3:2 2017

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Skenè. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

SKENÈ

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

3:2 2017

SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

Founded by Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliazzi, and Alessandro Serpieri.

Published in December 2017
ISSN 2421-4353

SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
http://www.skenejournal.it
info@skenejournal.it

Dir. Resp. (aut. Trib. di Verona): Guido Avezzù
P.O. Box 149 c/o Mail Boxes Etc. (MBE150) – C.so Milano 54/56, 37138 Verona (I)

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Ronald Blankenborg*

Rhythm for Situational Contexts: The Case of Ancient Greek Epic Performance

Abstract

In this article[1] I will discuss rhythm's contribution to the performance of ancient Greek epic like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in terms of phonostylistics, the branch of phonetics that studies the use of phonetic means which are restricted to specific contexts. Hartmann and Storck (1972: 175) aptly define phonostylistics as "that branch of stylistics which investigates the expressive function of sounds". I will apply observations from recent studies on phonostylistics in order to account for the rhythmical effect of the so-called heroic meter. It will be my aim to classify the rhythm of the dactylic hexameter as a function: a deliberate influence on stylistic variation. As such, rhythm may be compared to other stylistic functions like the tempo of speech. The rhythm of heroic meter is a conscious deviation from everyday unplanned spoken language. Its appliance creates a 'situational context', i.e. a particular linguistic environment that is conditioned by a fixed set of extra-linguistic factors: in this case, the performative environment. My perspective on the performance of ancient Greek epic will be limited, though, to this single aspect of prosody, rhythm, with only little regard for other issues such as the how and when of performance. Contemporary durational performances of the Homeric epic provide an intuition for epic performance as a particular linguistic environment. In this contribution, I will first discuss the prosody of ancient Greek epic performance with a focus on rhythm. In subsequent sections, I will analyse the performance of ancient Greek epic as a situational context under the influence of the rhythm of heroic meter: this phonetic feature is restricted to the context of epic performance. In the final section of this article, I will pay special attention to the way modern audiences perceive the 'otherness' and the repetitiveness of heroic rhythm.

Keywords: performance; Greek epic; heroic rhythm; situational context; phonostylistics

Introduction: The Prosody of Ancient Greek Epic Performance

Ancient Greek texts are broadly accepted as performed, or at least performable, texts. The well-known epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, attributed to the legendary poet Homer, were products of a long tradition that originated in

[1] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of *Skenè. JTDS* for the valuable comments and suggestions. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Greek are mine.

* Radboud University, Nijmegen - R.Blankenborg@let.ru.nl

orally composed and transmitted narratives. Having been performed for centuries, they were eventually written down, possibly in a version that differed considerably from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as they are known today. 'Dictation theory' (West 2001, 2011; Ready 2015) holds that at a certain moment (the end of the eighth century BC or little later), the 'monumental poet' dictated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to a scribe at a festival (Jensen 2011: 244 claims that this single recording took place in 522 BC). Up until this first 'material fixation' or writing-down, both epics supposedly changed with every performance: the composing poet had, and took, the opportunity to add and remove word groups, whole lines, and passages. West (2011: 28-37) envisages the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in this phase as resembling *epyllia*, self-contained episodes that might or might not be understood to have a definite place in a larger context. In his view, there is every reason to suppose that the *epyllion* was what an epic singer commonly or even usually performed – much like the performance of two songs of the Trojan War by Demodocus in the *Odyssey* (8.75-82; 8.499-520) –, the monumental poet being the exception to the rule. Frequency and occasion of performances remain a matter of guesswork, both for the period before and immediately after the first material fixation. Alternatively, Nagy's "evolutionary model" (1996: 29-63) describes the development of the monumental *Iliad* and *Odyssey* not as a historical accident, but as a gradual process: with the aid of writing as an equivalent to performance, existing transcripts of particularly successful performances served as the basis for re-composition. From their first material fixation, the narrative of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* continued to expand thanks to the interaction of orality and literacy: the Homeric epic kept being orally performed, while the performers' reliance on writing enabled them to keep composing (such composing performers are known as *aoidoi* 'singers') and re-composing with the aid of material which had been already written. Thus, the recurrence of distinctive words, word groups, or items, sometimes thousands of lines apart, becomes a matter of deliberate re-use, rather than "independent withdrawals from the great oral credit bank" (West 2011: 50). Bakker (2013: 157-69) shows how the re-use of word groups and formulas was exploited by the composing performer in order to create conscious allusions and motives to help structure the expanding narrative. The interaction between orality and literacy during the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries BC resulted in the monumental *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the most important redaction, under Peisistratus at the end of the sixth century BC, produced a text that was probably very similar to the text we know today. By that time, performers of the Homeric narrative were no longer composers: as reciting performers at major festivals they were known as *rhapsoidoi*, i.e. 'song-stitchers'. Their performance of episodes from the *Iliad* and the

Odyssey relied on the knowledge of the written text. González (2013) argues that the rhapsodic delivery of episodes from the Homeric narrative resembled that of tragic texts by actors, and of well-prepared material by speakers in the democratic assembly: the lines had been learned by heart, and delivery only allowed for little leeway for improvisation. 'Recomposition' had been brought down to the insertion or deletion of whole lines. Yet some fluidity of the text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* remained. Ancient scholars felt free to add, criticize, and remove lines well into the second century BC. Evidence from papyri (Bird 2010) shows that the written text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reflects variants in performance until the first century BC.

Performance implies, among other features, a deliberate and thoughtful use of the range and modulations of the voice. In the study of performative features of ancient Greek texts, delivery has been treated as an aspect of style. Style is then understood to encompass prosody, the study of the production and perception of phonation, or 'sound'. In the discussion concerning style and language in ancient Greek, the issues of style/register and prosody have both been treated, even though as separate topics, in Willi 2010 and Nagy 2010, and, more recently, in, amongst others, De Jonge 2014, Staab 2014, and Goldstein 2014.

Nagy's evolutionary model implies special restraints for the delivery of epic in performance as it presupposes that Homer's formulaic diction and its specific prosodic features developed together and in close connection (1996). The most conspicuous prosodic feature of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is meter. The language of formulas brought the dactylic hexameter with it, and, in turn, the hexameter provided the format for newly developed and flexible formulas. The dactylic verse of Homeric narrative is a rather strict format; the hexametric line features a minimum of twelve syllables, and never more than seventeen syllables, as the dactylic hexameter consists of six feet that allow for only little variation. Built as a regular patterning of two types of syllable structures, 'long' (–) and 'short' (∪), a metrical foot is either trisyllabic (dactylic) *long-short-short* or disyllabic (spondaic) *long-long* (West 1982). Even the verse-final foot is disyllabic despite the indeterminacy of its second element:

1		2		3		4		5		6	
	–		–		–		–		–		–
–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	X

Holodactylic and holospondaic lines do occur, but a typical Homeric line shows some variance in the tri- and disyllabic feet:

ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων (*Od.* 1.5)
– ∪ ∪ | – – | – – | – – | – ∪ ∪ | – –
striving to save his own life and the safe return of his comrades

The origin of the hexameter, a verse form based on a regular patterning of two types of syllable structures in a frequency ratio 1:2, remains the subject of scholarly debate; what is important for the study of performative aspects of prosodic features is that the dactylic hexameter itself seems to be ill-suited for delivery in a language whose distribution of the two syllable types is closer to a frequency ratio 1:1. If we presume that dactylic meter reflects rhythm (substituting 'long' for 'heavy', and 'short' for 'light'), dactylic rhythm is tied to the metrical phrase of the hexameter, and deviates considerably from the rhythm of unplanned ancient Greek speech, which, as Aristotle informs us, is iambic. I will show that dactylic meter is not the equivalent of its rhythm, but that meter merely reflects rhythm to a certain extent. Its close tie with formulaic language makes dactylic rhythm a recognizable and useful vehicle for managing audiences' expectation in performance.

1. Prosody Performed

How should we interpret the performative impact of dactylic meter? Two approaches stand out, and have done so since antiquity: the durational analysis and the approach of metrical rhythm as the timing mechanism of speech. The former takes its cue from the syllable denominations 'long' and 'short', and Aristides Quintilianus' (c. 300 AD) remarks on the vowel's duration in musical realisation (West 1992: 130-2). These remarks enabled metricians to establish a key for computing syllable durations, based on the number of vowels and consonants in the syllable's rhyme. Metricians count consonants in the syllable's rhyme as ½, short vowels as 1, and long vowels/diphthongs as two *morae*. The *mora* is the smallest unit of time in musical scaling. Even silence or pause may be computed this way: the ancient Greek scholar Nicanor (early second century AD), nicknamed *stigmatias* ('punctuator'), created a system of punctuation that involved pauses of up to four *morae*. From a phonological perspective, this approach of rhythmical prominence in performance as 'quantitative accent' appears to be very useful. The written texts of ancient Greek allow such syllable computations; poetic texts like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* prove to be very consistent in their written representation of syllable structures (West 1992: 135-7). Once the metrical phrase has been determined, performers may read out loud by making an audible distinction between the syllables with 'long' duration, and those with 'short' dura-

tion: 'long' syllables are then pronounced with roughly twice the duration of 'short' syllables.[1]

Such realization of metrical rhythm, however, seems to lack rhythm's most important quality: the perception of regularity. Homer's dactylic hexameter, for example, allows for the replacement of the double short (∪ ∪) by a single *longum* (–) in the first four feet, but hardly ever in the fifth. This avoidance of a sequence of two *longa* (– –) in the fifth foot shows that the verse in performance is sensitive to disruption in delivery, not as a result of duration (as ∪ ∪ presumably equals –), but rather of another prosodic quality that is tied to location within the line. Devine and Stephens (1984) argue that the preference for resolution of the second element of the fifth foot is tied to the location of word end: line-internal spondaic word end is generally avoided in epic meter (as in iambic trimeter) as it evokes untimely rhythmical disruption. In other metrical phrase types, like iambic, trochaic, or dochmiacs, the problem with counting quantities becomes even more visible, as single ∪ may be replaced by – which in turn may be replaced by ∪ ∪ or even ∪ ∪ ∪ (West 1992: 137-40). I argue that the ease with which *mora*-count ½ is replaced with *mora*-count 1 (and more disruptive replacements can be found in the texts) makes it very unlikely that the regularity of metrical rhythm stems from the performance of 'durations'.[2] Attempts to allow for more, variable durations – for the anceps element, for example, somewhere between long and short (Dale 1969), or for up to seven or more different durations (West 1982, 1992) – have provided scholars with a means to maintain the rhythmic regularity, but at the cost of the 'quantitative accent': rhythmical requirements like periodicity and isochrony cannot be attained from an approach based on absolute time values (Allen 1973, 1987; Devine and Stephens 1994; Nespor and Vogel 1986; Gussenhoven 2004; Gussenhoven and Jacobs 2011). Also, the durational approach does not account for similar syllable structures on different rhythmical elements.

A different interpretation of the performative impact of metrical text was suggested by Allen (1973), who preferred an alternative approach, later followed by, as mentioned above, Devine and Stephens. Their starting point is not the visible surface structure of meter, but the universal periodicity of rhythm. Instead of distilling rhythmical regularity from the metrical structure, this method assumes rhythmical regularity, and only then starts looking for its visible remnants in the surface structure, that is, in meter. In other

[1] For example in the pieces of poetry read by Stephen Daitz on www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOvVWiDsPWQ, (last access 2 May 2017) and, with regard for the pitch accent, by Stefan Hagel on www.oeaw.ac.at/kal/sh/ (last access 2 May 2017) and, for Latin, by Brooks 2007 on the CD that comes with the book

[2] Golston and Riad (2000) note that, with the exception of anapaests, all metrical rhythms lack periodicity in a durational approach.

words: meter is not rhythm, but it merely reflects rhythm to a certain extent. To a limited degree, the rhythm of ancient Greek prose, non-metrical text is equally reflected in its surface structure, despite the obvious lack of regular patterning in its scansion. Still, both text types, metrical and non-metrical, are seen as an alternation of rhythmically prominent elements (theses) and rhythmically less-prominent elements (arses), much like the pattern of dynamic stress accent.

What does this mean with regard to the performance of Homer's hexameter? The metrical hexameter may then vary in the number of syllables (I) as two light syllables may be contracted into a single heavy syllable, the rhythmical hexameter (II) is a flawless example of the universal rhythmical principle of 'counting by two':

(I) – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – X
(II) [TA] [TA] [TA] [TA] [TA] [TA] (T = Thesis; A = Arsis)

Devine and Stephens (1994) argue that the thesis-arsis alternation primarily functions as the timing mechanism of speech. Speech production is timed internally by the regular temporal intervals between prominent stimuli: a sort of beat which is the result of acoustic prominence every so many milliseconds. In natural unplanned speech, speakers automatically and unknowingly produce their utterances in accordance with such a beat. Sometimes this means that tempo of speech increases as there are so many rhythmically less prominent syllables in a row that they need to be compressed in pronunciation. At other times, tempo of speech slows down as there are three or four consecutive prominent syllables: the time in between is then accounted for by prolongation of the prominent syllables or by silence. In many cases, syllables either lose or gain (some) prominence in order to maintain the speaker's rhythmical regularity. What sets Greek poetry, i.e. metrical text, apart from non-metrical prose is the severe restriction on the abovementioned rhythmical adjustments in composition and performance. There is a limit to the number of either prominent or less prominent syllables in a sequence, and prominence cannot be strengthened or weakened as easily as in non-metrical speech. The rhythmical regularity of ancient Greek texts is thus reminiscent of the dynamic accent, and Devine and Stephens interpret the metrical evidence in order to reconstruct a stress-accented rhythm for Greek speech – both because of Aristotle's remark (*Rh.* 3.8, 1408b) that "all utterances, metrical and non-metrical, are rhythmical" and because of rhythmical periodicity as a linguistic universal, for metrical and non-metrical utterances alike. The strong correspondence between ancient Greek meter and phonology, however, forces scholars to allow for variety in durations, beyond the simple dichotomy of 'long' and 'short'. As mentioned above, metricians came up with up to sev-

en or even twenty different syllable durations. Devine and Stephens refuse to resort to absolute syllable durations. Yet maintaining regular temporal intervals in speech production requires them to allow for considerable adjustment of *prima facie,* phonological syllable 'duration' by prolongation or shortening of syllables in phonation. Such adjustment, labelled 'submoraic', since it is not expressed in the phonological *mora* of syllable duration or accentuation, should be studied as a rule, or as a constraint that is typical for ancient Greek.

Thus, meter and rhythm share different roles in the prosody of epic narrative, both in its composition and in performance. Meter serves as the framing structure for the compositional unit of the verse. It determines the mapping of disyllabic and trisyllabic feet on a twelve- to seventeen-syllables phrase.

The realization of feet as either tri- or disyllabic does not seem to have anything to do with the semantics of the words, nor does it suggest any meaningful regularization of patterning within or between the lines. The choice between two or three syllables per foot merely enables the composer to locate differently shaped words (O'Neill 1942). Contrary to metrical phrases, which are organized externally in distiches or stanzas, dactylic hexameters are grouped in series without any obvious restriction as regards the number of lines. In performance, metrical 'length' does not automatically function as an audible feature; the notion that syllable structures like 'long' and 'short' represent absolute syllable durations has been generally recognized as untenable (Allen 1973, 1987; Devine and Stephens 1994; Golston and Riad 2000). The regular coincidence of verse end and clause end in Homeric poetry has led to the observation that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not only initially composed per verse (Parry 1971), but also recited with a pause at every verse end (Daitz 1991; Nagy 2000). The mismatch of verse end and clause end has been analysed as enjambment (Higbie 1990; Clark 1997) and considered an instance of emphasis (Edwards 2002).

As happens with meter, rhythm concerns both the composition and the performance of epic poetry. Its role in the latter is taken for granted, because rhythm is a feature of spoken language, and it is the organizing principle behind the 'chunks' into which spoken language naturally divides (Allen 1987; Devine and Stephens 1994; Bakker 1997; Goldstein 2014; Blankenborg 2016). As a compositional motivator, dactylic rhythm provides the *cola*, the building blocks for the hexameter: the positions of frequent word end (caesurae and diereses) show that the relatively long hexametric line developed in two to four *cola*, themselves internally organized through formulas, rather than in six feet (Porter 1951; Kirk 1966; Clark 2004; Edwards in Finkelberg 2011). Into two hemistichs:

στέμματ’ ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν : ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος (*Il.* 1.14)

[Holding the ribbons in his hand of far-shooting Apollo]

Into four *cola*:

εἶκε Διὸς : θύγατερ : πολέμου : καὶ δηϊοτῆτος (*Il.* 5.348)

[Remove yourself, Zeus’ daughter, from the war and the fighting]

ὣς ἔφαθ’, : ἡνίοχος : δ’ ἴμασεν : καλλίτριχας ἵππους (*Il.* 11.280)

[Thus he spoke and his charioteer put the whip on the horses with beautiful manes]

Into three *cola* (Kirk’s “rising threefolder”):

διογενὲς : Λαερτιάδη : πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεῦ (*Il.* 2.173)

[Descendant of Zeus, son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus]

Together with intonation, rhythm also contributes to the coherence of the phonological phrase, keeping *cola* together in a clause even over the verse-end (Goldstein 2014; Blankenborg 2015, 2016). An example like *Il.* 6.509b-10a shows that the phrasal contours created by rhythm are not similar to those created by meter:

ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται
ὤμοις ἀΐσσονται (*Il.* 6.509b-10a)

[On both sides his manes spring out on the shoulders]

There is a scholarly tendency to use meter and rhythm almost as synonyms and to understand the regular recurrence and patterning of heavy and light syllables as the regular recurrence and patterning of rhythmically prominent and less-prominent elements (Dale 1969; Halporn, Ostwald, and Rosenmeyer 1980; West 1982; Silva Barris 2011; Staab 2014). However, the ‘quantitative rhythm’ (or ‘metrical rhythm’) of Greek metrical texts cannot be taken to mean that rhythm was the product of the regular distribution of ‘long’ and ‘short’ syllables, appealing to the listeners’ ability to distinguish between two durational categories. Indeed, as mentioned above, Devine and Stephens (1994) relied on Allen’s (1973, 1987) observations on Greek dynamic accent in order to reconstruct a rhythmical grid, analogous to his approach of reconstructed stress patterning. They describe metrical (similar to non-metrical) rhythm as the regular recurrence of more prominent auditory stimuli into a timing mechanism for the production of speech. They consider the differences in syllable ‘length’ on the basis of syllable structure

as not significant in the performance of Greek poetry: audible differences in syllable duration may arise from the speaker's personal preferences, or merely indicate an artificiality in the shortening and prolongation of vowels which emphasize the status of the speaker. As the structural marker of ancient Greek poetry, syllable 'length' is reminiscent of dynamic stress-accent patterns. Thus 'dactylic' rhythm, that is, a series of feet, each consisting of a rhythmically prominent thesis ('*DUM*') and a less-prominent arsis ('*diddy*' or *'dum'*), stems from 'dactylic' meter (– ∪ ∪). The series of feet ends in rhythmical disruption: an anceps element (printed X) which is metrically indeterminate (so either – or ∪) and rhythmically indifferent. Thus, the rhythm of a single dactylic hexameter ('six-footer'), the metrical phrase of ancient Greek epic like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, runs like this:

1		2		3		4		5		6	
	–		–		–		–		–		–
–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	X
	↑				↑		↑				↑
metron/foot				thesis			arsis				anceps
	-dum		*-dum*		*-dum*		*-dum*		*-dum*		
DUM-diddy		*DUM-diddy*		*DUM-diddy*		*DUM-diddy*		*DUM-diddy*		*DUM-dum*	

As I pointed out above, a single hexametric line is not the domain of rhythm, as rhythm keeps words, word groups and phonological phrases together in *cola*, or series of *cola*, sometimes over the verse end. Dactylic rhythm is thus better studied in the word group, the *colon*, or a cluster of verses. A typical cluster of Homeric lines may then create the following rhythmical profile (for reasons of perspicuity the metrical verse end is marked with | in the rhythmical rendering):

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
πολλὰ δ' ὅ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων.
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὣς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἱέμενός περ·
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἠελίοιο
ἤσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.
(*Od.* 1.1-10)

[Tell me about the man, Muse, of many ways, who for a very long time /

wandered, after he destroyed Troy's sacred citadel. / He saw the cities of many men and got to know their attitude. / Many woes he suffered at sea in his heart, / striving to save his own life and the safe return of his comrades. / But as much as he wanted to, he could not protect them this way: / because of their own stupid mistakes, they perished, / fools, who ate the cows of the Sun god, son of Hyperion; / he, in turn, took from them the day of their safe return home. / Start from any point in these events, Goddess, daughter of Zeus, to inform us as well.]

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ πλάγχθη,
DUM-diddy DUM-diddy, DUM-di, di-DUM-diddy, DUM-diddy DUM-dum, | *DUM-di,*
ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·
di-DUM dum-DUM diddy-DUM diddy-DUM-di di-DUM-dum:
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω, πολλὰ δ' ὅ γ'
DUM-dum DUM-dum-DUM diddy DUM-diddy DUM diddy DUM-dum, | *Dum-di di-*
ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν, ἀρνύμενος
DUM-dum-DUM diddy DUM-diddy DUM-diddy-DUM-dum, | *DUM-diddy-DUM*
ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων. ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὣς ἑτάρους
dum-DUM-dum-DUM dum DUM-di di-DUM-dum. | *DUM dum DUM diddy-DUM*
ἐρρύσατο, ἱέμενός περ· αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν
dum-DUM-diddy DUM-diddy-DUM-dum: | *DUM-dum DUM diddy-DUM-di*
ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο, νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς
di-DUM-diddy-DUM-di di-DUM-dum | *DUM-diddy, DUM-diddy DUM*
Ὑπερίονος Ἠελίοιο ἤσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν
diddy-DUM-diddy DUM-diddy-DUM-dum | *DUM-diddy*: *DUM-di di DUM-di*
ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ. τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ
di-DUM-diddy DUM-diddy DUM-dum. | *DUM diddy-DUM-di, di-DUM, diddy-DUM*
Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.
diddy, DUM-di di DUM-dum. |

Epic is characterized by, and recognizable from, its specific prosodic phrasing, both in composition and in performance. Other genres are equally identifiable as such or as text types because of their distinctive prosodic patterning: the spoken passages in tragedy are in iambic trimeter ('three-footer' based on *di-DUM di-DUM*), those in comedy in trochaic tetrameter ('four-footer' based on *DUM-di DUM-dum*), lyric poetry uses dozens of intricate and often hard-to-identify metrical forms. The rhythmical profile of many different instances of metrical Greek texts differs considerably from the rhythm of ancient Greek unplanned speech. Aristotle informs us (*Rh.* 3.8, 1408b) that unplanned Greek speech is iambic: *di-DUM di-DUM*. Little could he know that iambic rhythm appears to be a prosodic universal! In this respect, ancient Greek apparently falls in with most languages known today.

2. Epic as Situational Context: The Appeal of Rhythm in Performance

In performance, the rhythm of metrical texts must have made a distinctive impression on the listening audience. An aberrant rhythmical foot would not have attracted the audience's attention (and yet it would have in case of a metrical phrase in non-metrical delivery), but a sequence of lines consistently built from aberrant feet would definitely have caught the spectators' ears. Line after line, the listening audience would have got used to the specific rhythm. It is the rhythm itself that creates expectations: the audience expect it to keep repeating itself either on a smaller or larger scale. Dactylic, iambic, and trochaic verses are highly repetitive within the line, and the lines are repetitive in their sequencing, while choral and lyric meters are less repetitive line-internally and on a larger scale only recur as couplets, stanzas, and strophes. Still, the effect of metrical rhythm, as of rhythm in general, is based on the perception of some kind of iteration.

Once accepted as perceptible and aberrant, the effect of rhythm in performance may as well be approached from the reverse angle. As the distinction between the different rhythms and genres shows, rhythm is tied to the contents of the single line, of the poem as a whole, as well as to the context of the performance. While the aesthetic and emotional relationship between rhythm and the single line has been discussed in recent scholarship,[3] its connection with performance as a context remains relatively uncovered. I therefore propose to describe the performance of epic poetry as a situational context, and by 'situational context' I intend a particular linguistic environment that is conditioned by a fixed set of extra-linguistic factors. The close tie between a performative context and an aberrant rhythm evokes, as I will argue, a specific communicative situation in which the unusual and the expected blend. The performance of metrical text creates a situational context that is recognizable both from its form and its content: hexametric poetry deals with the stories or wisdom of old, as iambs and trochees are reminiscent of everyday speech, and lyric poetry reflects on the emotional ups and downs of life. The aberrant rhythm suits the content's specificity, and, in due course, performers will adapt their delivery to the prominence pattern of the situational context rhythm (Nagy's 'evolutionary model' suggested a similar progress for the Homeric bard, and recent scholarship shows that, in everyday situations, performers will bend the rhythm of their enunciation to both content and context. Speakers adjust their delivery and level of speech formality to the performative rep-

[3] Dale (1969: 254), for example, considers dochmiacs (*di-DUM DUM di-DUM*) as carrying "an inherent emotional expression" and Edwards (2002: 96) ascribes "terrifying qualities" to paeons (*di-diddy-DUM*).

etition, causing regularity to become even more regular, and allowing for deviations to become even more deviant. One may observe how this phenomenon, that is, the almost unavoidable and, as far as the performer is concerned, often hardly noticed aberration of the rhythm of speech, conforms to the rhythm that becomes the situational context. We may take as examples common everyday 'performances' such as the pre-flight safety demonstration on an airplane before take-off, or the announcement of a train delay while you are impatiently waiting on a windy platform. The performer's routine creates the situational context and the wording, the content is identifiable by specific prosodic features alone.

The ability of dactylic rhythm to create a specific performative context is reminiscent of the way phonetic processes, like tempo of speech, create situational contexts. This dactylic rhythm enters the realm of phonostylistics, the branch of phonetics that studies the use of phonetic means which are restricted to specific contexts. I will focus on dactylic rhythm in performance as such: as the usage of an aberrant, almost extra-linguistic phonetic means that is largely restricted to the context of epic performance. Trubetzkoy (1969) briefly discussed phonostylistic issues in the introduction of his *Principles of Phonology*, but this quality of phonology and phonetics has been mostly neglected ever since. Trubetzkoy defined phonostylistics as a "branch" of phonology and phonetics that can "be subdivided into stylistics of expression and stylistics of appeal on the one hand, and stylistics of phonetics and stylistics of phonology on the other. In the phonological description of a language one must take into account the stylistics of phonology . . . . However, the proper object of such a description must remain the phonological study of the 'plane of representation'. In this way, phonology need not be divided into a phonology of expression, a phonology of appeal, and a phonology of representation. The term "phonology", as before, can remain restricted to the study of sound pertaining to the representational plane of the system of language, while 'stylistics of phonology', which in itself is only part of "phonostylistics", focuses on the expressive and conative phonic means of the system of language" (24-5). The 'representational plane' of dactylic rhythm as a phonostylistic means may well be gauged: it is reflected in the metrical phrasing of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and motivated the analysis of the narrative as a stichic text. The meter of the written text is supposed to serve as a clue for the appreciation of the stylistics of expression and appeal, but has largely failed to do so: ancient and modern studies on Homeric performance have been unable properly to account for the performative impact of the epic's prosody. I therefore intend to take a first step towards a proper account, and to attempt a reconstruction of different aspects of the epic's 'phonology of expression'. I will approach epic rhythm's 'otherness' as the 'phonology of appeal', that is, a phonetic means

that is restricted to a specific context and accountable for conditioning a particular linguistic environment.

As pointed out above, hexametric poetry, like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, features a rhythmical profile that differs considerably – and consciously so – from everyday language. What then is its appeal in performance? Is it the mere perception of deviant rhythm being strengthened by its nearly 'endless' (the *Iliad* counts more than 15,000 lines, the *Odyssey* close to 12,000) repetition? The earliest extant works on poetic aesthetics in performance do not go into details with regard to the performative appeal. In the *Odyssey* itself we find a single characterization of it: the legendary Phaeacians, who have rescued and entertained Odysseus after a shipwreck, are "captured by his spell" (κηληθμῷ δ' ἔσχοντο, 11.334) at his autobiographical narrative of the past ten years. Similarly, in her famous poem *The gods' equal* (no. 5), Sappho (sixth century BC) describes her physical reaction when listening to one of her young female students speaking – although this cannot be considered as a real performance and therefore as an amorous rather than a performative appeal. In his dialogue *Ion* (c. 380 BC), Plato introduces his mentor, Socrates, involved in a debate with a Homeric rhapsode, Ion, who just won a prize in a performance competition. Unfortunately, their discussion focuses on content rather than on form, depriving us of a unique opportunity to learn first-hand about the effect of poetry in performance. Aristotle has been mentioned before: his remark on the rhythm of ordinary speech ("iambic") is important as it provides us with the certainty that ancient Greek speakers perceived a distinction between normal rhythm and 'other than normal'. Valuable information with regard to performative appeal might have been found in Aristides Quintilianus' *De musica* (third century AD) but only fragments of his work have survived (D'Angour 2015). It allegedly accounted for two important developments in metrical-rhythmical theory in the fourth and third century BC. First, there had been a paradigm shift in the approach of the relation between music and wording in the fourth century, the so-called New Music. Much remains unclear concerning this development, but it appears to have implied a change in the way music and wording reinforced each another. The New Music performers apparently tried to align the rhythm of spoken language with the musical accompaniment that was common in the performance of poetry. If language's rhythm – and its regularity – had been the performer's guide until then, now music took over, and the measurements of music with it. Language's rhythm became of secondary importance, much like it happens to lyrics in modern popular music. Due to the loss of crucial theoretical work of ancient Greek scholars, we do not know if this paradigm shift was in the end successful. We cannot even draw any conclusion on whether performance of Greek epic took the form of recited poetry (Daitz

1991; Nagy 2000) or song (Beck 2012). We can detect this shift, however, in the results of a debate that took place roughly around the same time. From the time of Aristotle and his pupil Aristoxenos, ancient scholars on prosody considered themselves either 'metricians' or 'rhythmicians'. The former group, already mentioned in section 2 above, considered syllable durations as equivalents of musical measurements, an approach that seems similar to that of New Music. The rhythmicians, on the other hand, maintained language's rhythm as the key to the performance of poetry. Again, as with the remarks on New Music, the crucial theoretical works from the period when this development took place (especially Aristoxenus') are no longer extant or have been preserved in a very fragmentary way.

Especially interesting are the observations of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (second century AD), who comments on the appeal of performance as seen through the eyes of a rhythmician. His comments on the *ethos*, or 'character', of the poetic form, provide a clue for the appreciation of rhythm's 'otherness' and appeal. In the fourth chapter of his work *On Composition* (*De compositione verborum*), he states that the effects that metrical rhythm may attain are considered to be partly inherent to the language itself, more or less as in prose composition. In modern terminology, we may summarize Dionysius' observation in chapter 11 of *On Composition* by stating that rhythm in stress-timed languages conditions various forms of adjustment, in order to maintain rhythmical regularity: syllables may be either compressed or prolongated in delivery. Dionysius speaks of phonetic reduction, a form of submoraic adjustment involving the compression of syllables. He also notes that metrical composition strives to avoid hiatus, the clashing of vowels when a word ends in a vowel and the next word starts with one. He further discusses vowel elision and shortening, which are both forms of submoraic adjustment. Dionysius' account is of paramount importance for us as he also pays attention to the taste and the talent of poets and of performers. With regard to the latter, Dionysius points at the speeding up of the tempo of speech through a preponderance of long syllables. In relation to this particular point, let us compare a holospondaic line like *Od.* 21.15 (there are only six more: *Il.* 2.544, 11.130, 23.221, and *Od.* 15.334, 22.175, and 22.192), to the verses 16-17:

τὼ δ' ἐν Μεσσήνῃ ξυμβλήτην ἀλλήλοιϊν
DUM dum-DUM-dum-DUM dum-DUM-dum DUM-dum-DUM-dum

[The two of them met once in Messene]

οἴκῳ ἐν Ὀρτιλόχοιο δαΐφρονος. ἦ τοι Ὀδυσσεὺς
DUM-di di-DUM-diddy-DUM-di di-DUM-diddy, DUM di di-DUM-dum

[in the house of war minded Ortolochus; at that time, Odysseus]

ἦλθε μετὰ χρεῖος, τό ῥά οἱ πᾶς δῆμος ὄφελλε
DUM-di di-DUM dum-DUM, diddy DUM dum DUM-di di-DUM-dum

[came to collect a debt, that the whole community owed him]
(*Od.* 21.15-17)

In a holospondaic line, the number of syllables pronounced is reduced when compared to the application of resolution, the replacement of a long syllable (*dum*) by a double-short (*diddy*). At first it may come as a surprise that, in Dionysius' view, a preponderance of short syllables, as it is found in *Od.* 21.16 above, also results in a speeding-up of the tempo of speech, as compared to the steady movement of an utterance in spondees. Dionysius apparently discusses two different perceptions of this process of acceleration: in a verse with many long syllables, the temporal intervals between prominent syllables are filled with only one syllable; in verses with many double-shorts the intervals are perceived as shortened due to the compression of the syllables. Still, the verse-type with many double-short elements is considered to be "slower" than the one with many long syllables. Dionysius comments explicitly on Sisyphus' slow and "shameless" boulder in *Od.* 11.598: a holodactylic verse that describes the unstoppable run down the slope of the large stone that Sisyphus worked so hard to push up the hill:

αὖτις ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδής
DUM-di di-DUM-di di-DUM-di di-DUM-diddy DUM-di di-DUM-dum

[then down again towards the plain rolled the shameless boulder]
(*Od.* 11.598)

In *Od.* 21.15-17, the holospondaic verse (15) would still take less time to be pronounced than the subsequent, holodactylic line (16). Verses with many long syllables are in turn considered "solemn" and it therefore comes as a surprise that the "heroic" (epic) rhythm is held to be endowed with solemnity of speech despite its preponderance of light syllables. It need not surprise us that both spondees and dactyls appear to increase the tempo of speech in performance. Compared to the metricians' approach, both verse types speed up language production, since language's rhythm takes the lead and musical accompaniment follows. The metricians' musical bars cause random syllables to become drawn-out, whereas the rhythmicians only allow for word- and phrase-final lengthening (indicated with . in the following example; Ruijgh 1989; Devine and Stephens 1994; Blankenborg 2015):

ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες, ὅσοι φύγον αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον,
οἵκοι ἔσαν, πόλεμόν τε πεφευγότες ἠδὲ θάλασσαν
(*Od.* 1.11-12)

[Then all others, in as far as they had escaped horrible destruction, / resided at home, safely returned from war and the sea.]

The metricians' approach:

ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες, ὅσοι φύγον αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον,
– – |– – |– ∪ ∪ |– ∪ ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | – X ||
οἶκοι ἔσαν, πόλεμόν τε πεφευγότες ἠδὲ θάλασσαν
– ∪ ∪ |–∪ ∪ |– ∪ ∪ |– ∪ ∪ | –∪ ∪ |– X ||

The rhythmicians' approach:

ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες, ὅσοι φύγον αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον,
– –|– –.|– ∪. ∪|– ∪ ∪.|– ∪. ∪|– X ||
οἶκοι ἔσαν, πόλεμόν τε πεφευγότες ἠδὲ θάλασσαν
– ∪. ∪|–. ∪ ∪|– ∪. ∪|– ∪ ∪.|– ∪ ∪|– X ||

In his discussion of metrical archetypes (for example dactyls, anapaests, iambs, and dochmiacs), Dionysius passes a moral and aesthetic judgement on the feet and rhythms they produce and represent (*De verb. comp.* 17, 25, 26 [on Simonides, fr. 37]; cf. *Demosthenes* 50, Aristotle, *Poetics* 23; Longinus, *De sublimate* 39.4): dactylic rhythm is heroic for a reason other than the solemnity of the words. Its appeal as 'heroic' stems from its distinctive 'otherness', and the way it appears to increase the tempo of speech.

3. The 'Impulse' of Rhythm in Delivery

Rhythm is prosody's most important aspect in the context of performance. In the performance of epic narrative, like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Origin of the Gods* or his *Works and Days* (eighth century BC), or Apollonius' *Argonautica* (third century BC), the dactylic rhythm of the performance was a key for the audience to the interpretation of the content. Rhythm creates expectations and catches the audience's attention by keeping words and word groups together and being suggestive of units of understanding. In this section, I will show that these units of understanding and perception are quite different from the units suggested by meter on the representational plane. The rhythmical impulse that guides the understanding and expectations of the listening audience creates a patchwork of phrases of different shapes and sizes.

