Sophokles got it!'" (ll. 2664-6).[34] She responds to this with the idea that both poets deserve to be held in great esteem ("Honour the great name! / All cannot love two great names; yet some do", ll. 2666-7).

The last segment demonstrates the qualities of *Alcestis*. From a literary point of view, the value of the tragedy is foregrounded by the fact that it exerts an extraordinary influence and Balaustion proves this by making an allusion to authors whose works have been inspired by Euripides: in particular, she refers to Elizabeth Barrett, by quoting a line from her epigraph (ll. 2668-71),[35] and to Frederic Leighton's portrayal of Alcestis (ll. 2672-97).[36] There is thus a shift from an internal to an external perspective which pro-

[34] This idea has already been mentioned in ll. 2398-9, "They say, my poet failed to get the prize: / Sophokles got the prize, – great name!". The detail that Sophocles had beaten Euripides into second place also derives from Aristophanes of Byzantium.

[35] See also l. 1412.

[36] Leighton's painting "Hercules Wrestling with Death for the Body of Alcestis" can be dated between 1869 and 1871 (the period in which Browning composed *Balaustion's Adventure*). It was exhibited at the 1871 Royal Academy Exhibition. According to Woolford (2012: 566), Leighton's interpretation is far-fetched and quite different from Euripides' *Alcestis*.

leptically and anachronistically[37] crosses the temporal boundaries and infringes the narrative fiction: "I know the poetess" (l. 2668), "I know, too, a great Kaunian painter" (l. 2672), affirms Balaustion, and by doing so she puts the accent not on the connection between the past and the present, but on the continuity between the present and the future. The last eight lines provide the reader with a recapitulation of all the values of *Alcestis*.

And all came, – glory of the golden verse,
And passion of the picture, and that fine
Frank outgush of the human gratitude
Which saved our ship and me, in Syracuse, –
Ay, and the tear or two which slipt perhaps
Away from you, friends, while I told my tale,
– It all came of this play that gained no prize!
Why crown whom Zeus has crowned in soul before.
(ll. 2698-705)

The salvific value consists in the fact that *Alcestis* has allowed Balaustion to land with her fellow-citizens at Syracuse, while the emotional value is revealed by her friends' soul-stirring reaction to the story.

The concluding lines finally close the frame into a circular structure: in fact, both the beginning and the end foreground Balaustion's focus upon her own narration, by first mentioning its providential function, and then her own action of story-telling alongside the nature of the tale ("saved my life", l. 3; "to tell you the adventure", l. 4; "saved our ship and me", l. 2701; "while I told my tale", l. 2703).

All the effects produced by poetry find their overall meaning in Balaustion's conclusive assessment which blends together the various sequences of the frame.

12.

In conclusion the frame of *Balaustion's Adventure* highlights a continuous hybridization between mimesis and diegesis. In narrating her adventure, even before her recital of Euripides' *Alcestis*, Balaustion already seems to distance herself from the merely diegetic or strictly mimetic narration and to adopt a mixed mode.

As the three speeches delivered by Balaustion show, the mimetic interventions are more suitable for carrying out a persuasive action: the exalta-

[37] See DeVane 1935: 311: "In *Balaustion's Adventure* Browning puts two delightful anachronisms into the mouth of his heroine"; see also de Loach Ryals 1975: 40; Woolford 2012: 565.

tion of Athens generates, without any hesitation, the departure from Rhodes; thanks to the quotation from Aeschylus' *Persians*, the Rhodians manage to escape from the pirates; and, finally, the proposal to recite *Alcestis* allows Balaustion and her fellow citizens to land at Syracuse.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the frame also conveys Browning's interest in aesthetic reception and artistic interpretation: the criticism directed at Euripides is countered with a deep admiration for the tragic poet and an exaltation of his poetry, which is able to bring together and reconcile Rhodians and Syracusans.

In other words, the alternation between the diegetic and the mimetic mode, as well as all the tools of persuasion and hermeneutics, are designed to demonstrate the salvific power of poetry.

Works Cited

Aeschylus (1926), with an English translation by Herbert Weir Smyth, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Albini, Umberto (1961), "L'*Alcesti* di Euripide", *Maia* 13: 3-27.

Arrighetti, Graziano (1964), *Vita di Euripide*, Pisa: Libreria Goliardica Editrice.

Barrett, James (2002), *Staged Narrative. Poetics and the Messenger in Greek Tragedy*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Benner, Allen Rogers and Francis H. Fobes (eds) (1949), *The Letters of Alciphron, Aelian and Philostratus*, Cambridge, MA: Heinemann, Harvard University Press.

Berdoe, Edward (1909) *The Browning Cyclopaedia: A Guide to the Study of the Works of Robert Browning*, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd. – New York: The MacMillan Co.

Brooke, Stopford A. (1965), "Balaustion", in Stopford A. Brooke, *The Poetry of Robert Browning*, NewYork: Ams Press inc.: 365-90.

Browning, Robert (1951), *Dearest Isa. Robert Browning's Letters To Isabella Blagden*, ed. by Edward C. McAleer, Austin: University of Texas.

— (1999), *The Complete Works*, ed. by Allan C. Dooley and Susan E. Dooley, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, vol. 10.

Butler, Eliza Marian (1937), "Alcestis in Modern Dress", *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1: 46-60.

Collins, Thomas J. (1964), "Browning's *Essay on Shelley*: In Context", *Victorian Poetry* 2 (2): 119-24.

Deane, Sidney N. (1914), "Robert Browning and Alciphron", *The Classical Journal*, 9 (6): 277-9.

De Jong, Irene J.F. (1991), *Narrative in Drama. The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech*, Leiden, New York, København, and Köln: Brill.

De Jong, Irene J.F., René Nünlist and Angus Bowie (2004), *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature,* Leiden and Boston: Brill.

De Loach Ryals, Clyde (1975), *Browning's Later Poetry (1871-1889)*, Ithaca and Lon-

don: Cornell University Press: 28-41.
DeVane, William C. (1935), *A Browning Handbook*, New York: Appleton.
— (1966), "The Virgin and the Dragon", in Philip Drew (ed.), *Robert Browning. A Collection of Critical Essays*, London: Methuen: 96-109.
Dowden, Edward (1904), "Poems on Classical Subjects", in Edward Dowden, *Robert Browning*, London: J.M. Dent: 272-94.
Drew, Philip (1963), "Essay on Shelley", *Victorian Poetry* 1 (1): 1-6.
Fairchild, Hoxie N. (1951), "Browning's Pomegranate Heart", *Modern Language Notes* 66: 265-6.
Friend, Joseph H. (1964), "Euripides Browningized. The Meaning of Balaustion's Adventure", *Victorian Poetry*, 2 (3): 179-86.
Genette, Gérard (1980), *Narrative Discourse*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Hair, Donald S. (1999), *Robert Browning's Language*, Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press.
Highet, Gilbert (1949), *The Classical Tradition. Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Irvine, William and Leonard H. Park Honan (1947), *The Book, the Ring & the Poet*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
Jackson, Carl N. (1909), "Classical Elements in Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology*", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 20: 15-73.
Jenkyns, Richard (1980), *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Langbaum, Robert (1957), "The Dramatic Monologue: Sympathy versus Judgment", in Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition*, London: Chatto & Windus: 69-103.
— (1970), "Browning and the Question of Myth", in Robert Langbaum, *The Modern Spirit: Essays on the Continuity of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature*, London: Chatto & Windus: 76-100.
Los Hood, Thurman (1922), "Browning's Ancient Classical Sources", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 33: 79-180.
Luu, Helen (2016), "A Matter of Life and Death: The Auditor-Function of the Dramatic Monologue", *Victorian Poetry* 54 (1): 19-38.
Martens, Britta (2011), "Dramatic Monologue, Detective Fiction, and the Search for Meaning", *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 66 (2): 195-218.
Marucci, Franco (1991), "Fantasie greche, autobiografismo e naturalismo nel secondo Browning", in Sergio Perosa (ed.), *Browning e Venezia*, Firenze: Olschki: 253-71.
— (2006), *Storia della letteratura inglese. Dal 1870 al 1921*, Firenze: Le Lettere, vol. 4.
Mermin, Dorothy (1983), *The Audience in the Poem. Five Victorian Poets*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
Michelini, Ann N. (1987), *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
Morgan, Monique R. (2007), "Lyric Narrative Hybrids in Victorian Poetry", *Literature Compass* 4 (3): 917-34.
O'Gorman, Francis (2007), "Browning, Grief, and the Strangeness of Dramatic Verse", *Cambridge Quarterly*, 36 (2): 155-73.
Paduano, Guido (1978), *Sui Persiani di Eschilo. Problemi di focalizzazione drammati-*

ca, Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo & Bizzarri.

— (2004), "L'Unità dell'*Alcesti* e la doppia ricezione", in Maria Pia Pattoni and Roberta Carpani (eds), "Sacrifici al femminile. Alcesti in scena da Euripide a Raboni", *Comunicazioni sociali*, 26 (3): 343-59.

Pearsall, Cornelia D.J. (2000), "The Dramatic Monologue", in Joseph Bristow (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 67-88.

— (2008), *Tennyson's Rapture: Transformation in the Victorian Dramatic Monologue*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Plutarch (1916), *Plutarch's Lives*, with an English translation by Bernadotte Perrin, London: Harvard University Press, vol. 3.

Policardi, Silvio (1946), *An Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry*, Milano-Venezia: Dr. Francesco Montuoro editore.

Richardson, Brian (1988), "Point of View in Drama: Diegetic Monologue, Unreliable Narrators, and the Author's Voice on Stage", *Comparative Drama* 22 (3): 193-214.

Righetti, Angelo (1981), *Il ritratto, l'epitaffio, il clavicordo: analisi di tre monologhi drammatici di R. Browning*, Verona: Libreria Universitaria editrice.

Riley, Kathleen (2008), "The Browning Version: *Aristophanes' Apology* and 'the perfect piece'", in Kathleen Riley, *The Reception and Performance of Euripides' Herakles: Reasoning Madness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 182-206.

Sanders Pollock, Mary (2005), *Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning: a Creative Partnership*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Sessions, Ina Beth (1947), "The Dramatic Monologue", *PMLA*, 62: 503-16.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1852), "A Defence of Poetry", in *Essays, Letters from abroad, Translations and Fragments*, edited by Mrs. Shelley in two volumes, London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, vol. 1.

Smalley, Donald (1940), "A Parleying with Aristophanes", *PMLA*, 55: 823-38.

Szondi, Peter (1987), *Theory of the Modern Drama*, trans. by Michael Hays, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tisdel, Frederick M. (1917), "Balaustion's Adventure as an Interpretation of the *Alcestis* of Euripides", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 32 (4): 519-46.

Woolford, John (2012), "The Genesis of Balaustion's Adventure", *Victorian Poetry*, 50 (4): 563-81.

Barry Allen Spence*

Sophoclean Beckett in Performance

Abstract

While Samuel Beckett's innovations for the stage place him in the vanguard of late twentieth-century theatre, his debt to ancient Greek drama is seldom discussed. This article argues that the richest engagement between Beckett's theatre and the tragedy and comedy of ancient Athens can be seen in the performance, that is, postpublication phase of his plays' composition. Beckett's directorial control created an ongoing compositional process; using the evidence of his production notes, I demonstrate how his performative aesthetics echo what is known of Greek practice and, in particular, how he makes mimetic use of an ekphrastic diegesis, blending telling and showing in a process of visualization. The argument is illustrated through a comparative analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and the performance history of *Krapp's Last Tape*. While both play texts involve a central dramatic analepsis which triggers the realization of an unwitting quasi-nostos, in performance Beckett's play increasingly emphasizes such Sophoclean elements as a circumscribed *mise en scène*, restrained bodily movement, ekphrastic spectacle, and a heightened use of both extrascenic and distanced space. Underscoring these correspondences is a shared paratactic modality, in evidence at key moments on the level of the lexis (resulting in meaningful pauses and appositional juxtapositions in the dialogue) as well as in phenomenological aspects of each play's performance.

The best would be not to begin.
Beckett, *The Unnamable*

μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾷ λόγον·[1]
Oedipus at Colonos

Il est peut-être temps que quelqu'un soit tout simplement rien.[2]
Beckett, *Eleuthéria*

While Samuel Beckett's innovations for the stage place him in the vanguard of late twentieth-century theatre, his debt to ancient Greek drama

[1] "Not to be born conquers all reasoning" (*OC* 1224).
[2] "It is perhaps time that somebody was quite simply nothing".

* Smith College - bspence@smith.edu

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 177-201
http://www.skenejournal.it

is seldom discussed.[3] Conscious Sophoclean echoes – for example, "Can there be misery – [*he yawns*] – loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now?" (Beckett 2006a: 92-3) – arguably build on Beckett's familiarity with Yeats's versions of *King Oedipus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, which he attended while a student at Trinity College, Dublin.[4] Systematic notes survive from the 1930s detailing (both in schematic and anecdotal fashion) the history of Greek drama (Beckett Archive MS 3000: 74r-76v). And, most decisively, the sensibility of his theatrical work resonates with the notion of Greek tragedy as the medium that unflinchingly presents the spectacle of human misery. Beckett's plays do not depict suffering and misery on the grand scale envisioned by Aristotle,[5] yet they are concerned with miseries that, but for the scalar difference, resemble those typical of Sophoclean heroes like Oedipus: irredeemable mistakes, fateful ignorance, miscalculation, impotence, inexorable physical and mental affliction and degeneration.

The richest engagement between Beckett's theatre and the tragedy of ancient Athens can be seen in the performance phase of his plays' composition, wherein he cultivates a blending of strategies of showing and telling, an interpenetration of mimetic and diegetic effects. For instance, the quote above from Hamm in *Endgame* clearly echoes Oedipus' lament at *OT* 813-5,[6] which W.B. Yeats rendered as "If this stranger were indeed Laius, is there a more miserable man in the world than the man before you?". Beckett found, during the play's production, the stage direction "yawns" too heavy handed as parody. He cut Hamm's yawn (Knowlson 1992a: 49), thus tightening the theatrical line separating the tragic and comedic registers.[7] He contin-

[3] Two notable exceptions are Worth 2004 and Menke 2009. Greek tragedy as mediated by the French neoclassical tradition, particularly through Jean Racine, is another, more familiar, pathway of influence, as evidenced by Beckett's lectures on Racine at Trinity College; see Juez and Schwartz 2008. I am going back, beyond Racine, to Sophocles (whom Racine admired more than Euripides, despite the obvious influence of the latter on his plays; see Phillippo 2003: 19-22).

[4] While the focus here is Sophocles, in Beckett's writing there are also multiple references to the plays of Aeschylus – for instance, in *Waiting for Godot* an allusion to the watchman at the opening of *Agamemnon*, and in *Happy Days* an echo of *Prometheus Bound* – so the influence and intertextual presence of Athenian tragedy is extensive.

[5] For two of Aristotle's defining notions of tragic scale – complex plot and a reputable and prosperous protagonist – see *Poet.* 1452b31-32 and 1453a10.

[6] εἰ δὲ τῷ ξένῳ / τούτῳ προσήκει Λαΐῳ τι συγγενές, / τίς τοῦδέ γ' ἀνδρὸς νῦν ἔτ' ἀθλιώτερος.

[7] Beckett consistently avoids the fixed generic categories of comedy and tragedy. Similarly, recent scholarship argues against the notion of "pure" Greek tragedy; see for example, *contra* Steiner 1996, Wright 2005 and Gregory 1999-2000. The change in the stage direction in *Endgame* is part of a general production-phase trend to diminish the comic slapstick strategies (absorbed from the music-hall and silent movie traditions) in favor of a more ambiguous (comic/tragic) dramatic register. This shift is notable, for instance, in the production history of *Waiting for Godot*; see Knowlson and McMillan 1993.

ues to undercut the high tragic tone but sharpens the echo of tragic seriousness by freeing the pivotal word "loftier" from the comic pause and allowing it to more fully bear the weight of the double (ironic) aspect. In the process of staging his drama, Beckett refines it in the direction of classical tragedy but reimagines Sophoclean tragedy in more pedestrian terms. This shift is underscored by Hamm's conclusion: "No doubt. Formerly. But now?" – as though it is the historical period itself which has fallen off the high register.

Beckett's notoriously tight directorial control created an ongoing compositional process, producing a continuous or fluid text[8] and undermining any firm distinction between the play text and the performance text. The fact is that many of the play texts as published stand as unreliable documents for understanding how Beckett envisioned their theatrical staging. The evidence of his production notes demonstrates how his performative aesthetics echo Greek practice – the change to Hamm's lines, for example, strengthens the passage's irony, a signature strategy of Sophocles (Scodel 2005: 237). The general argument is illustrated through a comparative analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (henceforth, *OT*) and the performance history of *Krapp's Last Tape* (henceforth, *KLT*). Once the significant changes to the play text Beckett made during performance are taken into consideration, the correspondences between his play and *OT* become striking. While both play texts involve a central dramatic analepsis which triggers the realization of an unwitting quasi-*nostos*, in performance Beckett's play increasingly emphasizes a circumscribed *mise en scène*, restrained bodily movement yielding a language of gesture, the pivotal use of ekphrastic diegesis, a dyadic storyworld structure, and a heightened dependence on extrascenic and distanced space – all elements associated with Sophoclean tragedy and exemplified in *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles' most famous play and the one that Beckett saw as an undergraduate when it was produced at the Abbey Theatre in Yeats's translation. Underscoring these correspondences is a shared paratactic modality resulting in meaningful pauses and appositional juxtapositions in the dialogue.

Part one of this article highlights instances where the written record shows Beckett contemplating the Athenian tragic stage. The Sophoclean instantiation of Greek tragedy as the point of comparison, as opposed to the Aeschylean or Euripidean, is in part predicated on Beckett's receptivity to aspects of Yeats's versions of the *Oedipus* plays as staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1926-27. Beckett's "Whoroscope" Notebook is briefly discussed for the light it sheds on his interest in Greek drama, and his early play *Eleuthéria* is

[8] For the concept of "fluid text" applied to literary works that exist in multiple versions, see Bryant 2002. With regard to the genetic approach to textual studies, see Ferrer 2011; Deppman, Ferrer, and Groden 2004; de Biasi 2000.

enlisted to show Beckett laying the groundwork for a thoroughgoing revitalization of Athenian, and specifically Sophoclean, tragedy. Part one concludes with a discussion of the seven theatrical strategies listed above as intrinsic features of Athenian tragedy, particularly in Sophocles' *OT*. This background sets the stage for the analysis of *KLT* in part two, in which I argue that Beckett's theatre inverts central elements of Sophoclean content while maintaining and even reinvigorating its performative methods and forms.

KLT may seem a paradoxical choice for comparison because it contains no explicitly classical intertextual references, unlike, say, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, or *Happy Days*. This absence would seemingly set the bar of proof higher, and therefore if commonalities can be demonstrated here they may be understood to persist elsewhere – as indeed is largely the case. The principles foregrounded, especially the minimal *mise en scène*, the gestural body, ekphrastic diegesis, and strategic use of distanced space, are central to many of Beckett's plays, to say nothing of his use of other techniques echoing Athenian conventions, such as mask-like effects and choreography. Throughout his published dramatic *oeuvre* Beckett observes the Sophoclean rule of having no more than three speaking parts on the stage at any given time. The one apparent exception, when Lucky gives his "think" in *Waiting for Godot*, is only apparent since Lucky is not conversing but rather enacting thought as speech.

Part 1
Yeats at the Abbey Theatre, 1926-27

W.B. Yeats's importance to Beckett is attested in Beckett's writing and well recognized by scholars.[9] As mentioned above, Beckett attended the performances of Yeats's versions of *King Oedipus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1926-27 (Knowlson 1996: 71). The principal translation of Sophocles' two plays contained in Beckett's surviving library in Paris is Yeats's (Van Hulle and Nixon 2013: 287). The only other Sophocles is a German translation of *OT* by Wolfgang Schadewaldt from 1955 (284), which Beckett referred to in a 1959 letter to Barbara Bray: "Started an *Oedipus Rex* in queer literal German translation but haven't got far" (Beckett 2014: 239). This letter shows that some thirty years after seeing *OT* at the Abbey Theatre, Beckett was still engaged with the play. The seemingly pejorative characterization of Schadewaldt's translation as "literal" hints at the qualities Beckett may have found satisfying in Yeats's version.