In current scholarship on epic rhythm and performance, rhythm is regularly studied as an aspect of style, in addition to being a reflection of emotional expression (see Dale's "passionate feeling of some kind", 1969: 254). The studies that discuss style and prosody together, mentioned in section 2 above, focus on the way stylistic issues are reflected in prosody. An ex-

ample concerning the Homeric epic is the discussion of emphasis (see § 1 above): specific words or word groups receive extra emphasis due to their position in the line or the verse, as explained in Edwards' *Sound, Sense, and Rhythm* (2002). Attention is drawn to instances of verses where the verse-end does not coincide with a break in syntax, making it look as if the developing clause runs over into the subsequent line. An example is the run-over clause ὄφρα καὶ ὑμεῖς εἴδετ' in *Od.* 9.16-17a:

> νῦν δ' ὄνομα πρῶτον μυθήσομαι, ὄφρα καὶ ὑμεῖς
> εἴδετ', ἐγὼ δ' ἄν ἔπειτα
> (*Od.* 9.16-17a)
>
> [Now I will first say my name, so that you too / know it, and I may then]

Such enjambment is remarkable in a work that was supposedly (cf. Parry 1971) composed by adding whole-line sentences into a sequence. Verse-end enjambment stands out as exceptional, as it indicates a mismatch of metrical-rhythmical and syntactical composition. Recent studies on enjambment in Homer (Kirk 1966; Clark 1997) have shown how the rearrangement of formulaic material allowed for the run-over of clauses: verse-final and verse-initial formulas and word groups teamed up to make clauses run over the verse end, or to make clauses start at the end of the previous line (a well-known example of the latter is the frequent clause start in verse-final αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα "but then"). Relying on Parry's observation that practically one in every two verses features verse-end enjambment, Higbie (1990) classified the various types of verse-end enjambment in seven categories, based on the level of grammatical expectation at verse end: verse-end enjambment may thus be merely "adding", "necessary", or, in case of a single *mot-en-rejet*, even "violent". Such terminology suggests that verse-end enjambment itself might be consciously exploited by the composer and the performing poet. In Edward's view, that is in no way unique, verse-end enjambment may be semantically strengthened by the verse end itself. The allowance for disruption of the ongoing clause by verse end highlights the (preferably) single *mot-en-rejet*, the awaited-for word(s) at the start of the subsequent line. An example of such strengthened semantics (with single *mot-en-rejet* in line 58) may then be found twice in an example like *Il.* 22.56-8a:

> ἀλλ' εἰσέρχεο τεῖχος, ἐμὸν τέκος, ὄφρα σαώσῃς
> Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάς, μὴ δὲ μέγα κῦδος ὀρέξῃς
> Πηλείδῃ
>
> [Come on, retreat behind the city wall, lest you may rescue / the men and women of Troy, and not offer a chance to gain great honour / to the son of Peleus]

Edward's view is not merely concerned with stylistic matters since it supposes expectations on the part of the listening audience. As, among others, Blankenborg (2016) shows, any such expectations, which lie in the field of situational context, depend on the combined effects of *both* rhythmical and intonational phrasing. In an example like *Od.* 14.5b-6a, it is safe to assume that both the rhythmical impulse and the intonational phrasing kept the coherent run-over clause together in delivery. An attempt to highlight verse-final or verse-initial semantics through emphasis would remain unconvincing:

ἔνθα οἱ αὐλὴ
ὑψηλὴ δέδμητο

[where a courtyard / of considerable height had been constructed]

In her study on word order in tragic dialogue, Dik (2008) analyses verse-end enjambment in the iambic trimeter and reaches a similar conclusion, but she allows for the possibility for verse-end enjambment to evoke a slight hesitation in order to underline a *mot-en-rejet*, as in Sophocles' *Electra* (86-7a):

ὅς μου κατέκτα πατέρα χἠ πανώλεθρος
μήτηρ

[who killed my father together with that total disaster: / my mother]

I consider such emphasising hesitation also possible in a Homeric line like *Il.* 22.41:

ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστι
σχέτλιος
(*Il.* 22.40b-1a)

[since, obviously, he is much stronger, / this monster]

Examples concerning verse-end enjambment show what generally holds true for Homer's verses: metrical verses and rhythmical phrases may end differently. The phrases and clauses form a pattern that does not necessarily coincide with the verse-to-verse pattern constructed by meter. The notion that meter and rhythm strive towards the same level of temporal regularity does not mean that their patterning coincides – and indeed the two patterns partly overlap. Together with a third type, i.e. intonational phrasing, rhythm contributes to a patchwork of phrases. Its primary contribution is the short "spurt", or as Porter (1971) put it, the "rhythmical impulse" which drives the narrative forward towards the next (breathing) pause – although always keeping up a regular, if uncommon, pace. Even in its non-everyday dactylic form, rhythm remains "an alternation between elements that allow sylla-

bles to run their full course" (Trubetskoy 1969: 22) and syllables that are compressed in their phonation (Arvaniti 2009; Blankenborg 2015; Rathcke and Smith 2015). Deliberately alienating as dactylic rhythm may be perceived in performance, its concept is in line with the rhythm of all other utterances, including what Aristotle (*Rh.* 3.8, 1408b) considers the rhythm of Greek unplanned speech, that is, iambic.

Rather than constituting a by-product of meter in Homer's verses, rhythm's impulse in situational-context delivery may also be illustrated from a point of view that is different but nevertheless widely accepted. I am referring to the widespread notion that a preponderance of dactyls is an indicator of light, perhaps even festive content, whereas verses filled with spondees are meant to convey serious and possibly depressing matter (cf. Dionysius' observations in section 3 above), a notion purely based on their metrical profile. Needless to say, verses that do not tally with this observation are more numerous than the ones that do:

κὰδ δ' ἄρ' ἐπὶ στόμ' ἔωσε; πεσόντα δέ μιν λίπε θυμός
(*Il.* 16.410; holodactylic: festive?)

[he hit him with a spear in the mouth; as he fell his life left his body]

σίτου καὶ κρειῶν ἠδ' οἴνου βεβρίθασιν
(*Od.* 15.334; holospondaic: solemn? depressing?)

[(tables) that are laden with food, with meat, and with wine]

Of course, I do not intend to go over the same argument again. I moved from the alternative notion that the contribution of rhythm to a situational context does not derive from stylistic observations that are then acknowledged in prosody. I took a lead from the otherness of Homeric prosody itself, only to turn to phenomena that may be identified as conscious deviations from everyday speech and the performative quality of unplanned spoken ancient Greek.

4. Experiencing the Situational Context of 'Heroic' Rhythm

The realization of dactylic rhythm differs considerably from the rhythm of unplanned speech: the *DUM-diddy*, *DUM-diddy*, *DUM-dum* of dactylic rhythm in epic performance is quite different from the *di-DUM*, *di-DUM*, *dum-DUM* you were likely to hear had you been so fortunate to roam the streets of Pericles' Athens. However, it was never the intention of epic performance to make one feel as if he or she was simply taking a stroll around the city, engaging in discussions and conversations of, or with, others. The

close tie between meter and phonology shows that dactylic verse, the heroic rhythm, was meant to be experienced as an aberration of normal speech, that it was to an extent artificial and sensitive to specific situational contexts, i.e. the rendering of the past exploits of the legendary heroes in faraway lands and the compiling of gnome-like lists of wise sayings known as didactic poetry.

Both the rhythm of everyday ancient Greek unplanned speech and the dactylic rhythm of epic performance are not readily perceptible to modern-day audiences and scholars. The attempt (Devine and Stephens 1994) to reconstruct the rhythm of Greek speech as the timing mechanism of spoken language makes it plausible, however, that ancient Greek's rhythm was patterned on a grid that can be compared to the feet of the dynamic stress accent used in most modern languages. If their view is correct (and I think it is), the rhythm of unplanned everyday Greek speech may well be gauged; even the slightly stylized iambic rhythm of the tragic trimeter would then sound rather familiar to modern ears. Yet, dactylic rhythm would still sound as an aberrant phenomenon, possibly even as an extra-linguistic constraint on delivery. Nevertheless its effect and impact may, to an extent, be experienced by modern-day readers or spectators too.

The difference between aberrant and normal rhythm can be perceived by reading aloud rhythmical translations. Compare the following two passages, one in 'hexameters' and one in 'iambs':

> Speaking so, he hit Dryops, hit straight in the gullet by spearpoint;
> fallen he lay on the ground at his feet; and he left him to lie there;
> Demuchus then, Philetor's young heir – good fighter, gigantic –
> knee being struck with the spear – held fast was he, then to the next man,
> wounding him with his powerful sword he tore out his spirit.
> (*Il.* 20.455-9, trans. by Mark W. Edwards)

> Now again, you've escaped your death, you dog,
> but a good close brush with death it was, I'd say!
> Now again, your Phoebus Apollo pulls you through,
> the one you pray to, wading into our storm of spears.
> We'll fight again – I'll finish you off next time
> if one of the gods will only urge me on as well.
> But now I'll go for the others, anyone I can catch.
> (*Il.* 20.449-54, trans. by Robert Fagles)

In Homer's Greek, both passages share the same metrical format, and the same dactylic rhythm. A translation in iambs makes the poem sound more colloquial, whereas the 'hexameters' evoke grandeur and standoffishness. Translators feel encouraged to strengthen these effects: Fagles uses a tag like "I'd say!", while Edwards inserts dashes in order to imitate the word order

and the presentation of information that is characteristic of epic poetry. Like many situational contexts that are marked as such on the basis of prosodic contours, epic poetry has a particular way of presenting information. Homer's hexameters leave much room for unnecessary information, and for parentheses. This 'redundancy' of epic diction is reminiscent of the one we typically find in modern situational contexts like train station announcements or pre-flight safety instructions. The feeling of redundancy experienced by passengers is not caused by the irrelevance of the information (especially for those who hear it for the first time and for whom it may prove of vital importance!), but by the type of attention that the situational contexts themselves require from their audiences. The contexts whose specific character is the result of the repetition of prosodic characteristics risk losing their listeners' attention: the repetition itself, especially in an artificial and aberrant prosodic contour, distracts the listeners who concentrate on the aberrancy of the rhythm rather than on the content. Modern listeners go through something similar when they board a plane. Frequent flyers are, of course, familiar with the content of the pre-flight briefing and, in their case, it is the prosodic pattern, rather than the instructions themselves that makes them recognize the procedure. They therefore do not pay much attention to it. On the contrary, new passengers will be at first keen on the content of the demonstration, but will soon discover that a full comprehension of it is seriously hindered by the deviant prosodic pattern of the presentation. Deviance is actually strengthened by the repetitiveness of the presentation as experienced by the crew members. They adapt the prosody of their speech, especially the intonational pattern and rhythmical prominence, to the repetitiveness of their task. By doing this, they unintentionally create a mismatch between the presentation's prosodic contour and its informational value. For first-time passengers, this makes it harder to gauge the importance of the message, just as it entices frequent flyers to practically ignore what is being explained. In a similar way, all passengers waiting on the platform may recognize the start of a delay announcement, but will focus on what is actually being announced only when *their* destination is mentioned.

A comparison of the various situational contexts established by ancient Greek metrical rhythm strengthens the intuition that performances in heroic (dactylic) rhythm suffer from a comparable loss of informational value. In the metrical text that most closely resembles everyday speech (the spoken verses of Attic tragedy), each line offers the listeners pieces of information they need in order to follow the developments of the plot. Aeschylus', Sophocles' and Euripides' extant dramas may be compared to comprehensible screenplays, the audience cannot afford to be distracted. The plots of Sophocles' *Oedipus* or Euripides' *Medea* can only be fully understood and appreciated by an audience that has heard every spoken verse. Con-

trariwise, the performance of Greek epic does not require such a high level of attention. The verses of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* feature many "fillers" (Bakker 2005: 1-21): words and word groups that, although interesting in their own right, do not provide essential information for the audience – many contain contradictory or superfluous items of information and quite a few distract the audience allowing them to sidetrack from the main issue. Let us consider in this regard the following passage from the Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2:

> The men of Argos and Tyrintha next,
> and of Hermione, that stands retired
> with Asine, within her spacious bay;
> of Epidaurus, crown'd with purple vines,
> and of Trœzena, with the Achaian youth
> of sea-begirt Ægina, and with thine,
> Maseta, and the dwellers on thy coast,
> wave-worn Eïonæ; these all obeyed
> the dauntless Hero Diomede, whom served
> Sthenelus, son of Capaneus, a Chief
> of deathless fame, his second in command,
> and godlike man, Euryalus, the son
> of King Mecisteus, Talaüs' son, his third.
> But Diomede controll'd them all, and him
> twice forty sable ships their leader own'd.
> Came Agamemnon with a hundred ships,
> exulting in his powers; more numerous they,
> and more illustrious far than other Chief
> could boast, whoever. Clad in burnish'd brass,
> and conscious of pre-eminence, he stood.
> He drew his host from cities far renown'd,
> Mycenæ, and Corinthus, seat of wealth,
> Orneia, and Cleonæ bulwark'd strong,
> and lovely Aræthyria; Sicyon, where
> his seat of royal power held at the first
> Adrastus: Hyperesia, and the heights
> of Gonoëssa; Ægium, with the towns
> that sprinkle all that far-extended coast,
> Pellene also and wide Helice
> with all their shores, were number'd in his train.
> (*Il.* 676-705, trans. in blank verse by William Cowper)

I suggest that this 'filling' is not merely a by-product of the oral origin and tradition of the Homeric epic (Parry 1971; Lord 2000), but can also be interpreted as a licence, if not a peculiar feature of the specific situation-

al context of the two poems. Their verses are so long, and their rhythmical profile is so aberrant and repetitive, that a listening audience would not have focused on single words, but rather on the salient details that entertained them and kept them under the narrator's spell.

5. Conclusion

By approaching the rhythm of ancient Greek epic performance as the motivator behind a situational context, I have ventured into the realm of phonostylistics, the study of stylistic implication of phonetic variation. Dactylic rhythm, as an "expressive function of sounds" (Hartman and Storck 1972: 175), was closely connected to the particular linguistic environment of the epic performance, and it could have permeated utterances from the performance of epic onwards. Expressive functions of sounds are known to do that (let us think, for example, of the deviant rhythmical and intonational patterns of (too) frequently used swearwords like 'OMG!', and 'WTF!').

The study of ancient Greek phonostylistics has only just begun and would require a closer analysis of all the various metrical and non-metrical texts and of their variants in writing in order to gauge the way performance explains the "permissible sound substitutes" (Trubetzkoy 1969: 22) that seem to run counter to the required phonological syllable structure.

In this article, I have focussed on the phonetics of deviant rhythm. Starting from universals concerning rhythm (cf. Arvaniti 2016; Lavidas 2014; Turk and Shattuck-Hufnagel 2014; Rathcke and Smith 2015), I have provided evidence in order to support my proposal to treat the rhythmical profile as a phonostylistic expression of appeal. Dactylic rhythm differs considerably and consciously from the iambic rhythm of unplanned Greek speech: its realization in performance evokes a context that predicts and offers a particular content, in addition to its aberrant and highly stylized delivery. I have therefore argued that the contribution of rhythm to situational context does not start from stylistic observations, like enjambment or emphasis, which are then acknowledged in prosody. In fact, I took a lead from the otherness of Homeric prosody itself, only to turn to phenomena that may be identified as conscious aberrations from everyday speech or as characteristics of epic diction that find their ontology in the rhythmical profile.

In addition to the examples I quoted in section 5 and in order to provide scholarship and the general public with a better reason to accept the otherness of epic Greek's rhythmical profile, I would like to point at the highly interesting contemporary experimental environments through which we may get closer to the performance of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The staging of Greek tragic plays and comedies already has a long tradition. Thea-

tre groups around the world, both professional and amateur, bring Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes to the stage, often in translation, but also in ancient Greek. Translations that copy the rhythm of the original, iambs for tragedy and trochees for the spoken passages of comedy, give the audience a sense of the repetitiveness of metrical rhythm, with its lack of rhythmical variation. Performances in ancient Greek suffer from the lack of proper and full understanding of the subtleties of Greek prosody, even though the performers' voices invariably adapt to its staccato-like rhythmical profile.

In the past few years there have been durational performances of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, i.e. readings of the entire text of the epics. On December 8 2016, the *Iliad* was read entirely in Dublin, by volunteers who responded to a call via social media. On March 24 2017 groups of reciters all over the world, taking turns, contributed to a durational performance of the *Odyssey*.[4] With so many contributors it seemed inevitable that many different and personal reading styles were heard. Yet, the various contributions had one thing in common: all the performers adapted their reading style, either consciously or not, to the otherness and repetitiveness of the metrical profile that deviates from the universal of rhythmical regularity of modern languages as well as from the one of unplanned spoken ancient Greek.

That, at least, provides us with a new and highly interesting universal: the otherness of epic Greek's rhythmical profile creates a distinctive situational context in performance. And from this, of course, comes the need to keep experimenting.

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Marco Duranti*

Iphigenia Taurica and the Narrative Artificiality of Euripides' Prologues

Abstract

Taking *Iphigenia Taurica* as a case in point, this article will investigate the narrative artificiality of Euripides' prologues. By creating prologic pieces which defied the dramatic festivals' conventions, the Greek playwright distanced his tragedies from that kind of theatrical rituality, transforming them into a vessel for newly established and independent principles and values. Hence Euripides' prologues set and defined the pre-conditions of his dramas, which may be perceived as a new intellectual construction. This article will explore the relationship between the prologue and the rest of the play, epilogue included and will, therefore, consider the play as a tripartite integrated structure which tests the possibility of conciliating myth, and its divine protagonists, with men's new intellectual and ethical values.

Keywords: Euripides; prologues; *Iphigenia Taurica*; *deus ex machina*; verisimilitude

When approaching the writing of a play, a dramatist must take into consideration the fact that he has to inform the audience about the events related to the pre-dramatic past and the present dramatic situation, both necessary to understand the ensuing action. Among the Greek tragedians, Euripides conveyed this information in a particularly straightforward manner, that is, by entrusting one solitary character (the *prologizon*, as I will often define him in the course of the article) with rather long and detailed narrative speeches. These prologic pieces may easily give the impression of deviating from the norm of verisimilitude, in that they do not sound as plausible dramatic reproductions of real speech acts. In modern dramas, but also, as far as we can tell from their remains, in Greek tragedies other than Euripides', the speeches delivered by a single character on stage are employed (and allowed for) only when psychologically justified. Now, the majority of Euripides' prologues are devoid of this psychological plausibility, since the Euripidean *prologizontes* apparently start speaking with no reason and go

* University of Verona - marco.duranti@univr.it

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on delivering a plain narration.[1] Moreover, they usually provide a lot of details which, even when relevant to the comprehension of the play itself, are often irrelevant in the characters' present condition. For instance, there is no point in the long genealogies which open several Euripidean prologues: why should the characters recall remote facts and people which have no connection with the present situation?

This article will focus on the question of *why* Euripides opened his dramas with such undramatic prologues and will consider them as a means to create a distance between the play and the dramatic festivals' rituality. While this rituality required the dramatist to open a space of dramatic illusion from the beginning of the play, Euripides contrarily emphasizes the gap between reality and the counterfactual world of drama.

As a result, the traditional tragic play gives way to a new intellectual construction, which can be considered as a kind of experiment: the prologue sets its initial conditions which will be developed in the course of the tragedy. Thus, the function of the diegetic prologue can be understood only in close connection with the plays' overall design. A detailed consideration of this process in the whole of Euripides' production would exceed the limits of this article, and I will, therefore, concentrate on *Iphigenia Taurica* (henceforth, *IT*) as a case in point of this dramatic practice. The play clearly exemplifies the mechanism through which the prologue becomes an integral part of an overall design. In this respect, the analysis of *IT* will allow us to draw some general conclusions which may apply to a number of Euripidean tragedies, i.e. *Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Helen*, *Orestes*. These plays share two fundamental characteristics: they all stem from a divine order or intervention and are closed by the agency of a *deus ex machina*. With the exception of *Hippolytus* (428), these plays belong to a relatively mature phase

[1] There is some approximation in this statement, as in some of his tragedies Euripides does 'disguise' the *prologizon*'s speech in more dramatic forms. This applies especially to his early tragic production: the prologue of *Alcestis* is cast as a farewell to Admetus' house; the prologic speech of *Medea* was already praised in the *scholia* for the verisimilar imitation of how real people would express their feeling (*sch. Med.* 57). The prologues of *Andromache* and the *Suppliant Women*, introduced by an apostrophe to Andromache's homeland and by a prayer to Demeter respectively, may be still perceived as dramatically motivated. But in *Heracles*, the *prologizon*, Amphitryon, starts speaking with no apparent reason; and Euripides' prologues become increasingly artificial with the passing years. In the *Phoenissae*, the eighty-line narration of the premises of the play is in no way justified by the dramatic exordium of Jocasta's speech (an apostrophe to the Sun). These examples seem to show how the 'undramatic' prologue was a later development, gradually introduced in Euripides' dramaturgy.

of Euripides' production, ranging from about 418/13 (*Ion*)[2] to 409 (*Orestes*). *Ion* dramatizes the consequences of Apollo's order, given to Orestes, to kill Clytemnestra, while the plot of *Helen* originates from Hera's order to Hermes to replace Menelaus' wife with a fake and hide the true Helen in Egypt. *Hippolytus*' and *Ion*'s prologues are delivered by a deity, which foregrounds their proleptic orientation. Despite a few differences, all these tragedies open and close with some kind of divine intervention, which is absent from the rest of the action. This entails the presence of a common circular structure which the analysis of *IT* can help identify, especially in order to establish what bearings it has on the issue of the relationship between the human and the divine worlds – which is, as it were, the pivot of Euripides' dramas. In particular, I shall point out the presence of two interacting spheres: traditional religion and cult, on the one hand, and human intellect and ethics, on the other. I will then focus on the crucial question of whether the initial distance between these two spheres, as stated in the prologue, is somehow bridged in the course of the play, and remarkably in the epilogue.

Before moving to the analysis, some preliminary terminological clarification is needed. If the term 'soliloquy' is usually employed to indicate the speech through which a solitary character pathetically expresses his thoughts and feelings, Euripidean prologic speeches' lack of dramatic pathos makes its use not completely appropriate. I will, therefore, employ here the more generic term 'monologue' and will refer to the dramatic implausibility of the Euripidean prologic monologues by labelling them as 'implausible', 'undramatic', or 'artificial'. Moreover, I will use the term 'premises' for the Greek term ὑπόθεσις which in ancient Greek scholarship refers to those pieces of information which must be conveyed in the prologue, and are listed by Meijering as follows (1987: 117): "who is on stage?"; "where is the scene laid?"; "what is the character doing there?"; "what has been going on before this?".[3] I will also use the word 'mimetic' as a synonym for 'dramatic'.

1. Critical Approaches to the Question of the Artificiality of Euripides' Prologues

A first negative (if comic) judgement on Euripides' prologues is contained in the famous underworld *agon* in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In the competition with

[2] According to the statistical analysis of the resolutions in the iambic trimeters in Cropp and Fick 1985: 23, table 3.5, the composition date of *Ion* may range between 418 and 413.

[3] This ὑπόθεσις must not be confused with the ὑποθέσεις which Aristophanes of Byzantium intended as an introduction to the play, containing information related both to the play and its *mise en scène*.

Euripides for the throne of the best tragic poet in Hades, Aeschylus ridicules his rival's prologues by introducing the enigmatic formula "he lost his flask" (ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν) in seven of them: *Archelaus*,[4] *Hypsipyle*, *Stheneboea*, *Phrixos*, *Iphigenia Taurica*, *Meleagros*, *Wise Melanippe* (*Ran.* 1205-48). However we interpret this phrase,[5] it is clear that Aristophanes is comically pointing out the prosaicness, monotony, and absence of *pathos* of the Euripidean prologues.

Following Aristophanes, in the ancient tragic *scholia* the prologues are blamed for their lack of dramatic quality.[6] A *scholion* on *Eumenides* (1a), for instance, contrasts the effective soliloquy of the Aeschylean Pythia, who speaks out of fright of the Erinyes, with the unemotional, and therefore undramatic, speech of the Euripidean *prologizontes*:

> *Sch.* Aesch. *Eum.* 1a. . . . ἡ δὲ προφῆτις πρόεισιν ἐπικλήσεις ὡς ἔθος τῶν θεῶν ποιησομένη· ἀπροόπτως δὲ ἰδοῦσα τὰς Ἐρινύας κύκλῳ τοῦ Ὀρέστου καθευδούσας πάντα μηνύει τοῖς θεαταῖς, οὐχ ὡς διηγουμένη τὰ ὑπὸ τὴν σκηνήν – τοῦτο γὰρ νεωτερικὸν <καὶ> Εὐριπίδειον – ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς ἐκπλήξεως τὰ θορυβήσαντα αὐτὴν καταμηνύουσα φιλοτέχνως.[7]
>
> [The Pythia advances in order to perform the ritual invocation to the gods; however, having suddenly seen the Erinyes sleeping around Orestes, she reveals everything to the spectators. She does not simply tell what is happen-

[4] See however Dover (1993: 339-40, *ad Ran.* 1206-8) on the double version of this prologue.

[5] Dover (1993: 337-8, Aristoph. *Ran.* 1200) explains that λήκυθος "is a small pot with a narrow neck and spout, which we may translate 'flask', usually containing oil for rubbing on the skin, but also scent and cosmetics". The expression ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν has often been interpreted as a sexual metaphor: ληκύθιον may suggest the verb ληκᾶν, a slang word indicating sexual intercourse; moreover, one common type of ληκύθιον had a phallic shape. When at l. 1203 ληκύθιον is combined with κῳδάριον "little fleece" and θυλάκιον "little sack", the audience may think of "pubic hair, penis and scrotum" (ibid.). However, the sexual interpretation is not convincing, for, as Bain 1985 has clearly underlined, it is inconsistent with the characters' statements about the ληκύθιον, or with the imagery attached to it. For the sake of brevity, I refer the reader to Bain's argumentations. A more convincing reading of this scene is provided by Navarre 1933, who points out that Aristophanes reproaches Euripides for creating monotonous and prosaic prologues, characterized by a prosaic tone, the repetition of the same syntactical structure (name in nominative, participial clause, principal verb), as well as of the same metric scheme (the end of the participial clause often coincides with the penthemimeral caesura of the second or the third verse). The prosaicness of the Euripidean *exordia* is signalled through the reference to humble, everyday objects, such as the ληκύθιον, accompanied by other analogous objects like κῳδάριον and θυλάκιον.

[6] On the *scholia*'s criticism regarding Euripides' prologues, see Elsperger 1906: 6-8; Meijering 1987: 190-200.

[7] The *scholion* is quoted according to Smith 1993.

ing behind the scene – for this will be typical of Euripides and later dramatists – but it is owing to her fright that she talks of what has confused her: this is an artistically effective choice.]

The modern understanding of Euripides' prologues has been influenced by the negative opinions of the *scholia* and has regarded them for a long time as sclerotized, "template" ("Schablone", Leo 1908: 23) or "rigid" pieces ("starr", Schadewaldt 1966: 24). This supposed lack of artistry derived from their alleged 'objectivity', that is, their being seemingly dispassionate accounts delivered by a dramatically isolated narrator, just like the prologue character of Latin comedy (see Leo 1908: 25; Schadewaldt 1966: 10; H. W. Schmidt 1971: 34-5). Towards the end of the twentieth century, though, this notion of objectivity started to be challenged as scholars gradually realized that, far from being objective, these speeches actually reflected their narrators' point of view. Moreover, the *prologizontes* were not viewed as detached from the dramas they introduced, but their words were seen as the expression of their own emotional involvement in the events.[8] The acknowledgment of the subjective quality of the prologic narration has advanced the critical comprehension of Euripides' prologues, but the question of *why* Euripides opens his plays with such undramatic speeches still remains unanswered.

A good starting point for unravelling this issue can be the association of the prologue with the final *deus ex machina*, which a few scholars intro-

[8] Paola Albini noticed that in *Medea* and *Helen* the prologic narrators orientate their narration in order to emphasize specific elements; Medea's nurse wavers between compassion for her mistress and fear of her possible future actions, whereas Helen strives to redeem her reputation from the shame of adultery, insisting on her conjugal fidelity (1987: 33-8). It would therefore be rather simplistic – Albini remarked – to define Euripides' prologues as mere narrative additions to the play, and their dramaturgical function should be reconsidered. Much on the same line, in the early 1990s, Charles Segal argued that "in the tragic prologue this voice [the speaker's] is neither impersonal nor objective. Euripides in particular often begins with what looks like epic objectivity; but this soon dissolves because the speaker is not an impersonal narrator and because the scene must also set up the crisis of the moment" (1992: 87). More recently, this narrative subjectivity has been investigated from a narratological point of view by Goward 1999 and Lowe 2000 (see esp. 157-87). Lowe has also provided a concise treatment of the Euripidean prologic narration (2004: 270-3), pointing out that "the prologues still leave gaps and ambiguities, and their narrators are anything but objective, impersonal authorities" (271). The narratological method has also been applied to the analysis of single dramas, as in Andreas Markantonatos' study on Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (2002) or Anna Lamari's on Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (2010). These two studies provide an interesting scrutiny of these two play's prologues, which focus on how the narrators communicate off-stage events through analepsis, thus conveying their own vision of the events (see (Markantonatos 2002: 29-44 and Lamari 2010: 23-40).

duced at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both have been considered as stereotypical and manneristic dramatic devices aiming at the construction of a conventional religious and cultic frame, which was supposed to enclose a play that actually defies tradition through the introduction of new philosophical, religious and ethical stances. Verrall's opinion well represents this critical approach:

> In each case the body of the work, the story acted by the real *dramatis personae*, is strictly realistic in tone and fact, and in purport contradictory to 'religion' (that is to say, to certain decadent superstitions); while the prologue and the epilogue, in sharp opposition with the drama proper and therefore with manifest irony, assert *pro forma* the miraculous explanation which the facts tend visibly to invalidate and deny. . . . The use of this method . . . is characteristic of Euripides, and is the true cause of a phenomenon, which candid and reasonable judges have always admitted to be perplexing, the singular stiffness, formality, frigidity and general artlessness which often appears in his openings and conclusions. (1895: 166)

Verrall's view is shared by other critics, such as Décharme (1893: 397-401), Terzaghi (1938), Pohlenz (1930: 467-9), and W. Schmidt (1963: 212-13). This critical approach is still interesting in that it takes into account the interaction between the beginning and the end of the tragedy. However, as we shall see, the excessive emphasis on the disconnectedness of these two parts from the rest of the play, as if they were three independent sections, prevents us from understanding the overall project of the play itself. Although acknowledging that both prologue and epilogue are formally distinct from the rest of the play, we must conceive them as closely *integrated* with it.[9]

2. The Question of Euripides' 'Undramatic' Prologue

Before examining the relationship of the prologue and epilogue with the rest of the play, I wish further to underline the peculiarity of Euripides' prologues by comparing them with the Aeschylean and the Sophoclean models. I will do this by exploring their verisimilitude, that is, by investigating to which extent the speech acts performed on stage can be considered as plausible, if approximate, reproductions of real-life ones.

[9] In chapter 15 of *Poetics* (1454a37-b6), Aristotle condemns the use of the machine to solve the tragic predicament; in his view, this device should only be used to reveal what had happened either before or after the dramatic action. Aristotle's critique, however, does not concern us here, as we are not considering the *deus ex machina* with regard to its integration into the dramatic action, but from a *thematic* point of view only.

Aeschylus did not open all his tragedies with a prologue:[10] two of them, the *Persians* and the *Suppliant Women*, started directly with the *parodos*. The initial scene of *Persians* may be perceived as slightly implausible as the chorus first introduce themselves and then dwell on the narration of past events, thus speaking longer than seems required by the dramatic situation. This has to do with the peculiar status of the tragic chorus that, as Guido Avezzù remarked, is "a character endowed with peculiar performative features" (2015: 12-13). On the one hand, the tragic chorus may be perceived as "an alien partition in respect to the dramatic action" (8) due to its mythological digressions and self-referential comments. On the other hand, the tragic *choreutae* do not break the 'fourth wall' by addressing the spectators (as instead happens with the comic chorus, especially in the *parabasis*). Despite this 'narrative licence', in the *Persians* the opening choral speech finds its psychological justification in the Chorus' anguished anticipation of news coming from the Persian army in Greece. The *Suppliant Women*'s prologue is even less 'implausible', as the Danaids are praying to Zeus, the protector of the suppliants (l. 1), while also invoking the city and the land of Argos (l. 23). Thus, their speech sounds as the verisimilar reproduction of a real-life speech act.

More clearly than his choral openings, Aeschylus' prologues are well rooted in a plausible dramatic situation. The *Seven Against Thebes* begins with Eteocles' speaking to his citizens. The watchman's speech in *Agamemnon* has often been mentioned as a typical example of a psychologically justified soliloquy (see, for instance, Schadewaldt 1966: 7). Walter Nestle, however, argued that the watchman's speech is artificial, in that he describes his actions instead of performing them: "the watchman only narrates that he is addressing the gods, he is trying not to fall asleep, that he spends his time singing and whistling etc., but he does not act all this".[11] Nestle drew the same conclusion about the Pythia's speech in the *Eumenides*. Yet, the idea that these Aeschylean prologues are formally artificial is unacceptable since the psychological plausibility of the Watchman's and the Pythia's words, their emotional colouring, as well as their integration in a verisimilar dramatic situation ensure that the prologues could not be perceived as an undramatic premise to the play. Moreover, as we have seen, the *scholion* on *Eumenides* did understand this crucial difference in comparison with Euripides' prologues.

As regards the second play of the *Oresteia* trilogy, i.e. the *Libation Bearers*, the fragmentary status of its prologue does not prevent us from under-

[10] Aristotle defines the prologue as the entire part of the tragedy preceding the entrance of the chorus (*Poetics*, ch. 12, 1452b19-20).

[11] "Der Wächter erzählt nur, daß er die Götter anrufe, gegen den Schlaf kämpfe, sich die Zeit mit Singen und Pfeifen vertreibe usw., aber er agiert dies alles nicht", 1967: 21).

standing that Orestes introduces his prologic speech through a prayer to Hermes (see on this Brown 2015). As in the case of the *Suppliant Women*, this speech also sounds verisimilar.

All in all, we can conclude that Aeschylus' prologues were not as artificial and psychologically unjustified as most Euripidean prologues. In his turn, Sophocles' dialogical prologues are even more distant from Euripidean practice. In his plays the dramatic premises are revealed in a dialogue between two characters, in which one informs the other about what has gone by.[12] The spectators are smoothly introduced into the fictional world of the drama; such device is specifically commented upon in the tragic *scholia*, which often praise the "plausibility" (πιθανότης, see Meijering 1987: 193) of Sophocles' prologues. In this regard, Euripides' prologues stand in striking contrast with Sophocles', in that they actually expose the gap between reality and the mimetic world of the plays. The Euripidean *prologizon* remains on the threshold, as it were, of the drama, as his/her speech is in fact neither a dialogue nor a psychologically justified soliloquy. Thus, the spectators experience the paradox of a figure who is still in an in-between not yet dramatic position, and describes the mimetic world before it becomes really mimetic. He or she can even deictically allude to other characters who may be present on stage, if only as mute presences.[13] Indeed, one could even expect that, being independent and detached from the dramatic action and therefore having no apparent reason to interrupt or wind up his or her speech, the *prologizon* may go on indefinitely.

The dramatic implausibility of these speeches is further underlined by the *prologizontes*' motionlessness. Unlike the Sophoclean ones, who move around the stage realistically describing the play's imagined space,[14] Euripidean *prologizontes* are often provided with a reason to remain still: for example, they can be presented as suppliants sitting beside an altar (see *Andromache*, *Heracleidae*, *Heracles*, *Helen*). Nevertheless, we normally understand such reason only

[12] Contrariwise, the *Trachiniae*'s prologue may be considered as a soliloquy, since it is not clear whether the Nurse, who speaks from l. 49, is present right from the start (see on this Schmidt 1971: 27-34).

[13] In *HF* 14 Amphitryon points to Megara (Μεγάραν τε τήνδε); in *Tro.* 36 Poseidon points to Hecuba (τὴν δ' ἀθλίαν τήνδ(ε)).

[14] In *Aiax*, Odysseus looks for and examines Ajax's footprints in order to understand whether he is in his tent; in *Electra*, the pedagogue describes the topography of Argos to Orestes (see Avezzù 2004: 157-9). An interesting combination between words and action can be found in *Philoctetes*; in its prologue, Odysseus describes Philoctetes' cave as he remembers it, asking Neoptolemus to tell him if it is still inhabited; Neoptolemus, who can actually see the cave, confirms Odysseus' memories by describing the objects it contains. Finally, in *Oedipus at Colonus* Antigone describes to her blind father the place they are in, even though she does not know exactly where they are until she is told by a passer-by.

at the end of the prologue itself, after the *prologizon* has expounded the mythic background of the action that will ensue. This "retarded motivation", as Schadewaldt aptly defined it,[15] does not eliminate the impression of artificiality: for most of the prologic monologue the lack of motion of the *prologizon* is not motivated by an apparent dramatic situation but is the reflection of an undramatic speech act. Furthermore, even when the spectators eventually comprehend the cause of this motionlessness, the long monologue to which they have been listening still sounds dramatically groundless. In *IT* 42-3, for instance, Iphigenia claims that she will tell a dream which she had in the previous night "to the air" (πρὸς αἰθέρ[α]), hoping that the ominous message that she read in it (i.e. Orestes' death) is false.[16] This may explain why she indulges in narrating the dream (43-62), and yet does not justify the previous forty-two lines, in which the princess painstakingly described her origins, the Aulis sacrifice, her arrival in the land of the Taurians, and her present duty as a priestess in Artemis' temple. Her tale is simply too long and detailed to fit in the dramatic situation, nor is it adequately justified from a psychological point of view. While Aeschylus' initial monologues were emotionally coloured, Iphigenia, like the majority of the Euripidean *prologizontes*, is not sufficiently agitated or emotionally stirred to make a case for such a detailed account.

Against this backdrop, it is easy to understand that the end of the prologic speech and the beginning of the canonical dramatic action are signalled by either a fully 'dramatic' speech act or by a movement or gesture. The former is generally an apostrophe that the *prologizon* addresses to another character – which can nevertheless go unheard or unheeded;[17] also, one character who was already present on stage from the beginning may

[15] "Nachgetragene Motivierung" (1966: 8-9n4). Schadewaldt points out that, while Euripides always provides a practical reason for the presence of the *prologizon* on stage, he does not provide an "interior" ("innerlich", 10), that is, psychologically plausible, reason why he or she should speak. In this he corrects Leo, according to whom Euripides did not provide "exterior", nor interior motivations (1908: 23).

[16] "Narrating an ominous dream to the sun and the sky was believed to prevent the omens of doom from coming true" (Kyriakou 2006: 64, *ad IT* 42-3).

[17] In *Hcld.* 48 Iolaos tells Heracles' children to come close to him in order to protect them from the Argive herald sent by Eurystheus; he then addresses the herald himself (l. 52). In *Hec.* 55 Polydorus' ghost addresses his mother, who cannot hear him. In *Ba.* 55 Dionysus calls the chorus of Asian maenads. In *Tro.* 45-7 Poseidon greets the city of Troy before leaving (even though he will not actually leave, being prevented by Athena's entrance). Finally, in *Pho.* 84 the apostrophe takes the form of a prayer to Zeus. As regards *Hec.*, it is interesting to note that Polydorus feels pity for his mother and pronounces the interjection φεῦ, an expression of pathos which the prologue character cannot use until he/she becomes fully dramatic.

start speaking or a new one may enter and start a dialogue.[18] A movement towards the extra-scenic space is rarer, and mainly concerns the supernatural *prologizontes*, who exit in order to leave room to the human characters.[19]

In order to fully understand this Euripidean gradual disclosure of the dramatic world, we should not forget that Attic tragedies dramatized portions of mythical stories that were to be mounted during a festive celebration. Through a long narrative introduction rooted in the distant mythical past and terminating in the character's own present, Euripides exposes how the dramatist operates a selection of myth material and transforms it into a dramatic representation. In other words, he brings to light the making of the drama itself, that is, a process that would normally be regarded as an implicit premise of the play's own staging. Moreover, by shaping this narration in a way which is not compatible with the requirements of dramatic plausibility, Euripides distances himself from the dramatic festivals' normal practice, according to which the dramatist created a counterfactual world that should unfold and come 'alive' before the spectators right from the beginning of the play. Thus, Euripides dissociates his plays from the festivals' cultic rituality, implying that his tragedies must be considered as autonomous works of art, regardless of the cultic frame in which they are staged. If tragedies were normally supposed to be rooted in the Athenian community's socio-political mind-set and practices because of their connections with rite[20], Euripides makes clear that his dramas possess aesthetical,

[18] In *HF* 59 Alcmena, who has hitherto stood silently on stage, even when she has been called into cause by Iolaos at l. 14, 'comes alive' and starts to speak. In *Suppl.* 42, it is the chorus who begin to speak and start off the action. A new character, unannounced by the *prologizon*, enters in *Med.* 49, *Andr.* 56, *El.* 54, *Hel.* 67, *Or.* 71, whereas in *Alc.* 24, Apollo announces the entrance of Thanatos.

[19] With the exception of Dionysus in *Ba.*, the other supernatural prologue characters (Aphrodite in *Hipp.*, Polydorus' ghost in *Hec.*, and Hermes in *Ion*) never reappear on stage after the prologic monologue. Only twice do human characters exit after the prologic monologue: in *IT* and *Pho.* In *IT*, the dramatist needs Iphigenia to leave the stage, so that she will not meet her brother, while in *Pho.*, Iocasta abandons the stage thus allowing for Antigone and the pedagogue to appear in the the *teichoskopia* scene (88-201).

[20] A long tradition of studies underlines the link between the tragedies and the socio-political context in which they were staged. On the one hand, Longo 1990: 14, Seaford 2000, Croally 2005: 67 maintain that tragedy was supposed to confirm the civic values. On the other hand, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet argue that "although tragedy, more than any other genre of literature, thus appears rooted in social reality, that does not mean that it is a reflection of it. It does not reflect this reality but calls it into question" (1990: 33; see also Goldhill 1990: 127). Contrary to both positions, Jasper Griffin contends that tragedy had no political function, and its main aim was to give pleasure (1998: 60-1; 1999). In my opinion, tragedy was probably supposed to revive old mythological stories, and to show their enduring relevance for Athenian contemporary society. However, the tragedians could not but express in their works the growing distance between the mythical values and the ones of contemporary Athens. My contention is that, through the diegetic prologue, Euripides marks his distance not only from myth, but also from the *polis*.

ethical, and intellectual values which should be regarded as independent from or even inconsistent with those same thoughts and practices. This understanding of the prologue as an isolating device which actually separates the play from the ritual context contradicts conclusions like those of Verrall, which saw the prologic monologue as a link to that same context.

Thus, while tragedies were normally meant to re-actualize myth in the *polis*, Euripides aimed at testing whether myth was in agreement not only with acknowledged and collective values, but also with the new intellectual, religious, and ethical concepts which were developing in his times. His *prologizontes* have a special role in this and while they voice the mythical premises of the play, they also act as mediators between the audience and myth itself; by doing this, then, they have the 'opportunity' to orient the audience's response to the mythical past, as well as to the ensuing tragic plot, which builds on this past. In this regard, *IT* is a case in point in the investigation of the reasons that led the dramatist to assign the introduction of his play to an individual character who delivers the initial monologue from a specific perspective.

3. *Iphigenia Taurica* as a Dramatic Experiment

We may now focus on *IT* as an example of how Euripides constructs his dramatic experiments. In the first place, we should examine the above-mentioned correspondence between prologue and epilogue, that is, the two parts of the play in which the deities intervene. The prologue contains two forms of supernatural intervention, though narrated by Iphigenia. Firstly, the heroine explains that Artemis saved her by sweeping her off to the Taurian land, thus creating the initial conditions of the play (28-30). Secondly, she recounts a prophetic dream, which she has had in the previous night (42-55): it should act as a warning against the possibility that she kills her brother Orestes, but the heroine refers instead its content to the past, interpreting it as a revelation that Orestes is already dead.[21]

In the end, it is Athena who intervenes in order to prevent Thoas, king of the Taurians, from capturing Orestes and Pylades, on the run after the

[21] In her dream, Iphigenia was sleeping in her paternal palace in Argos, when suddenly an earthquake forced her to flee outside, where she saw the house collapsing apart from a single pillar. This pillar took then human form and voice, and Iphigenia sprinkled it with water as she is used to do in order to prepare the victims for sacrifice. Iphigenia interprets the dream as follows (55-8): "Orestes is dead – he was the victim that I sprinkled in preparation for sacrifice. The pillars of a house are its male children, and those on whom my holy water falls are killed" (trans. by J. Morwood).

Prince has killed his mother, and to entrust Orestes and Iphigenia with the task of founding new cults in Attica (1435-89).

Thus, prologue and epilogue create a supernatural frame for a play acted only by mortal characters. Yet, the fact that the divine intervention we find in the prologue is indirect, that is, mediated through the narration of a mortal should not be overlooked. The meaning of this Euripidean choice can be better understood by comparing it with what happens in a play like *Hippolytus*, whose prologue is delivered by Aphrodite. There the deities' usual foreknowledge takes the form of a proleptic design, resulting in the entire tragedy being shaped as the fulfilment of that prologic project. The goddess announces that she will prove her power by punishing Hippolytus for refusing to honour her as he should (1-22), and then describes her plan to chastise him, even though she does not go into detail (23-50). As Francis Dunn aptly pointed out, "*Hippolytus* begins at the end. As the play gets underway, it seems that the action is already finished, and the hero of the drama is as good as dead" (1996: 88). Indeed, this tragedy does not look like an open experiment, but like a demonstration of a theorem: the theorem of divine power. In *IT* we do not find the same circularity since the play is not introduced by a deity, but by its protagonist. In principle, Euripides could have followed the same pattern and could have brought Artemis on stage, but this choice would have forced him to make the goddess at least partially justify the ambiguities and the contradictions of her behaviour. She would have had to clarify if she had actually asked for Iphigenia's sacrifice, or if Calchas, the seer, had falsely interpreted her will.[22] Moreover, she would have been urged to explain why she moved Iphigenia to a country where she must perform human sacrifices: does the goddess relish in human blood? On the contrary, since Artemis appears neither at the beginning, nor at the end of the play, she is exempted from vindicating her own actions, and indeed, as we shall see, the play leaves these questions largely unanswered. Nevertheless, the choice of avoiding a divine *prologizon* also prevents the drama from being nothing more than the fulfilment of a divine plan, as happened in *Hippolytus*. In fact, this allows us to define *IT* is not as a demonstration of divine power, but as an open experiment on the relationship between men and gods.

The play's prologue determines a profound gap between the human and the divine realms. Not only do the gods' decisions have dire effects on men's lives, but they also appear unintelligible to men; on the one hand,

[22] Parker (2016: xxxix) writes that "in *IT* there is no suggestion whatever that Artemis demanded the sacrifice"; however, there is no evidence, apart from the subjective belief expressed by Iphigenia in her long soliloquy (380-91, see below), that she did not.

human beings are hardly ever able to interpret the divine messages correctly, as is the case of Iphigenia's dream.[23] And yet those orders are often incompatible with the human moral sense, as in the case of the matricide imposed to Orestes[24] or the human sacrifices. Significantly enough, these issues are filtered through the perspective of Iphigenia, the mortal who has most suffered and suffers because of the obscurity and contradictoriness of celestial will. At ll. 35-41, she explains her obligations as a priestess in the goddess' temple and clearly condemns Artemis' lust for human sacrifices as morally revolting.[25] The princess is incensed against the goddess who relishes an event – a 'festival', as she sarcastically defines it – based on human sacrifices. Only the name of Artemis' festival is indeed καλόν, "beautiful" (36),[26] while the ceremonies there performed are hideous. In fact, in Iphigenia's monologue, καλόν is the only adjective which reveals the narrator's own judgement, together with τάλαιν(α), "wretched", of l. 26, as Iphigenia calls herself for having being cheated into coming to Aulis under the false promise of marriage with Achilles. These two adjectives point out the girl's double source of suffering and rancour, not only against her father – as well as the other Greeks – but also against Artemis.

After Iphigenia's monologue, the same atmosphere of indignation and resentment against the gods re-emerges in the second scene, when Orestes and Pylades enter the stage. The two friends have sailed to the Taurian land in order to steal the image of Artemis from the goddess's temple and bring it to Attica; it is a mission with which Apollo has entrusted Orestes, so that he can be freed from the Erinyes, who have been persecuting him after the matricide. In an apostrophe to Apollo, Orestes – who should be Phoebus' protégé – calls into doubt the intentions of the god who, after obliging him to kill his mother, may lay another trap for him (77-9). In fact, the relationship of Orestes with Apollo appears to be here as deteriorated as the one between Iphigenia and Artemis. The prince's pessimism about Apollo's real purposes degenerates when, after being captured by the Tau-

[23] With respect to Iphigenia's dream, Caroline P. Trieschnigg justly remarked that "[i]ts complexity and obscurity make the audience experience the difficulties of interpretation, which relates to one of the main themes of the play, namely the human limitations in understanding the divine" (2008: 463).

[24] Cf. the strong condemnation of the matricide in Dioscuri's speech at the end of Euripides' *Electra* (1244-6): δίκαια μέν νυν ἥδ' ἔχει, σὺ δ' οὐχὶ δρᾷς. / Φοῖβος δέ, Φοῖβος—ἀλλ' ἄναξ γάρ ἐστ' ἐμός, / σιγῶ· σοφὸς δ' ὢν οὐκ ἔχρησέ σοι σοφά. "Her [i.e. Clitemnestra's] punishment is just – but not your deed. And Phoebus, Phoebus – but he is my lord, I keep silent. Wise though he is, he gave you unwise bidding" (quoted according to Diggle 1981, trans. by M. J. Cropp).

[25] This passage is well known for being syntactically intricate as well as philologically problematic. I intend to analyse it in a separate contribution.

[26] *IT* is quoted according to Diggle 1981.

rians, he and his friend Pylades are about to be sacrificed to Artemis. Orestes accuses Apollo of having condemned him to die far away from Greece, out of shame for his first oracle which ordered the murder of Clytemnestra (711-15).[27]

However, albeit in the play human beings must face the puzzling obscurity and the apparent meaninglessness of the divine decisions, they are still able to develop a new, purer conception of the divinity by attributing to the gods an ethical prominence which has no mythic correspondence. It is Iphigenia who asserts her belief in divine moral perfection declaring that she "believe[s] that no god is bad" (οὐδένα γὰρ οἶμαι δαιμόνων εἶναι κακόν, 391). She rejects the idea that Artemis truly enjoys being honoured with human sacrifices, and argues that in fact it is the Taurians who, being bloodthirsty themselves, ascribe their ethic faults to the goddess (379-80). Criticism against the immorality of myth is not unprecedented in Greek literature (see, for instance, Xenophanes' rationalistic views or the Pindaric rejection of the myth of Tantalus' human banquet in *Ol.* 36-63). Yet, what is peculiar about this passage is the fact that it is a dramatic character who denounces it. Paradoxically enough, Iphigenia surprisingly denies Artemis' approval of the Taurian sacrifices, even though it was Artemis herself who moved her to the Taurian land to attend those same rites. The mythical bases of the play are therefore called into doubt by the very character who has been directly involved in those events and who has expounded them in the prologic monologue. This is indeed the paradox of myth which, after turning into drama, denies itself by means of its own creatures.[28]

The characters' refusal of the mythical image of the gods is also conveyed by the emphasis they lay on the value of familiar love which men believe the gods should also share. Maria Serena Mirto (1994: 80-1, 93) has

[27] Orestes, however, changes his mind after the recognition scene, when he acquires new confidence in his ability to accomplish the mission prescribed by Apollo. Indeed, he argues, if men are brave, the gods will be more eager to help them (909-11). Even though this opinion comes from his partial understanding of the events, it is not enough to dismiss it as irrelevant. In fact, such statements demonstrate the extent of human ignorance and man's inability to understand reality as well as the suffering caused by unintelligible divine decisions.

[28] On the characters' criticism of the mythical gods in Euripides' plays, see, among others, Papadopoulou 2005: 85-116. As she writes, focusing on *Heracles*, "Hecuba in *Trojan Women* and Iphigenia in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* also refused to believe that gods are imperfect. Heracles moves one step ahead here because, realizing that gods have indeed proven to be imperfect, he not only criticizes them but refuses to call them gods" (114-15). As regards *IT*, Papadopoulou argues that "Iphigenia's 'idealized' notion of divinity may seem sophisticated and appealing, but its validity is far from certain". In fact, we shall see that the gods eventually fail to fully adapt to Iphigenia's purified image of them.

cleverly underlined the relevance of this theme as a new possible 'communication channel' (the definition is mine) between humans and gods. The two human siblings, Iphigenia and Orestes, believe that the divine ones, Apollo and Artemis, will be united by the same affection they feel for one another, and will consequently favour their attempt of fleeing from the Taurian land. It is Orestes who first applies the idea of familiar harmony to the divine sphere, surmising that Apollo cannot have ordered the theft of Artemis' statue without the consent of his sister (1012-16); on her part, Iphigenia exploits this argument when she prays Artemis to forgive her and her brother for the theft and to let them sail off with it (1082-8; 1398-402).

Thus, the finale of *IT* brings about the implicit question whether the divine world will prove sensible to men's longing for justice and compassion. The answer to this question is passed on to Athena who, in her final *rhesis* (1435-76), invests Orestes and Iphigenia with the task of founding new cults in honour of Artemis in Attica (1446-67). Critics have often held this final focus on religion to be rather unsatisfactory, arguing that the *exodus* fails to provide a credible explanation for the actual reasons behind divine behaviour. Apollo and Artemis, around whom the play's action has been revolving, do not appear in the epilogue and therefore never reveal the reason of the many sufferings they have caused to the mortals, nor, in the case of Artemis, what her position on human sacrifices actually is. Wright refers to a fairly common opinion when he laments the "absence of intellectual or spiritual meaning" in *IT*, also adding that "in the place of theological profundity", the play ends "on a note of emptiness" (2005: 381-2).[29] However, seeing no profundity in this *exodus* means to miss the signs that hint at a possibly positive evolution of the divine world. In order to detect them, we should start noticing that Orestes' mission to the Taurian land is endowed with a twofold (human and divine) purpose. On the one hand, it is aimed at liberating his sister and, on the other, at transferring Artemis' statue and cult to Attica. At the beginning of her speech (1435-1441b), Athena explains to Thoas that Orestes has come not only in order to bring Artemis' statue to Athens, but also to rescue his own sister. Here she first mentions the human element which had not yet been revealed to Orestes in Apollo's oracle. In fact, these two aspects are united by the value of familiar love, which the deities eventually seem to comprehend. It is again Mirto (1994: 93) who observes that, at the end of her speech, Athena specifies that she will escort the Greeks in their return journey "in order to look after my *sister*'s venerable statue" (σώζουσα ἀδελφῆς τῆς ἐμῆς σεμνὸν βρέτας, 1489, emphasis added). This final remark is no casual addition, but shows how the gods have developed a concern for familial relationships, the same to which Ip-

[29] Wright refers this statement also to *Helen.*

higenia appealed in her prayer to Artemis. Athena will take care of Artemis as Orestes has done with his own sister. This tinges Apollo's oracular request with a brotherly concern for the spreading of Artemis' cult. As Donald Mastronarde has remarked, "the goddess Artemis is in need of rescue from herself by her brother and in need of the civilizing influence of Athena and Athens" (2010: 165).

This 'humanization' of the divine also affects the nature of Artemis' cult, as the new Attic rites devoted to her will put an end to the human sacrifices, thus becoming attuned with human morality and sensibility.[30] In this regard, we may draw a connection between this ritual improvement and Iphigenia's trust in divine goodness, which she expressed in her soliloquy. If that early act of confidence contradicted the play's mythic background, that is, the play's 'past', it now finds its fulfilment in the prospective cult, that is, in the play's 'future'. In other words, the divine world has evolved from the initial conditions accounted for in the prologue to the final results envisaged by Athena's speech. Yet, far from being self-directed, this transformation has relied on men's shrewd ability to accomplish the mission prescribed by the gods.

However, it would be hasty to define *IT*'s ending as unproblematically happy;[31] indeed, an utterly positive reading clashes with the numerous elements that flaw the ethical evolution of the supernatural world. The newly established Attic cult of Artemis asks for a priest to perform a violent ceremony during which a man's neck is cut in order to gather some blood (1458-61), an act which is 'metonymically' remindful of the Taurian human sacrifices (see Cook 1971: 122) and, as Athena clearly states, compensates Artemis for the loss of those rites. This testifies to the difficulty of converting the primitive gods to a new, purer conception of religion. But more significantly, this finale does not eliminate the impression that human beings may only act like puppets in the hands of the gods. In this regard, Emanuela Masaracchia (1984) has called attention to the fact that Iphigenia's future as a priestess in the Brauron temple counters her desire, to which she has repeatedly alluded throughout the play, to go back to Argos and enjoy the normal life of an aristocratic woman (see, for instance, l. 220, where she expresses her sorrow for having been "deprived of marriage, children, homeland, friends", ἄγαμος ἄτεκνος ἄπολις ἄφιλος). This conflict between

[30] These new rites could be partially due to Euripides' invention (see Kyriakou 2006: 457, *ad IT* 1458-51).

[31] Gilbert Murray agreed with this kind of interpretation; according to him, *IT* "begins in gloom and rises to a sense of peril, to swift and dangerous adventure, to joyful escape" (1913: 143). Similarly, Spira celebrates the "healing element" ("heilendes Element") contained in Athena's epiphany, which brings about a "restoration of order" ("Widerherstellung der Ordnung", 1960: 120-1).

men's aspirations and fate is not explicitly thematized here (unlike in Euripides' *Electra*, 1308-41, where Orestes and Electra grieve their exile and separation), and yet Iphigenia will be obliged to serve Artemis, regardless of her own will. Human beings must obey divine pronouncements, even though they cannot fully understand them. And yet, the gods themselves are far from being omnipotent, since they are subject to the power of Necessity (τὸ χρεών), which, as Athena states, rules over men and gods alike (1485). Thus, reality is determined by an obscure supernatural power, which lies beyond human understanding.

4. Conclusions

Taking *Iphigenia Taurica* as a case in point, I have tried to investigate the narrative artificiality of the Euripidean prologues by setting them within the context of the dramas they introduce. Contrary to a tradition of studies which maintained that the prologue is a means to establish a 'mechanic' and conventional connection with the rituality of the Attic dramatic festivals, I have argued that the prologue is aimed at isolating the play from that same context. It can be said that Euripides aims at bringing about in his audience a sense of intellectual detachment from drama. This does not mean that he refuses or bypasses the establishment of an emotional empathy between his plays and the spectators, and yet the overall effect of theatre should not be limited to this. Therefore, while the play itself may be an enthralling piece of work, its two extremities (the prologue and the epilogue) should instead lead the audience to an intellectual perception and understanding of the dramatized action.[32] By looking at Euripides' plays as a sort of investigation, we may notice that the prologues set the initial conditions, whereas the epilogues allow us to evaluate their results. This clarifies how the intellectual message of Euripides' plays can be understood only through a global reading of each play. In fact, although many critics have regarded the diegetic prologue and the *deus ex machina* as two rigid structures separated from the play, by looking at *IT,* as a case in point, I have argued that all parts of drama, though distinct, are strictly combined. Instead

[32] As Ann Michelini writes, "emotion and reasoning . . . appear concentrated and stylized, in separate areas. The result, as always, of this sort of arrangement is that the audience are enlisted as active rather than passive participants in the dramatic experience, since the synthesis of the parts so severed can occur only in their minds, and since they cannot trust and surrender to a dramatic event that fails to present itself as an acceptable quasi-reality" (1987: 106). In fact, Euripides' tragedies do not present themselves as a "quasi-reality", but as an intellectual construction, aimed at developing specific intellectual and 'philosophical' issues.

of emphasizing the independence of the play from its opening and closing pieces, underlining their exclusive connection with Greek traditional religion, it is more accurate to say that the entire play exhibits the co-existence of two levels: the cultic and the human one. The sacrificial rites which Iphigenia is forced to perform among the Taurians as well as the religious mission which Apollo has assigned to Orestes and Pylades pertain to a religious sphere, while the human level is represented by the experiences, the feelings, and the desires of the mortals. At the beginning of the play, the human and the divine spheres are separated by a profound gap, as the obscure celestial decisions have caused men to go through misery and woe, fostering feelings of resentment against the gods. However, even though in the mythic tradition the ambiguousness of the gods' decrees and their dubious morality – dubious at least for the most 'enlightened' intellectual circles – are a given and the necessary premise of a play dealing with myth, nothing would prevent Euripides from depicting a more sincere and sympathetic relationship between men and gods in his plays.[33] Indeed, if his human characters are able to develop, throughout the drama, a new model of morality, affection, and intellectual capacities, one may legitimately ask whether these human elaborations will be somehow shared by the gods, in other words, whether the gods will become more 'humane', their decisions will come out less opaque, and their behaviour will be more in line with human ethics. The meaning of the final direct intervention of the deity is indeed that of providing an answer to these questions.

The most prominent element in many Euripidean epilogues is the foundation of new cults and new rites. This creates a new connection between the play, and hence myth, and rite, which seems to compensate for the disruption of that same relation, which took place in the diegetic prologue. But how should we judge this ritual finale with regard to human sensibility? The answer can vary from play to play. At the end of *Electra*, the two siblings, Orestes and Electra, are forced to separate from each other and to leave their native country (1308-41), which signifies the impossible conciliation between religion and human aspirations. *IT*'s finale is more problematic since, from a human point of view, its positiveness is rather hard to establish. Unlike in *Electra*, Orestes and Iphigenia are not present when Athena delivers her final speech. Therefore, we cannot know their reactions

[33] This is true also with respect to the human characters who have acted as the instrument of the divine will; even when they have performed questionable actions, it does not mean that Euripides considers them as morally corrupted individuals since the very beginning of the play. As Martin West writes in the introduction to his edition of *Orestes*, "[t]rue, Orestes has killed his mother, and Electra helped him; but this is a fixed datum of the tradition, it is the very definition of Orestes and Electra, not something Euripides has used to give them a bad character" (1987: 33).

to it. Will Iphigenia, who has repeatedly expressed the desire to lead the normal life of an aristocrat woman, be pleased in continuing to be Artemis' priestess in Greece too? The question remains unanswered. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that, in this tragedy as well as in the others, the sphere of traditional religion and cult cannot fully contain the human longing for a fairer and more understandable world. While seemingly celebrating the Greek rituals, Euripides exposes their inadequacy in coming to terms with a deeply felt religious and ethical sense. Thus, the remote mythical stories and the rites which have allowed incorporating them in contemporary Greece public life are similarly devoid of real significance.[34]

If traditional religion, with regard to both myth and contemporary rituality, fails the mortals' expectations, the play's ending still displays a positive element, that is, the human protagonists' own virtues, which they have demonstrated all along. And this is what Euripides holds as truly significant for his contemporaries. Thus, the contrast between the formal rigidity of prologue and epilogue and the more open structure of the rest of the play may be even better appreciated. While human sensibility can express itself throughout the play, it is curbed and even 'oppressed' in its two extremities by the overwhelming demonstration of a supernatural arbitrary power. This is emblematically expressed, in the prologue, by Iphigenia's repressed condemnation of Artemis' delight in human sacrifices, and in the epilogue, by Athena's statement that both humans and gods must yield to the yoke of Necessity. However, these limitations do not diminish the importance of human values, which have proven ethically superior to the conventionality of myth, and therefore, we may say, will continue to live after myth itself. The mortals have proven their ability to react most honourably in the face of the hardest predicament, and in this, Euripides' experiment has definitely succeeded.

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[34] In this respect, Vincenzo Longo (1963) rightly perceived in Euripides' final scene a flair for the erudite mythological excursus, which reveals his lack of belief in the traditional mythical deities and preludes to the Alexandrine fondness for aetiologies.

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Nikos Manousakis*

The Extant *Rhesus* and Its Two Supplementary Prologues: A Question of Affinity

Abstract

In this paper I will discuss the two supplementary iambic prologues to the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*, both preserved in the so-called second Hypothesis or Hypothesis (b) to the drama – our only source concerning the authenticity question tied to this play in antiquity. The extant remnants of these prologues are a single line allegedly derived from the writings of the fourth century BCE scholar Dicaearchus of Messana, and eleven verses from an opening soliloquy by Hera, addressed to Athena. This prologue, engaging Zeus' wife and daughter, was considered in antiquity to be interpolated by actors. My main focus in this study will be on the various ways in which these sources can be associated with the extant drama. As far as the first prologue is concerned, I will attempt to show in some detail that its specific content does not necessarily constitute evidence for the existence of a genuine Euripidean *Rhesus*, as has been suggested. On the other hand, I will tentatively argue that its emergence in ancient scholarship can plausibly be linked to the origin of the authenticity issue. As regards the second iambic prologue to the disputed play, I will discuss its form and content, its Iliadic and extra-Iliadic framework, in an attempt to demonstrate, as thoroughly as possible, how dramatically suitable it can be for the extant composition.

Keywords: Euripides; *Rhesus*; supplementary prologues; Hypothesis (b); Dicaearchus

Rhesus is quite a mystery. It is the only extant play dramatizing an actual Iliadic episode,[1] and a rather peculiar alloy of tragic and comic elements.[2] It is traditionally attributed to Euripides, but its authorship was already disputed in antiquity, and its non-Euripidean origin (at least in its present

[1] See Liapis 2012: xvii-xviii; Fries 2014: 8-11. The most celebrated dramatization of the *Iliad* in antiquity is the (lost) Achillean trilogy of Aeschylus (see Sommerstein 2010: 242-9). Plays centered around Achilles or Hector seem to have been again in vogue in the fourth century BCE (see Liapis, 2012: xlviii for the bibliography).

[2] See indicatively Burnett 1985.

* University of Athens - nikolasmanou@gmail.com

form) is nowadays rather widely accepted.[3] The drama puts on stage the tenth rhapsody of the *Iliad*, focusing on the spy mission of Dolon to the Greek ships, and on the slaughter of king Rhesus, an illustrious Trojan ally. In this play Rhesus is a Thracian ruler who comes belatedly to the Trojan camp, in order to offer his services to Hector. Yet, Hector reproaches him for his late arrival, and barely allows him and his entourage to stay in Priam's city. At the climax of the play – the only surviving drama taking place almost solely during the night[4] – Odysseus and Diomedes, who have previously managed to kill Hector's spy Dolon and sneak into the enemy camp, are advised and tangibly assisted by goddess Athena to slay Rhesus and steal his magnificent horses. King Rhesus' mother, a Muse, appears on stage for the final scene of the drama. She mourns her son and foretells his after-life destiny as a man-daemon.

Four distinct Hypothesis-type texts[5] tied to the controversial *Rhesus* have come down to us. One of them, Hypothesis (b), in contrast to all other extant counterpart texts, records no (conventional) information on the action of the play, its *dramatis personae*, other aspects of the myth, or its title. However, its unknown author casts some doubt on the authenticity of *Rhesus*.[6]

> τοῦτο τὸ δρᾶμα ἔνιοι νόθον ὑπενόησαν, Εὐριπίδου δὲ μὴ εἶναι· τὸν γὰρ Σοφόκλειον μᾶλλον ὑποφαίνειν χαρακτῆρα. ἐν μέντοι ταῖς Διδασκαλίαις ὡς γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται. καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰ μετάρσια δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πολυπραγμοσύνη τὸν Εὐριπίδην ὁμολογεῖ. πρόλογοι δὲ διττοὶ φέρονται.
>
> [Some have supposed that this play is spurious and not a work of Euripides since it shows more the stamp of Sophocles. But it is listed as a genuine work of his in the Didascaliai, and furthermore the preoccupation with celestial phenomena betrays his hand. Two prologues are current.][7]

[3] For the authorship question regarding *Rhesus* see Liapis 2012: lxvii-lxxv; Fries 2014: 22-8. For some new observations on the subject see Manousakis and Stamatatos 2017; see also Ludwig 1997.

[4] See *ll.* 984-5 and 991-2.

[5] There are three general types of dramatic hypotheses preserved in the surviving medieval manuscripts and ancient papyri. The first type is closely associated with the Alexandrian edition of the dramas by Aristophanes of Byzantium, the second, which is uniquely Euripidean, derives from the so called *Tales from Euripides*, a series of plot summaries to which I shall return below, and the third consists of the 'amplified' texts of Byzantine grammarians. For this categorization, see concisely Allan 2008: 142. For tragic and comic Hypotheses in papyri see in more detail the first chapter of van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998.

[6] No other indication survives that the extant *Rhesus* was considered spurious by ancient or Byzantine scholars, see Fries 2014: 22-3.

[7] The translation is by Kovacs 2002: 454-5. The rest of the Hypothesis is quoted where discussed below.

It seems that at some point in antiquity a group of scholars asserted that Euripides was not the author of this camp drama otherwise ascribed to him. According to them the play indicates the style of Sophocles,[8] even though the author of the second Hypothesis clearly states that it is listed as Euripidean in the *Didascaliae*.[9] This reference to the didascalic record in Hypothesis (b) and, of course, the traditional ascription of the extant drama, seem to be the only indications from antiquity that someone could use in order to argue that a *Rhesus* actually written by Euripides ever existed.[10] All other external evidence alludes to the extant play.

In fact, it has been suggested that, when composing his text, the actual author of the second Hypothesis (or his source) still had before him (and refers to) an original Euripidean play on king Rhesus, and not the surviving drama.[11] In other words, this conjecture implies that a group of (Alexandrian?)[12] scholars expressed doubts about the authenticity of a genuine play, which was then lost and replaced by a spurious one. Even though this is by no means an impossible scenario, the argument supporting it is rather fallacious. More specifically, the main basis for the theory under discussion is that the (speculated) content of the first of the two iambic prologues recorded by the author of Hypothesis (b) is incompatible with the extant drama. Thus, this text must be seen as a vestige of an original Euripidean *Rhesus*. As I will attempt to show, this is not exactly the case.

[8] Perhaps the most obscure ancient information about *Rhesus* is its alleged similarity to the Sophoclean style, see Ritchie 1964: 11-15. There is some resemblance between *Rhesus* and Sophocles' *Ajax,* but it hardly concerns their linguistic idiosyncrasy, as the author of the second Hypothesis, most probably, implies when using the word χαρακτήρ. The contiguous dramatic function of Athena in these plays, and some other minor similarities of this kind, indicate that there is a noteworthy possibility for the author of *Rhesus* to have relied on the structure of this particular Sophoclean play when sewing his drama. For this case in detail see Richards 1916: 195; Nock 1930; Strohm 1959: 261, and especially Fantuzzi 2006a: 159-60, 164-7; see also Fries 2014: 33ff.; Liapis 2014: 286-8.

[9] For Aristotle as the main source of the didascalic records see Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 70-1. See also Hanink 2014: 191-2. From the Hypothesis-texts of some of the extant plays (see Ritchie 1964: 15n3) we get a scant (and often distorted) image of what sort of information this work must have included.

[10] See Fries 2014: 23ff.

[11] Liapis 2004: 173-7. However, Liapis later (2012: 62) notes that "the Hyp. author knew about at least the first prologue . . . not through direct access to manuscripts, but through his reading of Dicaearchus' account".

[12] See Liapis 2012: 60.

The First Supplementary Prologue: A Tragedy in the Dark

What survives of the first supplementary prologue to *Rhesus* in Hypothesis (b),[13] is an iambic trimeter line that is said to have been derived verbatim from the writings of Dicaearchus of Messana – a fourth century BCE scholar and pupil of Aristotle, who sets forth the plot of *Rhesus*: ὁ γοῦν Δικαίαρχος ἐκτιθεὶς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ Ῥήσου γράφει κατὰ λέξιν οὕτως (81: Wehrli; 114: Mirhady).[14] The line under discussion is now supplemented, *exempli gratia*, by Diggle at the beginning of his *apparatus criticus* for the play, and the supplement is adopted by Kovacs (2002: 455) in his translation of the text:[15]

> Νῦν εὐσέληνον φέγγος ἡ διφρήλατος
> . . . <Ἕως διώκουσ'>
>
> [Now the chariot-driven <Dawn is about to banish / . . . > the moon's fair light.]

This ingenious suggestion is formed after Euripides' *Ion* 1157-8: there the φωσφόρος Ἕως is dissipating the stars.[16] The image of dawn in the form of a goddess driving a chariot is known, although not common, in archaic and classical Greek literature.[17] The very same imagery of a divine, fe-

[13] The extant *Rhesus* opens with an anapaestic scene, during which a Chorus of Trojan soldiers informs Hector of some kind of suspicious activity taking place in the Greek camp. Similarly, in the opening of the lost *Myrmidons*, the first drama of Aeschylus' Iliadic trilogy, a Chorus of Greek soldiers approaches the tent of the hero, asking him – in chanted anapaests – with a sense of urgency to rejoin the battle. For *Myrmidons* see Sommerstein 2008: 134-49.

[14] See Ritchie (1964: 29) for the restoration of the text by Nauck. See also Liapis 2001; Merro 2008: 129-30; Fries 2014: 25n18, 112.

[15] See also Kovacs 2002: 455n25. Snell was the first to suggest this supplement – though in a slightly different form: <Ἕως διώκει>. See Liapis 2012: 63; Fries 2014: 64 (*app. crit.*).