[9] See, for example, Van Hulle 2015: 215-16, which traces the connection between *KLT* and Yeats's poem "Aedh Wishes His Beloved Were Dead".

Yeats began his translation of *OT* (initially with the assistance of Nugent Monck) in 1911 by using the R.C. Jebb translation of 1885 (Macintosh 2008: 529). Yeats strove to pare down the Jebb version, following principles of condensation and contraction, making it more "verb-based" (534) and able to spring easily from the actor's mouth. He breaks Jebb's sentences into smaller units, and, importantly, moves from hypotaxis in the direction of parataxis. For instance, Jebb's: "Such things were surmised; but Laius once slain, amid our troubles, no avenger rose" becomes "Such things were indeed guessed at, but Laius once dead no avenger rose. We were amid our troubles" (qtd in Macintosh 2008: 534-5). This generally paratactic shift towards speakable language in turn influences Hamm's intertextual quote discussed above, which consists of four short sentences in paratactic arrangement. Yeats's energetic speech is far closer to the type Beckett would fashion than is the translation of Jebb.

Yeats's staging of the *OT* offered other innovative features that likely impressed the young Beckett. The relatively narrow confines of the Abbey Theatre resulted in a restrained *mise en scène*: in the 1926 production, for instance, the chorus of five was relegated to the orchestra pit and only the choral leader stood on the stage with the other leading Theban figures. One effect was to "isolate Oedipus from his Theban context altogether" (538), which furthered Yeats's vision of the protagonist. The stylistic features of Yeats's translation in combination with his innovations in staging thus shed some of the historical and cultural specificity of Oedipus, presenting him as a more generalized hero.

These various aspects of Yeats's staging of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* – a more conversationally energetic and fluent paratactic language, a more concentrated *mise en scène*, a more generalized protagonist – reflect strategies Beckett made use of in his own theatre and are observable in his thinking about the art form. This is not to gloss over the significant differences between their theatres. Nevertheless, Yeats's version also foregrounded physical gesture, and it is clear that Beckett became especially interested in the way physical gestures can constitute a type of language. The Irish character actor Michael Dolan, who played the part of Tiresias in Yeats's production, had particularly impressed Beckett by his gestural use of his hands. This same semiotic interest in gesture found expression in 1931 in the lectures Beckett gave on Molière at Trinity, in which he emphasized the importance of "muscular dialogue generated by gesture" (Knowlson 1996: 71).

"Whoroscope" Notebook

The notebook Beckett kept through much of the 1930s, housed at the Beckett Archive in Reading (MS 3000), contains few entries relevant to Greek

theatre. However, six pages lay out in systematic fashion the major figures in the history of ancient Greek literature. Midway through these pages there appear section headings (Choral Poetry, Prose, Attic Period). The last heading is then subdivided into Tragedy, Comedy, History, and Eloquence, the last of which is left blank. In the Tragedy section, there are entries for Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and under each of these we find basic information about the playwright, the number of tragedies he composed, and the number that are extant in a listing of titles (the titles of Euripides' extant works are only partial). The clearest interpretative remark concerns Euripides and takes the form of a single word written in capitals: MISOGYNIST (a remark which likely summarizes the traditional evaluation).[10] It is clear that Beckett has simply transcribed information from secondary sources, most likely Harold Fowler's *A History of Ancient Greek Literature* and Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, "supplemented here and there [with] other texts" (Van Hulle and Nixon 2013: 118). The entry for Sophocles contains the following anecdote: "Famous ingratitude of his children who accused him of insanity. In defence of which he read his Oedipus at Colonus lately finished. Acquitted" (MS 3000: 74r). While Beckett is obviously paraphrasing an anecdote (one in fact retailed in Cicero's *De senectute*), the paratactically abrupt form of his summary sentence "Acquitted" might suggest a certain subjective satisfaction, as if Beckett is endorsing the acquittal based on his appreciation of the play used as evidence.

The most certain conclusion to draw from the "Whoroscope" Notebook is twofold. First, that while Beckett was interested in a historical overview of the literature of the period, he did not endeavour to engage interpretatively in the schema he transcribed, unlike, say, his voluminous notes on the history of philosophy – similarly dependent on secondary sources – wherein he would occasionally make his own summary of philosophical concepts (Trinity College MS 10967). Second, the notebook underscores the fact that Beckett did not know Greek and so did not read the Greek tragedies in the original. While Beckett was linguistically gifted (the notebook contains entries in Latin, French, German, and Italian), he did not remedy his lack of Greek and so relied on translations and performances like Yeats's as pathways for accessing classical theatre.

Liberation from Classical Conventions: *Eleuthéria*

Beckett's play *Eleuthéria* anticipates *Krapp's Last Tape*, most obviously in the name of the protagonist: Victor Krap. More meaningful, perhaps, is

[10] For the origins of this view of Euripides see, for example, Aristoph. *Thesm.* 82-5.

Eleuthéria's use of pantomime – evident in such stage directions as: "(*A silence. All of a sudden Dr. Piouk has slightly disjointed gestures, starts a dance step, makes odd movements with his arms, like signals, in other words, such as suit the actor's fancy, then comes to a stop. Mild embarrassment*)" (1995: 111) – which advances the notion that physical gesture can be as effective at dramatic characterization as verbal dialogue, if not more so.

Eleuthéria, written in 1947, foregrounds the influence of Sophocles. There are evidences of this influence in *Endgame*, when Hamm says to Clove, "One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void, in the dark, for ever, like me" (Beckett 2006a: 117)[11] or in *Waiting for Godot* where Estragon suffers from swollen feet, the boy character functions similarly to a tragic messenger, and Lucky the slave is the counterpart of the old Theban shepherd – all resonances with *OT*.[12] But it is *Eleuthéria*, the play that Beckett ended up suppressing, that serves as a "full statement of dramatic method – a statement which clearly influenced his later plays" (McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988: 29-30). Here one can detect the paradigmatic importance of Sophocles' theatre.

When Beckett offered *Godot* for production to Roger Blin in 1951 he offered it along with *Eleuthéria*, so at the time he viewed it as worthy of staging (30). *Eleuthéria* affords valuable insight into Beckett's theatrical aesthetics. In a far-ranging parodic engagement it targets canonized playwrights and dramatic conventions; prominent among them is Sophocles, whose Oedipus serves as the Aristotelian epitome of the tragic hero – a fact that is clearly targeted here (31). The play's title, the Greek word for 'freedom', heralds the liberation of both protagonist and dramatic action from the strictures of inherited classical practice.[13] The central character is Victor Krap, who is set up as a tragic figure in the vein of Oedipus, but who foregoes every form of heroism presented, first and foremost by trying to absent himself from the play's action (as well as from his mother's attention). As he says, "It is perhaps time that somebody was quite simply nothing"

[11] Compare this to *OT* 412-13, 418-21, and especially 454-6.

[12] See Worth 2004: 269, 271. These correspondences maintain Sophoclean forms but do so by overturning or deflating their content, or they appropriate the forms to the experience of modernity. For instance, Estragon's swollen feet carry no meaningful implications for either his name or the play's themes – for the importance of Oedipus' name in this regard, see Menke 2009: 40. Lucky the slave character's "think" (2006d: 35-7) can be seen as a parody of the consequential utterance of the Theban shepherd. And the messenger boy brings the opposite of a vivid account of momentous events.

[13] The play transgresses Aristotelian principles of characterization and plot structure (see FN 5).

(Beckett 1995: 82).[14] As a failure, Krap highlights the insufficiency of Sophoclean heroic drama and prompts instead the call for a theatre that can accommodate the pedestrian antithesis of Sophoclean heroism.[15] Krap therefore represents the accessibly unremarkable human, and the play's unfolding involves, on the meta-level, the search for a dramatic vehicle suitable for such a character (McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988: 30). It is Sophoclean, and specifically Oedipal, heroism that Beckett's play works to deconstruct. In contrast, the structural forms and strategies of Sophoclean drama remain an effective means of enactment for Beckett.

Aspects of Athenian/Sophoclean Tragedy

With regard to bodily disposition and action in the classical theatre, the absence of stage directions in the texts of Athenian tragedy force a reliance on other forms of material evidence, such as vase painting. Although inconclusive,[16] this evidence suggests the importance of physical gestures as a semiotic component of tragic theatre. This stands to reason, if only because all actors wore masks – eliminating facial expression – and tragic actors (all were male) wore inexpressive robes, "designed to fit seamlessly into their milieu" (Nelson 2016: 48). While the mask was "the only element of the actor's costume taken to represent the character's 'self'" (46), the occlusion of the actor's expressive body yielded a theatre that was "in no sense naturalistic" (Davidson 2005: 205) and that relied on verbal enunciation and emphatic gesture. Physical gestures, in other words, were integral to illustrating or emphasizing projected speech.

Athenian tragedy's original home in the open-air theatre of Dionysus, abutting the sacred precinct of Dionysus Eleuthereus, on the southeast slope of the Acropolis, involved a theatrical space unconcerned with erecting palpable, much less fixed, borders between its actual world and the fictional worlds it staged. There were no substantial structural features of the theatre designed to cut off the surrounding landscape from the sightlines of the audience. As Rush Rehm points out, "the *theatron* in fifth-century Athens was less a building than . . . landscape architecture" (2002: 37). He distinguishes three distinct components that established it as a playable the-

[14] This line, in playing on the concept of nothing, is reminiscent of *OT* 1016-20, particularly Oedipus' line: "How could a nothing equal the one who gave me birth?" (καὶ πῶς ὁ φύσας ἐξ ἴσου τῷ μηδενί;).

[15] For the centrality of the 'hero' to Sophoclean tragedy, see, especially, Knox 1964. While this notion endures, Beckettian theatre anticipates recent challenges to Knox's 'Sophoclean Hero' model: see, for instance, Finglass 2011: 42-6, and Scodel 2005: 233-6.

[16] For a defence of the link between vase-painting and the plays, see Taplin 2007.

atre: the *cavea*, the hillside that provided seating for the audience, which was either the ground or wooden benches; the *orchestra*, which consisted of "a flat area of beaten earth supported by a retaining wall lying lower down the slope"; and the *skene*, "a wooden stage-building . . . at the back of the orchestra and in front of the terrace wall, allow[ing] for access (*eisodoi*) into the orchestra along its two edges. Its façade had a single door or opening offering entrances and exits" (38).

With its minimally staged *mise en scène* and barest spatial apparatus in service to enhance the illusion of fictionality, this was a dramatic space whose vitality was animated primarily by the power of its speech acts and accompanying gestures. The dimensions of the amphitheatre itself meant that the effectiveness of bodily gestures was limited by what could easily be seen across the considerable distances in the round. By all accounts the embellishment of setting through the use of physical props or scene painting was a negligible factor in performance.[17] Furthermore, what would today be considered the primary graphic symptoms of tension-filled interpersonal relations, namely, the direct presentation of either sexual encounters or acts of physical violence, were consigned in the fifth century to off-stage and left for the ancillary figure of the Messenger to report. In this regard, the *skene* forms a vital part of the *mise en scène* as the sole structure visually signifying the space that is (to adopt Rush Rehm's term) extrascenic,[18] and serving as well as a threshold of entrances and exits.

In the theatre of Dionysus, the exploitation of extrascenic space ultimately results in its reliance on ekphrastic diegesis, that is, speech that visualizes what has happened off stage; tragic climaxes, such as in *OT*, involve a messenger who arrives to relate the decisive events that unfolded extrascenically. Such speeches are properly understood as a form of *ekphrasis*. As Ruth Webb has pointed out, the understanding of this term as "the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art" has only developed during the second half of the twentieth century. Its long established meaning was "a speech that brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes" (2009: 1). The term is appropriate for tragic messenger speeches, because such speech functions *as spectacle* enacting the events that have been hidden from spectator view. Messenger speech thus stands in for first-hand visibility, and rests on verbal strategies of *enargeia* (vividness): the power of words to "create an impression *like* that of sensation and . . .

[17] On these and other material aspects of performance in the fifth-century theatre, as well as discussion of the historical evidence, see Rehm 2002: 1-75, and also Taplin 1977; 1978.

[18] Extrascenic space designates that space "lying immediately offstage, behind or contiguous to the façade" (Rehm 2002: 21).

be contemplated either as equivalent to what they represent, or as likenesses" (112). Messenger speeches therefore further the illusion of the fictional world while also enacting the spectacle of an event that occurs within the storyworld.

OT contains two messenger speeches, the second of which offers an ekphrastic account of the climactic events – the suicide of Jocasta and Oedipus' self-blinding – that occur extrascenically, behind the façade of the *skene*. The first messenger speech, on the other hand, reports the death of King Polybus of Corinth and also precipitates the revelation that Oedipus was exposed as an infant on Mt Cithaeron. This messenger, therefore, makes pivotal use of distanced space,[19] since Mt Cithaeron, like the crossroads, constitutes a fateful distant location in Oedipus' past.

Another intrinsic dimension of Athenian tragedy is the dyadic storyworld: each play is comprised of a mortal realm and an Olympian realm. The Priest of Zeus' speech at the beginning of *OT* illustrates this double world structure when he describes Thebes to Oedipus, saying, "the firebearing god, a most hateful pestilence, swooping strikes the city" (ὁ πυρφόρος θεὸς σκήψας ἐλαύνει, λοιμὸς ἔχθιστος, πόλιν, 27-8). The paratactic arrangement of the phrases "the firebearing god swooping strikes" (ὁ πυρφόρος θεὸς σκήψας ἐλαύνει) and "a most hateful plague" (λοιμὸς ἔχθιστος) – ostensibly an identity relation – characterizes Thebes' affliction as an appositional juxtaposition of Olympian and mortal sources. The unfolding of Sophoclean tragedy invariably involves the paratactically conjoined divine and human worlds.

Part 2
Krapp's Last Tape: the Play Text

Written in the first two months of 1958, with the Irish actor Patrick Magee in mind, Beckett's *KLT* is a one-man one-act play that dramatizes the evening of Krapp's sixty-ninth birthday. The relatively static physical action and plot of the play involves an annual ritual, Krapp's taking stock of the year now complete, through the use of a reel-to-reel tape-recorder. This postmortem entails a double process. On the one hand, it includes a more temporally extended historical self-review by way of listening to an "old year" from among his archive of annual recordings. This is, in a sense,

[19] Distanced space "bears no immediate relationship to the scenic givens that provide the setting. . . . [It lies] beyond the theatrical and scenic areas visible to the audience. Whereas extrascenic space affords exits and entrances through the central door, distanced space provides for arrivals and departures via the *eisodoi* leading into the orchestra" (Rehm 2002: 22).

the use of recording technology as both a catalyzing and stabilizing aid to memory. On the other hand, the primary function of this annual observance is to set down in a fresh recording Krapp's reflections on the significant events of the year just completed as well as note his general state and condition. "These old PMs are gruesome, but I often find them… a help before embarking on a new… (*hesitates*) retrospect".[20]

As the play opens, Krapp consumes two bananas in comically meditative fashion, and proceeds to consult a large ledger book in order to find the box and spool numbers ("box… three… spool… five": l. 39) that correspond to the recording of the year he has it in mind to recall. The correct box and spool found, the action of the play then sets off into its deeper emotional waters as he proceeds to listen intently to the tape. The tape in question is a recording he made thirty years prior, on "the awful occasion" (l. 70) of his thirty-ninth birthday. The audience witnesses Krapp's experience of listening to the voice of his much younger self as he recounts events of the year – principally, the death of his mother "in the late autumn, after her long viduity" (l. 133); an epiphany he had "that memorable night in March, at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind, never to be forgotten, when suddenly I saw the whole thing" (ll. 168-70); and a "farewell to love", referring to the mutual ending of a relationship with a girl which occurred during an outing in which they drift in a punt on the stream of an upper lake – "We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side" (ll. 56-7, 196, 187-8). Erupting with revulsion on hearing the report of the epiphany on the jetty, the elder Krapp fast-forwards the tape into the account of this third event and is here arrested. Ultimately, the thirty-nine year old's narrative of the "farewell to love" takes hold and subverts the elder mind's intention from that of recording the narrative of the current year (he briefly begins that recording) to that of intractable nostalgia or pain for homecoming, the bitter solace of an involuntary return.

In addition to those landmarks distilling his thirty-eighth year, his younger voice gives a brief account of listening to "an old year, passages at random . . . it must [have been] at least ten or twelve years ago" (ll. 94-5). So, while the play is relatively short (the 2006 Grove Press edition totals ten pages), its narrative structure is quite complicated, involving a telescoping of timeframes: Krapp at age sixty-nine, at age thirty-nine, and, embedded within that timeframe, at age twenty-seven or twenty-nine.

[20] Knowlson 1992b: ll. 100-3. Citations from *Krapp's Last Tape* are by line number and refer to the "revised text" edited and published, with Beckett's consultation and approval, by James Knowlson in his third volume of *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett.*

This telescoping of time periods creates an effect of simultaneity in which three versions of Krapp cohabit the stage and give voice to a self-scrutiny that shifts between mocking disgust and dismissal, affirming laughter of commiseration, and an acute nostalgia that leaves him speechless. The theatrical spectacle establishes a dynamic, multi-dimensional portrait of Krapp, involving a complicated choreography of verbal, physical, and psychological elements that bring into indirect view his embittered and atrophied development. The tape-recording pivotally involves the use of (fateful) distanced space: the death of his mother; the night in the wind on the end of the jetty; and drifting with the girl in the punt on the upper lake.

But the play also endeavours to ameliorate the darkness that attends and emanates from Krapp's alienation, deadendedness, and accelerating decrepitude, by leavening it with comedic elements. Krapp's attire is generically clown-like, with trousers that are "narrow" and "too short for him" (l. 8); a waistcoat that has "four capacious pockets" (ibid.); "dirty white boots . . . very narrow and pointed" (ll. 9-10); and a "purple nose" (l. 11). His habit of taking solace in liquor is foregrounded through three trips "backstage into darkness" (ll. 31-2) to audibly consume six drinks. As his level of inebriation increases he launches, with "quavering voice", into two partial renditions of the evening hymn "Now the day is over / Night is drawing nigh" (ll. 124, 247). These various motifs work to undercut the tones of seriousness and barrenness that otherwise predominate. They imbue with a comic aura the spectacle of Krapp alone in, or self-exiled to, the sanctuary of his den.

The Continuous Text

This description is a general summary of the play as published, first in 1958 in the *Evergreen Review*, then by Faber and Faber in England in 1959, and thirdly in 1960 in the United States by Grove Press. And this summary still applies to the text in all its reprintings. But this version of the play represents only one of its incarnations. The complex postpublication history of Beckett's numerous excisions, alterations, and additions made over the subsequent nineteen years, in which he realized its construction *in performance*, reveals a play that no longer incorporates many of those ameliorating comedic elements detailed in the last paragraph of the summary above: the "four capacious pockets" of the waistcoat and the "purple nose" are cut, the banana gag is reduced, particularly in terms of the sexual innuendo (Knowlson 1992b: 12-13, 16-18). One result is a softening and diminishing of that distance from the audience that is associated with the genre of comedy: the spectacle of Krapp is more humanized, brought into more conventional proximity to the audience. This amelioration of comic aspects also allows those elements of the genre of tragedy – which are often resisted

by Beckett's theatre – to press against the play's surface. But these and the other changes made by Beckett never resulted in an officially revised text.