[16] ἥ τε φωσφόρος / Ἕως διώκουσ' ἄστρα.

[17] *Od.* 23.243-6 is the only epic example of Dawn driving a chariot with two horses, and the imagery was most probably formed under the well-established representation of Helios' chariot, see the notes by Stanford (1958) and Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck (1992) on the aforementioned lines. See also Nagy 1999: 198ff. Eur. *IA* 156-9 presents the two images together (the emergence of the light of dawn and the arrival of Helios' chariot) as complementary events of daybreak, cf. Eur. *Supp.* 990ff. In *Tr.* 855-6 a ἀστέρων τέθριππος… χρύσεος ὄχος (with no driver actually mentioned) abducts Tithonos and carries him to the chamber of Dawn. For attestations of the imagery under discussion in Classical and subsequent art see *LIMC* s.v. *Eos*.

male chariot driver also applies to the Moon/Selene.[18] Plausibly, the rationale behind the current choice of Dawn in our trimeter is that Σελήνη would have produced a highly tautological couplet with εὐσέληνον.[19] If this supplement is right, we are forced to accept that the preserved iambic verse could not have belonged to the extant *Rhesus*. A tragedy taking place almost entirely in the night-time[20] cannot present the arrival of dawn in its opening lines. Thus, the content of our trimeter must point to some other drama – evidently the original by Euripides, as has been asserted on this very basis.[21] However, there is also another way – that of the Night.[22] Νύξ appears as a goddess driving a chariot twice in plays by Euripides:[23] *Ion* 1150-1[24] and *Andromeda* fr. 114.[25] In addition, there is a reference to the dark chariot of the Night in Aeschylus' *Ch.* 660-1: νυκτὸς ἅρμ' ἐπείγεται/ σκοτεινὸν, and in the lost *Daughters of the Sun*: μελανίππου…/ ἱερᾶς νυκτὸς ἀμολγόν (fr. 69).[26] The textual and contextual affinity of the *Andromeda* line to that of *Rhesus* seems to be rather instructive. Just like the alleged Dicaearchean line of *Rhesus*, the fragment of *Andromeda* also belongs to the very beginning of the play. The heroine is bound alone in the

[18] See Pind. *Ol.* 3.19-20, Eur. *Suppl.* 990-2, *Hymn to Selene* (32) 5-14. For the depictions of the minor goddess Selene in art see *LIMC* s.v. *Selene*.

[19] Cf. Mastronarde 2004: 17; Collard and Cropp 2008b: 119. Such a tautology would not be inconceivable even for an original Euripidean play, see e.g. *Ion* 117-20, 258-61, *HF* 538, cf. *Tr.* 712, *Andromeda* fr. 114 Kn. Also, as we read in *De Elocutione* 59-66, 103, it seems that, in some respect, tautology (διλογία) – wholly opposite to the current concept of good writing – was perceived at some point in antiquity to be source of grandeur in literary style (cf. Quint. *Inst. or.* 8.3.51). However, the propensity of the author of *Rhesus* for grandiose, bombastic diction is to be associated more with the high percentage of *hapax legomena* (and predilection for the *recherché*) in his drama, see Liapis 2012: liiiff.

[20] See Perris (2012) and Donelan (2014: 549-50) for the challenges of stagecraft in a play of this kind.

[21] Liapis 2004: 174: "One of the many respects in which *Rhesus* is quite unlike any other surviving Greek tragedy is, notoriously, that its action unfolds entirely during the night . . . However, the first prologue clearly belongs to a play which, like many other Greek tragedies, began at dawn".

[22] See Rusten 1982: 360n17; Fries 2013: 816.

[23] Cf. the image of the chariot driving Nyx preserved in an Attic black figure lekythos dating from 500-475 in Chase and Pease 1942: 93-4 (pl. 44.1a-d); for further examples from the visual arts see *LIMC* s.v. *Astra A*, *Nyx B*.

[24] μελάμπεπλος δὲ Νὺξ ἀσείρωτον ζυγοῖς / ὄχημ' ἔπαλλεν, ἄστρα δ' ὠμάρτει θεᾷ. See the note by Owen 1939 on these lines concerning the horses of Nyx.

[25] Cf. Eur. *HF* 880ff. for the chariot of Lyssa, daughter of the Night.

[26] [". . . night's dark chariot is already advancing rapidly"], [". . . the darkness of holy Night with her black horses"]. The translation is by Sommerstein (2008).

dark,[27] making an invocation in anapaests (probably recitative at first)[28] to the chariot-driven[29] Night:[30]

ὦ Νὺξ ἱερά,
ὡς μακρὸν ἵππευμα διώκεις
ἀστεροειδέα νῶτα διφρεύουσ᾽
αἰθέρος ἱερᾶς
τοῦ σεμνοτάτου δι᾽ Ὀλύμπου.

[O sacred Night, how long is your chariot-drive across the sacred heaven's starry expanse, through holiest Olympus!][31]

If we take into account the gender of the expected word, this is the closest parallel to the remainder of the first iambic prologue to *Rhesus*,[32] and the διφρήλατος/Νύξ solution, which clearly introduces here a rather different image from the one Σελήνη would introduce,[33] makes the relevance of the verse under discussion to the disputed drama quite evident.[34] In describing the fall of the night and not its withdrawal, the line is perfectly consistent with the outset of the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*, taking place in the dark until the very end. In addition, the notable recurrence of νύξ (almost in the form of a motto-theme) and related words in the extant dra-

[27] For the Euripidean plays beginning in the dark see Clements 2014: 62n49.

[28] See further Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004: 156. For a tentative reconstruction of the play see ibid. 133-7; see also Bubel 1991 and Wright 2005.

[29] εὐσέληνος and διφρήλατος are found only in this *Rhesus* prologue-line and nowhere else in Greek literature. διφρηλάτης is literally used by Pind. *Pyth.* 9. 143, Aesch. *Eum.* 156, Soph. *El.* 753, Eur. *IA* 216 (cf. Pind. *Ol.* 3.67). Cf. Soph. *Aj.* 845-6, 857, where διφρηλατῶν and διφρευτής are used for Helios (cf. Eur. *Pho.* 1-3), and Eur. *Andr.* 1011 where διφρεύω is used for Poseidon.

[30] Cf. Eur. *El.* 54.

[31] The translation is by Collard and Cropp 2008a: 133.

[32] Eur. *Andromeda* was staged along with *Hel.* in 412 BCE, and must have enjoyed great popularity in the following years. Aristophanes does parody the drama extensively in *Thesm.* 1010-35, and alludes to it several times, see in detail the note of Austin and Olson 2004 on the respective verses of the comedy, also ibid.: lxii-lxiii. The popularity of *Andromeda* is evident in the visual arts as well, see Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004: 139-40. The extant *Rhesus*, being a rather imitative play, is expected to be making use of such material.

[33] While in the prologue of *Andromeda* the bound princess obviously highlights the length of the night, it is impossible to determine if something similar is taking place in the first iambic prologue associated with *Rhesus*. I want to thank the anonymous referee for this observation.

[34] In addition, the νῦν-νύξ assonance in exactly the same metrical position must have sounded more than music to the ears of the author of our drama, cf. the assonance of κ at 383-4.

ma can be seen as a subordinate argument in support of this notion.[35] If we go on to tentatively assume that after the association of the alleged Dicaearchean line with the extant *Rhesus* the scholars studying the drama, the author of Hypothesis (b) (and his possible sources) among them, had also favored the Νύξ supplement over the now commonly accepted Ἕως, we can understand why they did not bat an eye at the quote's reliability on the basis of its specific content. This, of course, is the case if and only if these scholars had access only to the line under discussion and not to the whole prologue (or to the play) it belonged to (see below).

Contrariwise, if Ἕως, the current supplement, was in fact what was coming after the preserved verse, and Dicaearchus (or some other scholar – who was the actual source of the line associated with Aristotle's pupil) ascribed the prologue under discussion to the extant play, a possibility that cannot be excluded is that he did it by mistake. It is also possible that Dicaearchus (or another author) attached the controversial opening verse to a Euripidean drama other than a genuine *Rhesus*, and some later scholar (the source of Hypothesis (b)?) made the erroneous (memory?) connection with the extant play – and thus the attribution became traditional. In any case, it is rather evident that the specific content of the alleged Dicaearchean verse in not (necessarily) out of line with the extant composition, and thus it cannot be used as sound and tenable evidence that an original Euripidean *Rhesus* ever existed.

The author of the second Hypothesis (most probably along with other scholars of his time) seems to have no real doubts that the extant *Rhesus* is an original Euripidean play – the authenticity of which he feels he should defend against the ἔνιοι disputing it: ἐν μέντοι ταῖς Διδασκαλίαις ὡς γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται. καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰ μετάρσια δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πολυπραγμοσύνη τὸν Εὐριπίδην ὁμολογεῖ. In fact, for him (the now controversial) *Rhesus* is simply a Euripidean drama for which two iambic opening pieces are in circulation (πρόλογοι δὲ διττοὶ φέρονται): the lost authentic one[36] (of which only a single line supplied by the great Dicaearchus – and, evidently, supplemented with Νύξ and not Ἕως – is extant in his time) and a clearly spurious one (an actor's interpolation). Yet, it still remains a fact that there was some group of ancient scholars who considered the surviving *Rhesus* to be wholly spurious, and the alleged Dicaearchean line might help us understand why.

[35] Only νύξ is found 13 times in the play (5, 13, 17, 64, 95, 111, 146, 285, 289, 600, 615, 691, 727); exceptionally more frequently, and exceptionally more clustered, than in any other extant Greek drama. For other references to the night-time in *Rhesus* see Donelan 2014: 549n53.

[36] Euripides' clear propensity for explanatory iambic openings in his dramas must have been one of the main reasons for an ancient scholar to believe beyond reasonable doubt that a *Rhesus* by this poet could not have been different.

Even though the (suggested) content of the line ascribed to Dicaearchus does not constitute evidence for a lost Euripidean *Rhesus*, its emergence in ancient scholarship could have been a key factor as regards the authenticity issue, and it can be seen as an actually plausible indication that a Euripidean play about Rhesus might have existed. Dicaearchus has been, possibly falsely, associated with the Hypotheses to the dramas of Euripides through the *Tales from Euripides* (as Zuntz 1955: 135 christened this lost work). That is an alphabetically arranged (by the first letter of the title of each play) corpus of mythographic plot summaries of Euripidean dramas, which seems to have been composed in the first or second century CE for a popular audience, and was ascribed to Dicaearchus most probably in order "to gain scholarly respectability" (Allan 2008: 142).[37] Nevertheless, in the present case the authorship of the *Tales* is not a crucial matter. Even if this plot collection was indeed falsely attributed to Dicaearchus in antiquity (by the second century CE), as Rusten 1982 quite persuasively suggests, the authority of Aristotle's pupil, which is most likely what triggered the ascription of the *Tales* to him in the first place, is what really matters.

Rusten (1982: 358) indicates that, even though "the narratives [in the *Tales*] were meant solely to summarize the plot, and contained no critical comments or didascalic information, . . . each play [in the collection was] being . . . identified by its first line". Hence, there is a possibility that the author of Hypothesis (b) to our *Rhesus* (or his source) derived the alleged Dicaearchean line from a plot summary found in the *Tales* (ἐκτιθεὶς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ Ῥήσου), evidently concerning some drama about the Thracian king with a storyline quite similar to that of the extant one. If this scenario holds, the fact that the line ascribed to Dicaearchus was different from the present opening of the extant play could have given rise to, or supported, the authenticity issue, which, in the first case, could be dated to the first or second century CE – after the circulation of the *Tales* (possibly under the 'erudite' name of Dicaearchus from the very beginning). The fact that, in its present form, our sole evidence about the ancient controversy over the authorship of the extant *Rhesus*, Hypothesis (b), most likely dates around the second century CE,[38] may be more than a mere coincidence. This line of argument, if sound, and not the specific content of the alleged Dicaearchean verse, can actually lead us to conclude that there could have been a Euripidean *Rhesus*, the opening line of which, possibly copied in

[37] For the use of the *Tales* in the reconstruction of the plots of Euripidean plays in the mythographic manuals from Roman times, the *Fabulae* of Hyginus and the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodoros, see Huys 1996, 1997a, 1997b.

[38] On the dating of Hypothesis (b) see Grégoire 1933: 97-8; Fries 2014: 111-2. Cf. Liapis 2012: 62.

succession from one scholarly work on tragedy to another, was its only remnant in the time of the *Tales*.

The Second Supplementary Prologue: Hera and Athena in Action

The second iambic prologue to *Rhesus* quoted in Hypothesis (b) is described as a quite prosy piece of writing (πεζὸς πάνυ),[39] unworthy of Euripides (οὐ πρέπων Εὐριπίδῃ), and is condemned as being an interpolation of which some actors should be held responsible (καὶ τάχα ἄν τινες τῶν ὑποκριτῶν διεσκευακότες εἶεν αὐτόν).[40] Eleven lines survive of this prologue, in which Hera shares with Athena her imminent concerns about their *protégés*, the Achaeans, being tamed by Hector's spear. She urges Zeus' daughter to co-operate with her in helping the Greeks and ravaging the Trojans:

ὦ τοῦ μεγίστου Ζηνὸς ἄλκιμον τέκος,
Παλλὰς, τί δρῶμεν; οὐκ ἐχρῆν ἡμᾶς ἔτι
μέλλειν Ἀχαιῶν ὠφελεῖν στρατεύματι.
νῦν γὰρ κακῶς πράσσουσιν ἐν μάχῃ δορός.
λόγχῃ βιαίως Ἕκτορος στροβούμενοι.
ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστιν ἄλγιον βάρος,
ἐξ οὗ γ' ἔκρινε Κύπριν Ἀλέξανδρος θεὰν
κάλλει προήκειν τῆς ἐμῆς εὐμορφίας
καὶ σῆς, Ἀθάνα, φιλτάτης ἐμοὶ θεῶν,
εἰ μὴ κατασκαφεῖσαν ὄψομαι πόλιν
Πριάμου, βίᾳ πρόρριζον ἐκτετριμμένην.

[Pallas, mighty daughter of great Zeus, what are we / doing? We ought not to be slow any longer to help / he Achaean army. For they are now faring badly / in the battle, being violently distressed by Hector's / spear. There will be no heavier grief that has befallen me – ever since Alexandros judged that Aphrodite was superior in beauty to me and to you, dearest of gods to me – than if I fail to see Priam's city /smashed utterly to pieces by force and its foundations dug up.][41]

If we set aside the scholarly objections concerning its quality, the diction of the preserved text speaks to the influence mainly of Aeschylus and Euripid-

[39] On this description see the discerning observations of Fantuzzi (2015: 228-9).

[40] According to Liapis 2012: 64 (see also 2001: 317-20, 2004: 174-5, 2009: 86): "if the first prologue is alien to the *Rh.* we have, then the second prologue . . . must probably be so too, since it seems to have been cited by Dicaearchus as alternative opening to the *same* play". This argument is rightly refuted by Fries (2014: 112).

[41] The translation is by Kovacs (2002: 455).

es,[42] and this can be seen as a point of strong affinity with the surviving *Rhesus* as a whole.[43] Furthermore, the piece under discussion seems to be dramatically quite fitting to the narrative plan of the extant play, as we will attempt to show here in detail. Yet, in order to do that, we must first indicate in what way(s) this prologue is convergent with, and also divergent from, the Iliadic and extra-Iliadic material of the myth about king Rhesus. The final remark preserved in Hypothesis (c) to the disputed *Rhesus*, attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium,[44] is that the play 'contains' *Il.* 10 (περιέχει δὲ τὴν Νυκτεγερσίαν). Additionally, the ancient scholia often bring up the deviations of this drama from its indisputable Homeric model.[45] The direct dependence of *Rhesus* on this specific epic text has also been adduced by modern scholars such as Ritchie (1964: 12), who argues that the play "takes its plot directly from the *Il.* and keeps closely in many details to the original".[46] On the other hand, it has also been rightly argued that the drama is a primary descendant of a non-Iliadic tradition, bringing together some versions of the myth most probably originating from the Epic Cycle. These lines of scholarship are in fact not hard to reconcile, *mutatis mutandis*, as the author of *Rhesus* seems to have made resourceful use of both the Iliadic and the extra-Iliadic material of the story.[47]

Two different extra-Iliadic versions of the myth about Rhesus' quite short visit to Ilium, the so-called *Pindaric* and *Oracular*,[48] are reported by

[42] See Ritchie 1964: 111-12; Stephanopoulos 1988: 208-9. See also Liapis 2012: 66ff.

[43] For the borrowings of *Rhesus* from Euripides, Aeschylus, and Sophocles – in that order of frequency – see Liapis 2012: xxii-xxv, lxi-lxii; Fries 2014: 31ff. See also Manousakis and Stamatatos (2017).

[44] No evidence allows us to think that Aristophanes doubted the authenticity of the play in any way, see Ritchie 1964: 41-3.

[45] Ibid. 48.

[46] For the story of Rhesus in *Il.* 10 see Hainsworth 1993: 151ff. in detail.

[47] For the inter-textual nexus between the *Iliad* and *Rhesus* see Fenik 1964; Fantuzzi 2005a, 2006a, 2011. A main point of controversy is the extent to which the drama relied on its models (on this see Fantuzzi 2005b). Fantuzzi has shown that for the first 263 lines of the play the author of *Rhesus* makes special use of the Iliadic *Doloneia*, and later on of the *Aethiopis*. The result "is no longer Homer's mostly Hellenocentric perspective on the events, but a purely Trojan point of view, in accordance with the Cyclic focusing on the false hopes of the losers regarding the seemingly powerful and victorious Trojan allies" (2006a: 152).

[48] See in detail Fenik 1964; Liapis 2012: xviii-xxi. See also Barrett 2002: 172-4, 186. According to the *Pindaric* version of the myth, king Rhesus is an outstanding warrior. When he joins the Trojans he kills numerous Greeks, and Hera, much worried about her *protégés*, sends Athena to settle the matter; Pallas in turn directs Odysseus and Diomedes to slay the Thracian king while he sleeps. The *Oracular* version holds that there was some oracle saying that if Rhesus reaches Troy and drinks from the water there, and also his horses drink from the river Scamander and eat the local fodder, he would become invincible.

three Iliadic scholia to the tenth rhapsody.[49] The version of the myth documented in these scholia holds that Rhesus' killing was in fact caused by divine providence, namely Hera's and Athena's joint intervention.[50] One of the main aspects of the plot disassociating *Rhesus* from the Iliadic context of the myth, and bringing it closer to the extra-Iliadic versions, is the dominant role of Athena in the drama.[51] The goddess practically dictates the action in the second part of the play, using mortal characters almost like puppets.[52] Contrary to what happens in the *Iliad*, where Athena fleetingly appears on her own initiative to rush Diomedes and Odysseus back to the ships after their murderous deed,[53] in *Rhesus* she presents herself to set the forthcoming (final) events in motion, staying on stage for quite some time, and even interacting with one of the enemies. More specifically, in the disputed drama the two Greek spies must get involved in an exploit very different from the one they had in mind when they set off from the Greek ships. Their victim should be king Rhesus, the great Trojan ally, since they are not destined to kill Hector, or Alexandros, and this emerges not from the information they acquire from Dolon, as in the *Iliad*, but from Athena's clear and specific bidding.[54] The goddess even presents herself to Alexandros in the form of his divine protector Aphrodite, in order to detain him and provide Odysseus and Diomedes time to slay Rhesus and steal his horses. Nevertheless, in the controversial drama Pallas follows the Iliadic paradigm in acting autonomously, and not in collaboration with or under the

[49] Σ^{bT} *Il.* 10.435 (III 93.64–8 Erbse) ~ Eust. 817.29 with a variant, Σ^{AD} *Il.* 10.435 (pp. 355-6 van Thiel = I 364.3-11 Dindorf), and its direct continuation Σ^{AD} *Il.* 10.435 (p. 356 van Thiel = I 364.11-15 Dindorf) ~ Eust. 817.27-8.

[50] κατὰ δὲ πρόνοιαν Ἥρας καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς ἀναστάντες οἱ περὶ Διομήδεα ἀναιροῦσιν αὐτόν – κατὰ δὲ θείαν πρόνοιαν νυκτὸς αὐτὸν Διομήδης ἀναιρεῖ – Ῥῆσος… διάφορος δὲ τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν γενόμενος ἐν πολεμικοῖς ἔργοις ἐπῆλθε τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, ὅπως Τρωσὶ συμμαχήσῃ, καὶ συμβαλὼν πολλοὺς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀπέκτεινεν. δείσασα δὲ Ἥρα περὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἀθηνᾶν ἐπὶ τὴν τούτου διαφθορὰν πέμπει. ["due to a plot of Hera and Athena, Diomedes' people got stirred up and killed him – due to a divine plot, Diomedes kills him during the night – Rhesus . . ., who was distinguished among the Thracians in exploits of war, attacked the Greeks, joining forces with his allies the Trojans, and killed many of the Greeks. Hera, anxious about the Greeks, sends Athena to arrange his killing"]. The translation is mine.

[51] See Fantuzzi 2015: 230.

[52] For the prevalent role of Athena in *Rhesus* see further Fantuzzi 2006a: 155, 157ff. See especially 160-1, concerning the derivation of this aspect from the *Pindaric* version of the myth.

[53] See Il. 10.503ff.

[54] At ll. 600-5 Athena partly introduces the *oracular* version of Rhesus' myth in the extant play, when she warns Diomedes and Odysseus that if the Thracian king survives the night, no warrior, not even the great Achilles, will be able to prevent him from destroying the ships of the Achaeans. See Liapis 2012: 239; Fries 2014: 352.

instructions of Hera, as in the extra-Iliadic version described in the Iliadic scholia. Yet, for *Rhesus* this possible thread of the plot is, strangely, introduced in the second prologue of Hypothesis (b), and it seems to have been quite appropriate and engaging material for dramatic exploitation either by some reviser or by the author of the play himself.[55]

The strong connection of Zeus' wife and daughter in plotting the fall of Troy in the *Iliad* is conspicuous and even formulaic.[56] The balance of power favors Hera most of the time, since she is the one instructing Athena on how to act,[57] but the reverse also occurs. Three times in the *Iliad* we hear Hera directly urging Athena to be her accessory in protecting the interests of the Achaeans. Twice, at 2.156ff. and 5.711ff., Pallas obeys without speaking, and once, at 8.350ff., she does answer Hera's claims by presenting herself as being even more eager than Zeus' wife to hurt the Trojans. At 2.156ff. Hera commissions Athena to prevent the Achaeans from leaving Troy after Agamemnon's test exhortation. In their other two interventions the goddesses decide they will both offer their immediate help to the Greeks, having noticed so many of them suffering at the hands of Hector in particular. In the second iambic prologue to *Rhesus* we witness approximately the same situation as in all the aforementioned epic counterparts – and most of all as in 8.350ff. Even though the diction is somewhat different, the form and content of Hera's plea to Pallas is remarkably similar in these two passages: in both cases Hera's urgent address to Athena (τοῦ μεγίστου Ζηνὸς [pr.] / αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς [*Il.* 8.352] τέκος) is followed by a question about their role in protecting the Greeks who are being destroyed by Hector. In the epic passage what follows almost immediately is Athena's response. She declares her wish for Priam's son to be slain in the hands of the Achaeans, accusing Zeus of obstructing her heart's desire. In the iambic prologue, on the other hand, almost taking the words out of Iliadic Athena's mouth, Hera brings to the fore the fatal choice of Alexandros, who dared to favor Aphrodite's beauty over theirs, unforgivably offending them both, and states that she will not relent until the city of Priam eventual-

[55] Naturally, the author of *Rhesus* could have deliberately diverged on this point from the extra-Iliadic material, as he did when, following the Iliadic plot line, he deprived Rhesus of the chance to show in the field the fighting skills he was blustering about when he first met with Hector (449ff.), since he was killed not long after his arrival in Troy.

[56] See *Il.* 4.20-1, 8.457-8. Cf. 5.418-19, 11.45-6 and 24.25-30. For the Euripidean view of this divine plotting pair see Fantuzzi 2015: 229n19.

[57] See *Il.* 1.194-5, 208, 2.155ff., 4.73-4 (although in the last case Athena answers indirectly to Hera's will through Zeus' command, see the respective note by Kirk 1985), 5.711ff.

ly falls to pieces.[58] It is noteworthy that in the extant *Rhesus* both Alexandros and Aphrodite (through Pallas' deceiving epiphany) appear as scenic characters.

It has been convincingly argued that the author of *Rhesus* uses the Iliadic text in general (and not only *Iliad* 10) to create a multilevel inter-textual game of anticipation and plot reversal. More specifically, Fantuzzi (2006a, 2006b: 152ff.) cites evidence in *Rhesus* for the use of a broad inter-textual dramatic technique, which misdirects the audience by presenting certain Trojans talking and acting like the Greeks or different Trojans of the *Iliad*, alluding to counterpart events that take place differently in the epos, and also using multilayered references to connect more than two passages. Consistent with this intertextual plan seems to be the allusive technique used in the prologue under discussion.[59] Hera's and Athena's preparations to fly together alongside the Achaean army at *Il.* 5.711ff. and 8.350ff. are both times preceded by some kind of praise for Hector's fighting skills.[60] Correspondingly in the second prologue to *Rhesus* Hera is mobilized to act in support of the Greeks when she witnesses Hector subduing them. Hence, it seems that the emphasis of the prologue on the divine wrath caused by the exploits of the Trojan prince, and the urgent need for action that would subdue him, alludes to the intensity of the analogous Iliadic situation the two goddesses attempt to reverse. In the same allusive vein, even though at 5.711ff. Zeus does allow Hera and Athena to stop the murderous work of Ares against the Greeks, he later prevents his wife and daughter from helping their *protégés* at *Il.* 8.350ff. Thus, although the fixed course of events leading inescapably to the death of Rhesus was, of course, familiar to the ancient audience, the allusion in the second prologue both to Zeus' sanction and his prohibition of intervention in the epic would introduce suspense right at the outset of the play. And since the closest parallel to the second prologue is *Il.* 8.350ff, we can imagine this audience, having in mind the inability of the two goddesses to act on that occasion, being misled from the very beginning as to what will come next.

Taking into account the joint action of Hera and Athena in the *Iliad*, and also the way divine prologues are shaped in extant, especially Euripidean, drama, we can, very tentatively of course, venture some guesses as to what followed the surviving part of the second prologue. On the basis of the presently considered Iliadic scenes, the piece of prologue under discussion might have proceeded in two different directions as far as dramatic action

[58] Cf. *Il.* 4.20ff., 24.25-30.

[59] Cf. Fantuzzi 2015: 228-31.

[60] Also, at *Il.* 10.47ff. Agamemnon, as he tries to devise and set in motion a plan to save his army and ships, offers similar praise for the Trojan leader.

is concerned. Hera could have gone on with her speech, describing to a silent Athena her plan to harm the Trojans during the night. Subsequently, Pallas could have obeyed Hera's instructions without saying a single word – exactly as she does in two of the three relevant Iliadic examples. This type of action would provide us with a typically Euripidean inaugural deity-monologue,[61] pleasing those who argue that Athena could not have been a substantial part of the opening scene of the disputed play, since there is no example in Euripides, or in extant Greek drama in general, of the same divinity reappearing later in the play after reciting the prologue or having an essential role in it.[62] Alternatively, the prologue could have taken the form of a dialogue between Hera and Athena, adumbrating future events. Dialogue-form prologues between gods or between a god and a supernatural being are not frequent in extant tragedy, but they are not unknown.[63] In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, for example, we witness a plot-scheming iambic prologue engaging two major deities, Athena (again)[64] and Poseidon, who decide to join forces against the Greek leaders this time. A full conversation between Athena and Hera[65] in the prologue of *Rhesus* would have been a far more natural choice than a loquacious Hera and a completely silent Athena. This turn would also be more consistent with *Il.* 8.350ff., and with the play itself. The dynamic role of Pallas later in *Rhesus*, and her imminent and energetic reaction to Hera's call in the epic parallel, would suggest that she may have offered an analogous response in the opening scene of the drama. If the second prologue to *Rhesus* unfolded this way, the eleven iambic lines in Hypothesis (b) are most probably Hera's first complete speech, anticipating Athena's answer.[66]

The need for an informative prologue to the extant *Rhesus*, most likely delivered by a deity, has long been emphasized, for reasons mainly concerning the noteworthy lack of any preliminary exposition in the play, and

[61] See Eur. *Hipp.*, *Ion*, *Bacch.*, cf. *Hec.*

[62] See Ritchie 1964: 111. Dionysus in *Bacch.* is a protagonist, and a quite special case in general. Only Apollo in Aesch. *Eum.* comes close to this description. Yet, technically, it is the prophetess of the god who speaks the (interrupted) iambic prologue; and the following scene, engaging Orestes, Apollo, Clytemnestra's ghost, and the Chorus is rather uncategorizable in terms of a conventional tragic prologue.

[63] See the prologues of Eur. *Alc.*, *Tro.*, and [Aesch.] *PV.*

[64] Cf. also the function of Athena in the prologue of Soph. *Aj.*

[65] Although disguised, Hera was also present on stage in the prologue of Aesch. *Semele*, see Hadjicosti 2006 in detail.

[66] In all other plays with similar prologues we have an extensive soliloquy preceding the appearance of the second deity and the beginning of the conversation. This is not the case with the second prologue of *Rhesus*, in which both interlocutors are present from the outset.

the consequent incoherence caused by this lack.[67] Almost the first third of the rather short drama bearing his name seems to be totally unrelated to Rhesus, since there is not a single reference to him until the moment the shepherd-messenger announces his arrival at 264ff. More specifically, the Dolon episode has nothing to do with the Thracian king, since, as already noted, it is Athena and not the Trojan spy, as is at *Iliad* 10, who informs Odysseus and Diomedes about his presence. Contrary to what we know about the structural patterns of Greek tragedy, in *Rhesus* we witness the climactic implementation of a divine deception plot against the main character, the concoction of which remains completely latent.[68] Up to the end of the first choral song,[69] there is not even the slightest hint of what is to come, leading to a sense that separate, detached events dominate the play. In addition, apart from the fact that the second iambic prologue closely matches the extant composition in diction, metrical style, and in dramatic technique, the current (anapaestic) opening piece could also be rather well-suited as the parodos of *Rhesus*.[70] Yet, notwithstanding the various ways in which the second iambic prologue can be, directly and indirectly, associated with the extant drama, and the possible repositioning of the current piece, we are, of course, in no position to say whether Hera's soliloquy was conceived and put together by the poet of *Rhesus* himself or by a different author. Nevertheless, it seems that we might at least entertain the former conjecture.

It is only reasonable that their relative self-sufficiency renders pro-

[67] See Ritchie 1964: 105-13. Contra Liapis 2012: 64. In practice, with the current choral (anapaestic) opening the author of *Rhesus*, intentionally or unintentionally, excessively blurs the focal point of the action. According to Fantuzzi (2015: 231), it is "probable that the play's original author wrote the play without a prologue, as this absence of superior preliminary information would have contributed to the atmosphere of uncertainty that the author evidently pursues". It should be noted here that Aristophanes of Byzantium apparently knew no additional prologues to *Rhesus* other than the surviving anapaestic one: ὁ χορὸς συνέστηκεν ἐκ φυλάκων Τρωικῶν (Hypothesis (c) 55-6).

[68] Cf. the course of action in the Euripidean plays with a prologue spoken by divinities (*Alc.*, *Hipp.*, *Ion*, *Tro.*), and also the opening of Soph. *Aj.* The unprepared entrance of Iris and Lyssa in *HF*, announcing and carrying out Hera's deception plan, is only superficially similar to the situation in *Rhesus*. In *HF* the indisputable focal point of the drama, right from the outset, is Heracles. His homecoming seems to be the only hope for the survival of his family, and the complete reversal of this fact is the main source of dramatic force in this play. As Bond (1981: n. 815ff.) puts it, "the contrast at *H.F.* 815 is clearly . . . fundamental . . . : the whole play changes course and the spectator with average memory may see the events of 1-814 in a different light".

[69] Stephanes' (2004: 142) suggestion that ll. 251-2 could refer to king Rhesus does not hold water. For this quite problematic passage see Liapis 2012: 133-4; Fries 2014: 212-3.

[70] See Ritchie 1964: 107-8.

logues, as well as closing scenes, more prone to actors' interpolations than any other major parts of a drama,[71] and evidence from antiquity points to this direction.[72] *Archelaos*, *Melanippe Sophe* and *Meleagros* are three of Euripides' dramas, though none of them extant, that seem to have undergone some modification in the hands of actors specifically in their prologues.[73] The case of *Archelaos* is rather indicative: in *Frogs* 1206-8 Aristophanes preserves three lines from a Euripidean prologue, without naming the play they come from. However, an ancient commentator of the comic poet argues that some scholars have wrongly attributed these lines to *Archelaos*.[74] He maintains that no such text tied to Euripides exists in his time (οὐ γὰρ φέρεται νῦν Εὐριπίδου λόγος οὐδείς), or, according to Aristarchos, ever existed in any of the poet's compositions. Aristarchos suggests that Aristophanes could have quoted an actual Euripidean version of the text of *Archelaos* only if Euripides himself changed the original prologue he composed – and the revision was then lost before reaching the Alexandrian Library.[75] Apparently, Aristarchos had in front of him a different prologue to *Archelaos* – most probably the one preserved by Diodorus, Plutarch, Tiberius, Strabo, and other later authors. If, however, the attribution of Aristophanes' lines to *Archelaos* is the correct one indeed, a possible scenario by all means, and Aristarchos' ingenious suggestion is unfounded, then the comic poet "is quoting the [only original] Euripidean text, and all the others are quoting a spurious text" (Page 1934: 93), probably composed for some restaging of the drama. In addition, it

[71] An obvious reason for revising some drama years after its first performance is to bring its action in line with a turn of the myth that appeared later or was for some reason neglected in the original version. This seems to be the case with the closing scene of Aeschylus' *Seven*, see Hutchinson 1985: 209ff.

[72] Fantuzzi (2015: 232) discusses the similarities between the controversial first scene of Euripides' *IA* and the second prologue attached to *Rhesus*. For the ongoing dispute over the prologue of *IA* see in detail Willink 1971; Knox 1972; Bain 1977; Philippides 1981: 101-2, Stockert 1992: 66-79; Michelakis 2006: 108-10; Kovacs 2008: 80-3; Pietruczuk 2012; Distilo 2013: 114ff.; Condello 2015: 189-91.

[73] See Page 1934: 92-5. On the prologue of *Meleagros* see Del Corno 1985 and Sommerstein 1996 on Arist. *Frogs* 1238-41. See also Collard and Cropp 2008b: 620, F516, n. 1. On *Melanippe* see Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995: 266-7, F665a-c, n. 1, cf. Collard and Cropp 2008b: 577, F480, n. 1.

[74] It has been regarded as a possibility – though in a quite speculative basis – that the source behind the attribution of the Aristophanic lines to *Archelaos* could in fact have been Dicaearchus, see Scullion 2006: 189, 198, n. 9.

[75] If we are to put any faith in Plutarch's words (*Amatorius* 13, 756B-C) about such a matter, that was actually the case with *Melanippe Sophe*. According to Plutarch, Euripides changed the opening lines of the play himself owing to the unfavorable reaction of the audience in the first performance.

should be noted here that the piece Aristarchos and the later authors had in mind could have belonged to a play unknown in the Library in its complete form.[76]

Regardless of who is right and who is wrong in this particular literary quarrel, the emerging conclusion is practically the same: confusion of this kind – even a slip on the part of the Alexandrian scholars that could sometimes be traced to Aristotle and his circle[77] – concerning the original text of a tragic prologue, seems to be anything but an inconceivable scenario for the Alexandrian Library. If there is even the slightest chance that we are touching on a similar complication in the case of the controversial *Rhesus*, we are forced to acknowledge that the second iambic prologue preserved in Hypothesis (b) could have been either part of the original text, or a revision made, perhaps, by none other than the author of the extant play.[78] If this is so, the question why the prologue was detached from the play and by whom emerges *ipso facto*; and the revisions and modifications in the

[76] Harder 1985: 179-82 considers several possible theories as regards which prologue could have been the original, concluding that it is the one found in the later scholars. She is followed by Collard, Cropp and Gibert 2004: 351; Kannicht 2004: 885; and Collard and Cropp 2008b: 237. Contra Scullion 2006: 185-91. Cf. the notes of Dover 1993 and Sommerstein 1996 on the respective lines of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. See also Xanthakis-Karamanos 1993: 517-9.