From the play's world première in October 1958 at the Royal Court Theatre,[21] London, Beckett had an active hand in shaping its production. Both the first American production,[22] at the Provincetown Playhouse, New York, in 1960, and, that same year, the first French production (as *La dernière bande*)[23] at the Théâtre Récamier in Paris, saw Beckett as consultant. But his first time directing the play (as *Das letzte Band*) in October 1969 at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt in Berlin resulted in significant changes to the text, and these were recorded in detail in what is known as the Schiller Notebook.[24] This production notebook presents the most extensive revision of the play by Beckett postpublication, but it is not the sole record of compositional revision.

In the year following the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt production Beckett directed *La dernière bande*, with Jean Martin as Krapp, at the Théâtre Récamier. Martin's annotated French script preserves the deviations from the text as published, many of which continue the changes detailed in the Schiller Notebook. Then, in connection with the 1972 BBC2 Television production, directed by Donald McWhinnie and with Magee again as Krapp, there is a 1960 Grove Press edition of the play annotated by Beckett for McWhinnie. Furthermore, there exist two copies of the play, one of the 1960 Grove Press edition and one of the 1970 Faber and Faber edition, both with annotations by Beckett, used in the 1973 Royal Court Theatre production, directed by Anthony Page and featuring Albert Finney as Krapp.

This extensive history of revision in performance is further enriched by two more productions of the play directed by Beckett: one at the Théâtre d'Orsay in 1975, with Pierre Chabert as Krapp, and the second featuring Rick Cluchey of the San Quentin Drama Workshop in a 1977 production of *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Both Cluchey and Chabert published accounts of these productions and detailed the changes to the original, published text. Changes developed in the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt production are retained, while further significant excisions and alterations were put in place.[25]

[21] Directed by Donald McWhinnie, with Patrick Magee as Krapp.

[22] Directed by Alan Schneider, with Donald Davis as Krapp.

[23] Directed by Roger Blin, with R.J. Chauffard as Krapp.

[24] Manuscript notebook titled *Krapp Berlin Werkstatt 5.10.69*, in Beckett's hand, now in the Beckett Archive as MS 1396/4/16.

[25] The foregoing list of postproduction materials is available in Knowlson 1992b, and it is included in the more detailed genetic analysis by Dirk van Hulle (2015) *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape / La dernière bande*. Many of these materials are also available in digital facsimile as part of the online collection of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project.

Taken as a whole, this archival material offers a record of Beckett's creative process and vision as he worked through multiple productions to arrive at a closer approximation of the performative ideal of *KLT*, particularly in terms of mimetic presentation. The material is available for scholarly consultation: in 1970 Suhrkamp Verlag published Martin Held's script from the 1969 production as *Das letzte Band: Regiebuch der Berliner Inszenierung*, and in 1992 James Knowlson published a volume in the series *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett* that includes both a facsimile and transcription of the Schiller Notebook as well as a "revised text" of the play, which compiles and synthesizes the changes made in the various sources listed above. Importantly, Knowlson confirmed the final state of the "revised text" with Beckett himself.[26] Knowlson's text makes a valuable contribution to a *genetic* approach to Beckett's play, which sees the work as a fluid process rather than as a fixed artefact.[27]

Sophoclean Beckett

The *après-texte* supports a view of *KLT* as grounded in the performative methods and forms of Sophoclean tragedy. For the argument here, there are two important types of revision made in the epigenetic phase of composition, namely 'dream stares' and 'the listening position'. Their intensified presence within the play affects the gestural body, the dramatic parataxis, the dyadic world structure, the ekphrastic spectacle, and the use of distanced space.[28]

To introduce these two categories of revision, consider the play's most interior point temporally, the tape-recorded voice of Krapp at thirty-nine paraphrasing the recording of his voice at twenty-seven/twenty-nine. The scene stages Krapp listening to the recording of his thirty-nine year old self:[29]

[26] "I have presented a revised acting text in the precise form that Beckett finally wanted his text to be performed" (Knowlson 1992b: xxvii). While an argument can be made that Beckett did not consciously embrace the idea of the continuous text and strove instead for the ideal, fixed dramatic realization of the work – i.e. performances should trust the text, not the director – it is noteworthy that he made no attempt to publish an officially revised edition of works like *KLT*.

[27] Among the numerous studies of Beckett as a process writer, see in particular Gontarski 1985; Van Hulle 2014.

[28] *OT* provides the fitting Sophoclean comparison because of Beckett's attested engagement with the historical reception of Oedipus (described in Part 1 above) as well as because of the structural affinities connecting it with *KLT*, described in greater detail below.

[29] The following passage is from the (epigenetically) revised text published in Knowlson's *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*. The editorial conventions are the following: stage directions are in italics; additions to the original English text are in square brackets []; pointed brackets {} contain revised text; passages excised from the original text are indicated with angle brackets <>.

Extraordinary silence this evening, I strain my ears and do not hear a sound. 86
Old Miss McGlome {sings always} at this hour. But not tonight. Songs of
her girlhood, she says. Hard to think of her as a girl. Wonderful woman
though. Connaught, I fancy. (*Pause.*) Shall I sing when I am her age, if I ever
am? ([*Pause.*]) No. (*Pause.*) Did I sing as a boy? ([*Pause.*]) No. (*Pause.*) Did I 90
ever sing? ([*Slightly longer pause. Ear close to tape-recorder for final*])
No.
(*Pause* [*and back to normal listening position*].)
Just been listening to an old year, passages at random. I did not check in the
book, but it must be at least ten or twelve years ago. At that time I think I 95
was still living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street. ([*Faint head reaction.*])
Well out of that, Jesus yes! Hopeless business. (*Pause.*) Not much about her,
apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm. (*Pause.* [*Raises head and stares front.*]) I suddenly saw them again. Incomparable! (*Pause.*) Ah well…
(*Pause.*) These old PMs are gruesome, but I often find them – 100
(KRAPP *switches off, broods,* [*makes to leave table, changes mind*] *switches on,*
[*back to normal listening position*].)
– a help before embarking on a new… (*hesitates*) retrospect. Hard to believe
I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations! (*Brief
laugh* {*tape alone*}.) ([KRAPP *looks at tape-recorder.*]) 105
And the resolutions! (*Brief laugh in which* KRAPP *joins,* [*without moving*].)
To drink less, in particular. (*Brief laugh of* KRAPP *alone.* [*He looks at tape-recorder without moving.*]) Statistics. ([*Back to listening position.*])
Seventeen hundred hours, out of the preceding eight thousand odd,
consumed on licensed premises alone. More than 20 per cent, say 40 per 110
cent of his waking life. (Pause.) Plans for a less… (hesitates) engrossing
sexual life. ([He grunts.]) Last illness of his father. Flagging pursuit
of happiness. Unattainable laxation. Sneers at what he calls his youth
and thanks to God that it's over. (Pause.) False ring there. (Pause.)
Shadows of the opus… magnum. ([He grunts.]) Closing with a (brief laugh, 115
[*tape alone*]) – yelp to Providence.
(*Prolonged laugh in which* KRAPP *joins,* [*throwing back his head*].)
What remains of all that misery? ([*Pause to get back to listening position.*])
A girl in a shabby green coat, on a railway-station platform? ([*Pause.*]) No?
(*Pause.* [*Head up. Dream.*]) 120
(ll. 86-120)

The passage gives a clear indication of the parataxis that animates the play's monologues, which enacts, in staccato fashion, a synchronization of Krapp's thought process and speech. In these thirty-five lines, there is the addition of a *performative parataxis* – the gestural disposition of Krapp's body in coordinate relation to the voice of the tape-recorder – to the *grammatical parataxis* that is already in place. The interpenetration of mimetic and diegetic means strengthens the performative presentation.

Dream Stares

The revisions in this passage reveal Beckett's effort at refining a language of physical gesture. The grunts, the throwing back of his head, the looking at the tape-recorder as though at someone else in the room, the expansion of the time spent in the state of pausing, and the full-blown "dream" – all these choreograph a multidimensional presentation of Krapp, heightening the mimetic presentation that works in conjunction with the tape-recorder's ekphrastic diegesis. The acute attention to physical enactment this passage displays underscores how important phenomenological spectacle was for Beckett.[30]

He has added five "pauses" for a total of seventeen; two dream-like stares added for a total of three; three added "looks at tape-recorder" for a total of three; and five additions that include head movements and verbal ejaculations. The pauses and dream-like stares speak of Krapp's interior paratactic experience as he negotiates the gaps of memory and sudden recollections, the distant spaces entailed in longing and reminiscent desire, and the sudden associative leaps that trigger laughter.

The action of the play increasingly depicts "a life consumed by dream (nothing)".[31] And Beckett clearly intended a progression in the duration of his spells lost in the dream state. The most explicit evidence for this intention is to be found on pages ninety-five and ninety-six of his Schiller Notebook, in which he makes a detailed list headed "How often seized by dream?". He describes sixteen places in the play where this happens, and to the right of each entry includes a description of the duration of each ("brief", "long", "very long") (Knowlson 1992b: 237). The epigenetic revisions portray Krapp as more and more engulfed in dreams, reflecting the intensified encroachment of distant space and the effect of this on the gestural body, as well as an atmospheric circumscribing of the *mise en scène*. In the play as a whole, the post-publication phase yielded an additional nineteen pauses to make a grand total of one hundred and two. And, perhaps most powerfully, it resulted in the revision of the play's conclusion, in which "({*Krapp listens dead still till the end.*} . . . *motionless staring before him. The tape runs on in silence.*)" (ll. 260-1, 278). He is finally overwhelmed by dream, and, instead of listening bent over the tape-recording of the girl in the punt, as in the original stage direction, he is frozen dead still staring before him. Beckett also revised the play's opening so that it opens and closes with Krapp in the same attitude "(*Krapp* [*sits with*

[30] In contrast to this, one is reminded of Aristotle's apparent slighting of the dimension of spectacle (ὄψις) in Greek tragedy. See the discussion in Halliwell 1986: 337-43.

[31] Beckett wrote in the Schiller Notebook: 97: in Träumen ertrunken ["drowned in dreams"], Traum – Nichts ["Dream – Nothing"], ein vom Traum (Nichts) gefressenes Leben ["A life consumed by dream (nothing)"], Traumgefressener Mensch ["Dream-consumed man"].

both hands on the table. He [*remains a* [*good*] *moment motionless,* [*staring before him*].)" (ll. 17-18). These changes deepen the presentation of the protagonist as a static shell containing jagged shards of memories, a characterization that connects him, on the one hand, to the "nothing" that Victor Krap gave voice to, and, on the other, (as an unheroic version) to the lone exilic Sophoclean figure who is out of options.

The stasis of the dream stare contrasts with Krapp's periods of speech and movement in the same way that Beckett creates a contrasting rhythm of silence alternating with speech or light in opposition with shadow.[32] This echoes Sophocles' concern with "realities the characters can and cannot see and know . . . they constantly play seen against hidden, speech against silence, true speech against falsehood, specific gods against unspecified divine forces" (Scodel 2005: 245). The increasing hold the dream stares have on Krapp bring a dawning self-knowledge of the lasting implications of acts committed in distant space. The reversal (*peripeteia*) for Krapp, while lacking Oedipal violence, actualizes his voluntary consignment to exilic emptiness, staring into nothing.

Listening Position

Another important choreographic strategy was the introduction of the "listening position": "*He bends over the machine, switches it on and listens with his head slightly turned towards machine and his face to the audience*" (ll. 60-1). This changes what was before called the "listening posture": "*leaning forward, elbows on table, hand cupping ear towards machine, face front*". That original stage direction suggests that Krapp's physical placement in relation to the tape-recorder reflects primarily his hardness of hearing ("*elbows on table*" as though planting himself for sustained concentration; "*hand cupping ear towards machine*" so as to catch what he would otherwise miss; and "*face front*" in the effort to leave the gaze non-directed so that the sense of hearing is sensitized as primary). The revision, on the other hand, deemphasizes Krapp's sensory decrepitude. It choreographs his body in a coordinate and paratactic positioning to the tape-recorder: there is no physical contact with the machine or table, he "*bends over the machine*", as though hovering in a kind of intimacy, rather than planting himself as a subject before an object. Krapp's deafness is no longer made explicit, and has been replaced by gestures typical of one positioning himself in proximity to a loved one ("*bends over*", "*his head slightly turned towards*"). The term 'choreography' accurately captures how the

[32] For the well-rehearsed Manichean dimension of this, see Beckett's notes in the Schiller Notebook: 43-7.

addition of listening positions establishes a rhythmical movement of one body in relationship to another.

The revisions in the passage quoted above reveal the addition of four instances in which Krapp assumes the listening position. The epigenetic phase saw the scattering of this choreographic placement throughout the play, establishing a regular rhythm of return to the listening position. Through repetition they elevate it from a physical posture to a positioning in relation to one's surroundings and the others within it – a shift in line with the general move towards the paratactic.

This strategy is at work in another group of additions to the text: "looks at tape-recorder". This gesture is introduced at three points in the passage and, because it involves a sort of mimed act of conversational exchange, can be understood as an extension of the listening position. Both communicate a sense of the relationship Krapp has with the machine.

This category of revision, particularly when taken in conjunction with that of the dream stares, best illustrates the idea of the paratactic body, which vitalizes the mimesis of *KLT*. The listening position is essentially a choreographed physical parataxis: Krapp's body is arranged side-by-side precisely into a coordinate position with the tape-recorder (bent over it, head turned "slightly" towards it). Both revisions involve using the physical language of gesture and mime to further paratactic expression, and to accomplish the performative work that verbal language can do only in part.

In its Sophoclean resonance, the addition of the listening position establishes the play's tragic irony. The central plot action of *KLT* presents Krapp returning (via archival recording) to his "farewell to love" with the girl in the punt thirty years previously. His life during the thirty-year interim has involved an intentional and salutary absence of love; in other words, his act of saying farewell to love was done to ensure his potential contentment and prosperous self-determination. Allowing for the aforementioned scalar difference with Sophoclean tragedy, one can nevertheless call Krapp's act a fateful decision. The listening position creates the spectre of intimacy through Krapp's paratactic positioning in relation to the tape-recorder, a machine that functions as a substitute for intimate partner. The audience is made visually aware of what Krapp is unconscious of: his manifest need for intimacy. The irony arises from the disjunction between what the protagonist knows and the greater knowledge to which the audience has access. The irony is tragic because it points to the desolation of a consciously determined loneliness, as reflected in the emptiness of the dream stare. Krapp qualifies as a tragic character insofar as his misery is compounded by his misguided attempt at self-improvement. "Tragedy's content points to the 'tragic irony' of practice and to an action that, although it is only ev-

er interested in its own success, necessarily brings about its own failure, and hence leads to misfortune for the doer" (Menke 2009: ix).[33] The tragic irony that is mimetically presented through the listening position depicts, therefore, Krapp's decision from thirty years previous as an instance of hamartia.

Furthermore, the listening position casts Krapp in the general form of a Sophoclean hero, not on the pattern of Aristotelian prescription, but in the way renovated by Beckett, where "reputation" and "prosperity"[34] are jettisoned and emphasis is instead placed on the figure as isolated and struggling through a quasi-exilic condition. These same attributes, in fact, characterize the extant heroes of Sophocles: Oedipus, Ajax, Philoctetes, Antigone, Electra — all of them distinguished from their communities in isolating, even exilic terms. The listening position's precise choreography of physical disposition forms a decisive part of the mimetic and diegetic spectacle of Krapp's physical decrepitude – a spectacle that verges on a presentation of disability – forming an additional attribute of this notion of heroism, in which physical limitation or degeneration is inherent to the heroic struggle.[35]

Tape-Recorder as Messenger

The tape-recorder should be understood as a species of messenger.[36] It has the authority of the first-hand witness and reports on events in distanced space (and time), events that have become defamiliarized for Krapp due to memory's faulty nature, and so are heard on the tape as news. Of course the news the voice brings is of Krapp himself, so this messenger speech has a reflexive aspect – like the messenger speeches in *OT*, which bring Oedipus news of himself.[37]

KLT has a reflexive strategy similar to that of the play within a play, only here the theatre-like spectacle is accomplished through ekphrasis. Its success depends on achieving *enargeia*: the narrator or speaker "sets out to reproduce the vividness of oracular proof through language" (Webb 2009: 89).

[33] "A fate can be called 'tragic' on the model of *Oedipus Tyrannus* only when it is through the very act by which an agent aims to preserve his or her good fortune that the sudden transformation of happiness into misery enters his or her life" (11).

[34] Arist. *Po.* 1453a10: τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ.

[35] A clear Sophoclean echo here is Oedipus' supposed disability from having his ankles pinned as an exposed infant.

[36] Beckett makes extensive use of the Athenian tragic messenger figure; for instance, a boy messenger appears in both *Waiting for Godot* and *Ghost Trio.*

[37] For the issue of self-reflexivity, double meaning, and irony, see Menke 2009: 45-50.

We witness the sixty-nine year old Krapp as listener undergo an ekphrastic experience, and the proof that he does rests in the way the stage directions in this passage choreograph his attentive reactions to the tape and especially in the fact that his dream stares proliferate as a result of the listening: his mind's eye becomes lost in gazing at the matter the tape-recorded voice describes.

To be sure, there is really a double ekphrastic experience unfolding. The voice on the tape must have before his mind's eye the details of the twenty-nine/twenty-seven year old's tape in order for his speech to effectively cast images onto the sixty-nine year old's mind's eye. The telescoping of timeframes engenders a doubling of the ekphrastic dynamic wherein the tape-recording's *paratactic distillation of descriptive particulars* activates a vividly visualizing recollection. Consider the following passage:

> Last illness of his father. Flagging pursuit
> of happiness. Unattainable laxation. Sneers at what he calls his youth
> and thanks to God that it's over. (*Pause.*) False ring there. (*Pause.*)
> Shadows of the opus… magnum. ([*He grunts.*]) Closing with a (*brief laugh,*
> [*tape alone*]) – yelp to Providence.
> (ll. 112-16)

Memory has been stripped of everything but vital particulars for Krapp. Even though the audience cannot see this directly, it presumably recognizes the *enargeia* that animates the tape's speech through the sixty-nine and thirty-nine year old Krapp's focused reactions and in the intensification of time spent in a dream state. This type of ekphrastic diegesis is reminiscent of the *enargeia* of Oedipus' rhesis (*OT* 771-833) and the Messenger speech (1237-85), in which an account recreates the distant events in a precisely distilled and visually evocative fashion: in all these instances the diegesis uses visualizing particulars to rhetorically simulate direct experience.

The tape-recordings are similar to messenger speeches in that they are performative, not just in the sense of being an integral part of the textual construction of the fictional storyworld, but in also actualizing the events of Krapp's past by rendering them as verbal spectacle, a type of mimetic diegesis. As Ruth Webb says, "[i]nseparable from [the] representational and informative function of *enargeia* is its ability to move the audience [in this case Krapp] and to make them feel the emotions appropriate to the events described" (2005: 89). The tape-recording clearly accomplishes this, and this emotionalizing function in turn 'verifies' the reality of Krapp's personal history, making it a feature of the fictional world that can be *described* and reacted to.

The fact that the tape-recorded voice actualizes, within the storyworld setting, Krapp's history is related to its nature as an archival machine: his

voice of thirty years ago has been captured in the flow of time and rendered an objective marker of time past. In the same way Oedipus recounts to Jocasta in anguished ekphrastic detail the memory of his fateful encounter with the "old man" at the crossroads (*OT* 771-833). Therefore, within the storyworld the taped voice, having an archival authority, has a different ontological status from that of Krapp's living voice. In other words, like the *OT* (and other Athenian tragedies), the fictional world of Beckett's play has a dyadic structure, although in this case the two realms are not mortal and divine, but rather mortal and archival.

Tape-Recorder as Oracle

The speech act of the tape-recording has an authority akin to that of the divinely motivated oracular speech in *OT*, in that both speak prophetically: Krapp's taped voice creates a kind of *mise en abyme* effect in which the three differently-aged Krapps mirror and repeat each other. There is a conspicuous repetition of constitutional factors uniting the speech acts of all three ages (for instance, consumption of bananas; constipation; dependence on alcohol; sexual preoccupation; rejection of love), and while this pattern makes a pronouncement about what Krapp has been and continues to be, it also foretells what in all likelihood he will be in the future. Similar to the ancient oracle, the tape-recording prompts an act of interpretation that seeks to avoid patterns and mistakes of the past. In the *mise en abyme* structure of *KLT*, the utterances of the tape-recorder function like the ancient oracle that speaks of things present, future, and past.[38]

It is this combined function of the tape-recording – its aspect as messenger bringing news of distant events and its aspect as oracle giving a pronouncement of the past which looks to the future – that yields the recognition (*anagnorisis*) for Krapp: he sees the outcome of his farewell to love as it relates to the darkness of his present and future. The tape-recording initiates an analeptic return – one that is structurally central and that echoes the vital analepsis of Oedipus' rhesis (*OT* 771-833). It is through Beckett's choreographic staging of this process (which pivotally involves both the dream stare and the listening position) that the play's tragic form and content are structured: tragic irony is first established, then Krapp's (implied) recognition unfolds, and, in tight conjunction with this, the reversal (*peripeteia*) occurs, which takes the form of Krapp becoming increasingly lost to the nothingness of the dream stare. Beckett achieves this economi-

[38] Hom. *Il.* 1.70: ὃς ᾔδη τά τ᾽ ἐόντα τά τ᾽ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ᾽ ἐόντα ([Calchas] "who knew the things that were, the things that would be, and the things past").

cal structure by refining Krapp's verbal pauses, stares, and physical disposition away from both the sentimental and the overtly comical in the direction of the tragic. He brings this precise focus while also maintaining the atmospheric presence of the comedic. This balanced combination of characteristics allows the renovation of the tragic within a modern sensibility, in which the onlooker can still observe that, "the tragic, on which the aversion, indeed the horror, of the spectator focuses, consists in the experience of the impossibility of learning from experience" (Menke 2009: 87).

In *KLT* the tragic irony, the recognition, and the reversal are enabled and brought into close formation through the multiple-functionality of the tape-recording. This resembles the structural role played by the oracles and messenger speeches in *OT*. The analeptic telescoping of timeframes and the resulting incorporation of events from distant space create, in both plays, a direct conjunction of the recognition and reversal, fulfilling Aristotle's tragic ideal.[39] Furthermore, the comparison of the two plays is warranted because the reversal in the case of both Krapp and Oedipus is due to self-knowledge, not action: "the reversal in Oedipus' destiny is brought about . . . not through his deeds, but rather through his full knowledge of his deeds" (Menke 2009: 8). Oedipus and Krapp are tragic figures because their self-knowledge precipitates their downfall, despite a history of trying to make it otherwise.

In the case of *KLT*, however, the tragic dimension of the play is brought into being specifically through Beckett's vitalizing revisions during production. The play's tragic irony, for instance, depends on the paratactic inflection of the listening position, discussed above, which is brought to life in the actual theatrical staging. This is in keeping with the fact that the modern instantiation of tragedy, as discussed by Menke, rests on the tension between the tragic practice and theatrical play (86).[40] The notion of the transcendent dimension implicit in the classical model's aesthetic contemplation of the tragic presentation is, like heroic action, evacuated from the Beckettian stage. However, the forms and play of the tragic are retained and exercised.

To be sure, the archival nature of the tape-recordings in *KLT* underscores a fundamental divergence from the Sophoclean tragic world: the absence of the divine. In replacing the mortal/Olympian dyadic structure with the mortal/archival dyad, the idea of textual fixity or storage is made

[39] Arist. *Po.* 1452a32-3: καλλίστη δὲ ἀναγνώρισις, ὅταν ἅμα περιπετείᾳ γένηται, οἷον ἔχει ἡ ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι ("the finest recognition happens together with a reversal, as with the instance in the *Oedipus*").

[40] "Where the classical model perceives the aesthetic other of the tragic as the tragic's interruption through the contemplation of its beautiful presentation, the modern model perceives it as its liquefaction through the play of theatrical performance" (86).

to fill the gap left by the divine. And this new, decidedly modern dyad allows for the collapse of the world into the solitary. An additional function, therefore, of the tape-recorder is that it allows for an interactive staging of Krapp in his world without other agents – in other words, it allows for a mirroring of the solitary self-exile on the level of the play's form. Krapp is shown alone, fallen from the tragic Sophoclean height formulated by Aristotle, in a darker and more pedestrian essay against meaninglessness, which through the process of Beckett's tragic play becomes, in effect, a reconditioned heroism – the solitary figure struggling against and falling to the limits of self-knowledge.[41]

Conclusion

The genetic approach to literature is not a search for intentionality. Rather, it seeks to highlight the work as extended compositional process. Beckett's directorial involvement in his plays' realization in many instances gave rise to an epigenetic phase of composition and theatrical refinement. In the case of *KLT*, this phase reveals a tragic complexion often obscured by the published play's foregrounding of comedic and sentimental elements. The epigenetic refinements to the play's complex vision reveal Beckett gravitating towards Sophoclean forms and strategies, at the same time that he moved beyond its notion of content and normative heroic characterization. This movement is strongly suggestive of the ways in which Sophoclean drama remains durable, adaptable, and relevant to the experience of late modernity.

Works Cited

Beckett, Samuel (1979), *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnameable*, London: Picador.

— (1995), *Eleuthéria: a Play in Three Acts* (*Eleuthéria*), New York: Foxrock, Inc.

— (2006a), "Endgame", in *The Grove Centenary Edition: Dramatic Works*, ed. by Paul Auster, New York: Grove Press, vol. 3.

— (2006b), "Happy Days", in *The Grove Centenary Edition: Dramatic Works*, ed. by Paul Auster, New York: Grove Press, vol. 3.

— (2006c), "Krapp's Last Tape", in *The Grove Centenary Edition: Dramatic Works*, ed. by Paul Auster, New York: Grove Press, vol. 3.

[41] Beckett: "We'd end up needing God, we have lost all sense of decency admittedly, but there are still certain depths we prefer not to sink to" (1979: 344-5). For an analysis of Beckett's work in the context of modernity and contemporary philosophy, see Critchley 1997: 141-80.

— (2006d), "Waiting for Godot", in *The Grove Centenary Edition: Dramatic Works*, ed. by Paul Auster, New York: Grove Press, vol. 3.

— (2014), *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: 1957-1965*, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, and Lois More Overbeck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 3.

Bryant, John (2002), *The Fluid Text: a Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Critchley, Simon (1997), *Very Little… Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*, London and New York: Routledge.

Davidson, John (2005), "Theatrical Production", in Justina Gregory (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing: 194-211.

De Biasi, Pierre-Marc (2000), *La génétique des textes*, Paris: Nathan.

Deppman, Jed, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden (2004), *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ferrer, Daniel (2011), *Logiques du brouillon: Modèles pour un critique génétique*, Paris: Seuil.

Finglass, Patrick J. (2011), *Sophocles. Ajax*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gontarski, Stanley E. (1985), *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gregory, Justina (1999-2000), "Comic Elements in Euripides", *Illinois Classical Studies*, 24/25: 59-74.

Halliwell, Stephen (1986), *Aristotle's Poetics*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Jebb, Richard Claverhouse (1887-1894), *Sophocles: the Plays and Fragments with Critical Notes, Commentary, and Translation in English Prose*, 7 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Juez, Brigitte Le and Ros Schwartz (2008), *Beckett Before Beckett*, London: Souvenir.

Knowlson, James (1996), *Damned to Fame: the Life of Samuel Beckett*, New York: Grove Press.

— (ed.) (1992a), *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Endgame*, London: Faber and Faber, vol. 2.

— (ed.) (1992b), *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape*, London: Faber and Faber, vol. 3.

Knowlson, James and Dougald McMillan (eds) (1993), *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Waiting for Godot*, London: Faber and Faber, vol. 1.

Knox, Bernard (1956), "The Date of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles", *AJP* 77: 133-47.

— (1964), *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

— (1998), *Oedipus at Thebes: Sophocles' Tragic Hero and His Time*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Macintosh, Fiona (2008), "An Oedipus for our Times? Yeats's Version of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*", in Martin Revermann and Peter Wilson (eds), *Performance, Iconography, Reception: Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 524-47.

McMillan, Dougald and Martha Fehsenfeld (1988), *Beckett in the Theatre: the Author*

as Practical Playwright and Director: from Waiting for Godot to Krapp's Last Tape, London: John Calder / New York: Riverrun Press, vol. 1.
Menke, Christoph (2009), *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett*, New York: Columbia University Press.
Nelson, Stephanie (2016), *Aristophanes and His Tragic Muse: Comedy, Tragedy and the Polis in 5th Century Athens*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.
Phillippo, Susanna (2003), *Silent Witness: Racine's Non-verbal Annotations of Euripides*, European Research Centre, Oxford: Legenda.
Rehm, Rush (2002), *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Scodel, Ruth (2005), "Sophoclean Tragedy", in Justina Gregory (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing: 233-50.
Silk, Michael Stephen (1996), *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and Beyond*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Steiner, George (1996), "Tragedy, Pure and Simple", in Michael S. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and Beyond*, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 534-46.
Taplin, Oliver (1977), *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
— (1978), *Greek Tragedy in Action*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
— (2007), *Pots and Plays: Interactions Between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.*, Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum.
Van Hulle, Dirk (2014), *Modern Manuscripts: the Extended Mind and Creative Undoing from Darwin to Beckett and Beyond*, London: Bloomsbury.
— (2015), *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape / La Dernière Bande*, Brussels: University Press Antwerp / London: Bloomsbury.
Van Hulle, Dirk and Mark Nixon (2013), *Samuel Beckett's Library*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Webb, Ruth (2009), *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Surrey: Ashgate.
Worth, Katharine (2004), "Greek Notes in Samuel Beckett's Theatre Art", in Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh, and Amanda Wrigley (eds), *Dionysus Since 69*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 265-83.
Wright, Matthew (2005), *Euripides' Escape Tragedies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Yeats, William Butler (1928), *Sophocles' King Oedipus: a Version for the Modern Stage*, New York: The Macmillan Company.

Małgorzata Sugiera*

Altered Pasts: Mimesis/Diegesis in Counterfactual Stage Worlds[1]

Abstract

The main goal of the article is to investigate the dialogical relationship between mimesis and diegesis in contemporary counterfactual stage worlds since the mid-1980s. It focuses on an extensive analysis of the ways of subverting the spectators' understanding of historical facts and their plausible artistic representation. That, in consequence, affects both the participants' individual experience and its theoretical modelling, which is no longer possible without taking into consideration the corporeality of experience (time, place, and bodies of the audience). To illuminate today's understanding of the intersection of contemporary theatre and performance with counterfactualism, three case studies have been chosen and analyzed as representative examples of different trends in challenging the ability of theatre to plausibly represent the conditions and ramifications of past periods and actions. The article starts with a close look at two contemporary historical plays: Hélène Cixous's *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge* (1985) and Suzan-Lori Parks' *The America Play* (1994). The first one asks the important questions about human agency within history and truth claims of history stage representations based on the assumption of causality, insisting on past's contingency. The second one makes visible and reflects upon the forms through which we engage the past, get access to the specific, material details of historical experience. What follows is an in-depth analysis of *MS 101* (ArtBoom Festival, Cracow 2015), a site-specific performance by the Polish performer and filmmaker Karol Radziszewski, clearly conceived as an experiment with counterfactual and mockumentary strategies. It premièred in the space where the real and the fictional events took place in order to gain a new vantage point on the past through friction between them, one that is inaccessible through other means. This vantage point is, then, used in a broader context of Bruno Latour's concept of circulating references to theoretically access the relation of mimesis and diegesis in counterfactual stage worlds, built upon an active experience of the audience, and to formulate new research questions that arise as a result of this approach.

[1] This text is the result of research within the framework of the project *Performances of Memory: Testimonial, Reconstructive and Counterfactual Strategies in Literature and Performative Arts of the 20th and 21st Centuries* (Performanse pamięci: strategie testymonialne, rekonstrukcyjne i kontrfaktyczne w literaturze i sztukach performatywnych XX i XXI wieku), conducted at the Polish National Science Centre (NCN) (UMO-2014/15/G/HS2/04803).

* Jagiellonian University, Cracow - malgorzata.sugiera@uj.edu.pl

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 203-21
http://www.skenejournal.it

One of the possible approaches to the problem of how the function of a dialogic mimesis within a diegetic context has changed in the last decades is to investigate contemporary counterfactual stage worlds that subvert the spectator's understanding of historical facts and causality, and refrain from plausible artistic representation. This, in consequence, affects both the individual experience of the viewer, often defined by the artistic event as an active participant or even co-creator, and its theoretical modelling which is no longer possible without taking into consideration the corporeality of experience, its tactile and material aspects. Therefore, performative counterfactuals can and do produce new forms of historical knowledge. As has been convincingly proven by Alison Landsberg in her recent book *Engaging the Past*, the popular, experiential genres of historical representation at best not only satisfy the audience's desire for a personal connection to the past, but must have a self-reflexive component to allow for a reflection on the process of re-enacting the experience. At this juncture counterfactualism meant as a thought-experiment useful for historians meets counterfactualism understood as a set of strategies engaging the past in drama and theatre, or more broadly, in performative arts. In the case of the former the question "what if?" makes visible both the usually occluded contingency of history and the limitations of traditional academic historiography. In the case of the latter the conditional mode is used not only to explore the contours of a historically specific moment, its material, environmental, and cultural constraints, but also to consider the specific formal elements of a given artistic form or genre that help to represent the past. Hence, what is meant by the altered pasts in the title of my article are not only marginalized or intentionally forgotten versions of the near and distant past (postcolonial or representing social minorities). I am primarily interested in alternative, speculative and significantly modified mechanisms of assessing, understanding and representing the past which in turn generated alternative visions of the pasts, the partial and situated knowledges that the performance engages.

In order to prove the value of counterfactualism as a tool for both general public and academic researchers, in his recent book *Other Pasts* British historian Jeremy Black focuses on the vital role of counterfactuals "in demonstrating the part of contingency, and thus human agency, in history" (2015: ix). It is, by no means, a position or school of thought, but rather an instrument that could be used in many contexts and for different purposes because indeterminacy is the most important lesson to learn from the past. For Black, the question 'why' is fundamental to our understanding of history and cannot be properly addressed without making implicitly counterfactual assumptions. Hence, he argues in *Other Pasts*: "A crucial value of counterfactualism is that it returns us to the particular setting of un-

certainty in which decisions are actually confronted, made, and implemented" (2). The questioning of apparent certainties, characteristic for all types of counterfactual approaches, has been in his understanding a crucial part for any historical research. Obviously, Black is not the first to state it openly. It was already Robin G. Collingwood who in *The Idea of History* from the mid-1950s argued that the work of the historian is best understood as historical re-enactment, because he "must re-enact the past in his own mind" (1956: 282). This experiential component was, however, not part and parcel of traditional academic historiography considered as objective, deterministic, and universal in its findings. That the study of history equals the study of causes, presented in a narrative mode, was established already at the end of the eighteenth century in various programmatic treatises such as, for instance, *Vom historischen Plan und der darauf sich gründenden Zusammenfügung der Erzählungen*, published in 1767 by a German historian, Johann Christoph Gatterer. He wrote there quite directly: "Begebenheiten, die nicht zum System gehören, sind jetzt für den Geschichtsschreiber, sozusagen, keine Begebenheiten" [The events that do not belong to the system are now, so to say, no events for the historian] (qtd in Koselleck/Günther 1975: 663, all translations are mine). Therefore, the counterfactual method was now and then criticized as unwelcome relativism, and sharply dismissed by many prominent historians. Clearly, as Simon T. Kaye argued a few years ago, there is more at stake here than just a suspicion of relativism and political issues. In his article "Challenging Certainty", published in 2010, he rightly emphasized that to consider indeterminacy in history poses a challenge to its assumed, deterministic certainty, i.e. its very basis as an academic discipline.

However, on one point I cannot agree with Black and Kaye. Both emphasize that one of the main advantages of the counterfactual method is to bring out the importance of human agency within history. Certainly, the same applies to most of today's historical texts written in the "what if" mode. Yet, what is more interesting for me nowadays is that there are more and more of such research projects that use the conditional in order to offer a new view on history as an outcome of dynamic assemblages of human and nonhuman agencies, working nets of biotic and abiotic elements as described, for instance, in Manuel DeLanda's *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*. The conditional mode is clearly linked here with an imagined perspective of a robot historian which "would write a different kind of history than would its human counterpart" (1991: 3), and consequently would put a stronger emphasis on the way the machines affected human evolution. This point of view is important for my argument because even if theatre is still believed to be the place where human interactions and agency come to the foreground, the counterfactual stage worlds which I am going to analyze

here uncover and include nonhuman agency not only within history but also on the level of the means of (re)presentation. This perspective does not require any major reformulation of the already cited definition of counterfactualism proposed by Black. However, a crucial value of counterfactualism is that it returns us to a particular setting of uncertainty. In this setting, understood as an assemblage, there is more to be taken into consideration than just the decisions that humans make and the measures that they implement.

From this point of view every historical play has to be identified as counterfactual at its core. Since the turn of the nineteenth century, the main aim of this new dramatic genre, situated by Victor Hugo between the canonical genres of comedy and tragedy, has been to return the audience to the particular setting of uncertainty in the past. Historical playwrights typically chose a traumatic moment or a set of events of great importance to a given nation, which should become the climax of the story presented on stage in order to allow viewers to see their own history in the making. And already in Hugo's plays, as well as in the historical subgenre of melodrama, history was made not only by human decisions, but decisively influenced, for instance, by weather conditions, various coincidences (fortuitous or not) or ghostly appearances as stage metaphors of non-human agencies. Consequently, one of the basic assumptions about mimesis in the ninth chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics* was challenged and, therefore, subverted. Hence, from that moment onwards, a historical playwright's primary objective was to imitate on the stage a factual, rather than universal, reality. And this objective required the introduction and implementation of a new set of rules and conventions that have to mediate between stage representations of counterfactual realities in order to convince the audience that it has been provided with an illusion of plausible historical facts in the making. Thus, theatre started to function as an important producer of historical knowledge in spite – or precisely because – of the fact that it has always drawn on the past with the actual socio-political reality in view. However, every time a historical playwright and the theatre employ historical materials and documents, they have to assume that the audience possesses an understanding of historical processes and rules of causality. Therefore, the plausibility of theatrical representation depended on the audience's participation and collaboration on the cognitive and epistemological level.

And yet, Mikhail Bakhtin was right in *Problems of Dostoyevski's Art* in which he argued that only the novel could be evaluated as truly polyphonic. Traditional dramatic genres, including historical plays, in spite of their seeming multitude of voices, are essentially monophonic, dependent upon the author's point of view. They are able to simulate "the particular setting of uncertainty" (Black 2015: 2), about which Black wrote, only thanks to their clearly defined, formulaic pattern. The structure of the traditional his-

torical play is, therefore, no less systematic than the academic history writing, stigmatizing as no events any events not fitting into its causal logic. No wonder that both the traditional structure of historical play and the academic historiography have been challenged on many levels at least since the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially since the mid-1980s. I would like to illuminate the intersection of contemporary theatre and performance and counterfactualism, taking a closer look at three examples. The first one, Hélène Cixous's *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge* (1985), poses important questions about human agency within history and truth claims of historical stage representations based on the assumption of causality, insisting on the contingency of the past. The second one, Suzan-Lori Parks' *The America Play* (1994), makes visible and reflects upon the forms through which we engage the past and get access to the specific, material details of historical experience. The close reading of two historical plays, which in different ways engage the audience here and now, is followed by an in-depth analysis of *MS 101* (ArtBoom Festival, Cracow 2015), a site-specific performance by the Polish performer and filmmaker Karol Radziszewski, clearly conceived as an experiment with counterfactual and mockumentary strategies. It premièred in the same place in which some of the screened fictional events took place in order to gain a new vantage point on the past through friction between them, an interplay between appearance and reality; between a willing suspension of disbelief leading to immersion in illusion and the awareness that the truth is situated and context-bound. Such interplay between cognitive appropriation and epistemological destabilization is one of the characteristic features of many contemporary counterfactuals. In counterfactual stage worlds, however, a similar interplay is often initiated by the way telling and showing coexist, collaborate or conflict with one another.