[77] In Aristotle's *Rh.* 3.9 a verse from the prologue of *Meleagros* is misattributed to Sophocles due to possible *lapsus memoriae* (so Cope 1877: 96) or because of someone else's erroneous addition (so Spengel 1867: 395); the anonymous commentator of the treatise (*CAG* XXI.2 pp. 195, 197) corrects the mistake, also providing us with four extra verses of the Euripidean prologue.

[78] It is quite interesting that in *P.Oxy.* 76, 5093 (first century CE), published by Daniela Colomo in 2011, an anonymous rhetorician argues that the extant *Medea* resulted from some authorial revision of a previous version of the play, in which the infanticide happened on stage. In the new version the plot is thoroughly modified, and the murder takes place indoors. However, from the papyrus, as is stands now, we are not able to know whether this first version of *Medea* was by Euripides or by another author, e.g. Neophron, see Colomo 2011b: 112. For *P.Oxy.* 76, 5093 in general see Luppe 2010, 2011; Colomo 2011a, 2011b; Scattolin 2013: 134-9; Magnani 2014. Yet, as Pontani (2016: 130) persuasively argues: "it is not easy to believe that these lines [, supplied by the anonymous rhetorician as what *Medea* told her children just before she murdered them,] should come from Neophron's (or from anybody else's) play, for the . . . papyrus . . . parallels Euripides' *diorthosis* with his similar . . . intervention on the earlier version of the *Hipp.*, and thus it would be strange to learn that in the case of *Med.* Euripides 'corrected' not his own play but someone else's . . . [T]he papyrus [also] seems to state that even so (i.e., after . . . producing what is our extant *Med.*) Euripides was nonetheless . . . defeated in the tragic contest . . . [, and] this way of expression . . . points to self-correction". I want to thank the anonymous referee for bringing *P.Oxy.* 76, 5093 to my attention.

dramatic texts made by actors and authors for the needs of re-performances could be a rather plausible answer.[79]

Conclusions

To sum up, as far as the first iambic prologue to *Rhesus* is concerned, it seems possible that it is a quotation from a Euripidean play (whether it is an original *Rhesus* or not) lost at the time Hypothesis (b) was composed. This opening line could have been found in the *Tales from Euripides* Hypotheses compilation, and it could have triggered or supported the question as regards the authenticity of the extant *Rhesus*. At all events though, the actual fact is that there is no hard (textual) evidence detaching the remnant of the first iambic prologue in Hypothesis (b) from the extant *Rhesus* and attaching it to any other composition. In practice, if Euripides did write a drama about king Rhesus, we seem to now know next to nothing about it, and, apart from detective speculation, we infer its existence based only on a piece of information provided by a Hypothesis-type text which, at all probability, dates from the first centuries CE: ἐν μέντοι ταῖς διδασκαλίαις ὡς γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται. The validity of this statement is utterly crucial and impossible to confirm. As far as the second iambic prologue is concerned, a piece evidently tied to the extant *Rhesus*, we are only in a position to argue that whoever composed it, was clearly competent enough to make very good use of the same, quite resourceful, inter-textual dramatic technique structuring the rest of the play, and thus to achieve similarly suspenseful results.

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[79] On the 'authenticity' of dramatic texts in view of re-performances see indicatively Revermann 2006: 66ff. *Rhesus*, in all likelihood a fourth-century drama (see most recently Mattison 2015), seems to have been quite popular in antiquity. The author of the second Hypothesis speaks of multiple copies of the play being in circulation in his time (ἐν ἐνίοις δὲ τῶν ἀντιγράφων), and the second supplementary prologue, if rightly associated with a re-performance, seems to be further evidence for this popularity.

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Vasiliki Kella*

Plauti "somnium narratur": Dreams in Plautus' Comedy

Abstract

This article examines the five dream episodes found in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, *Rudens*, *Mercator*, *Curculio*, and *Mostellaria*. Plautus' dreams are the only source for analysing the way dream episodes were performed in Hellenistic dramas. The main argument is that dreams are a scholar's manual for reading Plautus' composition method. These narratives play with the idea of illusion and give the playwright the chance to move further than the text and the stage and to innovate by composing metaplays. The examination begins with the text and its intentional resemblance to Greek tragic pieces. It then focuses on the dreams' key-function within the five comedies, in order to demonstrate that dreams were the most important metatheatrical device that Plautus had at his disposal.

Keywords: Plautus; dreams; *imagines*; metatheatre; mirroring; animal symbolism

A single dream description in Menander's *Dyskolos* and five dreams from Plautus are all that survive from Hellenistic comedy. Terence does not include even one such narrative. For this reason, dreams in Plautus are really the only source we have for analysing the way comic dream episodes were presented in front of the Roman audience. Scholars, however, have never studied these narratives without comparing them negatively with their Greek originals. No studies have been written in English that focus primarily on dreams as a plot mechanism in Roman comedy.[1]

Plautus is influenced by Greek attitudes towards dreams, but this does not exclude the fact that the Romans had their own sensibility for dream narratives.[2] Ennius in his *Annales* depicts the physical sensation of the soul

[1] See Katsouris 1978a on the use of dreams in the general background of Greek drama. For a study on the 'mirroring' method in relation to dreaming, see Kella 2011.

[2] Cicero's *De Divinatione* and Dido's dream (*Aen.* 4.465-6) were amongst the most significant Roman employments of the dream subject; see Harris 2003: 21.

* University of Cyprus - vkella01@ucy.ac.cy

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http://www.skenejournal.it

travelling in Ilia's dream. Cicero in *De Divinatione* records the belief that the dreamer's soul leaving the body converses with other souls.[3] The Roman interest in the true aspect of dreams is evident through the range of Latin expressions for unravelling the experience. To say *somniare*, the Romans would use any expression centred on the 'visual' aspect: *videre in somnis* or *in quiete* ('to see through/in a dream'), or the passive form *videri*; in Greek the equivalent would be ὄψιν or ἐνύπνιον ἰδεῖν ('to see a vision'), ὄναρ ἰδεῖν ('to see a dream'), ἰδεῖν ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ('to see during sleep'), ἐδόκει ὁρᾶν ('seem to see').[4] What the Greeks called εἴδωλον in Latin was defined as *somniorum visa* ('sleep visions'), *quietis visa* ('visions through/in a dream'), *species* ('appearance'), *imago* ('image'), *effigies* ('effigy').[5] However, any Plautine narrative was more a linguistic than a visual event, since it was never enacted on stage.[6] The playwright handled dream episodes as separate dramas within the comedies and this could always stimulate the Roman audience to grasp them and filter them through their own experience. Dream images gave Plautus the chance to move beyond the immediate plot and to innovate by writing metaplays.

This paper will focus on the five dream episodes that can be found in the Plautine corpus, which are divided into two groups. The first three sections will examine the fictitious dreams in *Miles Gloriosus* and *Mostellaria*, which are invented by characters in order to manipulate their opponents' understanding of events. The fourth section will investigate two real dreams (in *Rudens* and *Mercator*), in order to analyse how far Plautus developed the theatrical dimension of the relationship between reality and dream. Due to space constraints, the dream in *Curculio* will be mentioned only in passing. In the light of the following examination, we will try to determine the key function of dreamscapes in Plautus' poetics and style.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to examine dream images as a way of reading Plautus.[7] The reason for not examining Terence is the absence of dream narratives in his comedy, since he faithfully follows Greek concepts and values, whereas Plautus manipulates dreams adding them to

[3] Cic. *Div.* 1.20, 1.51.

[4] See on this Claflin 1943: 71-9.

[5] The word εἴδωλον meant both 'reflection' as well as 'ghost': εἴδωλον was the spirit-image of a living or dead person. Cf. Bettini 1997: 23.

[6] Dream-visions are performed in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and in the opening scene of Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

[7] There are opposing views regarding the influences on Plautus: Stärk (1989) and Lefèvre (1995) highlighted the influence of the traditions of the Atellan Farce and judged as un-Hellenic the scenario of Plautus' plays.

the main plot.[8] When writing a dream story, Plautus works on three levels: text, subtext, and metaplay. In other words, he has a threefold vision and he takes account of the dreamer's, the viewer's, and the playwright's perspective. The representation of a dramatic role is linguistically identified by explaining the meaning of a dream (ὑποκρίνεσθαι). Plautus uses the dream as a self-conscious theatre piece, a device whereby a play comments on itself and a miniature or micro-dream (the narration) is incorporated into the macro-dream of comedy.

The Role of Dreams

In order to gain a complete grasp of the role of dreams on stage, one should start by examining their religious impact on the Roman society.[9] Roman thinking never questioned the "belief in dreams", since important people, including almost "all Roman emperors based important decisions on dreams" (Harris 2009: 123-4).[10] It was generally accepted that dreams came from the gods and were worthy of recording for their prophetic and revealing character. Rome had its paid dream-interpreters (*coniectores*), who practiced the *coniectura* attested in Plautus' comedies.[11] Thus Plautus presents a world in which dream-interpretation is an everyday occurrence, in which anyone can learn to interpret dreams and where all ordinary people may have truth-telling dreams (165-6).

Plautus offers further understanding of the popular belief owing to his public role, his religious and psychological presuppositions that do not deviate from those of respectable citizens (178). Hence, when the dramatist makes use of significant dreams featuring comical dream imagery, he produces a comically undignified effect (159): thus, while reflecting the prevail-

[8] Terence had a Roman forerunner, a model to follow and reflect, whereas Plautus writes an unexampled Roman comedy and has to 'fight' against Greek conventions. Sharrock (2009: 28) notes a self-deprecating joke given that we are dealing with "a genre that presents itself as 'just a copy of Greek comedy'". According to Manuwald (2011: 316-17 and 305), in Terence the synthesis of comic and tragic material is different, since he brings his plays close to tragedy by using serious topics and ways. The comedy of Menander is no longer an alien form to be subverted by Terence but an aesthetic ideal to be imitated (cf. Varro ap. Non. 374.9: "In ethesin Terentius poscit palmam", "in characterization Terence demands first prize").

[9] Harrisson (2013) does not include Plautus' dreams in her discussion. For dreams and experience in classical antiquity see Harris 2009: ch. 3, 4 and Miller 1994.

[10] Cf. Plut. *Sull.* 6, *Luc.* 23.

[11] *Curc.* 246-50, *Mil.* 693.

ing cultural beliefs about dreams, he entertains his audience.[12] It will be argued that his dreamers occupy a place on stage very different from that of the other theatrical *personae*.[13] In *Miles Gloriosus* a woman is empowered to narrate an invented and misleading dream (*Mil.* 380-96). In *Curculio*, a specially concocted incubation scenario makes fun of the widespread 'healing belief', using a lower class character as the dream interpreter.[14] In *Rudens* a typical *senex comicus* ('an old man') is the dreamer admitting that he has not "been able to divine all day what he's to take this dream to mean" (611-12),[15] expecting the Roman audience to fill in the gap about his dream symbolism and purpose. This *senex* dreams the plot of the play and in it the characters are not humans but goats and monkeys.[16] Even though the characters struggle to work out whether their dream is a divine sign and what it means, the audience know what the dream is predicting and are able to interpret it correctly. The dream is designed to be comprehensible to the audience, but not to the characters (Harrisson 2013: 220).

The main textual model for comic dream narrative came from Greek tragedy and epic which Plautus adapted in a mock tragic way (*de fausse noblesse*).[17] Especially in tragedy, the irrationality of women and weak old men was associated with dreams.[18] Nevertheless, underneath the tragic surface of dream-telling scenes lies a new Roman concept of dream interpretation, one influenced by Aristotle. Dreams no longer came from outside, nor were they sent by gods (θεόπεμπτον) to wise kings and privileged dreamers; they were sent to all ordinary people owing to the activity of their subconscious. "Dreams are not divine, for nature is daemonic but not divine" (Arist. *Div. Somn.* 463b). Plautus, in a way that is similar to the Freudian theory of Displacement and Condensation in visions, presents distorted dreams with latent content and allowing multiple interpretations. The viewer who interprets the dream steps into the subtext and gains an insight

[12] For Plautus' audience see Beacham 1991 and Anderson 1993. According to inscriptions from Delos, Romans were beginning to learn new dream-practices of making dedications in obedience to divine dreams (Harris 2009: 179).

[13] Philocomasium (*Miles*), *senex* Daemones (*Rudens*), Demipho (*Mercator*), Philolaches (*Mostellaria*) and *leno* Cappadox (*Curculio*).

[14] Evidence shows that in the second century BC sick people turned to the shrine of Aesculapius which was the scene of incubation dreaming (see Harris 2009: 178).

[15] "nunc quam ad rem dicam hoc attinere somnium, numquam hodie quivi ad coniecturam evadere". All translations from Latin and Greek are by mine. Textual references are from Lindsay's (Oxford 1904) edition.

[16] *Rud.* 593-612, also in *Merc.* 246-73.

[17] Collart (1964), Monaco (1969: 160).

[18] For women cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 276. The chorus of old men claim to have the power of divination, even if they wander around the world as weak as an ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον (*Ag.* 82, 'daydreaming'). See Björck 1946, Dodds 1951, Gallop 1996, and George 2001.

into Plautus' dramaturgy.

Research has not yet thrown light on the metatheatrical aspect that dream scenes acquire in Plautine comedy.[19] Ziegler has assembled all the dream scenes and undertaken an analysis of their significance and their connection with dream theories. Similarly, Katsouris has considered the symbolism and meaning of each dream, though without referring to their metatheatrical function.[20] Nevertheless, such an examination could demonstrate the metatheatrical impact of dreams on the staging of the Republican period. If metatheatre is defined as playing with the concept of illusion based on the interaction between the audience, the actor, and the playwright, then dreams were amongst the most metatheatrical devices for Plautus' 'Theatre of Mind'.

Dreams are techniques Plautus used to rouse his audience's self-consciousness, since they copy, simulate, and transform characters into εἴδωλα, that is, dream images. Every time a dream is recounted on stage we are in the middle of a pivotal moment, during which the audience's power is at its greatest to conceive, interpret, and applaud the intellectual game played by costumes, masks, and characters. Dreams work as metaphorical 'mirrors' of a play informing about the plot and the role of each character. This 'mirroring' method of Plautus plays between the audience's expectation to see a stereotype/stock character as conceived as a dream image and the actual character/construct they finally see on stage.[21]

The Mirrored Self

Miles Gloriosus is considered among Plautus' "apprentice" works (Sedgwick 1930: 105). It features a dream which, in spite of its original metatheatrical aspect, has been neglected by scholars.[22] They have focused on the comedy's separation into two independent episodes, considering the dream scene to be unconnected with the second episode and generally cut off

[19] Slater (1985) altered the landscape for interpreting Plautus by providing a vocabulary for metatheatre, though he did not discuss dream episodes. Metatheatre is a term coined by Abel (1963) and refers to the ability of stage text and performance to allude to and comment on its own nature as an artistic medium. For recent metatheatrical studies, see Manuwald 2011, Marshall 2006, Moore 1998. For an overview on 'metatheatre' and 'self-consciousness', see Rosenmeyer 2002 and Gentili 1979: 15.

[20] Ziegler 1982, Katsouris 1978a and 1978b. Cf. Averna 1987, Mazzoli 1995.

[21] When discussing Plautine theatricality, Gratwick (1987) supports the view that Terence rejects this interaction between audience, representers, and represented.

[22] Cf. Leo 1912: 178, Fraenkel 1922: 253-62, Guastella 2003: 51.

from the rest of the comedy.[23] However, this scene gave Plautus' audience its first chance to experience composition as a double-layered act – Plautus' play and the invention of a dream within it.

In *Miles* Act 2, Plautus warns, through Palaestrio's prologue, that his comedy involves a game between reality and mirrored "imagines" ("images", 151). According to the plot, the slave Sceledrus has seen his master's girlfriend, Philocomasium, meeting and kissing her lover in the house next door. To avoid the truth being revealed, the clever slave Palaestrio, a parallel for Plautus, invents a fictitious dream that subtly mirrors and distorts reality: Philocomasium's twin sister and her lover *seemed* to have moved into the house next door. The slave Sceledrus, *seeing* the stranger and Philocomasium's sister together, wrongly accused Philocomasium of deceiving his master (388: "suspicionem sustinere", "she was under an enormous suspicion"). Palaestrio creates the dream narrative, puts his *sphragis* on it (386: "Palaestrionis somnium narratur", "Palaestrio's dream is being told") and gives it to Philocomasium to recite it and deceive Sceledrus.

Philocomasium unravels the content of her predictive vision, by acting afraid, with the proper gestures, thus hoping to change Sceledrus' understanding of what he had already seen (383-92). The passive form *video*r which she consistently uses (383, 385, 387, 388, 389), meaning 'seeing' and 'seeming in a dream' (kindred with Homeric εἴδομαι) enables her to refute the vision and opinions of Sceledrus; she misguides him by using the perspective of her own dream world. Hence the Roman spectators can observe the dreamer's paradoxical reaction towards a dream: "I see the truth at last; my eyes were clouded by fog" (405). Sceledrus' eyesight weakens as his speech becomes more befitting for a dreamer: "I saw, but I also had not seen" (402).[24]

Acknowledging a dream after it has been proven true conforms to a tragic *topos* (381: "mi hau falsum evenit somnium", "then the dream wasn't false").[25] Palaestrio, the *architectus doli* ('the architect of the deception'), creates a dream resembling a tragic piece and gains credence by entrusting it to a woman, since female narrators were predominant in tragic dream

[23] For a recent view on *Miles*'s structure, see Maurice 2007. Regarding the role of sight in the *Miles* see Ehrman 1997: 75-85 and Maurice 2007: 407-26.

[24] "Nunc demum experior, mi ob oculos caliginem opstitisse", "ita quod vidisse credo me id iam non vidisse arbitror". Sceledrus on his first entrance is not sure whether he is asleep or awake, and thus he himself provides the inspiration for the trick against him (272).

[25] Cf. Aesch. *Ch.* 928 οἵ 'γὼ τεκοῦσα τόνδ' ὄφιν ἐθρεψάμην, "so this is the snake to which I gave birth."; Eur. *IT* 55 τοὔναρ δ' ὧδε συμβάλλω τόδε, "I believe the meaning of this dream is this".

episodes. The audience hears a solemn recitation with an elevated slow opening of iambic *senarii* (381), long vowel sounds and polysyllables at the end of the verses.[26] The repetition of forms like *somnium*, *somniavi*, *visus est*, due to the alliteration of the sound /s/, gives the impression of a continuous whistle and incantation that would alarm even the most inattentive spectators.[27] This sound provides the sense of a high-pitched voice expressing fear, along with continuous references to the dreamer herself, with archaic words and *homoioteleuta* rhyming in -um/-am.[28] Exactly the same tragic features can be found in the rest of Plautine dream scenes.[29]

Plautus devotes the whole of 2.4 to shaping a narrative which reproduces the previous events but also foretells the scenes that follow (411-595). It is necessary to provide visual proof for the dream's validity (394: "praesens somnium", "there is your dream come true"). Philocomasium – under Palaestrio's tutoring – is impersonating her twin sister, while appearing in her own house too. Sceledrus thinks he sees Dicea, Philocomasium's twin, but what he sees is Philocomasium herself acting as somebody who looks like her (*videtur*). He comes across the image (εἴδωλον) manifested in a dream but not the substantial nature of a double.[30] Hence the *simulacra* of a dream, the *imago* of an identical twin and the falsity all together provoke a psychological effect in the slave who is now transformed into a mad Pentheus.

What the audience is about to watch is not really a dream: "Don't you be fooled: one girl today will play a pair" (*Mil. Gl.* 150).[31] After all, metatheatre is all about reminding the Romans that they are spectators of an enactment, of an illusion, a dream. What kind of playwright is Palaestrio? Moreover, what kind of plays is he capable of? His play-within-a-play imitates the Plautine plot of the *Miles*. At the beginning of the comedy, the slave Sceledrus was chasing a monkey, when he accidentally caught sight of the lovers. The monkey, as the archetypical figure of aping, introduces the idea

[26] Iambic senarii are used in the dream narratives in *Rud.* 597-8, *Merc.* 229, 233, *Most.* 433, 502, *Curc.* 30, 432-6, 260-1.

[27] *Merc.* 225-6, 228-9, *Rud.* 597, *Mil.* 383-5, 387-9, *Curc.* 260.

[28] In Ilia's dream, frequent references are made to the dreamer's part in the vision: "me . . . meus . . . mihi" (Cic. *Div.* 1.40). See Collart 1964: 156-9.

[29] Cf. Sharrock (2009: 167-78) on the importance of alliterations and other iterative devices which cause doubling on the linguistic level in Plautine comedy.

[30] Aeschylus draws a parallel between the seeming presence of Helen in the house and her presence as a dream-reality (*Ag.* 410-27). In *The Uncanny*, Freud (1919) presents games of mind in the form of doubles, shadows, portraits, reflections in a dream.

[31] "et mox ne erretis, haec duarum hodie vicem et hinc et illinc mulier feret imaginem". Philocomasium's role is a challenging one that calls for an actor of unusual comic versatility, since he has to succeed in portraying the free born/prostitute dichotomy. See Marshall 2006: 105-7.

of two scenarios, a double reality, two girls, two playwrights alike.[32] The monkey is the inspiration for the ringmaster Palaestrio to create a scenario identical to that of the *Amphitruo*, the *Menaechmi* and the *Bacchides* of Plautus, which also employ doubles.[33] Nevertheless, the *simia* also symbolizes an inferior parodic duplication of the original script.[34] Palaestrio, with this fake script, reconstructs reality to blind the enemy and to gain control of his mind. After the dream Sceledrus withdraws once and for all from the comedy and falls asleep drunk.

Haunted Theatre

The play between doubles continues in the dream in *Mostellaria*, which is a second fictitious story set in the play's core and carefully woven by an ingenious slave (476-505).[35] Tranio, the schemer, intends to keep Theopropides, Prophecy's son, father of Philolaches, from finding about his son's mismanagement of the family property and his debauches with courtesans in his absence. On the spur of the moment, a strategy is conceived. The slave seals up the family house by inventing the occurrence of a crime and a dream of a haunting spirit. The deception is framed by a dream pattern.[36] Amid the farrago of negative criticism and the controversy about *Mostellaria*'s original,[37] one fact should be underlined: Plautus "mostelli somnium" ("ghost dream") is the earliest extant haunted story in Greek and Roman literature and suggests a whole performance based on dream patterns. The motif appears when Callidamates withdraws to sleep just before the narrative (312) and wakes up only after the very end of the dream-intrigue. The *senes*, Theopropides and Simo, are sketched as sleeping and ignorant of the deceit (829: "quam arte dormiunt", "how fast they are asleep").[38] Simo completes the pattern with his discourse on Sleep and its harmful effect on the elders (690-710).

According to Tranio's scenario, the previous owner of Theopropides'

[32] For the concept of geminate writing in Plautus, see Kella 2015.

[33] Cf. the evocation of a twin occurred in Atossa's dream of the two sisters (Aesch. *Pers.* 181) and in the omen of two eagles representing the Atreidae (*Ag.* 109).

[34] Scholarship has explained the metaphor underlying the presence of *simiae* (McDermott 1936; Cleary 1972; Connors 2004).

[35] For *Mostellaria* indicatively see Lowe 1985a, Felton 1999a, and 1999b, Perutelli 2000, Milnor 2002, and Sharrock 2009: 101-5.

[36] The motif of sleep as deception is noted by Slater (1985: 168-74).

[37] Sturtevant (1925: 82) attributes lack of dramatic structure, much irrelevant detail and inconsistency to the scene.

[38] The use of the word *somnium* is common in Terence in the sense of 'delusion' or day-dream'; cf. Harris 2009: 140.

house killed his own guest, stole his gold and buried the body on the premises. Tranio's suspicion of a murder (483: "quapropter suspicamini", "what makes you suspect") was allegedly aroused when Philolaches experienced an oracular dream about the victim Diapontius, revealing the crime committed against him and warning the owners to evacuate the accursed house (490: "ait venisse illum in somnis ad se mortuom", "he said that that dead man had come to him in his sleep"). Consequently, the schemer comes up with a passive type of dream (χρηματισμόν), the kind most frequent in Homer, in which a message is conveyed orally by an εἴδωλον, in the same way that Patroclos' ψυχή ("soul"), reaches Achilles (*Il.* 23.65). In Homeric references, only a dead man's reality coincided with his εἴδωλον; no other 'self' of Patroclos is left 'behind' when he appears in Achilles' dream.

By having Tranio invent such a story, Plautus puts him in the position of a playwright who plays with *simulacra* ('simulations'), *umbrae* ('shadows') and *imagines* ('images'), in the same way that Palaestrio did in *Miles*.[39] However, the tradition of a ghost appearing on stage follows the trend of a ghost appearing in a dream, delivering a speech while the dreamer sleeps and then disappearing as soon as the dreamer wakes up.[40] This pattern is repeated in Euripides' *Hecuba*, where Polydorus' ghost is embodied by an actor who delivers a speech (1-58) while Hecuba is asleep and disappears when she wakes up. Likewise, in Aeschylus, Eumenides are asleep on stage and dreaming, while Klytaemnestra's ghost, embodied by an actor, is seen on stage standing over the Erinyes (*Eum.* 94-142). Still the trend is shattered in Plautus' *Mostellaria* and thus leads the audience to question: is this a dream? Is it a physical presence? Is it fantasy or reality?

Plautus' innovation in *Mostellaria* is that the ghost 'remains' on stage after the dream and starts acquiring subtle physicality through Tranio in order to frighten the old man. Tranio needs to infuse life into his scenario and reenacts the dream account onstage. Thus he begins transmitting the ghost's words in direct speech, as if the ghost is visually present (Kella 2015: 218). The slave, when reenacting the ghost's revelation, switches to an ominous voice while handling the technique of προσωποποιία, of 'impersonation', to enliven the tortured spirit.[41] "Habitatio" ("lodging"), used only

[39] Cf. *Ps.* 401: "poeta tabulas cum cepit sibi", "when a poet takes writing tablets". Sharrock (2009: 116-30) reads plotting and playwrights in Plautus with reference to the *locus classicus* for the metatheatrical reading of the slave which is Slater (1985) following Wright (1975).

[40] See for example *Il.* 2.6-34, *Od.* 4.795-841. Cf. Achilles' attempt to embrace the likeness of Patroclos (*Il.* 23.99-101) and Odysseus' to embrace the shade of his mother.

[41] Quint. *inst.* 11.1.39. The Latin word *larva*, with no precise Greek equivalent, meant both a 'mask' and a 'ghost'; it derived etymologically from *lar*, the household god connected with the after-life in Roman culture. See Wiles 1991: 129.

in this Plautine passage, is phrased in two different ways echoing Homer's elevated expressions for the highest value of ξενία, of "hospitality" (498, 504). Diapontius, 'the other Polydorus' or 'Pacuvius' other βιαιοθάνατος (murdered) Deiphilus', appears in a dream set in the border-region between sleeping and waking ("in somnis" and "vigilanti" coexist in line 493).[42] A phantom could either put in a personal appearance or be just a dream figure. While playing with Theopropides' superstitious nature, Tranio is testing his audience's response to the ghost's reality. According to the traditional belief, the dead person could converse with the living in his sleep, while a physically present ghost was mute (Felton 1999a: 134). Yet, even though Diapontius appears in a dream, he also appears in person to the inhabitants of the house (505: "monstra", "evil sign").

Beyond the tragic paradoxes lies a whole comic conspiracy which deviates from the expected narrative sequence and motivates the rest of the play.[43] The spectators would watch the author, Tranio, performing a role on stage and persuading his second audience, Theopropides, that whatever has a visual presence (490) is real and is wandering around them (509: "me accersunt mortui", "the dead are taking me"). Playing upon φάσματα and σκιαί ('ghosts' and 'shadows'), the slave infuses life into his scenario up to the point that the *senex* is taken in completely.[44] When the dramatic illusion fails and his dramatic devices are at risk, the slave complains in an aside: "Those people in there will soon be dishing my whole performance" (510).[45] Tranio, like Palaestrio in *Miles*, is inspired by dreams to write a scenario which tests dramatic illusion and dramatic devices (550: "techinae meae", "my tricks", 685: "mea consili", "my plans"). As the comedy comes to an end the slave praises his own contribution in the script: "If Diphilus or Philemon find out about my trick-dreams, they will be furnished with the best scenes on the comic stage" (1149).[46]

Symbolism and Simulation

This section focuses on real dream narratives that constitute part of the main plot. As mentioned above, the dream in *Curculio* will not be examined

[42] Eur. *Hec.* 25-30, Cic. *Tusc.* 1.44.106. Cf. Sychaeus' ghost in *Aen.* 1.353-60.

[43] The sequence of traditional ghost stories is recorded by Pliny in *Ep.* 7.27.7 and satirized by Lucian (*Philops.* 31).

[44] The dream reflects Tranio's waking preoccupations: he intends to get rid of Theopropides, who is a merchant like Diapontius, and then to steal his gold.

[45] "Illisce hodie hanc conturbabunt fabulam".

[46] "Si amicus Diphilo aut Philemoni es, dicito is, quo pacto tuo te servos ludificaverit: optumas frustrationes dederis in comoediis."

in detail. It should be noted, however, that no scholar has chosen to examine why so much space (252-79) in this comedy was allocated to a dream experience in the temple of Asclepius, to the dreamer *leno* who seeks a remedy and to the ὀνειροκρισία ('dream-interpretation') of his healing vision.[47] A boastful cook loaded with his spoon and his kitchen utensils takes over as the leading interpreter for a brief incubation dream which has no equivalent in Middle and New Comedy. The dreamer, absorbed by his dream, is unable to *see* the deception against him. He wanders around the scene like a sleepwalker without a substantial role: he loses the girl, his money and gets beaten up. The most notable success of Plautus is the rude awakening of the viewers within the dream episode, when he calls them to turn their eyes to the Capitol and to substitute in their mind the Roman Jupiter Maximus for Asclepius. Rome penetrates the *comoedia palliata* while the playwright invites the audience to search the Capitol for sleepwalking dreamers.

This section is mainly based on two apparently identical dream narratives, each of them respectively covering a whole scene, in *Rud.* 593-612 and in *Merc.* 225-70. Their resemblance is striking, considering that the original texts of the two comedies are different: *Mercator* deriving from Philemon's *Ἔμπορος*, *Rudens* from Diphilus. Thus, Leo, followed by Enk, argued that there has been a separate model for each dream in the Greek texts.[48] Nevertheless, according to Fraenkel, the dream in *Rudens* derived from its Diphilean original, while the dream in *Mercator* was also an imitation of Diphilus.[49] Without excluding either of these possibilities it seems preferable to consider the alternative: Plautus, when writing *Mercator*, used the original of Philemon, manipulating it so as to recall the metatheatrical technique he had already used in the dream in *Rudens*.

In both the dream-telling scenes, an old man occupies an empty stage to report the prophetic dream he had the night before.[50] Interestingly, the figures acting in his vision are neither gods nor humans but animals. Animal symbolism was frequent in dream pieces in tragedy and epic, in which case the identifying characteristics that the dramatic *personae* shared with the animal symbols created dramatic tension.[51] Likewise, the animal fables in *Rudens* and *Mercator* are essential for dramatic economy; they foreshadow the role of the comic *personae* as well as the resolution of the plot by giv-

[47] Williams (1958) and Fantham (1965) claim that Plautus substitutes, as briefly as he can, a large section of the Greek original which dealt with a *coniectura* by a professional priest of Asclepius.

[48] See Leo 1912: 163, Enk 1932: 7-21.

[49] See Fraenkel 1922, Marx 1959: 139, Katsouris 1978a.

[50] Like the ἀδολέσχης and δεισιδαίμων in Theoph. *Char.* 3.5, 16.24. Cf. Theoph. *On Sleep and Dreams*.

[51] Aesch. *Ch.* 523, Eur. *Hec.* 90.

ing 'key words' for the subtext. The dreamer and the audience have to compare the characteristic qualities of the animals (the signifying part) with the characters, their typical behaviour, their masks and costumes (*modus agenda*, 'the performance').

In *Rudens*, the *senex* Daemones walks onto stage to recount how it seemed to him that a talking monkey failed to climb up to a swallows' nest and so he approached him to ask for a ladder. The old man defended the swallows, because he considered them to be his fellow citizens. In retaliation, the monkey took Daemones to court, but Daemones caught the monkey and put him in chains. The dream account is enclosed in a sleep pattern. A moment before Daemones appears on stage, Charmides looks for a place to take a nap (572). After the account, Gripus, the fisherman, talks about his lack of sleep (920).

The dream scene functions as a delayed prologue (according to the structure: events-dream-events), since the audience has already been informed about the past, the present and the future events of the comedy by Arcturus in the prologue. The god informs the spectators that Daemones' daughter, who had been lost, escaped from her procurer after a shipwreck and is approaching Daemones' house along with a slave girl. The audience sees the *senex* Charmides calling the procurer Labrax "a dirty animal" ("impurata belua", 543), and the young Pleusidippus describing him as "a curly-haired, hoary, old rascal" ("hominem crispum, incanum videris, malum, peiiurum, palpatorem", 125), while the slave Trachalio talks about "an old Silenus with a fat belly and beetle brows" ("ecquem recalvom ad Silanum senem, statutum, ventriosum, tortis superciliis", 317). Thus the audience would immediately identify the procurer Labrax with the monkey and the two *puellae* with the swallows; Plautus' fans knew that bestiality was his way of forming metaphors and similes for his characters.[52] Dream narratives therefore function as descriptions influencing the audience's expectations for Plautine characters.

The dream of the monkey serves as a concise version of the action in the play, just as the monkey can be viewed as "a distorted version of a person" (Connors 2004: 195). The way the monkey threatens the swallows looks ahead to the threats of the procurer Labrax to deprive the young girl Palaestra of her freeborn parentage. The monkey's second attack foretells Labrax's effort to kick the two girls out of the temple of Venus (648), while Daemones will be sending his slaves to protect them (782). As the dream anticipates, Labrax (not Daemones) will be brought to court where Palaestra will be recognized as an Athenian citizen (1283).

[52] According to Sharrock (2009: 219), Plautine theatricality "plays with the gap between the character/construct you see and the stereotype/stock character you expect".

This reinforcement of information puts the spectators in a strong position since they have already seen the characters. Their perspective is empowered, in contrast to the dreamer's who is ignorant. Not until the fourth scene of the third act does Daemones reach the conclusion that the *simia* ('monkey') signifies Labrax and the *hirundines* ('swallows') signify Palaestra and Ampelisca, thinking of the symbols metaphorically as Artemidorus does in his *Oneirocriticon*: the *simia* symbolizes "a scoundrel and a cheat" (ἄνδρα πανοῦργον καὶ γόητα); the swallow "is not grievous unless it sould suffer something inauspicious" (οὐκ ἔστι πονηρά, εἰ μή τι ἄτοπον πάσχοι ἢ διαλλάσσοι τι χρῶμα παρὰ φύσιν ὂν αὐτῇ).[53] Searching for the dream interpretation, Daemones is ingenious and active, unlike the tragic model of the old and passive receptor of dreams. In his search, Daemones – a name related with the divine – sees the dream fulfilled and verifies the spectator's interpretation.[54] Exactly in the middle of the comedy, the idea of this dream-centred drama is revealed: "men are changed into different kinds of animals; Labrax is being changed to an imprisoned ringdove" (886-7).[55] The whole plot is thus based on semiotics, on sign language, on metaphors, in a comedy crammed with fortune-tellers (1139).

Leo argued that this dream-telling scene is unsuccessful for two reasons (1912: 162-5). Firstly, in Greek comedy and tragedy dreams should come at the beginning of the play, and when Daemones enters for the first time, he says nothing about his dream. Secondly, Daemones experienced a storm the previous night, an inopportune time for dreaming. This author would suggest the need for a more modern perspective. Plautus' technique startles the audience and arouses their enthusiasm with a framing pattern of wonder by presenting the unexpected (593: "miris" and 596: "mirum").[56] Even though it is not at the beginning of the play, the dream is still tragic, followed by tragic elements like Palaestra's sanctuary and her violent pursuit. The main function of the dream soliloquy is to draw the attention to a self-referring character, that is to say a dramatist, a mouthpiece of Plautus. The audience's understanding of the plot depends on his speech, which is responsible for the comedy's unity. Daemones is not a typical *senex lepi-*

[53] The image of a swallow could be an *appellatio blanda* ('a charming name'), in the same way that it was used in *Asin.* 694 where Libanus begs Philenium "Call me your . . . little sparrow" ("Dic igitur med . . . columbam"). Simia in *Pseudolus* is the proper name for "an unfair and cunning" slave (724, "malum, callidum, doctum").

[54] Marx (1959: 141) argued that Plautus, in imitation of the passages in *Rudens* and *Mercator*, was the first who used the word *coniectura* metaphorically.

[55] "credo alium in aliam beluam hominem vortier: illic in columbum, credo, leno vortitur".