For this reason, as I argue, the performative approach is one of the most adequate methodologies to answer the question of how to theoretically access the relationship between telling and showing in artistic events built upon the audience's own experience. In this context I am going, then, to introduce Bruno Latour's concept of circulating references to theoretically describe the relationship between mimesis and diegesis in contemporary counterfactual stage worlds, built upon an active experience of the audience, and to formulate new research questions that arise as a result of this approach.

"Nous croyons faire notre Histoire"

Already a century ago, in 1915, D.W. Griffith, cited in *Engaging the Past* by Landsberg, prophesied that history books would be in a not-so-distant fu-

ture replaced by movies. As she explains, Griffith believed that "the technology of film . . . like scientific instruments, would be free of human bias and would therefore offer a perfectly transparent, objective view of the past" (2015: 1). Obviously, he was wrong to believe that historical films will be used in schools to pass historical knowledge onto students. Nevertheless, historical movies are an important factor in a widespread dissemination of images and narratives about the past. These are narratives told through images. It was one of the reasons why theatre, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, progressively renounced images as a decisive mimetic means in representing the past. Since then, playwrights have relied on verbal means as they could be exemplified on the one hand by such plays as Wolfgang Hildesheimer's *Mary Stuart*, written as an extensive monologue of the eponymous heroine. She tells her life-story retrospectively, at the moment of her approaching death. On the other hand, there are Peter Weiss's or Rolf Hochhuth's documentary plays written in the 1960s, presenting historical documents as such on stage or, more recently, Verbatim theatre's performances in which authentic dialogues are delivered by actors. This kind of theatre, based more on words than images as the main mimetic means, is also represented by Rimini Protokoll's performance in which the so-called experts from various walks of life in their own words talk about their everyday experience on stage.

This tendency was strengthened in the latter part of the twentieth century when a widespread understanding of the complexity of history-making emerged. It became common knowledge that this process is conditioned by a number of human and non-human factors that influence particular political decisions and practical solutions. As a consequence, many possible and parallel histories came into being, each of which became an instance of situated knowledge. The task for a historical playwright, to a great degree dependent on the audience's knowledge of historical processes, became increasingly difficult. Moreover, making these processes visible on stage went against the grain of bourgeois theatre and the economy of its artistic means. Historical events could no longer be shown at the moment of a decisive climax or depicted via an individual fate of the protagonist, usually a ruler. Instead the infinitely complex historical process would have to be shown in detail. The difficultly – or even impossibility – of writing a historical play in accordance with the traditional conventions of the genre at the turn of the twentieth century is clearly demonstrated by Hélène Cixous's *L'Histoire terrible*, directed by Ariane Mnouchkine. The play premièred at Théâtre du Soleil in September 1985, and was published two years later.

In her play, Cixous tries to put on stage twenty-five years of Cambodia's insistent struggle for independence, from Sihanouk's decision to stra-

tegically exchange the royal throne for an equal share in power as head of the state, shortly after his father's death in 1960 till the tragic moment when the Khmer Republic fell to the Khmer Rouge in 1975. The ghosts of royal family gather on the stage in the final scene to announce "l'heure du Grand Exile" [the hour of the Grand Exile] (Cixous 1986: 385) and bid farewell to those who have to depart. Cixous not only felt compassion for the tragic fate of the Khmer people, a former French colony, but regarded it as rich material for a play with a true Shakespearian profoundness. Many similarities with Shakespeare's plays are not to be overlooked in *L'Histoire terrible*, for instance, the function of reflexive monologues and the presence of ghosts who recollect the past and provide valuable advice to the living. What has changed, however, is the way contemporary audience understands the plausibility of artistic renderings of recent historical processes in the globalized world. To do justice to the complexity of these processes, Cixous wrote a play that takes up nearly four hundred pages, and divided it in two "époques", five acts each. That requires over forty characters from around the world, some of them speaking in their native languages like, for example, Alexis Kosygin, prime minister of the Soviet Union. The performance based on the play would have to last at least eight hours (as evidenced in the footnotes in the published version, several scenes were either entirely omitted or abbreviated when the play premièred). Since Sihanouk tries to ensure Cambodia's independence by seeking alliances with various countries, his manoeuvring between world's powers entails a change of location in almost every scene in the play: Phnom Penh, Beijing, Washington, Hanoi, Moscow, Paris and many others. In the stage directions preceding each scene Cixous provides only the names of these places, and does not bother describing them in detail. The same can be said about the characters, even the protagonist. Their gestures, movements, rhythm of speech, timbre of voice are rarely described. In other words, a dialogic mimesis, that is, a mimesis of arguments and verbally expressed emotions, is the most prominent here. In an interview Cixous herself addresses the question of the relationship between mimesis and diegesis in her play: "Je n'ai jamais eu, en moi, ni une image de scène ni une image d'espace; je n'ai eu en moi que de l'écriture, c'est-á-dire le bouillonnement des passions. De la langue; ni du visage ni de l'attitude" [I never had an image of the stage nor an image of the space in my mind; I had but the text in my mind, that is the vibrancy of passions. Only language, neither faces nor attitudes] (qtd in Barret 1986: 135). It is neither a fictional world and an appearance of human agency nor theatre stage and actor's craft. Only language provides the privileged way of expressing emotions or putting forward arguments and counterarguments for both the characters and their creator.

"We still believe that we are making history" (Cixous 1987: 170), the words spoken by Sihanouk, used in their original French version as the title of this section of my article, justify the gargantuan volume of the play. *L'Histoire terrible* suggests that the lost world has been found and restored in its fullness for the contemporary audience. Nevertheless, already the title of Cixous's play emphasizes that the history of Sihanouk has not finished yet (*l'histoire inachevée*). As I posit, it is not only because the eponymous character is still alive when the play ends. His history has to remain unfinished for yet another reason: so many events, human and non-human actors and factors which may or may not have influenced Cambodia's fate were not included in the play. To prove it, it suffices to take a close look at the prologue to the second part of the play in which the Chorus takes the floor just once in the entire play. In a longer versed passage it addresses not only the fate of Cambodian people, in a manner reminiscent of Greek tragedies, but also speaks about the theatre and its mission, indirectly expressing the agenda of the author:

> Cette époque est déchiquetée, cette nation est mise en pièces.
> Le théâtre a mission de les rassembler.
> Puissé-je ne pas en oublier un fragment.
> Quand tout est infidélité,
> Comme il est difficile á un récit d'être fidèle.
> . . .
> Sans vérité, pas de théâtre.
> (Cixous 1987: 184)

> [This epoch is torn apart, this nation broken into pieces. / It is theatre's mission to bring them back together. / Not a single piece should be forgotten. / When infidelity reigns supreme, / It is hardly possible for a story to be truthful. / . . . Without truth, there is no theatre.]

Clearly Cixous, quite unlike Shakespeare, expresses her genuine disbelief in theatre's ability to represent contemporary times. The final line of the quote, "Without truth, there is no theatre", acquires an utmost importance in this context. The prologue was entirely omitted when the play was staged at the Théâtre du Soleil. Perhaps in this way the director tried to convince the spectators that they can watch the recent history of Cambodia rendered truthfully on stage. Mnouchkine's decision to omit the prologue might be dictated by the customary structure of their performances, usually followed by a discussion with the audience. Even if the author in many interviews emphasized that she wanted to remain unbiased, the director tried to immerse the audience in an illusion of historical truth in order to inspire a discussion. What is important in the context of my next

two examples is that in Cixous's play there are several monologues addressed to the audience, but they are of a fairly rhetorical nature. Thus, the discussion after the performance remained the only way to directly engage the audience with the past, its meanings and today's repercussions. In other words, the active participation of the audience was not an inherent part of the play. In this respect the next two examples differ considerably from Cixous's text.

"The Great Hole of History"

Regarding Suzan-Lori Parks' plays, it is possible to repeat what has already been said: the main task of a playwright of historical plays is to demonstrate history in the making. In her case, however, the present participle 'making' should be put into quotation marks, in accordance with Park's own statement: "Since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to 'make' history" (Parks 1995c: 4). The theatre that Parks refers to here is understood as an event of theatrically representing or mediating in another way the history shown on the – most often bare – theatre stage to foster a cognitive or intellectual awareness of how we engage the past. A historical play that tried to subvert established views on the past and the way it has been mediated by academic historiography, highbrow arts, mass culture and imagination was brought forth in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This type of historical drama emphasized the inability of theatre to truthfully render the conditions and ramifications of historical periods and actions, which would have changed the stage into a privileged place to reflect upon history. Many important rewritings of classical historical plays and narratives were authored by feminists, such as Liz Lochhead or Caryl Churchill, as well as by playwrights and activists representing racial or sexual minorities, as in the case of Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America*. However, I have deliberately chosen the less known *America Play*, written at the same time by Suzan-Lori Parks, because in this play the ways of engaging the past come to the foreground. Moreover, a novel type of interrelations between the mimetic and diegetic instances, caused by the choice of the topic, is clearly visible here. Significantly, the play already comprises an experiential or embodied engagement with mediated history that, for instance, in the analyzed Cixous' play was made part of its staging. Therefore, I will not take into consideration any staging of Park's *The America Play*, and limit my close reading to the written text.

Undoubtedly, the author has learned her lesson from Hayden White and other scholars who had demonstrated a vital difference between the past events in the making and their recorded or remembered versions, usually

called history. The apparently documentary character of history, its 'factness', has to be subverted on many levels in order to prove that linking together means that an interpretation is imposed on discrete events (White 1975). This is why William B. Worthen is right to state: "In their complex representation of the past, Suzan-Lori Parks' plays interrogate not only history but also how we have access to it, engage it, understand it" (2009: 162-3). The past, as written or oral history, equals the past repeated, revisited and revised, rearranged, un-remembered, re-membered and dis-membered, always creatively re-enacted or at best cited and recycled that at the same time is deprived of its own 'original' materiality and, as a consequence, its 'genuine' meaning. Even if in the quoted interview Cixous underscores that her only rights as a playwright are the rights of a storyteller ("du contour"), she rarely relies on a diegetic narrative. Most often she chooses dialogic mimesis, typical of drama as a genre. Contrary to that, Parks stages the recovery and interpretation of the past as a mainly diegetic event, and in so doing, she severely undermines the conventional expectations, pertinent especially in the American context, that in performance words will have their own agency. Suffice it to quote just one sentence: "A play is a blueprint of an event: a way of creating and rewriting history through the medium of literature" (Parks 1995b: 4). Quite obviously 'literature' means 'narration', 'storytelling' or 'telling stories', as opposed to the typical theatrical illusion, usually created by means of a dialogic mimesis. For the same reason Parks claims that in her texts there is no place for traditionally designed characters. Her plays are peopled only by stage figures, pure figments of imagination. If a historical event takes place here, it is announced straightforwardly as a re-presentation and re-staging of something to which we have lost direct access, and which can only be mediated as a theatre piece presented on stage.

It is clearly the case of Abraham Lincoln's assassination in *The America Play* which should be shown on the theatre stage as an action repeated many times by members of the audience on the stage of "a dark box" owned by the play's main figure, The Foundling Father as Abraham Lincoln. To tell the one from the other, I will refer to the first one as the theatre and to the second as "the dark box". The name of the main figure is as ironic as the cover of the volume *The America Play*. Lincoln has been depicted with all his characteristic attributes: white shirt, black frock-coat, black top hat and black beard. Only the face is missing. On the volume's back cover the blank space is filled, but Abraham Lincoln's face is replaced by the face of an Afro-American: the founding father of the American nation has literally become a foundling father. That is true, in a performance the main character could be played just as well by a white actor. However, it will not change the status of the character within the stage world of

The America Play, because it has been well taken care of by the author. Although his name and costume suggest role-playing, The Foundling Father never impersonates Abraham Lincoln in the theatre as he might have done on the stage of the bourgeois theatre. He does not even impersonate The Lesser Known who is said to bear a resemblance to Lincoln. He only recounts the story of The Lesser Known and his invention, "the dark box". To underline that, Parks resorts to a well-known metatheatrical device: two repeated gestures of The Lesser Known, "a wink to Mr. Lincolns pasteboard cutout" and "a nod to Mr. Lincolns bust", are at the same time executed and named, and once the words are said, the gestures are missing (which resembles the final scene of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*).

The story told in the theatre is about The Lesser Known, an ex-grave digger, who once went to a theme park, called A Big Hole of History, where historical parades were staged, and he got passionately interested in the past. His "dark box", in which Lincoln's assassination is infinitely enacted and repeated, and shown in the theatre as a performance on the "dark box" stage, has been made as an exact replica of that theme park. This, however, is not the only repetition: the theatre stage on which the action of Parks' play, the storytelling performance by The Lesser Known, should take place is another Big Hole of History where the past can be explored and altered through repetition and embodiment. Worthen is, however, most probably right in saying: "In performance, dramatic writing is prosthetic, one of several instruments enabling the playing to do the work of embodiment, play. *The America Play* is richly attentive to this prosthetic dimension of performance, performance as a means to inspecting a finally inaccessible historical past through the 'properties' – actors, words, costumes, objects – of the stage" (2009: 173). To demonstrate that, Parks makes The Lesser Known speak directly to the intended theatre audience about the material prosthetics of the performance, mostly about different kinds of beards as instruments of Lincoln's impersonation on the "dark box" stage. In *The America Play* the past is thus intentionally demonstrated as produced by material theatrical means and in accordance with theatrical conventions: it is not history in the making, but in the 'making', not history to be experienced directly, but as manifestly mediated. The Great Hole as a theatre stage "is a replica both of the fullness (whole) of history and of its undoing, its absence (hole) in representation" (178). In this context the notion of "unfinished history" gains a different meaning than in the case of Cixous's play. It provides ground for the fundamental authorial gesture of creating history here and now, for a particular audience.

This is clearly visible in the second part of the play, where Lucy and Brazil, most likely The Lesser Known's wife and son, find themselves "in the middle of nowhere" (Parks 1995: 174), that is, on a bare theatre stage

as, for instance, in a number of Beckett's plays. The Lesser Known vanished (died?) as did his "dark box". It is not by chance that Lucy and Brazil commemorate him while digging up the materials of American history and attentively listening to echoes of gunshots and echoes of echoes. Listening to voices and sounds, not only on the stage, but also in the intended, 'real' auditorium, plays an important part in Parks' theatre. The voice as a privileged site of embodiment fulfils an affective, engaging function. If everything in the essentially fake Big Hole of the theatre is real in its materiality, the actor's voice is the only prosthesis of performance which can directly reach the audience. It does not mean, however, that there were no real voices and bodies on the stage in Mnouchkine's *L'Histoire terrible*. I would like to emphasize, however, that they were to a large extent independent of what Cixous had written in her play, because she was mainly interested in language, not in the spoken word. Contrary to that, Parks repeats: "Language is a physical act" (1995b: 11). She tries in many ways, mostly by an ingenious spelling, to influence the pace of delivery, expressed through and by the body in performance: "I am most interested in words and how they impact on actors and directors and how those folks physicalize those verbal aberrations" (10). In *The America Play* spoken language holds together the rhetoric of narrative and the rhetoric of performance, and it provides a link between the performance and its audience. Each time in an entirely different way it shapes the agency of both actors and viewers. However, in Radziszewski's *MS 101* not only the rhetoric of narrative and the rhetoric of performance go apart, but also the spoken words are clearly marked as quoted. Surprisingly enough, this solution ensures a heightened participation of the audience members, who thus become co-creators.

"By Means of the Double Negative the Liar Is Forced to Tell the Truth"

The fifty-minute video *MS 101*, commissioned by Krakow's ArtBoom Festival in 2012, premièred as a part of a site-specific performance. Radziszewski not only "returns us to the particular setting of uncertainty" (Black 2015: 2), but goes even a step further. He stages a missed, imaginary encounter between two giants of twentieth-century Austrian culture: the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who worked primarily on logic and philosophy of language, and the poet Georg Trakl. Both volunteered as soldiers when the Great War had broken out. After being lightly wounded in a battle, Trakl experienced a nervous breakdown and ended up in Krakow's garrison hospital (by that time the city was still part of the Austro-Hungarian empire).

There he impatiently waited for his first meeting with Wittgenstein who was quartered in Krakow and helped Trakl with a scholarship for a young gifted poet some years before. When the philosopher ultimately arrived, he had to learn that Trakl had committed suicide three days earlier. Hence, the awaited meeting had to remain a pure figment of Wittgenstein's imagination. What Radziszewski presents in his video is therefore a study of homosexual desire in which that which could have happened is visualized simultaneously with what had already happened, that is, Wittgenstein's (platonic) love affair with the British mathematician David Hume Pinsent during his study years in Cambridge. However, Pinsent, also a soldier-volunteer, is fighting on the other side of the war front and they have to exchange their letters via neutral Switzerland, hoping for a better time after the war. Thus, both the lived-through past and the imagined future provide material for a tragic gay love story, explicitly arranged as fictional in a theatrical manner.

What is particularly important in the context of the two previous examples is that the script of *MS 101*, written by the art historian Wojciech Szymanski, is based on thoroughly researched archival materials. The title itself refers to the notebooks that Wittgenstein kept in 1914, entitled *MS 101* and *MS 102*. They include the only sentence written by the philosopher after he had got the news of Trakl's death: "He was the one and only person with which I could speak frankly" (qtd in the script, Szymanski 2012: 8). Other materials are gathered from Wittgenstein's letters to Trakl and Pinsent, their letters to him as well as excerpts from Trakl's poems. These elements gained significance in comparison with Parks' play. In *The America Play* the opening scene consists of easily identifiable quotations – the well-known examples of chiasmus – that should alert the audience to the primarily quotational nature of the written and oral history. Citations are also sentences shouted out by those who voluntarily enact Lincoln's assassination on the stage of the "dark box", each of them painstakingly referred to in the footnotes to the published version of the play. However, the rest of the play is written in Parks' idiolect. Contrary to that, in *MS 101* every single word of the scenario had been recycled and, therefore, may be identified by a careful listener: beside the notebooks, letters and Trakl's poems, the text includes citations from Roland Barthes, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Alfred Chamisso, Thomas Mann, Sigmund Freud, Otto Weininger and many others. Some quotes come from well-known writings by the prominent Polish literary figures Adam Mickiewicz and Witold Gombrowicz. Obviously, the audience will be able to recognize only a part of that specific landscape of citations and, depending on how much they identify, the landscape will change its shape and look differently for each of the viewers. Obviously, this will influence their emotional engagement and, in end-effect, their understanding of the performance.

It is not by accident that I have chosen the metaphor of the shape-changing landscape of citations that make up the script of *MS 101*. Even if the text is distributed between three figures, and the language flow is divided into sections by stage directions, the video splits the images and the spoken text apart. The three men are visible on the screen, most of the time close-ups of their faces are shown, their lips not moving, but their lines are spoken by a single female voice. However, this is not a typical instance of a film with a distant and objective voice-over. The female speaker in *MS 101* provides an actor's highly emotional interpretation of the text, whereas the male faces on the screen are rather emotionless, almost lifeless as if they were seen in a dream or hallucination. Only at a few moments is it possible to have an impression that the text is more realistically linked to what is shown on the screen. However, as in the case of the citations and their identifiability, these links will appear at different moments for each audience member, differently shaping the co-created fictional world. Perhaps this strange disjunction of words and images can be explained with reference to documentaries with a typical voice-over: in most cases an objective male voice assures about the plausibility of the commentary (Rosco and Hight). Contrary to that, in *MS 101* the audience listens to a female voice, fully engaged in what she is speaking about. That, as a consequence, additionally emphasizes the prominent and inexplicable disjunction between words and images that usually conspire to create a fictional world in a historical performance, endowing it with plausibility.

The visual aspect of Radziszewski's video is no less complex. As indicated by almost all reviewers, *MS 101* demonstratively recycles not only verbal but also visual discourses. Derek Jarman's queer biographies and his film *Blue*, Andy Warhol's artistic documentaries *Blowjob* and *Sleep*, Yves Klein's monochromes from the Blue Epoch were mentioned most often. Radziszewski used not only the already vintage technique of blue box (which is why I prefer to call his work a video, not a film), but he also laid bare this technique many times on the screen, when he showed his characters to belong to a realistically depicted world, although set against an intensely blue background. The imagined and recollected events are, in other words, shown here as materializing with the help of cinematic and theatre prosthetics. It is particularly strongly emphasized in the final scene when we can see the whole set with the film crew, cameras, and a small TV-screen, showing the last scene of the video. One could say that this is the Big Blue Hole of the video-movie. But any analogy with Parks' play may turn out misleading, because Radziszewski does not try to draw a clear line dividing that which is material and real from that which is fake and simulated. On the contrary, his main aim is to conspicuously blur this divide.

The first scenes of *MS 101* show snapshots of Vienna. Buildings, sculptures and a park, most probably Prater. It appears to be today's Vienna, because we can see several joggers running. However, the two men in a fellatio scene are dressed in clothes belonging to a past epoch. Soon afterwards, one of them is shown in a rich palace room, reading a leather-bound book. This succession of scenes can be interpreted as a typical progression of imagination: from material reality to hallucinated images, a build-up of elements from the former. However, there is a catch. What we strongly believed to be 'real' images of Vienna was actually filmed elsewhere, as the artist himself elucidated in a private e-mail exchange: "Palace's interior was filmed in a neo-baroque palace in a Polish town Pszczyna", "a park in which the scene of fellatio took place is located in Krakow's district Podgórze, in reality, it is Bednarski's Park but it fakes Vienna's Prater", "hospital scenes were shot in a deserted vodka factory that we had rented as a film studio" (qtd in Sajewska 2016: 190). The room in a deserted factory that imitated a hospital room in which the bed of the wounded Trakl is located has a significant function. We can see it in the last scene of *MS 101* in a double role, as both fake and supposedly real. When the film crew and the blue sheet that functions as the background for Pinsent who has just committed suicide appears, the white tiles of the factory recall the white tiles that we saw in the hospital scene a minute earlier. It is enough to make us notice that, contrary to *The America Play*, in the case of the video not only could the material props be used for creating illusion of a lost world, but also that which seems to belong to the fictional world may reveal itself as no less 'real'. The medium of video is, therefore, much better suited for such an exercise in cognition than the theatre stage because on the screen both the 'real' and the 'fake' have the same ontological status. Consequently, the famous Wittgenstein's double negative seems to be in full force here.

MS 101 alludes to the double negative with the help of a citation from Werner Herzog's well-known film *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*. The reference is to the story of a traveller who meets a man at the crossroads of two villages. One of them is inhabited by liars, the other by truth-tellers. To learn from which village the man comes, the traveller has only one question at his disposal. In the title of this section I have already made use of the lesson this story teaches: "By means of the double negative the liar is forced to tell the truth". In Radziszewski's video it is the artistic representation of the past that seems to be the liar of the story forced to tell the truth, to reveal that there is no truth in both mimesis and diegesis as both are only unfaithful copies of the copies of what once was lived and/or imagined.

Let us take a closer look at the last scene and the text that accompanies it. On the screen we can see an almost naked David Pinsent, reclin-

ing on an antique couch and wearing two different socks. Most probably, he is the person to whom the last lines of the script can be attributed. He knows a much better question that will help to reveal the identity of the man met at the crossroads. He should be asked if he is a tree-frog. If he says "yes", everybody can see that he is a liar since a man cannot be a tree-frog. Hence, the person who is supposedly Pinsent continues, addressing Wittgenstein (or maybe the audience as well): "Is it not a good question? You cannot accept it. It has nothing to do with logic. Logic is deduction, not description. Understanding is secondary? Reasoning is the thing? You have not been taught understanding as a professor of logic and mathematics. You cannot accept this question. You are a tree-frog" (Szymanski 2012: 10). Then the last image of Pinsent appears. He is reclining on the same couch, but half-naked in military pants and boots, with a big wound in his breast. The wound seems to be a telling trace of the suicide he committed, shooting in his heart in response to the ultimate logic of Wittgenstein's argument and his lack of understanding of what common experience is. Yet, according to Pinsent's biography, he did not commit suicide but died in a plane crash in May 1918. Which of the sources is to be believed? The official biography? Or the gay love story? As the last line of the *MS 101* text suggests, everyone has a choice between logic and understanding, deduction and description.

The choice that is forced on viewers of the video was even clearer when *MS 101* premièred at the ArtBoom Festival, as it was shown in a military hospital in Krakow, the same facility in which Trakl committed suicide almost a century ago. Hence, the viewers not only watched the video, but also participated in a site-specific performance that I define here differently from Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks in *Theatre/Archaeology* or Cathy Turner in her article "Palimpsest or Potential Space?". These authors concentrated on the complex relations between the 'found' space and the performance scenography, 'found' and deliberately introduced discourses. What counts for me is first of all an experiential or embodied engagement of the audience with both the 'found' and 'screened' spaces, 'found' and introduced discourses. They were not conspiring to create the one and only reality, an immersive reality typical of the kind of reenactments fathered by the site-specific theatre of yesterday, but made the interplay between cognitive appropriation and epistemological destabilization even more complex. For example, *MS 101* does not rely so much, if at all, on the place where it is screened, does not feed on its specific materiality. Moreover, the mimetic dialogue is not impersonated here, nor framed by the diegetic context. The two develop side by side but separately, without creating an illusion of a fictional world. Their clash impedes any attempts of creating illusion. And yet the fact that the audience found themselves in the same

space where Trakl spent his last days worked a miracle, forcing an emotional identification with the story; forcing understanding against logic, description against deduction. The counterfactual world was there because of the reality of the space in which it was confined together with the audience. The reality was, however, felt by the viewers, not preconceived by the video. Contrary to what the Chorus says in *L'Histoire terrible*, in *MS 101* it is not the theatre (art), but the audience which is the source of truth. What is more, it is actually the situated truth. A truth.

Altered Pasts

In *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* Bruno Latour convincingly demonstrates how since the mid-1600 such different modes of existences as, for example, science, politics, technology, and what he calls "beings of fiction" have been established and in the process of modernization increasingly separated from each other on the basis of conditions of felicity specific for only one mode. He explains: "Conditions of felicity and infelicity do not refer simply to manners of speaking, as in speech act theory, but also to modes of being that involve decisively, but differently in each case, one of the identifiable differences between what is true and what is false" (2013: 21). It is in this context that I would like to look once again at the already cited statements of the Chorus in Cixous's play: "Without the truth, there is no theatre". What is clearly visible here is that not only does each mode of existence consists of rules allowing to recognize what is true and what is false, but each of them also pretends that a truth for a specific mode is the one and only truth, whereas there are at least several types of truth and falsity, each dependent on specific sets of practices and experiences. Over one decade earlier in *Pandora's Hope*, primarily in the essay entitled "Circulating reference", Latour identified and analyzed in detail one of the mechanisms which help to sustain this pretence. Citing as an example a scientific expedition into the Amazon Forest in which he took part as an observer, he describes step by step the progression from samples of the soil to various diagrams and maps, tracing a transition between forest and savanna in The Boa Vista region. He shapes the progression as a chain of consecutive transformations of verified references that circulate through constant substitutions, forfeiting resemblances that never existed. "Constructing a phenomenon in successive layers renders it more and more real within a network traced by the displacements (in both senses) of researchers, samples, graphics, specimens, maps, reports, and funding requests" (Latour 1999: 76). Neither this pedologic expedition nor science as such is an exception. As Latour himself admits, he used science as a touchstone "because any dis-

ruption in the way the sciences were conceived threatened the entire apparatus of modernization" (2013: 9). As I posit, it is possible to look at arts, theatre and performative arts among others, as specific fields of circulating reference that through a chain of substitutions forfeit resemblance between reality and its artistic renderings, traditionally categorized in different genres. A binary pair, mimesis/diegesis plays an important role in this chain, helping references to circulate between successive layers. At the same time, it enhances the plausibility of an artwork, stressing its difference from and resemblance to the reality of audience's lives.

One of the consequences of vital divisions between the modes of existence, defined by Latour, are specific felicity conditions, still in force, for fictional renderings of the past in arts and counterfactual speculation about alternative pasts in history as science. In the last few decades, as illustrated by my examples, not only has the dividing line between historical playwriting and counterfactual worlds been blurred, though. The whole field of circulating references in the traditional theatre, together with a specifically defined concept of aesthetic experience, has been dismantled and set piece by piece, device by device by many artists, as clearly shown in the case of *MS 101*. Back in the 1990s the avant-garde theatre was essentially autothematic, demonstrating the ways it used to create plausible, fictional worlds on stage. But today's theatre and performative arts are researching social and cultural practices and phenomena of dynamic assemblages of humans and non-humans and their specific conditions of felicity. It is also the disrupted circulation of reference and the significantly changed mechanisms of assessing, understanding and representing the past which in turn have become the past, situated knowledges. Historical facts and citations together with the fictional love story provided a required framework to both engage the audience and make each of its members aware of the mediation of the past, stressing a personal stake in knowledge about the past. As a consequence, not only a hidden, partial perspective of the conventional historical writing and its status as only one of possible narrative representations of the past was made visible. In this respect contemporary performances are not only firmly rooted in the theoretical context of alternative histories, but are also clearly linked to the current trends in popular culture which increasingly uses self-reflexive devices to disrupt the typical conventions of historical fiction. In contemporary counterfactual performances the audience is often also asked to reflect on the artistic process of re-enactment and the role of both diegetic narratives and dialogic mimesis in creating its immersion effects.

Works Cited

Barret, Gisele (1986), "Petit essai sur la dramaturge de *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge*", *Jeu: Revue de Théâtre*, 39: 131-42.

Black, Jeremy (2015), *Other Pasts, Different Presents, Alternative Futures*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Cixous, Helene (1987), *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge*, Théâtre du Soleil.

Collingwood, Robin G. (1956), *The Idea of History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DeLanda, Manuel (1991), *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, New York: Swerve.

Kaye, Simon T. (2010), "Challenging Certainty: The Utility and History of Counterfactualism", *History and Theory*, 49 (1): 38-57.

Koselleck, Reinhart and Horst Günther (1975), "Geschichte", in Otto Bunner, Werner Conze and Reinhardt Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag: 593-717.

Landsberg, Alison (2015), *Engaging the Past. Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Latour, Bruno (1999), *Pandora's Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press.

— (2013), *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press.

Parks, Suzan-Lori (1995a), *The America Play and Other Works*, New York: Theatre Communications Group.

— (1995b), "Possession", in Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play and Other Works*, New York: Theatre Communications Group: 3-5.

— (1995c), "FROM Elements of Style", in Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play and Other Works*, New York: Theatre Communications Group: 6-18.

Pearson, Mike and Michael Shanks (2001), *Theatre/Archaeology*, London: Routledge.

Rosco, Jane and Craig Hight (2001), *Faking it. Mock-documentary and the subversion of Factuality*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Sajewska, Dorota (2016), *Nekroperformans. Kulturowa rekonstrukcja teatru Wielkiej Wojny*, Warszawa: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego.

Szymanski, Wojciech (2012), *MS 101*, typescript.

Turner, Cathy (2004), "Palimpsest or Potential Space? Finding a Vocabulary for Site-Specific Performance", *New Theatre Quarterly*, 4: 373-90.

White, Hayden (1975), *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Worthen, William B. (2009), *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Zornitsa Dimitrova*

Transmorphisms in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* and Laura Wade's *Breathing Corpses*

Abstract

This article shows how postdramatic works for the theatre invite us into conceptual regions wherein the distinction between the diegetic and the mimetic modes is effectively blurred. Not only does this interfusion of mimesis and diegesis make the boundaries between the 'fictitious' theatrical reality and the non-theatrical somewhat permeable, but it also invites us to re-conceptualize mimesis as an act of production within a work. This auto-generative mimesis accounts for a self-propelled, non-purposive, and fluxional becoming that allows a given arrangement within a play to ever constitute itself anew. In order to arrive at a definition of mimesis as a dynamic constitutive motion from within a work, I look at the generative ontology of philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his concept of 'expression'. This type of mimesis becomes capable of showing how plays are involved in self-constitutive processes that recompose their fabric from within. In being such, mimesis assumes the role of a generative force in the composition of literary worlds in drama.

Introduction – Diegesis and Mimesis in Postdramatic Theatre

This article seeks to uncover a novel way of positioning the notion of dramatic mimesis – representation through enaction – within the ontological texture of postdramatic works for the theatre. Rather than emulating a literary reality from without, postdramatic theatre strives to generate its own idiosyncratic realities that are at times incongruent with our received notions of the real. Postdramatic theatre thus problematizes the very question of the genesis of representation since, as Lehmann notes, our expectations of what constitutes mimesis and diegesis, "the principles of narration and figuration, and the order of the fable (story)" (2006: 18), are put to the test. Specifically, postdramatic plays exhibit a certain redundancy of the divide between the diegetic and the mimetic mode: that of narrating on behalf of others and that of enacting in speech as if one were someone else. Speaking with Hans-Thies Lehmann, in postdramatic theatre we witness an interfusion of both modes and thereby a novel way of scaffolding a theatrical reality from within a work.

* zornitsa_dimitrova@yahoo.com

© SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 2:2 (2016), 223-43
http://www.skenejournal.it

Whereas the dramatic tradition relies on a definition of mimesis as action, and can be constituted as such because of an audience's capacity to recognize an action as fictitious yet coherently 'lifelike', postdramatic theatre constructs regions of flamboyant ontological uncertainty. Many of the constituents of the Aristotelian dramatic tradition are dispensed with and no mimetic recognisability is readily available. Spectators have been denied the familiar territories of plot and action, reliance on the dramatic script per se, and the careful scaffolding of a 'fictional' universe clearly recognisable as such. Whereas postdramatic theatre does not deny the existence of the classic elements of drama, it does not accept them as a given but enters in dialogue with them.

What is unsettled in postdramatic theatre is exactly the plane of ontological coherence that constitutes the drama as strictly dramatic: "The traditional idea of theatre assumes a closed fictive cosmos, a 'diegetic universe' that can be called thus even though it is produced by means of mimesis . . . the play on stage is understood as diegesis of a separated and 'framed' reality governed by its own laws and by an internal coherence of its elements . . ." (Lehmann 2006: 99-100). Dramatic mimesis in its traditional form ignores the sporadic inclusion of epic elements: "While arguably 'real', the occasional disruption of the theatrical frame has been treated as an artistically and conceptually negligible aspect of theatre" (ibid.). The postdramatic tradition, on the other hand, thrives on the interfusion of the mimetic and the diegetic as a means of entering in dialogue with the real: "in the postdramatic theatre of the real the main point is not the assertion of the real as such . . . but the unsettling that occurs through the *indecidability* whether one is dealing with reality or fiction" (101).

Accordingly, one feature of postdramatic theatre is the refiguration of the divide between the mimetic and the diegetic modes. Every so often we have a disruption of the mimesis of action on stage through narrative means. As if aiming to amplify the layers of ontological uncertainty in the postdrama, narrative is introduced within the mimetic rendering, at times entirely replacing the mimetic mode. In injecting the drama with diegetic narrativity, these disruptions make the drama increasingly nondramatic. Rather than being carried by plot or action, the drama is being advanced by the utterances of narrating speakers. The imitation of human action that lies at the heart of the *Poetics* is unsettled. Instead, we have figures on stage that give account of their own action or diegetically impart the action of others.

Yet these diegetic accounts cannot be aligned with simple cases of metalepsis, soliloquies, asides, songs performed by a chorus, metadramatic tendencies, and other such epic elements within the drama. Such infusions of narrative, rather, disrupt the very ontological unity of the drama. That is to say, what we have at hand is a type of diegetic narrativity that disrupts the

aesthetic 'illusion' of the drama as such. Every so often, we encounter infusions of diegetic narrativity that influence the layer of mimetic immediacy. At the same time, the diegetic narrativity cannot be separated from the enaction. Rather, these layers form a unity that is neither diegetic nor mimetic precisely because its genesis no longer relies on the immediacy/distance distinction that guarantees a clear boundary between the two ontologically discrete regions. By means of such vocal gestures, figures on stage become capable of co-constituting the very theatrical realities of the plays they inhabit. We develop a sense that each utterance is a gesture of creation and that the realities of the play are moulded through the very act of speaking as the characters continually negotiate the constituents of their theatrical reality.

In his theory of speech acts, John L. Austin speaks of an incorporeal transformation taking place in the ontological status of things because of the power of certain utterances to effect a change in the states of affairs they reference. He calls such utterances "performative" (1962: 10) because of their capacity to alter their surrounding reality. In such cases, "the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just', saying something" (5). Such utterances can be said to 'perform' an action and thus alter the status of persons and objects. In the case of postdramatic theatre, we have an even more radical type of reality creation as here the very practice of worldmaking is conditioned on the uttering of words. It is the very materiality of speaking and this auto-generative quality of language that, at times, carries the transition from words to worlds in a play. This change, however, has less to do with Austin's subtle and incorporeal change of state. Rather, it can be likened to a transubstantiation whereby the infusion of diegetic narrativity within a play already amounts to the 'materialisation' of a world.

This performative and auto-generative act of creating a world within a work is supplemented by an increased confusion about the ontological status of such emergent worlds. According to Lehmann, this "reality of the new theatre begins precisely with the fading away of this trinity of drama, imitation and action" (2006: 36). We no longer have a case of mimesis as an undisputed immediacy but a dispersal of the mimetic. Here mimesis dissolves into diegesis, and, alternatively, diegetic elements fuse within the mimesis. In introducing such disruptive techniques, "postdramatic theatre emphasizes what is incomplete and incompletable about it, so much so that it realizes its own 'phenomenology of perception' marked by an overcoming of the principles of mimesis and fiction. The play(ing) as a concrete event produced in the moment fundamentally changes the logic of perception and the status of the subject of perception, who can no longer find support in a representative order" (99). We no longer rely on the "shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells,

the world of which one tells" (Genette 1980: 236) but witness their co-mingling. The division of a literary world into a mimetic and a diegetic plane relies on the principle of distance, narrative being taken to be "more distant than imitation" and "more mediated" (160). In postdramatic theatre, we witness a collapsing of this very boundary or a productive alliance of the two planes based on the erasure of the principle of distance. In this way, the theatrical reality actively engages with some of the inherent paradoxes within the principles of mimesis and diegesis. At times, it reminds us that "showing can only be *a way of telling*" (163), that diegesis can be not only of words but of action and as such, can be achieved through mimesis ('diegesis through mimesis'). In other cases, we encounter an extreme modal distance between the level of the mimesis of action and the level generating a play's narrativity ('mimesis through diegesis').

At the same time, while striving to frustrate the 'fictional' dimension of the drama, such forms re-dramatize that which we habitually refer to as 'life'. As Angel-Pérez notes, such techniques nevertheless "inject some drama back into postdrama" so that "being post-mimetic somehow also means being pre-mimetic" (2013: § 3). The ontological uncertainty inherent in postdramatic theatre is thus intensified. The spoken narrative – an act of self-constitution in words – works not against but together with dramatic mimesis to reinforce not the constitution of the real but that of fiction, as well as the ever-shifting (perhaps even nonexistent) divide between the two: "Post-dramatic practices are making a show of what constitutes the condition of the subject constructing itself through words: it makes us understand the intrinsic fictionality of the construction and therefore refounds drama within post-dramaticity" (ibid.).