[56] The formula ἀλλόκοτος ὄνειρος ('wondrous dream') was used by Menander (*Dys.* 407).

dus ('pleasant gentleman'); he is charged with testing the spectators' oneiric imagination, calling them to identify riddling images with the action.

Plautus manipulates the tragic pattern of animal symbolism and uses his own dream figures. The monkey, present in half of his comedies, is a metapoetic image talking about doubles, imitation, and authenticity. Through Daemones' monkey dream, Plautus comments on his own production and pokes fun at his own metadramas. Therefore, the opening lines of Daemones' narration suggest that this dream is a comedy staged by gods before our eyes, a play-within-the *Rudens* (593).[57]

Plautus expands his technique as far as possible in *Mercator* in a dream narrative twice as long as the one in *Rudens*. In spite of the playwright's hallmark phrase by which he repeats himself (225), this dream is an ἀλληγορικὸς ὄνειρος ('allegorical dream') that may have been modelled on the dream in *Rudens*, but goes one step further. The critics Leo and Fraenkel considered the text less polished than the one in *Rudens*.[58] Leo appreciated solely the paratragic aspects of Demipho's dream narrative (the dreamer accounts and interprets his dream during his first appearance on stage) while deeming its content a boring and artless imitation of *Rudens*.[59]

The dreaming motif is introduced early, when Acanthio is careful "not to wake the drowsy spectators" (160).[60] The dream narrator in his opening speech is given a scene of fifty lines to deliver an episode enacted by animals characterized by lust and sexual nature. The picture of a *simia* and *hirunda* is now altered into one of a *simia* and *capra*. Demipho bought a beautiful she-goat and committed her to the custody of a monkey to avoid upsetting another she-goat in his household. The beautiful she-goat ate the monkey's wife's dowry and the monkey complained to Demipho. A young he-goat arrived who laughed at him and stole the she-goat from the monkey.

There is a smooth transition from dream to reality. As soon as Demipho narrates his ὄνειρον ('dream'), he attempts to reveal the symbolism of the central figure (253: "suspicor", "I suspect"). The remaining images are left to the viewers to interpret. Yet, this time the animal symbols are not related metaphorically to the characters as in *Rudens*. The viewer has to work with analogies between the dream and the comedy's content to identify the animals with the personae. Therefore, guided by the adjective "formosa", "beautiful", the spectator pairs the "capra", the "goat" in the dream with the "forma eximia meretrix", "the concubine of magnificent beauty", Pasicompsa whom the young Charinus has bought (13). The second *capra* who has a

[57] In *Amph.* 621 the comedy is a dream sent by gods.

[58] See Leo 1912: 163-4 and Fraenkel 1922: 200.

[59] Leo (1912) citing Aesch. *Pers.* 176, Eur. *IT* 38-55 and Aristoph. *Vesp.* 15.

[60] "Dormientis spectatores metuis ne ex somno excites?"

dowry corresponds with the *uxor dotata* ('endowed wife') Dorippa, the wife of the old Lysimachus (703). The μωρολογία ('senseless words') of Demipho in the dream of his love for the *capra* tallies with the μωρολογία of his son Charinus for Pasicopsa at the beginning of the comedy; hence, Demipho (the *hircus*, 'male goat') becomes a rival for his son (the *haedus*, 'young goat') for Pasicompsa's (the *capra*'s) love.

Rather than highlighting the connection to drama – the way Leo did – we could instead examine Demipho's dream in the context of Hellenistic dream-literature. Plautus' comedy followed the Hellenistic tendency of attributing dreams to the irrational, stemming from Aristotle's theory of the unconscious.[61] Demipho's condensation of images recalls Herondas' eighth mimiamb, or Theocritus' twenty-first idyll, where an ἐνύπνιον ('a vision') with a golden fish is explained. Apollonius (*Argon.* 4.1733-42) presents Euphemus recounting his obscure dream of a virgin growing from the cold in his palm and from streams of milk. In *Amores* 3.5 Ovid, dreaming of birds, heifers, bulls and cows, cries out in desperation for an interpretation.

A Freudian *ante litteram* would be an apt description of Plautus in *Mercator* (Arnaldi 1956: 8). Demipho's narrative is compatible with what Freud calls the work of Displacement, the distortion of the dream's content provoked by the censorship of the subconscious.[62] In the dream, the monkey is blamed for the *flagitium* and *damnum* ('shameful crime' and 'harm') when he brings the *capra* to his house and the *capra* eats his wife's dowry. In the drama, however, the loss happens to Lysimachus, the monkey, and not to the powerful *uxor dotata* ('endowed wife') who could preserve her dowry in case of a divorce. Demipho subconsciously avoids being linked to his own shameful act of adultery and clears himself of the crime. A modern dimension of the *modus conjiciendi* ('means of deciphering') is exploited for the blurry images of Demipho's dream on which the whole comedy is centred. The viewers have to think of Demipho's out-of-dream monologue (252-70) as if it preceded the dream narration, in order to find out the interpretation. In this way, if the monologue comes before the dream, then it is obvious that Demipho carries out an auto-analysis the way Freud suggests: someone has to think what happened on the day he experienced the dream in order to understand it (Freud 1900: 150-65). Therefore, the dream, by this interpretation, proves to be an ἐνύπνιον, a wishful thought of Demipho that arose when he first met the beautiful girl Pasicompsa at the port. [63]

[61] The ὄνειρος ('dream') in Homeric texts is never a product of a personal unconscious. However, Penelope's dream informs her of something she has long wished for (*Od.* 19.535).

[62] Freud 1900: 178.

[63] For dreams reflecting daytime thoughts cf. Hdt. 7.16 ἐνύπνια τὰ ἐς ἀνθρώπους πεπλανημένα ("roving dreams that visit men"), Lucr. 5.724 "rerum simulacra vagari" ("images of things are roaming everywhere"), Emp. 31 B 108 D.-K.

The dream constitutes a second nucleus for the comedy since it functions as a complementary prologue. The verb *videor* repeated at the beginning or at the end of the verses appears as an inverted pattern offering multiple interpretations. The difficulty is that the dream spawns duplicated characters. The *senex amator* ('lecherous elder') is Demipho but also Lysimachus who guards the girl (Demipho-Lysimachus-*hircus*). Charinus is the *adulescens amans* ('the young lover') but his friend Eutychus is the one who steals Pasicompsa for Charinus' sake (Charinus-Eutychus-*haedus*). Demipho's portrait continuously switches purposely, from a he-goat, into a "musca" ("a fly", 361), an "ovis" ("a sheep", 524) and finally a "vervex" ("a castrated ram", 567). The text (bracketed by Leo) at 276 reveals the possibility that Demipho's wife could also play the part of a *simia*. The ambiguities of Demipho's sign-language illustrate the even bigger difficulty that Romans had when trying to realize the content of the dream. Questions probably remained unanswered for the spectators when they left their seats and returned to reality.

The Plautine use of dream in *Mercator* tests the audience's attentiveness and capacity to understand the iconography of characters, by rearranging animals and their expected performance. The stories of *Rudens* and *Mercator*, with their respective ape and swallow, and ape and goats, are paired as 'delayed prologue' but differentiated as a hermeneutic matrix actively pursued to fulfillment by Daemones; over against a 'displacement' narrative of Demipho left for the audience to complete.

Conclusion

The five scenes examined in this paper provide strong moments of metatheatre and make a contribution to the state of knowledge regarding Plautus' use of dreams. They demonstrate that where Plautus employs dreams there is a metatheatrical layer of understanding as well as special staging of the dreamers: Philocomasium, Cappadox, Daemones and Demipho. A dream is a centrepiece that condenses Plautus' compositional method: three perspectives, three different interpretations according to *who* (the dreamer, the audience, the playwright) is observing *what* (the text, the subtext, the metaplay). With the dream as the manual, one can examine the way the tragic text becomes a dramaturgical piece and is then transformed into a metatheatrical scene with an infusion of Roman concepts. Common experience is distilled into a set of stock situations and characters: dreams created by clever slaves constructing double realities and *ludi* played by gods that feature monkeys and goats are all performed on a stage 'within the stage'.

Dreaming is an important metatheatrical conceit which suggests a dreamlike quality to experience throughout the Plautine corpus.[64] Plautus' characters are divided into ingenious playwrights and dreamers, into victimisers and victims of illusion. Calderón (*Life is a Dream*) and Shakespeare (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) would later be aware of the thin line between dream and theatre in the same way as Plautus. Romans probably reached for their dream interpretation handbooks after the show, as if they had just awoken from a night's dream filled with doubles, ghosts, and grotesque animals.

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[64] *Somniare* from Plautus onwards meant 'to have illusions'. Further references to dreams: *Mos.* 757, 954, 1013, 1122, *Rud.* 343, 773, 1327, *Mer.* 950; Slater (1985: 170) argues against this dreamlike experience.

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Dominique Goy-Blanquet*

"Noble in body and judicious in mind like Homer": Enacting Richard II

Abstract

Richard II aimed to be an absolute king, and took pains to impress future generations with his royal image, yet the acting tradition has steadily moved away from the historical character, endowing him with a poetic talent that stripped him of other powers, as if poetry rhymed with incapacity. This article will explore his metamorphoses.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Richard II; acting tradition

Prudens et Mundus, Ricardus iure Secundus,
per fatum victus iacet hic sub marmore pictus.
Verax sermone fuit et plenus ratione,
Corpore procerus, animo prudens ut Omerus.
Ecclesiae fauit, elatos suppeditauit,
Quemuis prostrauit – regalia qui violauit.
Obruit hereticos et eorum travit amicos.[1]

In One Person Many People

Richard II, played by Jean Vilar, made the opening of the first Avignon festival in 1947.[2] By setting his production in the Cour d'honneur of the Popes'

[1] ["Prudent and elegant, Richard by right the second, / conquered by fate, lies here portrayed, under marble; / truthful in speech he was and full of reason; / noble in body and judicious in mind like Homer; / he favoured the church, cast down the proud; / and laid low those who violated the royal prerogative; / he destroyed the heretics and scattered their friends", Richard II's epitaph, trans. by Nigel Saul]. Richard's Latin epitaph in King Edward's Chapel, Westminster Abbey, is reproduced in Fabyan's *Chronicles* with his own English translation of the first two stanzas (1811: 569).

[2] *Richard II*, translated for the occasion by Jean-Louis Curtis. Vilar performed again in autumn at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, and in Avignon until 1953, Gérard Philipe from 1954 to 1956, first in Avignon, then the TNP (Théâtre National Populaire, Paris). I am indebted to Cécile Falcon's review of reviews (2007: 19-37). Translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

* University of Picardie - dgoyblanquet@free.fr

Palace, with minimal props, Vilar was aiming to recreate an Elizabethan space, away from the *boîte à l'italienne*, the illusionist Italian box: Richard's prison needed no locks, just a stool on which to sit and a jug of water. The dispossessed king was jailed on other stages of Europe at the time: Rudolf Bing's production of the play opened the Edinburgh festival in August of the same year, and a year later Giorgio Strehler staged it at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan.

Vilar went on playing the title part every year in Avignon until 1953. Reviewers were deeply troubled when Gérard Philipe took his place in the revival of 1954. He and Vilar performed such different characters that some felt they were like the negative and positive of the same image (Kemp 1954). To Jean Jacquot, "It seemed that no dimension of the play had escaped Vilar" but when Gérard Philipe succeeded him in the part, "Richard shrunk down to the size of a crowned minion, a lucid but effete profligate who turns hysterical when he meets adversity".[3] Elsa Triolet, wife of the poet Louis Aragon, expressed her dismay at seeing two great actors perform the same text so at odds with each other: "A tone of voice, a gesture, and everything the author meant to say turns into its opposite".[4] According to the reviews, Vilar had a "tough attitude" and a "steely look",[5] whereas the much younger Philipe, pale, willowy, his eyes flickering with anxiety and doubt, played a "handsome degenerate" (Kemp 1954), evocative of Lorenzaccio or the last Valois king. Even when Vilar's Richard came close to madness, he remained every inch a king. Philipe toyed with his crown like a kid with his rattle, he performed the comedy of power whereas Vilar believed in it, giving a tragic dimension to his fall (Joly 1954). Roland Barthes (2002: 65, 67) was highly critical of the changes the "star" actor had imposed on Vilar's scenography and direction. The change was so thought-provoking that Vilar himself felt he was watching a play he no longer recognized. Seven years after creating the part, he wrote a long paper on the construction of the character and its variants (Vilar 1953).[6] He did not want to choose between Richard's facets, nor clarify the "secret" of his multiplicity, but preferred to leave it open to the spectators' imagination. They must let themselves be "brassés", brewed, by the poem (Vilar 1953).

[3] "Aucune dimension de l'œuvre n'avait, semble-t-il échappé à Vilar . . . Quand le regretté Gérard Philipe lui succéda dans le rôle, Richard fut réduit aux proportions d'un mignon couronné, d'un débauché clairvoyant, mais veule, et que l'adversité faisait sombrer dans l'hystérie" (Jacquot 1964: 111).

[4] "Une inflexion de voix, un geste, et tout ce que l'auteur a voulu dire, se change en son contraire" (Triolet 1954).

[5] "Dureté de gestes" and "regard d'acier" (Joly 1954).

[6] Vilar had performed the part twenty-seven times in the past three months when he wrote this paper. He mentions his perplexity in a note of 3 February 1954 in his *Memento*.

Since then, the acting tradition on both sides of the Channel has left us memories of variously weak Richards. Deborah Warner's, played by Fiona Shaw at the National Theatre in 1995, was a capricious child who sucked his thumb while telling himself sad bedtime stories of his dead ancestors. Patrice Chéreau played the monarch as a provocative hedonist, more youthful than royal, disoriented and vulnerable. Mnouchkine's impersonal characters, distinguished only by their costumes, and masks indicative of age, were ruled over by a godlike, hieratic figure, seated ten feet above the ground on a slim bamboo structure – in reference to the Vietnam war – that would become his prison when Bolingbroke took over his kingly attributes. More recently, Denis Podalydès, a shy, sickly clown, walked with tiny steps "like a geisha" (Héliot 2010), or a bird fallen from the nest, trying to escape the terrifying world of adults.[7] In *The Hollow Crown* on BBC 2, Ben Whishaw plays "an airy and effeminate Richard" who loses "his grip on both reality and his throne to the advancing Henry Bolingbroke" (Genzlinger 2013), "a nebbish and fey Richard, flitting about and making cataclysmic decisions on a whim", who whines and screams on the beach in Wales, "throwing a tantrum of disbelief that anyone would defy succession" (McFarland 2013). To *The Telegraph* reviewer, "He was camp, fretful and feeble throughout" (Crompton 2012). As Michael Dobson (2011) points out in his brilliant review of British performances since the '70s, the high camp tradition is an enduring one: "some of the greatest Richards in the theatre have been gay or bisexual". The transfer from Vilar to Philipe had marked a point of no return in his impersonations.

The Rise of the Poet-King

The fortune of the play varied no less in the course of centuries. It was very successful in Shakespeare's own time, judging by the number of performances and reprints; at least until its last recorded performance at the Globe in 1631. After the Civil War, when the continental stage and its classical repertory took over, *Richard II* had only a few severely cut productions through the next century. George Steevens observes in 1780 that successive audiences usually sleep through those rare occurrences, and strongly advises Garrick not to revive it. Even Coleridge, one of its earliest admirers, writes in 1813 that it is rarely performed. Inflamed by Schlegel's lectures, he declares it "the first and most admirable of all Shakespeare's *purely* historical plays" as opposed to *Henry IV* "which may be named the *mixt* drama" (Coleridge

[7] Chéreau played the title part in his own production, Nouveau Gymnase, Marseille, 1970, Théâtre de l'Odéon, 1971. Georges Bigot, dir. Mnouchkine, Cartoucherie, 10 December 1981, Avignon, 1982. Denis Podalydès, dir. Jean-Baptiste Sastre, Avignon, 2010.

1989: 123-4). In his view (1971: 126-7), *Richard II* fulfills the function of historical drama, "namely, of familiarizing the people to the great names of their country, and thereby of exciting a steady patriotism, a love of just liberty, and a respect for all those fundamental institutions of social life, which bind men together" (1989: 126). But Coleridge found *Richard II* too subtle and sublime a poem for the crudities of the stage, he preferred to read it than hear it in the theatre. Indeed, he protests, he has never seen "any of Shakespeare's plays performed but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation": Shakespeare's proper place is "in the heart and the closet; where he sits with Milton" (119). Concerning the eponymous character, he agrees that Richard is "weak and womanish", but Shakespeare did not want to make him a vulgar rake, just to give him "a wantonness in feminine show, feminine *friendism*, intensely woman-like love of those immediately about him" (134).[8] A number of writers shared Coleridge's distrust of the theatre. Hazlitt for one, did not recommend "the getting-up of Shakespeare's plays in general", even when performed by the best actors: "Not only are the more refined poetical beauties and minuter strokes of character lost to the audience, but the most striking and impressive passages, those which having once read we can never forget, fail comparatively of their effect, except in one or two rare instances indeed" (1818: 55). He does grant some quality to the performance of Richard II by Edmund Kean, but still, he insists, "we believe that in acting Shakespear there is a greater number of good things marred than in acting any other author" (57).

Edmund Kean was using Richard Wroughton's adaptation of the text. Wroughton had cut about a third of the lines, and replaced them with extracts from other plays, or new speeches of his own, which made Richard more heroic, and the play generally more moralizing. The actor was criticized for what Hazlitt thought was excessive ardour: "Mr Kean made it a character of *passion*, that is, of feeling combined with energy; whereas it is a character of *pathos*, that is to say, of feeling combined with weakness" (58). Wroughton's version was the standard one until the mid-nineteenth century, when Charles Kean, Edmund's son, gave *Richard II* new life with a text quite as ruthlessly cut, costly scenery and costumes, in a production that Queen Victoria would attend five times.[9] Here enters Richard "the poet-king", saluted by Walter Pater as "the most sweet-tongued" of all Shakespeare's eloquent row of kings: "In the hands of [Charles] Kean the

[8] Review for the *Bristol Gazette*, 18 November 1813, and marginal notes on his copy of the text for his "Lecture 2" of the 1818-19 series.

[9] Princess's Theatre, 1857, Royal Archives reference VIC/MAIN/Z/115. Charles Kean's *Richard II* was performed with large cuts and a well-documented spectacular scenery which pleased the public's taste for history.

play became like an exquisite performance on the violin" (1924: 201). The elegiac version was taking the upper hand, the confusion between Shakespeare's poetic talent and his character's near complete. Now writers adopted Richard as a brother artist who prefers poetry to action, and is too good a poet to be a good king. Only Swinburne protests that a poet is not necessarily effeminate and childish, but he does not argue with this portrayal of Richard: in his view, "the interest taken by the young Shakespeare in the development or evolution of such a womanish or semivirile character" can only be explained by the playwright's "dramatic immaturity". His play is full of imperfections, betraying "the struggle between the worse and the better genius of the author" (1909: 59, 85).

Nowadays, compared with Edmund Kean's muscular performance, Nicholas Brooke notes, "most modern Richards have moved so far in the other direction that they look ridiculous every time it is remarked how much he *looks* like his father, the Black Prince" (1973: 14). Harold Bloom sums up a widely spread feeling among critics, when he defines the play as "the tragedy of a self-indulgent poet" (2005: 113). So, what happened to the English Solomon depicted in Richard II's epitaph as "noble in body and judicious in mind like Homer", who "cast down the proud; / and laid low those who violated the royal prerogative", "destroyed the heretics and scattered their friends"? What happened to the man who, at age fourteen, had gallantly faced the Peasants' Revolt without a tremor? It is often said that his posthumous reputation was shaped to a large extent by Shakespeare. A historian like Palmer (1971: 76) argues that the historical character had nothing to do with "the pale poetic aesthete of Shakespeare's drama". But is this metamorphosis truly Shakespeare's work, or the actors' and directors'?

The End of Feudalism

Today's productions often base Richard's weakness on the fact that he gave up his throne without fighting. Yet, as a closer look at the sources will confirm, neither Shakespeare nor the chroniclers claim he submitted willingly. What does happen on page and stage is a chain of events Richard could not divert: the duel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray, which causes a political dilemma, and his return a day too late from Ireland, which creates a military one. In Hall's chronicle (1809: 19), the murder of Woodstock is the initial cause of the disaster. In Holinshed's (1587: 498-9), it is the delayed landing. Shakespeare's "Call back yesterday" (2002: 3.2.69), "Unhappy day too late" (3.2.71) stresses the king's impotence against the irreversibility of time which makes his errors fatal:

But now the blood of twenty thousand men
Did triumph in my face, and they are fled;
(3.2.76-7)

At the opening of the play, Richard's belief that his royal words have a performative power is ironically endorsed by his cousin:

How long a time lies in one little word!
Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
End in a word; such is the breath of kings.
(1.3.213-15)

This is the last time he can believe it, and soon Gaunt reminds him of its limit: "But not a minute, King, that thou canst give" (1.3.226). Nor can he trust in divine protection any longer when God's army of angels fail to rush to his defense. The sequence of events will further deny his vision of monarchy. Time, the major dramatic agent of the play, will never again obey Richard, yet obsessively returns to nag him:

I wasted time, and now doth Time waste me;
For now hath Time made me his numb'ring clock.
(5.5.49-50)

To the king's tragic errors, Shakespeare adds another important factor, supported by all the sources: Richard's financial extorsions are a sure way of alienating his subjects, as Bagot points out, "for their love / Lies in their purses" (2.2.128-9).[10] Patrice Chéreau had made this the basis of his production. His Richard was trapped in a major political change, when the old feudal class begins to retreat before the rise of a new power, money: instead of occupying the political centre of the realm, monarchy becomes its banker, inventing new ways of spending and wasting, new taxes to pay for pleasures. The theft of Bolingbroke's inheritance, the last of many abuses, makes the wealthy nobility eager to stop the haemorrhage. Chéreau noticed an important fact, seldom pointed out before: Bolingbroke has planned his return from exile before he learns the loss of his inheritance, though he swears that all he wants is his dukedom back, and the discontented lords are only too happy to make him their leader. Indeed, in the play there is no scene break between the death of Gaunt, Richard's capture of his possessions, and the news of Bolingbroke's return. The chronicles show he did have designs on the crown from the start: his friends have

[10] Blank charters and other exactions play a significant part in the anonymous *Woodstock*. Thomas Walsingham (2005: 298) reports that in 1397, Richard began to tyrannize his people. On his evolution at the end of his reign, which alienated the contemporary chroniclers, see Saul (1997: 270, 366-8, 388-91).

written to him, promising him their support "if he expelling K. Richard, as a man not meet for the office he bare, would take vpon him the scepter, rule, and diademe" (Holinshed 1587: 497).[11] Once he has landed, no one opposes him, the few royal supporters are taken and executed, and his troops increase as he marches to the throne because "those that came not, were spoiled of all they had . . . And thus what for loue, and what for feare of losse, they came flocking vnto him from euerie part" (498). Now that Richard's friends have been killed, there can be no turning back for the Lancastrians, and Richard knows it: those who have taken up arms for Lancaster "would rather die than give place, as well for the hatred as feare which they had conceived at him" (499). On the stage Bolingbroke's methods are reflected at 3.4 in the gardeners', which are uncritically held up as models of good government by those critics who find nothing wrong with their brutal programme: cut off lofty sprays, pluck up noisome weeds, lop away superfluous branches.

Last element in their posthumous construction of a weak, ineffective king: "the enigma of Richard's behaviour after his return to Wales" could only be explained by the collapse "of a poetic introvert" (Bullough 1960: 379).[12] The enigma? Holinshed's narrative clearly states that Richard was beaten before the fight, and that he was shrewd enough to know it: "he euidentlie saw, and manifestlie perceiued, that he was forsaken of them, by whom in time he might haue béene aided and relieued, where now it was too late" (Holinshed 1587: 499). His delayed return "gave opportunitie to the duke to bring things to passe as he could have wished, and tooke from the king all occasion to recover afterwards anie forces sufficient to resist him" (ibid.). When Richard does arrive, he is informed that all the castles of the marches from Scotland to Bristol have surrendered, "that likewise the nobles and commons, as well of the south parts, as the north, were fullie bent to take part with the same duke against him" (ibid.).

The news leaves him "so greatlie discomforted, that sorowfullie lamenting his miserable state, he utterlie despaired of his owne safetie, and calling his armie together, which was not small, licenced every man to depart to his home" (ibid.). Here one question remains: why did he make no attempt to resist? His own soldiers were ready to fight, "promising with an oth to stand with him against the duke, and all his partakers vnto death: but this could not encourage him at all" (500-1). With good reason. Bolingbroke sends to him the Earl of Northumberland, accompanied by "foure hundred

[11] Cf. Shakespeare 2002: 2.1.289-90.

[12] Bullough is one of many, Ann Barton, Winny, Van Laan, Potter, Berger, Siegel, Bloom, Calderwood, Hodgdon, to name a few. On the historical character, see Palmer (1971: 75-107) and Saul (1997: 411, 421, 460-4).

lances, & a thousand archers", while his own troops are "hid closelie in two ambushes, behind a craggie mounteine, beside the high waie that leadeth from Flint to Conwaie" (ibid.). Richard "being inclosed with the sea on the one side, and the rocks on the other, hauing his aduersaries so néere at hand before him, he could not shift awaie by any meanes . . . And thus of force he was then constrained to go with the earle" (ibid.).

Richard's 'free consent' to resign, like Bolingbroke's 'show of duty' is exactly that, a show, the official version of the deposition that all must accept as fact. If he agreed, according to the chronicles, it was in the vain hope to save his life. At Flint Castle, Shakespeare's Richard anticipates Hamlet:

> Shall we call back Northumberland and send
> Defiance to the traitor, and so die?
> (2002: 3.3.129-30)

His reluctance to waste his and his soldiers' lives in a lost cause would probably earn him praise nowadays, but in his own time, such irenism was condemned as cowardice unworthy of his great ancestors.[13] Walsingham, for instance, memorably complained in his *Chronica maiora* that the king's men were "knights of Venus rather than of Bellona" (Ormrod 2004: 290). On stage it is one of Northumberland's early grievances: "More hath he spent in peace than they in war" (Shakespeare 2002: 2.1.255).

Shakespeare obviously knew his sources well, even if he does not feel tied to them when they do not fit his design. Nowhere does he paint a 'weak' Richard, unless providing him with some of the best poetry in the histories is to make him weak. Poetry, as in the "sad stories of the deaths of kings" (3.2.156), is out of character, more, it transcends the character, who becomes the mouthpiece of an enlarged vision of the movement of history.

Positively Last Performance

Once defeated by superior armed strength, did Richard 'willingly' abdicate? It was a tricky point. The medieval and Tudor chroniclers were well aware that the case against him was fairly light, touching a king of undeniable legitimacy. Edward Hall adds to his predecessors' accounts a willing confession made by Richard of his faults, for which he expresses due remorse, but which the stage character skillfully evades. Holinshed retreats

[13] See Philippe de Mézières' *Epistre au roi Richart*, pleading with him to make peace with France (1975: 60-2) and Saul (1997: 206-10, 387-8) on Richard's abhorrence of war.

behind official reports, the thirty-three articles of impeachment summed up "by maister Hall as followeth", the testimony of sixteen commissioners who speak sometimes as a multiple "we", sometimes as a singular "me the said earle", Northumberland. According to these witnesses, Richard, having confessed his inability to govern, promised "he would gladlie leaue of and renounce his right and title", a promise he is ready now "to performe and fulfill". Thus "he desired to haue a bill drawne of the said resignation, that he might be perfect in the rehearsall thereof" and was determined to read it himself "with glad countenance" (Holinshed 1587: 503).

Perform, seem, rehearse… Embedded in this testimony, a document in the first person, "I Richard" frees his subjects from their allegeance and renounces all his titles. The witnesses state he then expressed the wish to have Bolingbroke succeed him, and he put his gold ring on his cousin's finger. Then they carry the "voluntarie renounciation" from the Tower to Westminster Hall where it is confirmed by the two Houses. This is but the first phase, which continues with other documents, speeches, and proclamations. Richard himself remains invisible throughout the proceedings. Henry Bolingbroke who has remained silent so far, now presents his titles to the crown, reported again through an official document, "I Henrie of Lancaster claime the realme of England and the crowne", which is granted him straightaway (502-6). He then summons a new Parliament, where he hears the challenges between rival factions, orders a new enquiry into Woodstock's murder, and has the bishop of Carlisle arrested, all episodes which *Richard II* stages *before* the actual deposition (4.1), with the pretender visibly usurping the royal prerogative. In the chronicles, divine monarchy takes on the shape of a vaguely constitutional monarchy, with Parliament raised to an unprecedented role. Edward II had likewise been deposed, but to be succeeded by his son and lawful heir.

The play does not discuss the cause of Woodstock's murder, the outcome of an episode that strongly affected the historical Richard. The Merciless Parliament dominated by the Lords Appellant had convicted his court of treason, and executed several of his favourites. But Richard fought back: in July 1397 three of the Appellants were arrested. The Revenge Parliament of September revoked their commission to govern and declared them guilty of treason. The Earl of Arundel was tried and executed. His younger brother the Archbishop of Canterbury was exiled. Woodstock was imprisoned and murdered in Calais. The quarrel between Hereford and Mowbray erupted the following year, during the Parliament session of Shrewsbury. On stage, the fall of medieval divine monarchy begins then. Richard cannot allow a trial by combat that would point him out as the real culprit.

The full story of Woodstock's death, suffocated under a featherbed, would be confessed by his murderer in Henry IV's first parliament. But the records

during Richard's own reign already show strong disapproval of his behaviour. Chaucer (1987) directly advised Richard in his ballad "Lak of Stedfastnesse", giving him full instructions on the proper behaviour expected from a king:

> O prince, desyre to be honourable
> Cherish thy folk, and hate extorcioun.
> Suffer nothing that may be reprevable
> To thyne estate don in thy regioun.
> Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun.
> Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse
> And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.
> (1987, "Lenvoy to King Richard": ll. 22-8)

The poet John Gower pleaded with him to listen to his subjects' grievances,

> A king who reckons gold greater than his people's hearts
> Straightaway must fall from the people's mind.
> (2005, "O deus immense": 4, ll. 21-2)

He even goes further, "*Nomen regale populi vox dat tibi*", "the voice of the people gives you the royal title" (l. 60). A wise king will have ears for them if he wishes to be secure. Increasingly disgusted with Richard's rule, Gower moved over to the Lancastrians and wrote a poem praising Henry IV for a blessed act of war that rid the country of a tyrant and drove the legitimate heir to the throne, blithely ignoring the fact that Mortimer, the nearest heir, was bypassed, despite a family tree that would be rehearsed at length in Shakespeare's early histories.

One of the Tower committee, Adam of Usk, a doctor in canon law of Oxford, reports the whole sequence of Richard's fall in his *Chronicon* with a strong Lancastrian bias (Usk 1997: 20).[14] His sympathy goes unequivocally to the Appellants, one of whom, Archbishop Arundel, was his early patron. Richard's downfall is blamed first on his youth, and his unhappy choice of favourites, bad counsellors all, while Parliament stood impotent and ignored. In Adam's view, the confiscation of Hereford's inheritance sealed the king's fate. The French accounts, *Chronicque de la Traïson et Mort de Richart deux roy Dengleterre*, Jean Créton's versified *Prinse du Roy Richart d'Angleterre*, like Froissart's chronicle (1806), strongly support Richard and cannot be wholly trusted either. The official report, the "Record and Process of the re-

[14] See Christopher Given-Wilson (1993: 329-35). John McCullagh (2005: 11-16) points out that his criticism of kingship goes beyond this particular king, it runs throughout his chronicle, and shows striking similarities with Walsingham's. Both chroniclers agree that taxation makes a monarch perilously unpopular with his people, yet both disapprove the Peasants' Revolt and their attack on hierarchy.

nunciation of King Richard the Second after the Conquest" ("Record and Process" 1969: 401-8) monitored by the managers of the revolution, betrays a complex state of irregularities. In this rewriting of facts, the sanction of the estates of the realm, *status* summoned by writ, is the only one invoked. The turbulent crowd of Londoners, *populus*, provide the traditional *acclamatio*. Richard gently resigns, confessing his faults, and designates his worthy cousin as successor, a well-organized ambiguity to be sorted out through the ironies of Shakespeare's dialogue, in the famously censored deposition scene. The *gravamina*, the list of faults recorded against Richard II, stress practices depriving his subjects of rights and liberties guaranteed by Magna Carta, like arrests on suspicion, persecuting the lords who sought to advise him, infringing on the "*potestas et status parliamenti*", appealing to the pope for confirmation of certain statutes "*contra coronam et dignitatem regiam*" and against the statutes and liberties of the realm. He is also charged with having alienated the property of the Crown without leave of the estates of the kingdom. The interests of the nation must be protected by Parliament against his arbitrary personal interference. The distinction between the two bodies of the monarch, royal person and dignity, first appears here, opening the split that will leave Shakespeare's "unkinged" Richard naked, and divine monarchy a corpse to be covered up under Henry V's pious cloak of "ceremony" (Goy-Blanquet 2016: 97-107).

By a sensational *coup de théâtre*, Shakespeare turns the deposition scene back on its organizers. As Dobson (2011) points out, it is easy to see why it was omitted from all Elizabethan printed texts: "this is a scene that sees through the whole business of political icon-making". Richard retraces in reverse mode the way to the coronation, emptying it of its symbolic worth, stressing that every step Bolingbroke is about to walk, his every gesture, will be a transgression of the sacred ritual. Bolingbroke understands too late he has been tricked. He gives the show away, "I thought you had been willing to resign", and clumsily insists "Are you contented to resign the crown?" (Shakespeare 2002: 4.1.200), which gets him an ironical "Ay, no. No, ay" (201). Now the anointment, the regalia, the oaths will all appear as parodies devoid of meaning. The royal icon holds centre stage for one masterly, positively last performance, rehearsing the tragic fall of sacred medieval majesty. The sound of footsteps on Richard's grave will echo through the next plays, under showers of English blood: these "sad stories of the death of kings" told at the fireside will still draw tears from the hearers before the common weal begins to move away from the warlike court to a world of taverns, rural towns and prosaic trade.

The Revolutionary Poet

Even more significantly, Shakespeare deliberately departs from his sources to highlight the role of Parliament by transferring the deposition scene from the Tower to Westminster (Goy-Blanquet 2005: 99-111). Shakespeare's French translator François-Victor Hugo was the first to stress the significance of this move, actually a revolution: "In front of the wretched Westminster that divinizes tyranny, Shakespeare erects the formidable Westminster where it is unthroned". Richard deserves no sympathy and will get none, the poet Hugo's son writes. Shakespeare did not alter the work of Providence, he was just God's stage director. To the French Republican, Elizabeth who chose to identify herself with Richard deserved no better, exercising as she did "the double supremacy of pope and emperor, mistress of all consciences as of all destinies, arbiter of faith, arbiter of law". The poet Shakespeare, no weakling here, dares to stand up like a justiciar against "the almighty sultana of England" and "summon before the people's bar this imperial monarchy that claims to hold a mandate from above". His play will "establish by a famous and revealing example that law is the supreme force".[15]

The similarities between Richard and Elizabeth have often been stressed, though seldom with such flame. François-Victor Hugo saw here a major turn in English politics that Shakespeare shrewdly detected in the mass of chronicle material, and brilliantly staged as the resounding, heart-breaking crash of divine monarchy. Hugo's diatribe against the almighty sultana of England may seem excessive: the Tudors, who made abundant use of the royal prerogative, were wise enough not to advertise absolutist views. But their successor-to-be, young James VI of Scotland, who had to suffer from the Ruthven Raiders an oppression as humiliating as Richard's by the Appellants and their Merciless Parliament, declared his will to be "an absolute king".[16] Since royal power existed before there were laws, James insisted, Parliament holds its authority from the king, who holds his from God: "And so it followes of necessitie, that the Kinges were the authors & makers of the lawes, and not the lawes of the Kings" (James VI & I 1982: 70).

Against Bracton's time-honoured dogma that the King is "under God and under the law, because law maketh a king", James found a legal ba-

[15] "Devant ce misérable Westminster où l'on divinise la tyrannie, il élève subitement le formidable Westminster où on la détrône"; "la double suprématie du pape et de l'empereur, maîtresse de toutes les consciences comme de toutes les destinées, arbitre de la foi, arbitre de la loi"; "la sultane toute puissante de l'Angleterre"; "traduire à la barre du peuple cette monarchie impériale qui prétend tenir son mandat d'en haut"; "établir par un exemple éclatant et illustre que la force suprême, c'est le droit" (Hugo 1872: 25-30).

[16] From Walsingham's notes on their interview, in Read (1925: 2.213-18).

sis to his claim that "*Monarchie* is the true paterne of Diuinitie" (60) in Jean Bodin's recently published theory of the State. To Bodin, "all the princes of the earth are subject to the laws of God and of nature, and even to certain human laws common to all nations", yet the power of the State is unambiguously embodied in royal power. The king is not subject to his own laws: "For this reason edicts and ordinances conclude with the formula 'for such is our good pleasure', thus intimating that the laws of a sovereign prince, even when founded on truth and right reason, proceed simply from his own free will" (Bodin 1955: 32).[17] The doctrine would lead James's son, Charles I, to the scaffold, while French kings would enjoy another century and half of absolute power before they shared the doom promised by the poets, a force to be reckoned with.

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David Schalkwyk*

Macbeth's Language

Abstract

This essay approaches the question of language in *Macbeth* from the perspective of the recent proliferation of interest in computational analysis. Using the programmes Docuscope, LATtice, and Wordhoard, it examines the LATtice indication that, based on Language Action Types (LATs), *Macbeth* is, after *Troilus and Cressida*, linguistically closest to *Hamlet* and the Wordhoard finding that in *Macbeth* the pronoun *she* is used less often than in Shakespeare's canon. It argues that, despite the apparent similarity of language in the two tragedies, there is a profound difference between the two when one takes into account the poetic qualities of metaphor, rhythm, and the variation of single and multiple-syllabic words. Finally, examining the relative occurrence of the noun "woman" in the play, it argues that, in linguistic terms, the preponderance of uses in the final act in the phrase "of woman born" creates a rhythmical mantra that suggests that the root of evil in the Scottish play lies in the denial of the female.

Keywords: Shakespeare; *Macbeth*; *Hamlet*; computational stylistic analysis; wordhoard; docuscope; LATtice; rhythm; poetry; pronouns; *she*; woman

In early 2017 the new Oxford Shakespeare appeared with much press fanfare, chiefly because of its radical expansion of co-authored plays from eight out of thirty-nine in the 1986 edition to seventeen out of forty-four in 2017. The major winner in this process is not Marlowe or Middleton or Fletcher, but rather computational analysis: the tool that allows scholars to pinpoint, in accordance with the relative frequency of particular words, passages written by specific authors that are now assumed to bear their characters as indelibly as their personal signatures or thumbprints. At a recent conference on Shakespeare and Marlowe held by the Kingston Shakespeare Seminar under the direction of Richard Wilson, most of the discussion (and contention) concerned the way in which computational analysis should be used: the questions it should be asked to address, the data it should be fed, the units of analysis it should depend upon. None of the protagonists, notably Brian Vickers and Marina Tarlonskaja on one side, and the representatives of the new Oxford

* Queen Mary, University of London - dschalkwyk1@gmail.com

Shakespeare, Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (with Hugh Craig in the background) on the other, attacked digital analysis as such. But they did disagree violently about how it should be used. Very simply – or simplistically – the 'Oxford' school put their faith in the purely computational analysis of 'function words' (articles, prepositions, auxiliaries), while Vickers claimed not only that it was far better to use 'word strings' as the unit of comparative analysis, but also that attention to 'traditional' literary concerns like differences of genre and fine shades of meaning in context is critical: "Attribution studies based on reading, on the constantly changing flux of meaning and intention, can register the full spectrum of dramatic language from the minutiae of verbal contractions to the larger significance of repeated words and concepts" (Vickers 2011: 114).

I must say at once that I have no interest in the attribution of authorship in this essay (especially not regarding *Macbeth*). But I am interested in the use of computer analysis to help us ask questions of and read Shakespeare's texts with close attention. Most scholars engaged in author attribution analysis use their own sophisticated programmes. But there are others readily available to non-specialists that reveal patterns in the language of Shakespeare's plays (indeed, any texts) that would be very difficult to see without the computer's vast capacity for statistical analysis. The three programmes I will discuss here include Docuscope, which analyses Language Action Types (LATs), a range of different uses of language or speech acts; Lattice, which works with Docuscope data to represent graphically the distance of Shakespeare's plays from each other in their rhetorical actions; and Wordhoard, which offers an analysis of the relative frequency of words used in particular plays in comparison with other Shakespeare plays, either in a single comparison (*Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, for example), or across the whole canon.

Wordhoard, like all concordance-based programmes, can reveal some counterintuitive things – for example, that the character who uses the word "love" most across the canon is Iago (followed by Othello) and that the word is hardly used at all in *The Tempest*. Docuscope's speech-oriented analysis is more sophisticated. For example, it not only tags all first-person pronouns, but also indicates specific uses of the first person – "Self-disclosure", as in 'I think', 'I am', 'I feel', 'I believe'; but also "Self-reluctance", as in 'I regret', 'I was forced', 'I refuse'; and "Autobiography", when characters reveal things about their past thoughts and actions.

I have been playing around with these programmes for some years now, and have not quite come to a decision about how useful they are for the kind of analysis that Vickers describes as "dramatic language from the minutiae of verbal contractions to the larger significance of repeated words

and concepts". So I thought, especially after Michael Witmore, Jonathan Hope and Michael Gleicher's chapter on the use of these programmes to reveal the features of Shakespeare's language in his tragedies as a whole in the recent *Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, that it might be interesting to see if they can tell us anything about the language of *Macbeth* (Witmore, Hope, and Gleicher 2016). In their early attempts to isolate the distinctive characteristics of Shakespeare's languages of tragedy and comedy, Witmore and Hope found that Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies clustered separately in different parts of a graph representing LATs (Hope and Witmore 2010). But in the latest study they suggest that, compared to the whole corpus of early modern plays, there is in fact little difference between Shakespeare's language of tragedy and that of his comedies. To anyone who has read Susan Snyder's decades-old study on the comic matrix of Shakespeare's tragedies, this should perhaps not be very surprising (Snyder 1979).

One striking difference that Witmore and Hope do isolate in their comparison is that Shakespeare uses more personal address, and especially first-person address – language addressed by the speaking 'I' concerning its own states, intentions, and actions – in his comedies than he does in his tragedies. This is counter-intuitive, especially in the light of the general assumption that it is in Shakespeare's tragedies, especially *Hamlet*, that a self-consciously interior subjectivity is invented.[1] But matters are more complicated than can be revealed by mere statistical analysis. Hope and Witmore know this, of course, and have always insisted that computational analysis is no more than a research aid — the researcher still has to ask, and try to answer, the hard questions. So what I am going to say should in no way be regarded as a criticism of their work, or indeed of those scholars who have discovered multiple other hands in Shakespeare's texts, or indeed his hand in others.

Looking at the OpensourceShakespeare concordance and the Wordhoard loglikelihood analysis of the relative frequency of words in *Macbeth* compared to the whole of Shakespeare's corpus, but stripped of proper names (which would otherwise skew the comparison considerably) it is striking for being unsurprising. We should expect "thane", "knock", "cauldron", "weird", "dagger", "tyrant", "fear", and "horror" to appear more frequently in the Scottish play than in the others. More interesting, though, are the personal pronouns. "She" is strikingly infrequent in *Macbeth*. It appears only seventeen times – twenty-one uses for every 10,000 words – in

[1] This has long been argued by cultural materialist and new historicist critics. The *locus classicus* of the argument is Barker 1995. For a critical response, see Eisaman Maus 1995.

comparison with the rest of the corpus, which has fifty-three per 10,000.[2] This is something I would certainly not have noticed without the help of the computer. The question is, what to make of it.

Does this absence of the female pronoun mean that women are unimportant in this play? It is not as if *Macbeth* is devoid of female characters. Indeed, Lady Macbeth is an extremely prominent figure in the play. For that matter, Lady Macduff is also pretty central to Macduff's life and actions, even if she appears in one brief, horrific scene. The point is that women may play an active role in the play, but they are not talked about much. They play very little part in the thoughts or reflections of the other (male) characters. There is no such discrepancy with the male pronoun, "he". Shakespeare uses it about as frequently in *Macbeth* as he does in his other plays. "Her" is also used significantly less frequently in *Macbeth*, on twenty-six occasions, many of which refer not to any specific woman but to entities like the scotched snake, a sow, figures invoked by the witches, and Scotland herself.

Matters get more interesting when we move from statistical analysis to reading the text itself. Act 5, scene 1 is very brief – no more than sixty-seven lines. But it contains fourteen instances of "she" and seventeen of "her". There is thus a "she" or "her" for every line of the scene, although they might not appear in every line. This is not surprising, because the scene is the famous, harrowing occasion on which the distraught Lady Macbeth walks and talks in her troubled sleep, lacerated by her conscience, and observed by the doctor and the Waiting-Gentlewoman. This is no dumb-show. Shakespeare provides a running commentary from the two minor characters that forces us to attend in full at the woman who now finds it almost impossible to speak or think, impossible to adopt the first person 'I' with any security or confidence. Her heart is "sorely charged"; we witness her inner torment in broken fragments that nevertheless sound with a terrifying clarity: "Out, out damned spot . . . Hell is murky . . . Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? . . . The Thane of Fife had a wife . . . Here's the smell of blood, still . . . What's done cannot be undone" (*Macbeth*, 5.1.37, passim).

And in their continuous commentary on the character we see before us on the stage, the Doctor and the Waiting-Gentlewoman present a fragile, damaged human being: throwing on a night-gown, opening a closet, taking out a paper, writing, reading, rubbing her hands, echoing her earlier reading of a letter actions in which she possessed such certainty of thought and

[2] These figures are obtained from the sites www.opensourceshakespeare.org (last access 28 November 2017) and Wordhoard (wordhoard.northwestern.edu, last access 28 November 2017).

self that she was the one who spoke and acted, not the one spoken of. In the dialogues between them, Lady Macbeth by and large matches her husband's use of the first-person pronoun. He outstrips her only in his soliloquies, of which he has many more than his wife.

This brings us to *Hamlet*, and its relation to the later tragedy. LATtice reveals that comparatively speaking these two tragedies are linguistically very similar. The closest play to *Macbeth* (according to the Docuscope rhetorical analysis upon which LATtice bases its findings) is in fact *Troilus and Cressida*. *Hamlet* is next in line, followed by *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* and, perhaps surprisingly, *Cymbeline*. The play furthest from *Macbeth* is *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. What LATtice, working on Docuscope data, shows is that especially with regard to personal disclosure, there is not a great deal of difference between *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. *Macbeth* has slightly more uses of the first person, *Hamlet* slightly more self-disclosure, but also a lot more that falls under Docuscope's "Autobiography" category (*Macbeth* has virtually none). Perhaps surprisingly, they are virtually on a par on "Self-disclosure", universally regarded as Hamlet's unique province.

But again, we come up against the limitations of even a rhetorically oriented programme that focuses not on word frequency but rather on language as action. Intuitively, we sense that, despite what Docuscope and LATtice tell us, the languages of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* belong to entirely different worlds. In their modes of self-address the eponymous heroes are utterly different: the one, as James Calderwood (1985) argued, is embroiled in action – in Macbeth's constant projection of "the deed" – the other, infamously and incessantly "los[es] the name of action". That intuition tends to ignore the degree to which Macbeth, at least initially, in his own early soliloquies struggles to bring himself to act. But it should prompt us to ask about differences of syntax and rhythm (this is verse, after all, and Docuscope has no means of measuring the linguistic force of the poetic) and the way in which, especially in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare alternates passages of multisyllabic language often clogged with recalcitrant metaphors and similes with much more simple, monosyllabic lines.

There are differences within the play, and sometimes differences in the language used by a single character.

Here is an early Macbeth soliloquy:

> If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly. If th'assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence and catch
> With his surcease success, that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
> We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases

> We still have judgment here, that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice
> Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips.
> (*Macbeth*, 1.7.1-10)

The opening sentence appears to be simple and clear enough. All the words bar "quickly" are monosyllabic. Almost all the words are repeated – "it", "done", "were/'twere", "well" ("done" appears three times). But it is precisely this repletion, and the way in which words like "where" and "were" merge as the same sound that makes the syntax difficult to follow. That is complicated further by the conditional, "if", while the indeterminate "it" coupled in the subjunctive mood and the passive voice means that while Shakespeare is using simple, common English words, he is throwing up grammatical obstacles to our easy grasp of the sense of Macbeth's thinking. The rhythm offers a further hazard, breaking from the familiar voice of the iamb with three initial, unstressed beats and a strongly stressed accent on "done", repeated twice more, over the enjambment, after two further unstressed beats.

Macbeth then follows this deceptively simple sentence with a further, elaborative conditional that runs across six lines and contains five multisyllabic words in what is effectively two lines, before returning to single syllables for the next four lines. And then he repeats the pattern: a string of monosyllables followed by a conglomeration of words up to four syllables in length. Rhythmically, this makes the speech difficult both to say and to follow, especially in the running together of sense and sound in "surcease success" and in the abrupt syncopated repetitions of "that but this blow . . . here / But here . . . But in these cases".

The speech is Hamlet-like in the degree to which it interrupts the train of thought, as in his "To be or not to be" reflection, with its many hesitations and interruptions. Indeed, the two soliloquies share affinities in both their subject matter and their rhythmically insecure struggles to follow a train of thought through qualification. Both are entangled in the struggle to hold a desired moment apart from its feared consequences. Both men are struggling to come to terms with themselves, with what they know but also wish to deny. And despite that fact that each reflection is deeply personal, neither grounds it in the first person – there is no "I", at least grammatically, at the centre of either contemplation.

Here is Macbeth again, after his musing on the dagger, in a speech filled with the first-person pronoun, in some parts a pronoun in every line. The "here" that Macbeth has such difficulty locating and fixing in the earlier speech is now embodied in the concrete language of immediate sense-per-

ception (rendered extremely ironic by its character as an hallucination). I want to look at the second part of the speech, as Macbeth moves from the immediacy of the dagger to the anticipation of his "deed":

> There's no such thing.
> It is the bloody business which informs
> Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one-half world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's off'rings, and withered murder,
> Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
> Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts
> And take the present horror from the time,
> Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives.
> Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.
> *A bell rings.*
> I go, and it is done. The bell invites me.
> Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven or to hell.
> (2.1.59-74)

It is not so much the words of the speech actions that carry emotion and sense here, but the rhythm, which is utterly different from that of the earlier speech. The absolute clarity of "There's no such thing. / It is the bloody business which informs / Thus to mine eyes" derives from the secureness of the rhythm as much as the directness of the words, each stamped with equal emphasis. It marks a point of resolution and decision that morphs into Macbeth's immersion, as one of night's agents, into the world of Witchcraft, Hecate, and the wolf. His agency remains displaced, now onto "Tarquin's ravishing strides", whose design is the foreboding shadow or ghost of Macbeth's own determination. His sense of horror remains; he is still filled with fear; but it is banished with his determination to replace words with deeds: "Whiles I threat, he lives. / Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives".

The sentence at the centre of the speech spans six lines, comprising thirty-four words, and contains a complex image yoking together "witchcraft", "murder", "Hecate", a "wolf" as both "sentinel" and ravisher, "Tarquin" and "ghost" in two allusions, two forms of personification, two metaphors and a simile. It concludes in the direct simplicity of "I go, and it is done". The monosyllables; the straightforward syntax; the decisive rhythm, all bring

the uncertainties of the earlier contortions of thought and feeling to an abrupt end: the clear intrusion of the bell turns thought into deed, hesitation into grim resolution. Despite LATice's indication that only one other play in the canon is linguistically closer to *Macbeth* than *Hamlet*, such structural and rhythmical contrasts or progressions (this speech moves from relative simplicity through contorted, clotted syntax and imagery to a resolution in the direct finality of the final lines), suggests not action impeded by thought but rather reflection resolving itself in the directness of the deed, which completes itself almost without the intervention of intention: note the passive, "it is done".

If Hamlet is by and large left to himself to find a path to action – or at least a space of "readiness" and ultimately, "silence" – Macbeth negotiates his way in open, active dialogue with others, especially, in the early stages of the play, with his wife, of whom he may speak little, but to and with whom he converses much, and who drives him towards the "deed" that he both eagerly projects and from which he withdraws in horror (one of the words that appears most frequently in this play than any other). Shakespeare carries not only Macbeth's thoughts but also his immersion in and our imagination of the dark world of absolute evil, by skilfully varying but not interrupting the march of iambic pentameter: in the iamb followed by the equal stress of the spondee in "Nature seems dead" and the repeated, initial, trochaic stresses of "Moves like a ghost" and "Hear not my steps", which carry forward the newly secure imperative in their equal stresses. That is repeated in the horrific simplicity of "I go, and it is done". The earlier hesitation at the impossibility of securing the deed without consequence is obliterated in this contraction of the future into the present, precisely what he could not do in his earlier reflection. Shakespeare contracts even the economy of his usual monosyllables into the briefest breath. "I go, and it is done". Six words. Four of them containing no more than two letters. A deed of immense moral and political import is crushed into the economy of the greatest alphabetical compression. The irony of this is that it occurs at the very point when Macbeth decides to eschew speech for action. But speech, even in the tiniest words, may contain everything – therein lies Shakespeare's astonishing combination of language, thought, and feeling. Besides that compression, the ominous rhyming couplet with which the scene ends seems bathetic.

Finally, I turn to the last of the two occasions on which Macbeth speaks of his wife, in which he speaks of her as "she", his famous reflection on her death.

There is a bit of context that will be useful to keep in mind as we look at this speech. It is Macbeth's early, public declaration, after he has killed Duncan, of the way in which a single death may rob the world of significance:

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessèd time; for from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality.
All is but toys. Renown and grace is dead.
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.
(2.3.106-11)

What makes this speech ring hollowly? The language is plain enough. The rhythm fairly supple and flexible. Compare it with this:

She should have died hereafter.
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(5.5.16-27)

The latter is an astonishing speech – the culmination, perhaps, of everything Shakespeare achieved in this great play. Once again, I want to talk about the power of Shakespeare's language as the supple alternation between muscular and yielding rhythms. Yes, the words and the syntax are important: the plain simplicity of "she should have died hereafter / There would have been a time for such a word", as Macbeth is thrown back into the agony of the here and now and the loss of a future he has so desperately sought to trammel up. The exhausted repetition of "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow", the multiple syllables of which are contracted into the compressed assonance and alliteration of "Creeps in this pretty pace from day to day", as if the words have turned in upon themselves in exhausted iteration. Again, the natural tiredness of the unstressed/stressed iamb is wonderfully varied as the verse (and the thought and feeling) are stopped on a stressed/unstressed rhythm: "Creeps in", "To the last", varied to a sudden, insistent, despairing spondee: "Out, out". In a final breath of despair all meaning itself, after the contemptible "strutting and fretting", is drained from the pretentions of language as the word "signifying" dissolves into emptiness.

But that is not the whole story, for we are watching a player strutting and fretting upon a stage; we are listening to his words, to what he signi-

fies, and the words in performance move us to tears, even for this tyrant, as we feel and breathe with Shakespeare his grief and emptiness. It is impossible to convey anything of the power of this language through the abstractions of mere signification. These words, these rhythms, this syntax demand the living breath and body of the actor. We have to share in the actor's bringing these words of death to life in a community that unites body, intellect, and soul. And that, perhaps above all, is why computer analysis, if not exactly a way to dusty death, cannot touch the living force of Shakespeare's universe of language, although it can do much besides.

In conclusion, let us return to the distribution of words in *Macbeth*, in particular the substantive counterpart of the pronoun "she": "woman". I have noted both the relative absence of the feminine pronoun in *Macbeth* compared to the Shakespeare canon and also its significantly unbalanced distribution across the scenes in the play. Almost all the uses of "she" in the entire play occur in a brief scene in which Lady Macbeth is the object of commentary rather than the subject of action. "Woman" occurs relatively frequently in *Macbeth*. Not as frequently as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which, at sixty-six occurrences, has both the greatest number and the highest relative frequency of uses, but measured by relative frequency it comes sixth in the corpus, pipped only by *Merry Wives*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, and *Henry VIII* (in itself an interesting list). Like "she", almost half of those occurrences are concentrated in one part of the play. That concentration is not as intense as it is with "she", but it remains significant that seven of the fourteen uses of "woman" in *Macbeth* occur in the final act. Even more telling, they are confined in this act to two syntactic strings: "of woman born" or "born of woman". These utterances thus offer a different kind of rhythm, as repeated mantra in the final scenes of the play: a variation of Duncan's earlier "knell / That summons [him] to heaven or to hell" (2.1.76-7).

The invocation of "woman" in the early parts of the play call up the conventional sense of woman as weak, prone to emotion and pity, lacking courage and resolution, unfit for manly action. The most infamous occurrence is Lady Macbeth's own desire not only to be "unsexed" but also to be made both more and less than human, certainly inhumane:

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood.
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts

> And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
> To cry "Hold, hold!"
> (1.5.47-61)

This process of dehumanization is cumulative, as the relatively neutral "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" are transformed into "murd'ring ministers", "thick night" and "the dunnest smoke of hell". To possess the milk of human kindness is to be open to the "visitings of nature", vulnerable to the body's natural "passages of remorse", properly fearful of "nature's mischief" and the "wound it makes". These are bodily as well as spiritual conditions, and when Lady Macbeth attempts to deny the reality of her body she sets herself up for the unbearable insanity to come, already signalled by her (dare we say it?) womanly incapacity to murder Duncan herself: "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done't" (2.2.12-13).

So: "woman" as weak, but also as the incarnation of humanity itself. In the subsequent uses of the word before Act 5, characters, male and female, invoke woman as a site of potential weakness (or humanity). Macduff (with supreme dramatic irony) withholds the description of the murdered Duncan to Lady Macbeth, declaring, "O gentle lady, / 'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak. / The repetition in a woman's ear / Would murder as it fell" (2.3.96-9). Lady Macbeth herself decries the stupid superstitions of "A woman's story at a winter's fire, / Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!" (3.4.78-9) in her response to Macbeth's shameful terror at the vision of Banquo's ghost. Even Lady Macduff denigrates the protestation of innocence as a "womanly defence": "Why then, alas, / Do I put up that womanly defense / To say I have done no harm?" (4.2.85-7); and Macduff himself controls his grief at his family's murder by refusing to "play the woman with mine eyes" (4.3.270).

By the time the ambiguous prophesy, "Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.90-2), is pronounced by the ambiguously gendered "weyward sisters", the very notion of what it is to be a woman has taken on complex and contradictory resonances. The apparition offers an instruction as well as a prophecy, the qualities of bloodiness, boldness, and resolution aligned against the notion of what it is to be "of woman born". To have been given life by a woman is to retain, by nature, some of the channels of remorse and pity, kindness and proper fear; but that would also mean an incapaci-

ty to defeat Macbeth. Not to have been born of woman is to be quintessentially unhuman and inhumane, a being beyond nature and therefore imbued with all the qualities of fearlessness, boldness, cruelty, and resolution that Lady Macbeth, seeking to be "unsexed", calls upon in the early part of the play.

No person is "not of woman born". But with characteristic blindness Macbeth assumes the straightforwardness of the apparitions' language, its transparency and clarity. He may harbour dark depths, but language seems to exist open to the view. He therefore clings to the apparitions' mantra with a combination of growing desperation and hubris. This after his reflection just before his wife's death draws him, briefly, to her return to being a "woman", and therefore human and humane:

> I am sick at heart
> When I behold – Seyton, I say! – This push
> Will cheer me ever or disseat me now.
> I have lived long enough. My way of life
> Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have, but in their stead
> Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath
> Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not.
> (5.3.23-32)

What connects Macbeth here to his wife is his honest recognition of inward disease: "I am sick at heart", which echoes the doctor's observation in the earlier scene: "What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged" (5.2.52), and the Gentlewoman's reply: "I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body" (56). In contrast to the bold and bloody bluster of his final scenes, Macbeth recognizes for a brief moment what he has lost forever, what he will never regain.

From now on he will turn from the brief recognition that there is nothing gendered about being human, about pity, love, troops of friends: that these belong exclusively neither to man nor to woman. Instead he will cling to a warped conception of what it is not to be touched by woman, reiterating over and over his empty mantra that he is invincible unless confronted by a miracle. The miracle that greets him is ordinary enough – a man "from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped" (5.8.18-19). But the violence of these lines is startling, given the degree of violence that has been heaped on us already in the play. Macduff's entry into the world is initiated by a form of violence that proclaims a world the initial condition of which is uncanniness, a wrenching into a life that cannot be a home, and the sac-

rifice of the mother. It contributes to the uneasy sense of many (exemplified by Polanski's film) that there is no return to "order" with Macbeth's death. But what we do know, from the resonance of "of woman born" in the last act, is not only the omnipresence of woman as a condition of human life, but also that the desire to expunge "woman" from that life is where evil lies.

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Marin E. Laufenberg*

Laughing Bodies, Bodies in Pain: How Humour Approaches Torture in Two Works by Eduardo Rovner

Abstract

Torture is a uniquely difficult experience to represent accurately. Nevertheless, we continually struggle to understand, deal with, and preserve the memory of torture. It is paramount to our human societies that the voices of those who were tortured are heard. The transmission of affect in theatre pieces that deal with torture deserves closer attention, in particular in order to understand how dark humour can communicate trauma and torture. Ultimately, laughter and torture are both bound up in the languages of the body and implicate the physical as well as the psychological. As J.M. Bernstein notes, extreme pain and other limit conditions, like laughter, imply our recognition of the instinctual, out of control body. In the theatre, we experience these affective transmissions as a temporary community, which allows for an inquiry into the role of the group, or those who witness torture as an ephemeral community and who also take part in laughter together. Both *Concierto de aniversario* [*Birthday Concert*] (1983) and *¿Una foto...?* [*A Photo?*] (1977) by Eduardo Rovner expose and explore this intersection between the laughing body and the tortured body. These works, which deal with both physical torture and psychological manipulation of Argentine citizens during the military dictatorship (1976-83), employ strong applications of the grotesque and absurd which rely on humour. The Argentine tradition of the *grotesco criollo* places enjoyment and displeasure in direct contact, a process which creates emotional knowledge. This article aims at establishing the value of emotional knowledge when recording the event and aftermath of torture.

Keywords: theatre; trauma; torture; affect; Argentina; Eduardo Rovner; *grotesco criollo*

Laughter is an emotional approximation that can be an effective approach in creating an alternate way to understand dark subjects such as torture. That is to say, laughter and resulting humour can aid us in processing the *overwhelmingness* of torture, violence, and pain. In fact, the complexity of both experiences (pleasure and pain) may be better understood by putting them in conversation with one another. One great similarity they share is their

* University of Wisconsin-Madison - melaufenberg@wisc.edu

boundedness in the body. Additionally, laughter and pain might be deemed 'limit conditions' or extreme feelings, though on opposite ends of the same spectrum, of feeling and sensation. While the experiences of laughter and pain may seem utterly disconnected, they both come about when humans identify entirely with their bodies. In other words, the tortured victim or the laughing person *becomes* their body instead of maintaining a distance from their physical being through mental contemplation. Both these moments of laughing or feeling pain cause us to lose control, and therefore pertain to the realm of affective experience, or in other words, instinctual, unmediated, unqualified emotional experience.[1] Showing the shared genealogy between pleasure and pain, in his work *Torture and Dignity: An Essay on Moral Injury*, philosopher J.M. Bernstein states that "Extreme pain, like some other limit conditions – most notably, laughing and crying – requires the identification of the person with her out of control, involuntary body" (2016: 92). I contend that, in the two plays I will look at, this bodily identification, accessed through the unlikely pairing of laughter and pain, provides a key entrance into the theatre audience's understanding of the experience of torture.

In particular, contemporary Argentine theatre, inspired by the autochthonous genre of the *grotesco criollo*, takes these two affective languages (humour and trauma, or pleasure and pain) to their limits, often in order to stimulate audience reflections about human behaviours surrounding torture. Similarly, as Eva Claudia Kaiser Lenoir observes, "Laughter has always been a social strategy . . . it has been used as a way of transcending (even momentarily) and attacking the symbols, central ideas, and images of official culture" (1978: 21),[2] indicating the power of humour to shock us as we take in the dual existence of horror and absurdity, and then focus our attention in order to evaluate the event and aftermath of torture. Bringing together both the characteristics of the Argentine grotesque and trauma recovery tactics, I will examine the benefits of laughter in the communal atmosphere of the theatre when witnessing scenes of violence and torture, specifically in the historical context of Argentine military dictatorship. I claim that the interaction between enjoyment and displeasure is a process through which emotional knowledge is created. Notably, this interaction between emotional states is achieved when the playwright, Eduardo Rovner, uses techniques that involve the audience physically (by provoking

[1] Raw affect is physiological, though not yet mentally or cognitively evaluated. According to Brian Massumi, as opposed to affect, "emotion is qualified intensity . . . it is intensity owned and recognized" (2000: 277).

[2] "La risa ha sido desde siempre una forma de estrategia social . . . la ha usado como una forma de trascender (aunque sea momentáneamente) y de atacar los símbolos, las ideas centrales y las imágenes de la cultura oficial". All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

laughter and involving the audience in the dramatic action at its height) in order to bring attention to the troubling case of Argentine citizenry's denial of its participation in the military dictatorship and also its problematic self-blinding. Society's passive attitude and accomplice role, often referred to as "percepticide" or "self-blinding", is still a much-discussed topic in post-dictatorship Argentina and one that Rovner poignantly addresses in his plays.[3] Finally, with this in mind, I propose that emotional knowledge is both valid and a valuable record of torture and its aftermath.

The plays I investigate here are Eduardo Rovner's *¿Una foto…?* (debuted in 1977) and *Concierto de aniversario* (debuted in 1983, but reworked into a longer version presented in 1991 under the title *Cuarteto* which I will also refer to). Together, these pieces provide evidence to support the idea that laughter can be seen as an affective approach towards the topic of torture. *¿Una foto…?* tells the story of a mother and a father who try various tactics to get their baby to smile for the camera, so that they might preserve the appearance of its happiness. Their desperation grows as they try to make the baby smile: first by playing classical music to entertain it, then by shaking toys before its face, next by drawing a smile on the baby's face with lipstick, and finally by determining that a grimace may look like a smile in a picture as they first twist their child's leg and eventually kick over its stroller in order to achieve their goal. The only characters we see on stage are the parents, while the baby stays hidden in the stroller. Humour in this short one-act piece grows in tandem with building ominousness and malignity.

Similarly, in the one-act play *Concierto de aniversario*, eccentric and absurd characters without moral obligations are found alongside pathetic victims, who are hardly seen on stage. Four musicians gather to rehearse for a televised concert to honour Beethoven's fight for liberty, peace, and happiness. As they play, one of the musicians' (Anselmo) wife (Zulema), who is very ill, continually interrupts the rehearsal by asking for assistance in calling the doctor and getting her medicines. They first ignore her, but gradually take more sinister measures: they laugh at her suffering, cut the phone cord so she is unable to call or be called by the doctor, physically remove her from their rehearsal space, torture her into submission, and finally, gravely injure or perhaps even kill her (this is left uncertain in the stage directions) in order to obtain the peace and quiet needed to practice. She may die of shock, pain, or some combination of inattention and torture. The death of Anselmo's and Zulema's son (José María) is also am-

[3] "Percepticide" is a term coined by Diana Taylor (1997). She uses it with reference to the self-blinding of a population. As Taylor further explains, "[b]ut seeing, without even admitting that one is seeing, further turns the violence of oneself. Percepticide blinds, maims, kills through the senses" (124).

biguous in *Concierto*: at the end he lies inert on the stage. However, in the play's longer version (*Cuarteto*), José María intervenes and is killed, strangled offstage with the string of a cello. Most of the torture in the two versions of the play occurs off stage, and is merely alluded at in the play text. Therefore, the victims are again left in the periphery. Those who occupy centre stage are the eccentric musician-buffoons, wearing tuxedos, classic white wigs, and a lot of make-up and holding their instruments as if they were ready to give their performance of a lifetime.[4] Ironically, these imposters never produce pristine, classical music but waste their time arguing, repeatedly failing to get in tune, and playing along to a recording of Beethoven. Once again, the exaggerated absurdity that stems from this motley group amuses and frightens at the same time.

The black humour permeating both works belongs to the genealogy of the local Argentine *grotesco criollo*. This specifically Argentine theatre genre is best characterized by its tragicomic presentation, use of black humour, and warped exaggerations which critically highlight social and political wrongs and failures by showing the disintegration of families and the irremediable suffering of individuals. At a basic level, the humour employed in the *grotesco criollo* is adept at creating sudden alternations between the purely comic and the somber, emphasizing horrific absurdity and thereby demanding that the audience evaluate and take a closer look at what is going on under their eyes. It is clear that in order for this to work, the *grotesco criollo* requires the interaction between the actors and the audience, since the action must be perceived by the spectators as intentionally shocking. According to Dianne Zandstra, "the space for evaluation is presented, when the comic treatment strikes readers or spectators as inappropriate, [and] a comic distance is created that does not permit them a total identification with a character" (2007: 23). This sort of dilemma presents us as an audience with work to do, with something that must be processed.

Another dynamic that has come to define the *grotesco criollo* is the use of masks: both the actions of covering one's face with a mask, and especially the action of removing a mask to reveal the face beneath are relevant in this context.[5] The mask underscores the lack of correspondence be-

[4] I am drawing these observations from my own impressions as audience member in 2015 at Buenos Aires' CELCIT theatre (Centro Latinoamericano de Creación e Investigación Teatral).

[5] Osvaldo Pellettieri (1998) explores this defining characteristic and dynamics of the *grotesco criollo*; in particular, he explores the duality of the mask and the coexistence of the emotional experiences of pain and pleasure. Pellettieri concludes that the juxtaposition and tension produced by this relationship is a key emotional experience of the genre.

tween somebody's social façade and their true face (Kaiser-Lenoir 1977: 35), and can be literal or symbolic. In *Concierto*, the four musicians show this extremely ironic juxtaposition between their own supposedly joyous experience of practicing and reveling in Beethoven's music and an underlying cruelty experienced by the victims and witnessed by the audience. In a recent performance of *Cuarteto*, which took place in 2015 at the CELCIT theatre in Buenos Aires, the actors did not wear proper masks but their faces were powdered, and their costumes (tuxedos, white wigs, and jabots) were typically remindful of classical musicians *à la* Beethoven.[6] Adding to the ghostly white face powder, the four sported a permanently exaggerated facial expression, which made their faces look even more like masks. Besides, these expressions grew more disturbing or extreme as the violence intensified and reached its climax. While their facial expressions and over-the-top make-up caused laughter, the audience was also aware that this façade operated as a mask. Similarly, in *¿Una foto…?* Rovner plays with the idea of the facial expression as mask. First, the father models various facial expressions as he and his wife look for their child's 'correct expression', the one they would like to preserve in the permanence of a photo. At one point, they even cover the child's face with make-up, using lipstick to draw a smile. We imagine this smile to look somewhat like a clown's: overly exaggerated and disturbing in its being obviously fake, while its fixedness conceals any real expression.

In order to understand Rovner's insistence on the comically ironic two-faced, doubling dynamics provided by the *grotesco criollo* tradition, we must look at the historical context of these pieces. Just like the way in which a mask displays one expression while the human face beneath may be showing another, during the dictatorship, a contradiction often existed between the military regime's discursive practices, on the one hand, and its real actions, on the other. The incongruence between the purported values of the musicians (happiness, freedom, and peace) and their vile actions in *Concierto* are an unmistakable reference to the gross violation of human rights by a regime that outwardly represented itself as civilized and morally upright. The same contradiction between discourse and action is evident in *¿Una foto…?* as the parents literally mask their pained baby's face with a grotesque clown smile for all of posterity to enjoy it in a photograph, while they are actually twisting its leg.

Placed in the context of the Argentine dictatorship, which lasted from 1976 to 1983, both pieces premiered while the oppressive regime was phys-

[6] For images and other information regarding this performance, see the CELCIT's webpage https://www.celcit.org.ar/espectaculos/117/cuarteto/ (last access 8 September 2017).

ically torturing citizens as well as making use of coercive and psychologically damaging tactics to crush and overpower the entire country.[7] Art was censured, certain behaviours, such as gathering in groups in public spaces, were prohibited, and a culture of suspicion among fellow-citizens was encouraged as the military government carried out a witch hunt for so-called 'subversives'.[8] In that historical moment, the use of allegorical strategies and the masking of criticism against society and the current politics were unavoidable. As a result, the laughter provoked in the audience in 1977 or 1983 when watching absurd buffoons engaging with pathetic victims, was a laughter which ultimately criticized, ridiculed, resisted, and was subversive to the regime under which Rovner and other artists were forced to work. However, these plays maintain their bite and continue to be staged regularly in present-day Argentina, evolving into modern classics.