Rather than perceiving mimesis in terms of imitation, such theatrical realities invite us to re-conceptualize mimesis as an act of production within a work. This type of mimesis, as the following pages show, accounts for a production that is auto-generative. Further still, this is a type of production involved in non-purposive and fluxional becoming that allows matter to ever constitute itself anew. In order to arrive at a definition of mimesis as a dynamic constitutive motion from within a work, I first look at the generative ontology of philosopher Gilles Deleuze and, specifically, at his concept of 'expression' introduced in *Expressionism in Philosophy* (1968). Here 'expression' is a relational entity that carries forward the individuation of substance from a maximally indefinite state towards finitude. As a relational and transmissive component, Deleuze's 'expression' captures the very motion of constitution in the genesis of a form. This revised concept of mimesis thus becomes capable of accounting for the type of reality creation endemic to postdramatic theatre – a generative and self-constitutive gesture that moulds a work from within.

Unlike Aristotle, who viewed substance as a mere passive receptacle for forms, generative ontologies such as that of Deleuze have conceived of another possibility, "that the resources involved in the genesis of form are immanent to matter itself" (DeLanda 1997: 499). Rather than presupposing that the genesis of forms involves agencies and forces that are to be found outside of the matter to be formed, here we speak of a 'spontaneous morphogenesis'. That is to say, we have the possibility that matter generates novel shapes out of its own resources, without recourse to an entelechial pre-givenness. In isolating a specific 'space of possibility' within a play, we can witness how a play carries forward the emergence of an entirely novel shape within its fabric, and even advances by dint of such spontaneous acts of onto-constitution that are entirely self-propelled. If we are to assume this vantage point, mimesis too can be said to be 'expressionist' in that it becomes capable of showing how plays are involved in auto-generative processes and recompose their fabric from within. In being such, mimesis assumes the role of a generative force in the composition of literary worlds in drama. The present article looks at Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* (1998) and Laura Wade's *Breathing Corpses* (2005) to show how these plays disclose one such ontology and subscribe to a different type of reality creation that is ubiquitous to postdramatic theatre.

Mimesis as Relation

The term mimesis is commonly associated with concepts such as mimicking and imitation. The dialogues of Plato contain the oldest documented account of a relatively consistent 'theory' of mimesis and an assessment of its relation to the arts. Book X of Plato's *Republic* (10.598a-599a) ranks mimesis – artistic imitation – as the lowest manifestation of the Good. A mimetically rendered world – in painting, poetry, and sculpture – is perceived as fictitious and therefore fraudulent. It is a product doubly removed from the Idea, the one 'truthful' entity informing a world of fleeting phenomena. Unlike verbal diegesis, where we have the Homeric bard speaking in one's own voice and recounting the actions of others in the third person, in theatrical mimesis we have a type of poetic imitation that involves speaking through the voices of others and hence an element of 'deception'. This treatment of mimesis as representation is commonly associated with correspondence theories of truth and has reinforced the view that dramatic mimesis, seen as a locus of immediacy, carries a 'danger' because of its capacity for affective contagion. The 'antitheatrical prejudice' inherent in the anxiety that the 'fictitious' may have its inimical impact on the 'real' rests precisely upon this imitation premise. Postdramatic theatre, in turn, intro-

duces a different type of antitheatricality that thrives on the interfusion of elements of verbal diegesis (telling) and theatrical mimesis (showing), supported by an increasing unsettling of the nominal divide between the 'fictitious' and the 'real'. As I argue in this article, this interfusion is the product of a different type of theatrical reality that can be called generative or 'expressionist', and implies a different perspective on the concept of mimesis.

Koller's book *Die Mimesis in der Antike* (1954) reminds us that mimesis is actional, dynamic, and productive in its essence. It relates to notions of impersonation and enaction; also, it is best understood in terms of Greek drama as a medium that combines dance, music, and speech. Having its origins in drama, mimesis is more of a performance or a transmission, a gesture of rendering. Koller's interpretation shifts the focus to the very act of the transmission and the establishing of a relation between two ontologically disparate regions. Rather than focusing on the end product, that is, the represented reality, or on the model structure, that is, that which is emulated, Koller looks at the ways in which the transfer between the two is enacted. Here we have a dimension of mimesis that is both processual and relational. This dimension is lacking in the concept of representation inasmuch as in dealing with representation, we already deal with a product. Koller's focus, on the contrary, shifts to the explication of the mediality as such. This is one early instance where we have a foregrounding of the relational, dynamic, and productive side of mimesis. In order to fully account for this generative dimension of mimesis, the present article assumes Koller's focus "on the medium of expression inherent in mimesis rather than on the object of expression" (Keuls 1978: 11).

Rather than an exercise in matching between two hierarchically divergent givens, mimesis here is the very act of forming a relation. Once we assume this vantage point, we notice that mimesis does not presuppose a hierarchical scenario whereby a lesser reality ('fiction') is matched and evaluated against a 'truthful' one ('life') but exhibits intermediary, processual, transmissive features that foreground a productive alliance between incongruent worlds. Within this shift, attention is paid to the in-between ground of the transmission. Mimesis becomes the expression of a relation between two ontologically disparate world regions.

This take on mimesis allows us to substantiate Lehmann's positing of postdramatic theatre as generative, as a "formation rather than a story" (2006: 68) wherein the focus shifts to "the processes of metamorphosis" (77). Further still, it allows us to see how these, in turn, "lead to another mode of theatrical perception in which seeing as recognition is continually outdone by a play of surprises that can never be arrested by an order of perception" (ibid.). As we confront a "theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations" (68), we are led to dwell more closely on the onto-

logical status of its constituents. Here we look not so much at a ‘story’ or a ‘message’ but towards something that Lehmann calls a “landscape” (78). The latter leads us not so much in the direction of a telling or a showing of a story but to a particular style of being, a “gesture or arrangement” (82) whereby we cannot but confront an “irruption of the real” (99). Lehmann describes this as a formation of an “unstable sphere of a simultaneously possible and impossible choice, as well as the virtual transformability of the situation” (106).

Within this ‘scenic dynamic’ (as opposed to the ‘dramatic dynamic’o), the very ontology that a postdramatic play creates is conditioned upon the dispersal of action and the downplaying of the possibility of developing a narrative. We encounter maximally open worlds composed of potentiality, an attunement more towards the virtual than to the scenic and the tangible. Accordingly, the “principles of narration and figuration and the order of the ‘fable’ (story) are disappearing” (18). As Poschmann notes, “against the ‘depth’ of speaking figures that would suggest a mimetic illusion” (ibid.), we have a simultaneity of mimetic and diegetic forms, a coming together of the layers of the ‘real’ onto a unified landscape whereby even language itself no longer pertains to the speech of characters but acquires a certain “autonomous theatricality” (ibid.). Because of this, apart from an aesthetic logic of the postdramatic, one could begin to speak of a distinctive ontology related to this particular type of theatre.[1]

Within the context of postdramatic theatre, the vantage point thus changes yet again. Postdramatic theatre goes one step further in blurring the divide between the ontologically disparate layers that the principle of mimesis unites. The act of narrating on stage coincides not only with the act of speaking but also with the very act of the constitution of a work. A play is constituted line by line, utterance by utterance, not by dint of a plot or an action, but through the very utterances of figures on stage. And these figures, rather than creating a separate cosmos and insulating the work they inhabit as a coherent and discrete dramatic universe, continually make us aware of the fiction. The plane of showing – the region of dramatic mimesis – is infused with narrative, and it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between showing and telling, enaction and diegetic rendering. That is to say, postdramatic works for the theatre invite us into conceptual regions wherein the distinction of the diegetic and the mimetic is effectively blurred as no clear separation exists between the act of telling (speaking on behalf of others) and the act of impersonating (speaking as if one were someone else). This interfusion of mimesis and diegesis makes the boundaries between the ‘fictitious’ theatrical reality and the non-theatrical somewhat permeable. This leads me to speak of a new orientation of mimesis in

[1] For a detailed account, see Dimitrova.

postdramatic theatre. Here we do not deal with the acts of emulating, but of an orientation towards the very act of generating a reality within the theatrical.

I call this orientation 'immanent' because it amounts to a gesture of creation from within a work. Speaking of this generative dimension of mimesis in the genesis of forms, here the divide between the two techniques of rendering, diegesis and mimesis, can be subsumed under another species of mimesis that can be called 'expressionist'. Mimesis in this case accounts for the very act of forming a literary world within a theatrical reality and attests to the ways a theatrical reality is 'expressed', that is, constituted, in vocal gestures. Dramatic theatre builds up its reality on the basis of an essentialist philosophy that carries the implication of a pre-established essence that undergoes series of transformations. Postdramatic theatre, when read through the lenses of Deleuze's concept of expression, shows how relations are primary to their relative terms. In this case, we encounter a realism of relations that puts on display the secondary nature of substances and the primacy of the underlying field of relational forces that participate in the ongoing genesis of substance.

This is also the case with mimesis in postdramatic theatre whereby the very notion of essence is undermined and made secondary to the act of relating. Accordingly, mimesis is something inextricable from a work and ubiquitous to its ontology. In view of this, the Latin imitatio can be replaced with 'evocation': mimesis here designates the procedure by virtue of which a literary world is generated and comes into existence by means of vocal gestures. A literary world, however, remains yet open and indefinite enough to allow for a complete refiguration of its reality.

Mimesis as Expression

In order to account for this special type of literary creation in postdramatic theatre, I turn to the concept of 'expression' introduced by philosopher Gilles Deleuze in *Expressionism in Philosophy* (1968). Deleuze's concept of expression alludes to a nondual ontology that conceives of being as self-organising and self-propelled. One such view is reinforced in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, a book on Spinoza's *Ethics* that deals with the individuating motion of an infinite substance to finite modes towards ever finer distinctions.

Deleuze envisions Spinoza's substance as infinitely unfolding, relational, and in perpetual motion. Substance unfolds with the help of an intermediary transmissive constituent called 'expression'. This transmissive constituent allows substance to become many – to enfold and manifest itself in a

variety of finitudinal entities – while remaining in itself. As such, substance pertains to a pre-representational region where it is present in its maximally infinite form. At the same time, substance is involved in a perpetual motion of individuation whereby the infinite becomes finite, that is, a concrete entity. Substance thus moves from one mode of existence to another, from the maximally indefinite (the infinite) to the maximally concrete (an individuated finite entity within a world). These two regions are ontologically distant and appear practically unbridgeable. In introducing the concept of expression, however, Deleuze offers a way to account for this transition from the infinite to a finite form. The transmissive work of what Deleuze calls 'expression' guarantees the continuity between the two regions, that of ontological constitution and that of individuated entities.

Substance becomes expressed as an *event of sense*. At the same time, the expressed event of sense remains entwined with the pre-representational region of ontological constitution and is ubiquitous to it. In this way, the event of sense is also the inherence within a literary world that is maximally open to the regions of pre-representation and constitution. Once an event of sense consolidates within the ontological texture of a literary world, it has the capacity to reshuffle it anew and to alter its ontology. In this way, we can have several ontological layers presented within a single play, a reshuffling of the mimetic and the diegetic mode, and, at times, a thorough refiguration of the literary world at hand up to the point that it becomes unrecognisable as such. From this vantage point, we become capable of accounting for the oftentimes incongruent and mutually exclusive realities that populate the literary worlds in postdramatic theatre, and put on display the generative dimension of mimesis that is oftentimes responsible for the interfusion of ontologically disparate diegetic and mimetic elements.

Within our specific context, the work of expression and the event of sense carry the unfolding of drama. The entwinement of expression and sense, of a constitutive motion and a supra-representational constituent, at once enables the genesis of representation (expression becomes expressed sense and thus a world is constituted) and opens up to the region of pre-representation (a constitutive motion). Assuming this vantage point, one begins to notice that postdramatic works for the theatre – albeit nonsensical to the habitual gaze – exhibit a quasi-causal logic. Rather than perceiving these plays in experiential terms, the present article assumes the stance that their 'nonsensical' constituents are maximally expressive (to the point of being non-signifying). In being such, they expose the work of an event of sense within a play's ontological texture and thus can show us the various ways in which an already constituted literary world (representation) remains inextricably related to a host of forces and relations

that belong to the supra-representational regions of ontological constitution. In being such, a literary world can recompose at every step (as in the case of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*), or open up to the supra-representational region of the event of sense (as in the case of Laura Wade's *Breathing Corpses*).

The manifested event of sense is not congruent with the literary world that surrounds it. It rather carries the imprint of the pre-representational region – a field of constitutive forces and relations out of which the order of representation congeals. Confronted with the consolidation of an event of sense within their habitual texture, plays are at pains to re-adjust, re-compose, and thus incorporate the pre-representational within their fabric. The concept of 'expression' designates exactly the generative motion that carries the capacity to create and recompose literary worlds, whereas the event of sense coincides with the juncture whereby one such recomposition is triggered. Whereas expression carries the motion in the process of the constitution of a literary world, the event of sense carries the capacity to reshuffle an existing arrangement within a literary world and compose it anew. In this way, the expression (generative force) and the expressed sense (the force precipitating novelty and change) work together in the scaffolding of literary worlds in drama.

These points of departure feed into another purpose of the present article: to show postdramatic theatre as a case of a dynamic mimesis whereby the very motions of ontological constitution are being played out. Within this latter context, mimesis and diegesis are inextricable from one another. Here mimesis is a continuously generative flux only observable in the various diegetic modalities it creates. Mimesis is a gesture of transmission whereby literary worlds undergo a variety of transmorphoses and recompositions as they are infused with elements that generate their own narrativity. Let us see, then, how this interfusion of mimesis and diegesis supplies communication between different ontological layers in Kane's *Cleansed* and Wade's *Breathing Corpses*, carries the generative flux of expression, and exposes a quasi-causal logic at work within the plays' ontological texture.

The Case of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*

Cleansed (1998) is the earliest example of a Sarah Kane play in which we witness a decomposition of the categories of plot, character, time, and action. *Cleansed* draws a picture of ontological uncertainty as it continually appeals to the themes of shifting subjectivities and the arbitrariness of agency. Stage directions are profuse, bringing an authoritative streak with-

in the otherwise frugal dialogic sequences. Yet both the mimetic and the diegetic planes rely on an informational and communicative minimum to shape a coherent narrative. At the same time, mimesis and diegesis continually fuse into one another as enaction becomes narrative in the course of the play. That is to say, the play generates its narrativity by confronting us with a series of scenic landscapes without story – but precisely because of doing so, it also vicariously constructs a diegetic plane. On this level, we can already discern a certain minimal narrative (Tinker mutilating two couples, couples persisting, scenes of torture issuing as a result of this resistance). This diegetic plane, however, has nothing of the dramatic as it is indeed populated by the variations of a single 'situation' or an 'event' that is continually reshuffled and recomposed in the course of the play. Equally so, the characters only subsist in a state of relative stability – they continually merge into their counterparts, appropriate each other's gender markers, speak through each other's lines, and even 'invade' each others' bodies. Personalities shift, spoken lines travel from one character to another as if having acquired an agency of their own, and even the figures themselves become increasingly unrecognisable as the play progresses. At the same time, the figures in *Cleansed* appear to have been generated spontaneously and arbitrarily. Even more so, they continue to be moulded into one another and take on a variety of shapes in the course of the play.

Essentially, the play introduces us to two couples: that of Grace and her brother Graham as well as that of the lovers Carl and Rod. Graham, then, is replicated onto another figure, Robin, who appears to have been spontaneously generated out of the play's fabric as Graham's imperfect substitute, wearing his clothes and speaking through his lines. A woman in a peep show booth also makes a sudden appearance and we are given to understand that her erotic dance – triggered after inserting tokens in the show booth – is an emulation of Grace's dance. Then we have a supernatural creature named Tinker, at once a doctor presiding over an unnamed facility and a shapeshifting entity of extraordinary malevolence. Tinker's presence is entirely unexplained; he appears to have emerged out of thin air to tamper with the lovers' lives. Lovers perceived as 'aberrant' are 'punished' in spectacles of lavish absurdity, within a landscape marked by the corrective presence of institutions. The last scene depicts Carl having acquired female genitalia and Grace having completed the transition towards literally becoming her brother. Tinker, who goes to great lengths to test the couples' love in ordeals of tremendous cruelty, admits: "I think I— / Misunderstood" (Kane 1998: 40).

Cleansed is thus a postdramatic play insofar as, in its scenes of ritualistic mutilation, we observe not only a "replacement of dramatic action with ceremony" (Lehmann 2006: 69) but also an increased awareness of

the de-dramatisation of the drama. A certain revelling in the spectacle of the non-dramatic is at hand here as the very act of bodily mutilation is formalized, taken in isolation, and made an aesthetic unit. As Lehmann notes, here the theatrical body becomes "a ceremonial body" (162). We witness a focus on the very gesture of the performing of an action whereby "the whole spectrum of movements and processes have no referent but are presented with heightened precision" (69). The theatrical body becomes a value for and in itself, and as Lehmann states, whereas "the dramatic process occurred *between* the bodies, the postdramatic process occurs with/on/to the body" (163). Images of bodies in pain and the aesthetic value of "agony" are primary here. What is of interest for this postdrama is the very "decomposition of the human being" on stage as this "self-dramatization of the *physis* continually works to realize the intensified presence of the human" (ibid.).

In a way, the play can also be said to be constructed around Plato's technique of 'diegesis through mimesis', the constitution of telling through showing. The play's narrative is moulded entirely by means of sparse vocal gestures and intense action on stage. Whereas the stage directions are long and elaborate, the spoken lines remain pointedly minimal, just enough to sketch out a situation. At the same time, the very frugality of the stage space and the artificiality of the dialogue – directed not so much towards the characters' counterparts but towards a void – undermine the theatrical illusion and frustrate any wish for reference. The component of 'imitation' is made apparent, yet at the same time no imitation can be performed at all since the play appears to follow its own course and to evolve spontaneously without much recourse to an external reality. This already alludes to a certain morphogenetic principle at work with the play.

Cleansed exposes one such auto-generative quality in that it appears to recompose from within and alter its ontological texture as it progresses arbitrarily, without much appeal to an Aristotelian plot striving towards a foreshadowed purpose and completion. The play thus alludes to an auto-generative ontological framework whereby we have a constitutive motion that incessantly generates novel shapes while, not unlike Spinoza's substance, remaining in itself. In the context of *Cleansed*, three transmorphoses take place as the play appears to be continually at pains to generate versions of the union of Grace and Graham by means of what can be called a 'derivative isomorphism'. That is to say, one structure is mimetically mapped upon another, generating matrixes of resemblance. *Cleansed*, thus, can be said to be entirely composed of such isomorphic thresholds whereby Tinker's attempt to emulate or neutralise the figures of Grace and Graham brings forth a host of tremendous transformations and supernatural occurrences. In the course of the play, these figures are effectively erased,

however. Once agency, self, and articulation are lost, one arrives at a stage whereby the play generates an 'endomorphism', two bodies grotesquely carved into one another. While formally successful, however, this mapping results in an unsettling picture – the play merely ends in blinding light with its figures facing a bright void, exhausted and thoroughly misshapen.

Three successive transmorphoses recompose the play's ontology anew until it arrives at this last moment. First, in attempting to emulate the union of Grace and Graham, the play appears to generate a copy of the lovers Grace and Graham, producing the union of Tinker and the woman in the peep show booth. Inserting token after token and talking to the woman in the booth as if addressing Grace, Tinker pleads her to love him, show her face, and talk to him. The booth dance mimes Grace's dance, yet the scenario sketched out here only offers an imitative model. The desired relationship is grotesquely imitated; the union between the woman in the booth and Tinker remains only an imperfect double of Graham/Grace as it only mechanically copies the lovers' union without any involvement of its one indispensable constituent, love.

As *Cleansed* advances, a second scenario is generated. Here the union of Graham and Grace is mapped onto Grace and Robin. Throughout the play, 'Robin' barely has an independent existence – he rather functions as an emanation of 'Graham'. The scenario generated here can be described as automorphic: what we witness throughout the scenes involving 'Robin/Graham' is how an entity (Graham) is mapped onto itself. This is evident in the many episodes in which Graham stands next to Robin, miming his gestures and talking through his lines. Robin temporarily becomes a receptacle for Graham, containing him entirely. First, he is shown to wear Graham's clothes (Kane 1998: 7). Later, Graham, as a ghost, speaks through Robin's lines, the two voices overlapping: "Robin/Graham Do you still love him? . . . Robin/Graham Gracie . . . Robin/Graham But choose" (18-19). The scene continues to make use of the Robin/Graham overlap even after an overlap of the voices of Grace and Graham (Grace/Graham) presents itself: "Graham/Robin What would you change? . . . Robin/Graham I would. . . . Robin/Graham I am. Robin/Graham Never will" (21-2). Eventually 'Robin' dies (38) as 'Graham' reaches out to him, in the exact moment in which the two figures are physically united. The presence of the Robin/Graham isomorphic map shows that *Cleansed* has recomposed its ontology anew, generating a newer version of the union of Grace and Graham.

In the final scene, we arrive at a third version of Grace and Graham – already the unified figure 'Grace/Graham' – and therefore at a third morphism. This moment is already prefigured in the scenes in which Grace's and Graham's voices are indistinguishable from one another, "Graham/Grace (*laugh.*)" (19) and "Grace/Graham I do. . . . Grace/Graham No"

(21). At this juncture, a last step has been taken so that Grace can literally 'become' her brother. Her wish that her body "looked like it feels" (20), "Graham outside like Graham inside" (ibid.), is made literal. To Tinker's literal mind, this means attaching Carl's genitalia to Grace's body, completing the final stage of her transmutation into Graham. At the same time, Carl undergoes a surgical treatment to acquire the genitalia of a woman (Grace). The bodies of Grace and Carl are "hollowed out" (Horton 2012: 117), reshuffled, and made open for entirely different flows. 'Graham' is mapped onto 'Grace' while 'Grace' is mapped onto 'Carl', thus making each character subject to perfect erasure. Tinker believes to have done everything right, to have 'mended' the 'aberrant' bodies, but the result is a horrendous shape.

In this third scenario, we are presented with a spectacle of what Kaufman calls a "most vulgar and mythical violence" (2003: 21) that nevertheless contains within itself an event of sense, an impassive force that holds the promise that an entirely new redefinition of any fixed form is still possible. An event of sense enwraps the violence and all the while retains a tinge of hope. It constitutes an openness and contains the possibility for further alteration along the chain of transmorphoses that the play undergoes at every step. In line with Urban's interpretation, here Kane's work can be said to dramatize an arrival at an ethics emerging "from calamity with the possibility that an ethics can exist between wounded bodies, that after devastation, good becomes possible" (Urban 2001: 37).

Deleuze also addresses this ethical dimension: "We do not even know of what a body is capable . . . We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power" (2005: 226). *Cleansed* shows how the relations into which bodies enter stretch infinitely, reshuffle, and recompose. Through the relations into which they enter, bodies express the unity inherent in "the principle of their production" (304) together with the infinity of their grades of intensification and openness. As the figures of the play undergo a variety of morphisms, their literary world recomposes its ontological texture anew and becomes open for a redefinition of its constituents.

This model aligns with Spinoza's notion of elasticity as presented in *Expressionism in Philosophy*: the ability of a relation to stretch so that an entity undergoes a limitless number of stages while retaining its essence, "passes through so many stages that one may almost say that a mode changes its body or relation leaving behind childhood, or on entering old age" (222). In the context of *Cleansed*, each morphism corresponds to a particular intensification of a relational composition that remains nevertheless the same in order to continue to exist within the flux of expression. What is expressed in this relation is an event, a threshold of novelty that constitutes an openness. This openness is to be understood as a momentary capture within the

process of individuation that carries within itself a potency of a new magnitude and hence a new line of re-expression. It is in this openness that *Cleansed* reinstates itself as a spectacle of hope – the violent image of the last scene can recompose in a second step, congealing into an entity that is radically novel.

In retrospect, *Cleansed* showed us not only two lovers put into an ingenious torture machine but also how the expressive, generative quality of mimesis allows a play's fabric to recompose anew and arrive at novel encounters. Here a technique that can be aligned with Plato's 'diegesis through mimesis', a telling through showing, helped us to flesh out a morphogenetic scenario whereby we witnessed how Grace's and Carl's bodies undergo a series of elaborate surgical interventions. In the final scene of *Cleansed*, Grace is moulded into the body of her brother and Carl's genitalia is removed before he is reunited with Rod. As the characters begin to fold into one another, fantastic elements invade the scenes. A flower rises from the ground and bursts open; rats come out to gnaw at the wounds and bandages of Carl and Grace. As subjectivities intertwine and traverse their prefigured boundaries, the play begins to generate versions of the union of Graham and Grace. Towards its end, by having produced the chimerical creature Grace/Graham/Carl/Grace, the play subjects each of its characters to erasure but also retains the possibility of a new, positive refiguration of the given. The play recomposes its ontology several times to open up a territory for the complete redefinition of substance in a scenario of incessant creation whereby entities become maximally open and capable of reconstituting themselves anew.

The Case of Laura Wade's *Breathing Corpses*

Another such example of a morphogenetic or 'expressionist' mimesis presents itself with a recent play by Laura Wade. Rather than employing the technique of 'diegesis through mimesis' observed in *Cleansed*, here we have a mode of reality creation that can be aligned with a technique called 'mimesis through diegesis'. That is to say, rather than having a scenario of 'telling through showing', in this case we encounter a diegetic form that can be said to unsettle the level of enactment through the encroachment of narrative turns within the play.

Breathing Corpses (2005) distances itself from postdramatic tendencies of the plotless and characterless play; it has clear spatiotemporal outlines and does not appear to disrupt spectatorial expectations. In fact, the realities it depicts appear rather mundane and we are led to perceive *Breathing Corpses* as a clever murder mystery that, however, does not do much in

challenging our ontological assumptions. At the same time, some features of the play make it difficult to trivialize. The play tests out the ontological certainty of its emulated reality on several occasions; this takes place through the installment of ever-morphing images of boxes and pervasive smells throughout the play.

Because of the arbitrary and seemingly unnecessary nature of these images, but also because of the ways they affect the advancement of action within the play, here one could speak of a postdramatic tendency to infuse non-linear, non-entelechial, and even non-actional narrative within an otherwise congruent literary world. In this case, however, we do not speak of the aesthetic technique of displacing enactment through narrative. Rather, we are presented with a different ontological arrangement whereby certain images (of boxes and smells) generate their own narrativity and, because of this, alter the play's linear progression. For this reason, it becomes difficult to see *Breathing Corpses* as a typical postdramatic play that is less drama and more like narrative. Rather, here we encounter a dialogue between the dramatic and the postdramatic. That is to say, we encounter a diegetic level that presents itself at an ontological layer that is different from that of the overarching drama, generates its own narrativity within the play, and thus infuses it with inherences of a different ontological texture. I call this level evental but also 'diegetic' because of its capacity to generate narrativity that affects the play's action and causes a series of transmorphoses in the course of its unfolding.

Whereas *Cleansed* was a more straightforward example of a postdramatic play, both in terms of its ontology and scenic aesthetics, *Breathing Corpses* displays postdramatic qualities mostly on the level of its ontology. The play is constructed around a singular event, and its most poignant feature is the infusion of auto-generative narrativity that disrupts the layer of 'mimetic' enaction, thus creating a clash between dramatic and postdramatic narrativity. In *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann concludes that even works such as those of Beckett or Brecht are mere stepping stones towards the postdramatic because of their continued reliance on the mimesis of action: "Certainly the theatre revolutionaries broke with almost all conventions but even in their turn toward abstract and alienating means of staging they mostly still adhered to the mimesis of action on stage" (Lehmann 2006: 22). Postdramatic theatre, in contrast, is "a multiform kind of theatrical discourse" (ibid.) that makes us aware not so much of the action but of an underlying process of production. One such processual quality is discernible in *Breathing Corpses* whereby the entire play hinges on an ongoing tension between the dramatic and the postdramatic. We have dramatic mimesis when we look at the play's level of action, but a postdramatic event when we turn to the play's diegetic layer. In the case of the latter, we en-

counter a singular evental constituent that is continually played out in different variants, altering the fabric of the play's level of mimetic enaction.

Scene 2 introduces Jim, who runs a self-storage service business, his wife Elaine, and the employee Ray. The three are preoccupied with a strange smell coming out of one of the units, enjoying bacon sarnies and recalling a customer who had forgotten the contents of a kebab van in a storage: "Don't realise it's A Five till the maggots start crawling under the door" (Wade 2013: 27). It is not until Scene 3 that we become aware of the play's darker undercurrents as we are shown how perpetrators of violence are not so much rational actants but unwitting figures at the sway of forces as arbitrary as a heat wave. Here we witness another domestic scene, a home on a hot September day. Kate, who had found a murder victim in the park the previous night, repeatedly kicks the dog responsible for sniffing a woman's corpse under a bush: "but I didn't I didn't want it to be me and your stupid fucking dog that found her / either" (41). Scene 4 takes us back to Jim and Elaine who had already opened the storage unit. It emerges that Jim had unsealed a box storing the decomposing body of Kate from Scene 2, strangled and with a dog lead still around her neck: "JIM: I keep wondering if – Like maybe if I hadn't found her, maybe she wouldn't have been dead" (59).

A recurrent appearance throughout the play is that of boxes. *Breathing Corpses* starts with a scene in the boxed space of a hotel room, "not *a great hotel, a mid-price hotel that trades on its views over the town*" (9), and ends with a scene involving a Boxter, a silver-coloured convertible. In Scene 2 Elaine tells a story about a phone conversation with a support operator helping her to fix her Skybox. She then leaves the scene with the explanation, "Back in my box" (30), and hands over a box of chocolates. In Scene 3, Ben decants a box of dog food and Scene 4 contains Jim's reminiscence of opening a box within a box, the storage containing the boxed body of Kate.

Smells and boxes, the contradictory images of pervasiveness and enclosure, operate within the play in what appears to be an arbitrary manner. Whereas the advancement of the action and the construction of the separate episodes follow a simple causal logic, the images of boxes and smell are arranged in ways that demonstrate a high degree of contingency. The appearances of boxes and smells in the separate episodes do not follow a prefigured pattern and do not seem to be connected in any 'logical' manner. Rather, they appear to 'infect' one another: the images of smells and boxes form networks that connect both characters and events in quasi-causal ways more compelling than the causal relationships that construct the play's overarching mimesis.

In using the term 'quasi-causality', I evoke Deleuze's discussion of the event of sense as pertaining to a species of causality that is indifferent to 'real' causality (1990: 6). Following this principle, the various morphisms

of boxes – the tin can, the storage units, the box of chocolates – adhere to a causality that is indifferent to the remaining givens of the play. *Breathing Corpses* can thus be said to be structured like a dream with constellations of images of boxes and smells forming areas of intensification that operate outside of the rules of linear causality and form a causality of their own. They can be said to function as "an aggregate of noncausal correspondences which form a system of echoes, of resumptions and resonances . . . in short, an expressive quasi-causality, and not at all a necessitating causality" (Deleuze 1990: 170). While of no significance for the advancement of the plot, these local areas of intensification resonate throughout the entire play, affecting the linear chain of events and altering its texture.

The play presents us with a number of episodes wherein the images of boxes and smells take on a variety of guises. First, we encounter Elaine speaking of a Skybox, a box of chocolates, the box that is her home, and the numerous storage units her husband operates. Then, we have the decanting of dog food in Scene 3 presaging the unsealing of Kate's box in Scene 4. The envelope containing a suicide note left on the dressing table in Scene 1 transmutes into a box containing a carving knife. In the play's last scene, it then swiftly morphs into a Boxter. A similar non-causal logic presents itself as we begin to look at the way the play aligns the smell of perishable food and dead bodies. Jim has begun to smell in Scene 1. The smell coming from one of the storage units evokes a memory of a kebab van in Scene 2. The decanted dog food smells unbearably in the heat of Scene 3, and the ghost of a smell pervades Scene 4. The transmorphisms that smells and boxes undergo as the play progresses allow us to speak not simply of an allusive similarity between a can of dog food and a woman in a box, but also of quasi-causal relations that allude to the work of what Deleuze calls 'an event of sense'.

In *Breathing Corpses* the region of the event of sense positions itself as a second (diegetic) ontological layer within the play and begins to work within the linear chain of events of *Breathing Corpses.* Yet it does so in a manner that evades causal relations. Rather, it manifests itself in certain locales within the play as an utterly contingent and unnecessary inherence. These local manifestations of the event of sense are exactly the various incarnations of boxes and smells throughout the play. While displaced and seemingly unnecessary with regard to the plot, they appear to advance a 'shadow play' within the play, one that is entirely dependent on the workings of a "quasi-cause" (Deleuze 1990: 35). This is the type of causality that belongs to the region of the event within dramatic mimesis. The work of the event, however, is 'pervasive', at once 'everywhere and nowhere', as an event's appearance in one scene affects all others and disrupts the steady linearity of the play's mimetic layer. Smells not only invade the scenes

they stem from but 'infect' the play's remaining scenes, eventually causing deaths. The same applies to the presence of boxes, innocently making an appearance in Scene 1 as chocolates or a Skybox, yet transmuting into precipitators of violence in the scenes to follow. Charlie's Boxter, a phonetic evocation of the word 'box', has even ceased to resemble an actual receptacle. We witness the same process towards ever-greater abstraction followed by increasing amounts of violence in the travels of smell across the play. As *Breathing Corpses* progresses, the smell becomes more and more ethereal, eventually becoming a phantasmatic presence that cannot be shaken off: "JIM: Just outside the door, and inside opening the box, my lungs got full of – Sticks like tar, it's stuck to the inside of my nose I can't get –" (Wade 2013: 59-60).

In this way, one witnesses the formation of two ontological planes within the play: one of linear causality and one pertaining to the quasi-causal event of sense. Whereas the former is 'mimetic' as it pertains to the level of enactment, the latter can be called 'diegetic' because of its capacity to generate its own narrativity and thus actively change the states of affairs on the mimetic plane through the encroachment of narrative turns. The quasi-causal event of sense leaves its imprint on the representational ontological layer as it operates through the play's various morphisms of smells and boxes. The play thus submits to the workings of a diegetic non-linear quasi-causality, and the various arbitrary transmorphoses that smells and boxes undergo are one attest to the work of quasi-causality within the play. Within this arrangement, each affected item (envelope, box, storage unit, tin can) replicates itself further. The Skybox maps itself onto a box of chocolates, which in turn morphs into Elaine's referring to her home as a box, mapping itself onto boxes as shorthand descriptions of the storage units, a dog's tin can and, eventually, a Boxter. These manifestations are aberrant spots within an otherwise coherent ontological layer where the play breaks open to explicate an ontological region of a different texture.

The appearance of smells and boxes within the play is utterly unnecessary, a superfluity that nevertheless can be said to glue the play together, supply unity, and in fact even make the play what it is. *Breathing Corpses* would have lost its entire brilliance if it were not for the subtle interfusion of these images of enclosure and pervasiveness. The play's layer of dramatic mimesis reaches out towards the evental only through the inclusion of these 'aberrant' inherences. The images of smells and boxes do not aim to represent. They rather operate as captures of the event of sense and its self-generated narrativity within an otherwise dramatic milieu.

The quasi-causal diegetic layer precipitates a rearrangement of the play's episodes that is indifferent to temporally or spatially governed relations of cause and effect. The images of boxes and smells are perfectly su-

perfluous and of no significance for the evolvement of the play's linear plot. They rather function as empty spots within the play's fabric, as places of void significance. Still, it is in their emptiness that an evental component that generates its own narrativity is to be found. Rationalisations remain insufficient in supplying a logic that envelops them and exposes their texture. Jim's suicide, the dead woman under a bush, Ben's unmotivated outburst of violence, and the murder anticipated in the last scene are rather the manifestations of a clandestine event that invades the play's representational layer, unites and sustains them. This event remains unnamable and incorporeal, only showing itself in local areas of capture. The work of an event of sense only becomes visible in the metamorphosed manifestations of an enclosure trope and a pervasiveness trope. These, in turn, alter the fabric of the play in unexpected ways. In scaffolding a scenario of 'mimesis through diegesis', *Breathing Corpses* shows us how a diegetic quasi-causal layer fuses into the play's level of enactment, unsettling its habitual ontological texture. In staging a dialogue between the dramatic and the postdramatic, the play discloses the processes by which its quasi-causal layer, which I aligned with the domain of Deleuze's 'event of sense', operates within the layer of dramatic mimesis, altering the fabric of the latter and generating its own singular ways of telling.

Conclusion

Both *Cleansed* by Sarah Kane and *Breathing Corpses* by Laura Wade exhibited very similar ways of worldmaking that are auto-generative and emergent. In this way, we could witness a type of genesis that originates in substance itself. The two plays were shown to recompose their ontological fabric to accommodate an aberrant constituent, an 'event of sense'. This aberrant constituent precipitated intensive changes in its surroundings and caused the plays to recompose. The ontological texture of this constituent became palpable from a vantage point that I called 'expressionist'. The term 'mimesis' should be understood as synonymous with generative, processual, and relational ways of worldmaking in drama that allude to the possibility of a spontaneous morphogenesis from within a work. *Cleansed* presented us with a worldmaking scenario that could be aligned with the aesthetic technique of 'diegesis through mimesis', or narrating through enacting. The play's literary world was generated through intensive enactment onstage and its various transmorphoses were mostly rendered by means of action – here it was the enactment that generated the narrativity. *Breathing Corpses*, in turn, acquainted us with a situation that could be characterized as 'mimesis through diegesis'. In this case, the play's level of enactment was continually altered

by the workings of a supra-mimetic ontological layer within the play that generated its own narrativity and thus influenced the mimetic layer.

Works Cited

Angel-Pérez, Élisabeth (2013), "Back to Verbal Theatre: Post-Post-Dramatic Theatres from Crimp to Crouch", *Études britanniques contemporaines [British Literature in the Present]*, 45, http://ebc.revues.org/862 (last access 17 July 2016).

Austin, John L. (1962), *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

DeLanda, Manuel (1997), "Immanence and Transcendence in the Genesis of Form", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 96 (3): 499-514.

Deleuze, Gilles (1990), *Logic of Sense* (*Logique du sens*, 1969), London: The Athlone Press.

— (2005), *Expressionism in Philosophy* (*Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, 1968), New York: Zone Books.

Dimitrova, Zornitsa (2016), "A Drama of Potentialities—Toward an Ontology", *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 31 (1): 65-87.

Genette, Gérard (1980), *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Horton, Zach (2012), "Can You Starve a Body Without Organs? The Hunger Artists of Franz Kafka and Steve McQueen", *Deleuze Studies,* 6 (1): 117-31.

Kane, Sarah (1998), *Cleansed*, London: Methuen Drama.

Kaufman, Eleanor (2003), "To Cut Too Deeply and Not Enough: Violence and the Incorporeal", *Parallax*, 9 (1): 14–27.

Keuls, Eva (1978), *Plato and Greek Painting*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Koller, Hermann von (1954), *Die Mimesis in der Antike [Mimesis in Antiquity]*, Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre* (*Das Postdramatische Theater*, 1999), London: Routledge.

Plato (1978a), *Plato in Twelve Volumes: The Republic I. Books I-V*, c. 380 BCE, ed. by Paul Shorey, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

— (1978b), *Plato in Twelve Volumes: The Republic II. Books VI-X*, c. 380 BCE, ed. by Paul Shorey, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Urban, Ken (2001), "An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane", *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 23 (3): 36-46.

Wade, Laura (2005), *Breathing Corpses*, London: Oberon Books.