In August 2015, I attended the production of *Cuarteto* at the CELCIT – the house was packed and the air was saturated with laughter. Is this laughter today different from that of 1983? I suggest that it is, due to the fact that laughter itself, as a reaction to stage action, has evolved to fit a new context. When imagining the audience's response and reception when faced with darkly humourous tones in 1983, it is important to recall the context of the *Teatro Abierto* movement by which *Concierto* is framed. Playwright Pompeyo Audivert describes *Teatro Abierto* as a moment of cultural resistance which began during the dictatorship by claiming that "it was a striking force, a rock thrown into the mirror of a sinister reality that the military civic power had established through blood and fire".[9] Clearly, the *Teatro Abierto* pieces were meant to address the political environment which, at the time, was a lived reality. Furthermore, in describing the audience reception at the debut of *Concierto* in 1983, Osvaldo Pellettieri adds that the humour was, "a

[7] For further reading on the specifics of the atrocities committed during the Military Dictatorship and the violations of human rights, the role of the military in kidnapping and holding citizens in clandestine detention centres, as well as the process of national recovery after this period, see, for example, Feitlowitz (2011), Méndez (1987), Andermann (2011; 2015) Avelar (1999), and Calvert and Calvert (1989). For a more specific study on how the theatre that has dealt with these issues, see Taylor (1997) and Graham-Jones (2000).

[8] As Feitlowitz explains in *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture*, according to the regime, a subversive was "a terrorist . . . a person whose ideas are contrary to our Western, Christian civilization" and "[n]ot only was the 'subversive' not Argentine, '[he] should not even be considered our brother' . . ." (2011: 27).

[9] "fue una fuerza de choque, un piedrazo en el espejo de una realidad siniestra que el poder cívico militar había establecido a sangre y fuego" (qtd in "Se cumplen 35 años…" 2016). The article "Se cumplen 35 años de la histórica experiencia de Teatro Abierto", which appeared in *Télam* on July 28, 2016, looks back upon the years of *Teatro Abierto* from our present-day perspective.

true transgression to conventional morality, which is perceived with disquiet by the spectator".[10] In contrast, I noticed how today's audience responded to *Concierto* by laughing loudly and unrestrainedly, thanks to the safe distance which comes from the fact that many years have passed since the end of dictatorship in 1983. Today, an element of playful *farce* is highlighted by the director's choices, and carried out by actors on stage, while the original production was characterized by a shadier atmosphere and black humour. This difference in the audience's response could be attributed to the fact that present-day laughter is one that does not convey rebellion and resistance, but rather strives to remember. Nevertheless, today's audiences are still highly aware of the significance of the allegories of out-of-control power systems and the very absurdity of those systems. The fact that the audience effortlessly recognizes the dictatorship as these play's background is enough to understand that the trauma of that dark period has not been overcome yet. Artistic productions such as these keep passing on affective legacies, reminding younger generations of those years and I believe that in both periods, now and then, the appeal to laughter through humour is paramount not only to inspire complex reflections and establish emotional knowledge, but also to ease communal healing after trauma.

Humour in these plays was first devised by Rovner in his scripts in order to be later activated by performers on stage. Pellettieri believes that humour is part of Rovner's mode of looking at the world, adding that it frequently illuminates contradictions between hidden truths and outward appearance, classifying both *Concierto de aniversario* and *¿Una foto…?* as "satirical absurdist".[11] They share much in their progression, tone, and underlying messages. In both, humour grows as horror grows. At the onset of each drama, our laughter is light and more infrequent, as we observe the petty bickering between husband and wife, or as the musicians dispute what to wear for their televised concert. By the end of both pieces, the audience frequently explodes with laughter as a reaction to either shock or disbelief; indeed, the most humourous moments often coincide with torture, horror, or come in close succession. As *¿Una foto…?* draws to its conclusion, the baby's stroller is kicked (in some productions, the stroller ends up flying off stage, and the stroller enters the audience's space), and subsequently, the parents embrace and smile ridiculously, looking down towards where we suppose the baby to lie:

> (*Luis va hacia el cochecito y le pega una patada, volcándolo. Apagón e inmediatamente un foco ilumina las caras de Luis y Alicia juntas, mirando al piso.*)
> Alicia ¡Qué sonrisa hermosa!

[10] "una verdadera transgresión a la moral convencional, que es percibida con inquietud por el espectador" (1994: 133).

[11] "absurdo satírico" (1994: 129).

Luis Como queríamos los dos…
(Rovner 1977: 103)

[*Luis goes towards the stroller and kicks it, causing it to flip over. Lights out and immediately a spotlight illuminates the faces of Luis and Alicia together, looking at the floor.* // Alicia What a beautiful smile! // Luis Just like we both wanted…]

Likewise, in *Concierto*, the four musicians surround the son of the ailing woman, resembling a group of predators closing in on their prey as one of them raises and supposedly stabs the son fatally with a violin bow. This incredibly physical scene, in which human beings act with animalesque brutality, is entirely contained within a long segment of stage directions:

(*Ignacio, Pedro, y Esteban se levantan y lo van rodeando lentamente mientras José María sigue rompiendo partituras y gritando. Zulema va lentamente hacia el lugar donde cayó, mientras Anselmo se acerca y le da el arco afilado a Pedro. Pedro lo toma lentamente, mira a José María y se lo clava en el estómago. Zulema acusa la estocada a su hijo, pega un grito y cae a su lado. Los cuatro miran y después de un momento, lentamente van hacia sus lugares y toman los instrumentos sin sentarse.*)
(Rovner 1983: 370-1)

[*Ignacio, Pedro and Esteban get up and slowly start surrounding him while José María continues ripping up sheet music and yelling. Zulema goes slowly towards the place where he fell, while Anselmo gets closer and gives the pointed violin bow to Pedro. Pedro takes it slowly, looks at José María and stabs him in the stomach. Zulema realizes her son has been stabbed, lets out a yell and falls down at his side. The four watch them and after a moment, slowly go towards their places and take up their instruments without sitting down.*]

Seconds later, the televised concert begins, and the play ends.

In both pieces, the humour is very physical and is centered in and on the body, rather than coming solely by way of language. Also, humour may arise when there is extreme discord between words uttered and physical actions or gestures; this can be best experienced in a live performance, arguably the only way in which affective communication may occur. Humour is the result of alternations between the horrible or immoral and the absurd or incongruent, as the bodies of the performers bring to life unexpect-

ed expressions, gestures, motions, and actions.[12] Anselmo's crippled body is wheeled around in merry circles by his fellow musician in a jubilant scene, as he grabs the urn containing his father's ashes and begins to toss them about, gleefully but heinously showering his friends with them.[13] Another musician, Pedro, leaves the stage in order to stop the interruptions that come from the ailing woman who keeps summoning them offstage by ringing a bell; he soon comes back, smiling and carrying a bloodied bell, and exclaims: "She wouldn't give it to me… What greasy hair she has!" ("No quería dármela… ¡Qué grasoso tiene el pelo!", Rovner 1983: 367).

Likewise, in the final torturous scene of *¿Una foto…?*, Alicia cannot manage to twist her own arm far enough to make the baby grimace, which could be regarded as a smile in the picture they are desperately trying to take. Having failed to make the child to cry, she gives up, disappointed, pouting, and rubbing her sore arm. Once again, the body becomes the epicentre from which grotesque absurdity radiates and affects the audience's own bodies.

By means of this kind of humour, one that brings the question of morality into focus, both *Concierto de aniversario* and *¿Una foto…?* make the audience muse on the fact that tortured bodies may be ignored or torture may be allowed to happen by passively accepting it. Ironically, as the audience is asked to look at the warped morality on stage, they partake in the very same behaviour that is called into question by passively observing and silently allowing for torture to be carried out. As the musicians either watch or partake in the torturing of the son and his mother in *Concierto*, we – as audience – also indirectly allow for it to take place before our eyes. Worse yet, the audience's laughter actively acknowledges that what we are seeing is actually taking place; we are nearly approving of it, as we encourage the continuance of the drama. In both plays, laughter sets off our engagement with the work; however, it also highlights our collective role as onlookers and urges our judgment on what is going on in front of us.

Why would an Argentine playwright choose to depict such a deep and painful trauma through a seemingly irreverent and certainly non-realistic lens? The emotional experience of trauma needs a space to be dealt with, understood, and passed on to fellow citizens or future generations. After the atrocities of the dictatorship, the Argentine community required sever-

[12] This references the classical humour theory of incongruence, championed by several scholars from Aristotle and Immanuel Kant, to Arthur Schopenhauer, and most recently, Peter McGraw, who has coined the term "Benign Violation" (2014: 9) which is inspired by the same idea of incongruity. See also Critchley for a concise description of this sort of humour.

[13] I am still commenting on the 2015 performance I attended at the CELCIT theatre in Buenos Aires.

al kinds of approximation to understanding, remembering, and healing to deal with their past; no single interpretation would suffice. While individual human bodies are directly, physically affected by torture, the community as a whole suffers psychological strain. A community that allowed the torture to happen and which supported the tortured individuals as they were reinserted into the community itself suffers and deals with suffering as a community, that is, differently from how individuals would handle and react to the same issues. In Argentina, a truth commission was established in order to gather information, evidence, and testimonies about the disappearance and torture of its citizens. After the commission's work had been done, an official trial brought its findings to the public, assessed responsibilities, recommended punishment for the victimizers, and finally sentenced some of the highest ranking Generals, though others were acquitted.[14] To be sure, a legal, judicial procedure directly addresses and verifies the atrocities that have gone by and holds a certain kind of official validity, but Rovner's work and that of other Argentine artists may speak to different sensibilities and deal with more emotional common wounds.

An equally important facet in the post-trauma healing process is the need to respond to the validity of a community's emotive experience. In this light, Argentine theatre scholar Brenda Werth notices that in the Trial of the Juntas – the members of the military government that ruled Argentina from 1977 to 1983 – "the nonverbal expression of emotion was considered a threat to the integrity of the proceedings and was abruptly cut off" (2010: 40) and in fact the display of emotions was expressly prohibited by the court during the trial and whoever wished to attend it had to agree to this rule and refrain from openly showing any feelings. In this regard, Werth adds that "The limitations placed on nonverbal language in the trial reveal an uneasiness with the body, which finds expression in the heightened tension between bodies and narration in theatre during the post-dictatorship period" (40-1). Although she is referring to a different play, we can agree on the emotional benefit facilitated by the theatre being a wide-reaching phenomenon in Argentina. The theatre and the arts in general provided a space for a different kind of healing than the one offered by the official trials and investigations. In both plays presented here, this comes about by encouraging emotional exchanges between the audience and stage, affectively approaching the topics of torture and trauma, and do-

[14] A report of the findings of this commission was published under the title *Nunca Más* in 1984 in Argentina and has been available in print ever since. The commission was established in December of 1983 and collected testimonies through September of 1984. The Trial of the Juntas occurred from April to September of 1985 and sentencing took place in December of the same year.

ing so as a collective.

The experience of feeling together, which partially includes laughing together, plays, I contend, a major role in the creation of a community experience in the theatre. This affectively unified audiences in temporary communities that mirrored society as a whole, showing possible ways of acting and interacting. In the introduction to *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theater*, Becker, Hernández, and Werth remind us that a stage representation, "is part of an essentially cooperative activity that takes place in a shared place and time" (2012: 3), therefore, these space and time naturally create a togetherness or a temporary community. We may think of this community experience as what Argentine theatre researcher Jorge Dubatti terms the "convivio" (2007: 84) or convivial experience.[15] The "convivio" makes the experience of the theatre-goer unique; it is unavoidable to affect and be affected by our fellow audience members in addition to the physicality of stage action. When we laugh inside the playhouse, those sounds are emitted individually, but we cannot help but hear others laughing around us. Hearing the others' laughter makes our own grow and, in turn, diminish and this sharing enhances our engagement in the theatrical experience. An invisible affective web unites us in the theatre space and time. In his theory of the "vibratorium", theatre scholar Nicholas Ridout (2008: 221) posits that affective communication occurs in the theatre between the bodies of the people via physical, though invisible, waves which are produced by the sound; thus he imagines the intangible and the corporeal, affective and bodily reactions to be connected to each other. A "vibratorium" is created as we emit and hear sounds, in this case, laughing and responding to laughter.

Heightening a sense of collectivity, both plays actively involve the audience, creating a closeness or intimacy. Rovner breaks the fourth wall in subtle but very specific ways at the conclusion of both pieces. In *¿Una foto…?* Luis eventually raises the camera to capture the ideal shot of the baby who is now lying on the ground (and we suppose crying or frowning). The camera, however, is not directed at the baby, but rather points squarely at the audience as "*A flash blinds the audience. Curtain*" ("*Un flash encandila al público. Apagón*", 1977: 103). As he takes his final shot, a flash of light simultaneously blinds us and implicates us. This photograph evinces our role as passive witnesses of torture and we all become guilty of "percepticide" (Taylor 1997: 124). What happens is that we have taken the place of the tortured child, and are now the focus of Luis' and Alicia's attention. The two parents are left smiling and happily embrace as they look at us lovingly, but

[15] Jill Dolan (2005) is another contemporary critic who has explored the audience experience of togetherness, conceptualizing this affective interbody communication.

disturbingly, commenting upon the beauty of the baby's smile. Immediately after the flash, the stage and auditorium go black, and the piece ends in one shocking final gesture. Rovner unites us all here, and as a collectivity we become the body of the injured child. Involving us in such a way makes the humour we experience rather troubling; it calls us to action rather than passivity, which requires us to follow through with some deeds when faced with such disquieting juxtaposition of humour and violence.

In a similarly engaging and entangling move, in the very last scene of *Concierto*, as the musicians have just 'taken care of' the nuisance of the ailing wife and her nagging son, they draw close to the proscenium, facing the audience and speaking directly to us. They inform us that this evening we will be treated to a program of Beethoven's music, titled "Beethoven, his Fight for Liberty, Peace, and Happiness".[16] They then raise their instruments as if to start playing as the stage goes dark. In this swift final scene, the audience members have been transformed into TV viewers. Again, extreme violence is juxtaposed with a pretense of happiness (the happy parents, or Beethoven's passionate music that exemplifies the search for happiness). The result is that these final combinations of pleasure and pain awake us from any passivity or submissiveness we may have been immersed in. By implicating our bodies through these sensory shocks, Rovner makes us come together in our new-found role of engaged and affected subjects. In both plays we can see that while affect unites us as a group, and laughter troubles the performance, it is precisely this unavoidable participation in what is going on in front of our eyes that heightens our sense of morality as a community, or nation.

Watching psychological and physical torture occur onstage, the audience's bodies are not allowed to remain distant, as Rovner activates sound and music to engage with our auditory senses beyond the mere use of dialogue on stage. Through laughter, cries, screams, and the incorporation of music, the sonorous atmosphere is vibrant in both works. Sounds are pervasive and difficult to ignore or shut out. We react instinctually to them as well, so that they form yet another part of the affective communication between stage and audience. Of particular importance in both works is the use of sounds which emit from points that we cannot directly see, or off-stage, diegetic sounds. For example, in *Concierto*, frequently "a little bell" ("una campanita", 1983: 362) is heard ringing off stage, indicating that somebody, a body, which is unseen but part of the fictitious world (in this case it is Zulema's, Anselmo's sick wife), requires assistance or is suffering. The musicians mostly ignore it, but at times they are bothered by

[16] "Este programa lleva por título: "Beethoven, su lucha por la Libertad, la Paz, y la Alegría" (1983: 371).

it enough to exit the stage and address that noise, oftentimes in a violent manner. Later on, in a culminating moment of physical off-stage violence – that is, which is implied but which occurs off-stage and is perceived by the audience aurally only, stage directions read: "(*A cry is heard from Zulema. Everyone looks towards the door until Pedro enters with his hand bloodied*)".[17] Through sound, the audience is made aware of the existence, if invisible, of a suffering body. Torture is partially revealed and yet it remains veiled and this uncertainty has the audience respond in terms of (physical) tension. This technique both creates suspense and adds intrigue as it piques our curiosity, perhaps making us crane our necks, trying to get a glimpse of what is happening. By not being forced to *see* the violence directly, such distancing techniques provide a certain lightness and pleasantness to the audience who witness the ridiculous reactions of the absurd musicians on stage. Nevertheless, we may presume that the spectators are eager to see those implied off-stage interactions, which calls into cause a problematic issue, that is, the voyeurism of trauma. Rovner highlights here the dichotomy between the seen and the unseen, or between the appearance and the reality which lies buried underneath it. Once again, this alludes to the 'dirty' aspects of the dictatorship era such as torture and kidnappings which, back in those days, citizens either chose not to see or were prevented from seeing, as the dictatorship was careful in covering up and hiding its atrocities from the public eye.

In both plays analysed here, on-stage diegetic sounds or those coming from visible sources – I am thinking of the music coming from record players which are used as props in *Concierto* – are also problematic. The stereo (in a contemporary production of *¿Una foto…?*) or the record player (in the original production of *Concierto*) may be emitting pleasurable classical tunes by Beethoven, Vivaldi, or Tchaikovsky, but this aural delight is actually screening something ominous which lies hidden to our senses – the torturers, absolutely oblivious to real-world moral codes.[18] The clash of pleasure and pain that we experience in the two dramas carries into the realm of the musical choices (classical European music) too. Rovner illustrates again that appearance and reality are two very separate things which may often mingle and mislead the human mind through chaotic times, such as those characterized by dictatorship.

These various forms of audience implication demand that we inherit a responsibility as witnesses of the torture as we view it onstage or perceive

[17] "(*Se oye un grito de Zulema. Todos miran hacia la puerta hasta que entra Pedro con la mano ensangrentada*)" (1983: 367).

[18] I am referring to a March 2015 production of *¿Una foto…?* put on by the group Décimo Piso at the University of Wisconsin-Madison which used a stereo to emit the music.

it to be happening offstage. Watching and taking part in the pain of others raise some thorny ethical questions since, as an audience, we become willing watchers or voyeurs of the performance, and thereby of the violence it represents. Yet, we allow it to go on, even actively approving of it with our laughter. Is it possible to forget about what we have seen when we leave the theatre? The guilt that may arise from our passiveness is in itself a critique of those Argentine citizens that saw or understood what was going on, but did not act or speak out against the psychological and physical torture carried out by the military during the dictatorship. According to psychiatrist and Holocaust scholar Dori Laub, taking on a responsibility of witness is fundamental to overcoming guilt (1992: 57-8). Witnesses choose to carry with them the atrocities they have seen, speaking about them, understanding, sharing, and dealing with the violence they have beheld.

Choosing to continually question, be bothered by, and contemplate this kind of violence, perpetrated against unseen or unresisting bodies on stage (the sick wife, the baby), carries the implication of the spectator/witness beyond the stage. Sparked by the questionable mixture of pleasure and pain (that is, dark laughter), the issues we face force us to carry the experience with us, outside the here and now of the performance. Rovner has devised a way to unsettle our certainties and make us uncomfortable by transforming us from spectators into witnesses. Pain and pleasure end up by being troublingly wrapped up in one another and although this is a difficult process to decipher, we can certainly feel it through our senses. By appealing to dark laughter, Rovner makes a case for the place of emotional knowledge in assessing and remembering the trauma caused by torture. Torture cannot be entirely encompassed by statistics and objective reporting, nor entirely remedied by court trials and official procedures. The emotional knowledge and memory of violence potently become necessary for the communities which have been affected by it, and can be accessed in a place of togetherness, such as the theatre, where our affects mingle and communicate with each other.

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Katherine Ford*

Interrogating Cuban Womanhood in Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce*

Abstract

La virgencita de bronce (2004), from Cuban playwright Norge Espinosa Mendoza uses actors and puppets to dramatize the classic novel *Cecilia Valdés*, in the process questioning the classic Cuban myth and definitions of Cuban womanhood. Cecilia Valdés is a pivotal figure in Cuban culture, since the days that Cirilo Villaverde first wrote the novel (1839) and Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce*, written at the request of the important Teatro de las Estaciones in the small city of Matanzas, gives the Cuban stage the opportunity to interrogate the national canon developed around Cecilia Valdés in an innovative way.

Keywords: Cuba; Cecilia Valdés; women; puppetry; re-writing

Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce* [*The Bronze Virgin*] (2004) returns to the Cuban classic novel *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde (1839, revised and extended 1882) to interrogate what it means to be a Cuban woman and a Cuban literary classic through the use of puppets. Given the importance of the figure of Cecilia Valdés in the Cuban literature and culture, Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce* offers the reader-spectator the perfect opportunity to examine the re-visioning of a canonical literary text on the national stage. *La virgencita de bronce*, written at the request of the Teatro de las Estaciones in the small city of Matanzas, under the direction of Rubén Darío Salazar, re-examines the canonical Cuban novel to dramatize the story of Cecilia Valdés through puppetry. We look at how theatre returns to its own national canon to create, remember, or distort the definition of national literature and use theatre to provoke a discussion on these topics. In Cuba, the nineteenth-century novel *Cecilia Valdés* offers an important moment that founds a literary and cultural identity that is then used on the stage to re-write that identity. Norge Espinosa Mendoza, an important contemporary figure within the theatrical community in Havana and Cuba more generally, returns to the definition of Cuban

* East Carolina University - fordk@ecu.edu

womanhood embodied in Cecilia Valdés to re-envision national definitions through the use of puppets rather than human beings. This pivotal change provokes a different approach on behalf of the reader-spectator that allows him/her to question these identities. They present an alternate perspective on what it means to rewrite within the national literary canon that offers the reader-spectator a widened definition of this canon and its importance within national, regional and global boundaries.

The title of the play – *La virgencita de bronce* – alludes, of course, to the famous Cuban literary character of Cecilia Valdés. Cirilo Villaverde's novel *Cecilia Valdés* refers to its main character with this nickname throughout the novel. Villaverde's version is the first Cecilia that sparks a national obsession with this figure that is revised in different artistic genres. Cecilia Valdés is a character that has occupied an important place in the national canon. She is the subject of many re-writes and new versions, particularly and perhaps most well-known are the Cuban *zarzuela Cecilia Valdés* written by Gonzalo Roig in 1932 and Humberto Solás's film *Cecilia* (1982).[1] However, both within these three texts and moving beyond them, there are innumerable versions of Cecilias, many of which helped inform the version that Norge Espinosa Mendoza puts forward in *La virgencita de bronce*.[2] Following the script of his play in the Ediciones Alarcos publication, Espinosa Mendoza discusses the various texts that served as inspiration, such as Abelardo Estorino's play *Parece blanca* (1994) and Reinaldo Arenas's novel *La loma del Ángel* (1987). Norge Espinoza Mendoza, then, writes his play within an established tradition of the Cuban literary canon. Espinosa Mendoza (b. 1971) is a well-known figure in the world of Habanero and Cuban theatre. In addition, the first Cuban to participate in the University of Iowa's International Writing Program, he is a poet and cultural critic, often writing on and within the perspective of an LBGT activist. Having worked for many years in the theatre community and adapted various works to the stage, Espinosa turns to a canonical figure in *La virgencita de bronce* in order to examine the effects of this new context and approach.

The figure of Cecilia Valdés is one that has, in many ways, moulded definitions of Cuban beauty and womanhood since its first arrival on the Cuban scene. Cecilia is described in all versions as a light-skinned woman of mixed race, almost white in appearance. Her beauty is attributed in part to

[1] A *zarzuela* is a traditional form of musical comedy from Spain that was also popular in Cuba.

[2] Cristina Bravo Rozas and Almudena Mejías Alonso (2014) present a comprehensive collection of analyses on the incarnations of Cecilia Valdés in *El mito de Cecilia Valdés de la literatura a la realidad*. This edited collection emerged from a conference series dedicated to this Cuban figure and encompasses the breadth of influence of Cecilia Valdés in present-day Cuban culture.

her light complexion, though this is also mixed with her exoticness of not belonging to the upper class from which Leonardo, her lover-brother, comes. He is drawn to her because of her beauty and her sexuality but she is not suitable for him and the world he occupies. It is the very idea of mixing that makes Cecilia such a strong and identifiable character in Cuba, but that also dooms her to tragedy in all her artistic incarnations. Just like the Virgen de la Caridad de Cobre (Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, which will be explored more), Cecilia embodies the different cultures and races that make up Cuba in a way that encourages identification with all that she represents: we want her to succeed. Yet, given the constraints of racism and sexism of colonial culture in Cuba, we know that this will end tragically, as continues to happen in version after version, although her story continues to hold our attention.

La virgencita de bronce consists of a prologue and nine scenes, where all the action unfolds with puppets, a reality that may seem to indicate an infantilization of the material but actually is the exact opposite. In fact, the theatre of Teatro de las Estaciones, the company that commissioned Espinosa Mendoza's play, presents puppet theatre that specializes in presenting material from a perspective that challenges characterizations such as these.[3] As we see, this play is anything but an infantile version of *Cecilia Valdés*. Espinosa's version of Cecilia Valdés is not melodramatic or Romantic, as the original may be seen, but instead satirical and exaggerated. The prologue lays out the basic tension of the play: that don Cándido is the father of the infant girl who will grow up to be Cecilia Valdés and demands that Cecilia's grandmother, Chepilla, keep this a secret. The following scenes portray a young, beautiful woman, very pale in complexion, and reveal that she and Leonardo, Cándido's son, have fallen in love (though this version primarily emphasizes the sexual nature of this relationship at this point). Despite Leonardo's desires, his parents try to marry him to Isabel Ilincheta, the daughter of a wealthy coffee plantation owner. Leonardo pursues Isabel while professing his love for Cecilia, which they consummate. Propelled by the horror of what may happen, Cándido reveals to his wife, Rosa, that he is Cecilia's father and the two conspire to marry Leonardo and Isabel immediately. This new development is revealed to Cecilia and she calls upon her admirer Pimienta to kill Isabel with his tailor's scissors. In the final scene – that of the wedding between Leonardo and Isabel – Pimienta enters and kills his rival for Cecilia's love. The play closes with a bitter exchange between Pimienta and Cecilia and then the slaves place Isabel's bloody veil on Cecilia and put her in the crib that had occupied a part of the scene throughout the play.

[3] Teatro de las Estaciones is a fascinating theatre group that challenges the definitions of theatre, as outlined in Germán Aguilar (2014) and Almarales Monier (2016).

Norge Espinosa Mendoza's play follows close upon the established plotline of the other versions of Cecilia Valdés, though it emphasizes the erotic nature of the nineteenth-century Cuban plot and uses puppets to portray this. The idea of a literary canon that attempts to found and define the nation, as we can see in the use of Cecilia Valdés, is explored in depth in Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991). Here, Sommer attempts to respond to the Boom writers' assertion that they had few literary predecessors worth reading. Instead, these authors dismiss the earlier writers and claim themselves to be cultural figures of independence. Sommer questions this presentation by focusing her attention, and that of her reader's, on the nineteenth century and the novels that the Post-Independence period produced. She finds that through the marriage of love and patriotism these texts help to consolidate the state and its inhabitants. The role of these novels, Sommer maintains, is to construct a national history that can both fill in the gaps in the young nations and can direct them towards an ideal. In this way, she reminds us of Andrés Bello's affirmation that narrative should be used as a teaching tool (1991: 8-9).

Inherent in the novels that Sommer explores and in *La virgencita de bronce*, the reader-spectator already finds re-writing, given the points of inspiration that they have. This "passionate investment I/we have in nationalism" (xi) that Sommer identifies in her text has many roots in English and French novels (as well as American as seen in her second chapter on James Fenimore Cooper), although in the Latin American version the resolution to the romances is often righted and the love triangle simplified. Furthermore, the relationship between the lovers changes to make the two more interdependent and their feminine and masculine roles more ambiguous, thus creating a situation that is more conducive to the family – the stabilizing element of the state and also justifies the presence of romance in the national canon. Race also becomes an important issue in the Latin American novels that is absent in their European counterparts, although the positionings of the novelists shifts according to the novel's setting and the project that each one wants to put forth.

While Doris Sommer examines novels from the nineteenth century that unquestionably shift form a national canon, Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce* melds two literary genres and centuries, and rather than emulate a past example, Espinoza Mendoza is interrogating what this past example has done for Cuban culture and womanhood. In this way, in the words of Roberto González Echevarría in *Myth and the Archive*, the very fact that *Cecilia Valdés* is rewritten is what determines its importance: "What determines the centrality of these works is their rewriting or their being rewritten" (1998: 40). However, I believe there is more to the response

than the circularity inherent here. Hidden within the first Cecilia Valdés and its rewrites is an examination of the past and the present's interpretation of that past in order to widen definitions of national identity and to urge the reader-spectator to challenge traditional ideas of the nation. This can be seen in Espinosa Mendoza's re-visioning of what Cecilia Valdés means and how it can be used to create a national future.

La virgencita de bronce mixes literary genres by borrowing from a novel and acknowledging various other revisions. While this intertextuality is common in literature, we must take note of the fact that this is not simply a conversation of literary texts but that there is a translation of genre here – non-theatrical texts are converted into theatre. This is important to consider in order to understand how the dramatic texts change or, perhaps enhance, the originals. To think about this question, we should consider the differences between theatre and other literary genres. Theatre is of course a collaborative genre – written to be adapted according to the interpretations and needs of the theatre group presenting it and to whom they are producing the work, whereas the other literary genres often reach publication (the ultimate endpoint) as the product of one person. The final product of a play will be the result of many different endpoints (the theatrical text, the spectacle or spectacles) and perspectives (the playwright, the director, the producer, the actors). By making literature theatrical, the playwright pushes and challenges these definitions to incorporate other points of view on what is theatre. The conversation on theatre and the texts in question widens to include new ideas whereas the discussion of the text in question reaches beyond the limits of the original to find a new audience and point of view.

While the final pages of Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce* publicly acknowledge the role of the earlier versions of *Cecilia Valdés*, the entire text emphasizes Espinosa Mendoza's indebtedness to the other Cecilias. This is an important point that is not left to chance but is repeated again and again throughout the play. This is first underlined twice in the opening scene: first, with the introduction of the music from Roig's *zarzuela* that scores the change of scenery from a black backdrop to that of Havana in 1832 and second just a few moments later with the entrance of Leonardo into the open-air market where everyone is anticipating Cecilia's entrance. All the characters on the stage prepare to greet her with words from the *zarzuela*:

> *Leonardo, como un maestro de ceremonias, se dirige a todos, leyendo los siguientes versos de un libro que aparece repentinamente, o que lo sostiene Tirso, y en cuya portada puede leerse* Cecilia Valdés*, comedia lírica, 1932.*
> (Espinosa Mendoza 2004: scene 1, 27-8)

> [*Leonardo, as the master of ceremonies, directs everyone, reading the following verses from a book that appears suddenly, or that Tirso holds up, and on whose cover can be read* Cecilia Valdés*, lyric comedy, 1932*].[4]

This stage direction precedes an exchange that comes directly from Roig's *Cecilia Valdés* (much like the final scene of *La Virgencita de bronce* which is also a quote from the *zarzuela*), highlighting the creation of a performance within the play. This double layer of performativity underlines the role of re-visioning within Norge Espinosa Mendoza's version of Cecilia Valdés since he both pays homage and pokes fun at this construction. While he does aim to honour the *zarzuela* with these references, he also provokes laughter in his reader-spectator that will allow them to question the purpose of this re-visioning of the national classic and how he challenges their ideas of Cecilia, femininity and *cubanía*.

Nowhere is this humour more evident than in Espinosa's borrowing of the many incarnations of Cecilia Valdés. This can be seen in the way that the characters emphasize the creation of a story within *La virgencita de bronce*, many times in an effort to remember the past Cecilias but also as a way to provoke laughter. This double goal can be seen in the following exchange where Cecilia hints at the fact that any romantic relationship between her and Leonardo would be illicit, while another character jests that the suspense of the story has been ruined: "Ah, damn, someone gave away the end!" ("¡Ah, cará, ya alguien le contó el final del libro!", Espinosa Mendoza 2004: 30). While this is a humorous moment that lightens the tension of the meeting between Cecilia and Leonardo, it also hints at the many layers of rewriting within this story. Cecilia, who does not know she is Leonardo's half-brother, alludes to this familial relationship that would make repulsive any romantic link between the two; the sentence highlights what she does not know by suggesting what the audience does know. There is a double play here that takes advantage of the original story and its importance in Cuban cultural production. In this way, Norge Espinosa Mendoza plays both sides of the story of Cecilia Valdés in an effort to remember the original stories and to acknowledge the role of Cecilia outside of the literary pages. Furthermore, the implication that any Cuban would not already know the love story of Cecilia Valdés is laughable in itself and points to the importance of this character and story in the creation of a Cuban national definition, as we will examine here.

While much of the humour emanates from the borrowing of Roig's *zarzuela*, it is not the only version of *Cecilia Valdés* that Norge Espinosa Mendoza references in his version. *La virgencita de bronce* also returns to

[4] All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

the narrative version of the story remembering directly Villaverde's original, and, in the process, alluding to Estorino's *Parece blanca* [*She Looks White*]. The reader-spectator sees this in what almost becomes a slogan throughout the play: "Let it be what Villaverde wants!" ("¡Y qué sea lo que Villaverde quiera!", Espinosa Mendoza 2004: 7, 60), though it sometimes changes and Cecilia herself becomes the equivalent of the original author: "Let it be what Villaverde and the Virgin want!" ("¡Qué sea lo que Villaverde y La Virgencita quieran!", 67). These sentences show the level of status that the novel, the character and the author have reached and their centrality to Cuban literature and culture. They determine what will happen: "That's what the novel says" ("Así lo dice la novela", 60). While these references directly remember Villaverde's novel, the use of Villaverde's name and of the novel so explicitly alludes to Estorino's use of the novelist and novel in his theatrical version of *Cecilia Valdés*. Estorino's *Parece blanca* features metatheatrical elements that humoristically point out the debt that his play owes to the various versions of *Cecilia*. Espinosa's *La virgencita* borrows these very metatheatrical comments, creating an even more intricate and funny circle without even directly referencing Estorino's play. All of the allusions in these passages reveal why Espinosa Mendoza returns to this story and also allow the reader-spectator to comprehend his innovation of this sacred text. Hidden within the quotes and reverent references to other versions of *Cecilia Valdés*, Norge Espinosa Mendoza validates the national literary canon and the Cuban experience.

Complicit with the humour analysed in *La virgencita de bronce*, Norge Espinosa Mendoza chooses to represent some of his characters in an exaggerated way that emphasizes the excess on one side of the colonial system, many times in ways that emphasize the erotic excess of this portrayal.[5] Leonardo's parents, *don* Cándido and *doña* Rosa are represented as excessive creatures in their appetites: Rosa gorges any food around her (33; 48) while she spoils her son by giving him gold coin after gold coin (21; 34); Cándido cannot resist most young female bodies that surround him (48) and smokes incessantly (21). These over-the-top characterizations of this couple are joined with a presentation of Leonardo and Cecilia as two lustful youths that, rather than being deeply in love, are attracted to one another physically (54-5). Furthermore, both characters are described in a disparaging manner that challenges their position as paragons of Cuban man- and womanhood. With Leonardo, he is presented as a "young white man, a pretentious flirt. Lady killer. 'Distant eyes, perfect mouth'".[6] The adjectives

[5] "*La virgencita* is a serious farce charged with sexual energy" (Lisenby 2012: 91).

[6] "joven criollo, pretencioso y picaflor. La perdición de las damas. 'Ojos lejanos, boca perfecta'" (21).

used here emphasize his superficiality; he presents a danger in that he is not constant nor worth the effort. He is all façade. Cecilia, in turn, the very definition of the ideal Cuban woman, in *La virgencita de bronce* is a "coarse, splendid, scheming, beautiful and capricious *mulata*".[7] Just like Leonardo in Espinosa Mendoza's version, she is beautiful but empty. Both of these characters are shallow in their character and in their affection for one another. This presentation is seconded by an over-arching feeling within the play that the majority of the characters are unable to control their desires and are not objects of ideal Cubanness despite their iconic status within the literary and cultural canon. These portrayals, then, humanize these important Cuban types and re-envision what their place and meaning is within Cuban cultural production.

Hovering over this entire play, from the very title to the protagonist, is the spectre of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, the patron saint of Cuba, another central female figure that has defined Cuban womanhood. This manifestation of the Virgen, particularly identified with Cuba, is an important parallel made in the play, and with many of the versions of Cecilia Valdés. The legend of the Virgen details her appearance to three slaves, colloquially referred to as the *tres Juanes*, working in the local copper mines. The story tells that in the beginning of the seventeenth century, three men, one African and two indigenous brothers, went out on the sea. They found something floating in the water and, when they reached it, saw that it was an image of the Virgen with the baby Jesus in her arms (the image that is now associated with her) with the words "I am the Virgen de la Caridad" ("Yo soy la Virgen de la Caridad"). In the Santería religion associated with Cuba and that draws on the Yoruba religion together with the Catholic faith, the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre corresponds to the god Oshún; this comes in part from the fact that the two share the same feast day (September 8), but can also be seen in the many syncretic connections between the two religions. Race is central to the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre in that, first, she appears to three slaves, one African and two indige-

[7] "mulata zafia, rumbosa, refistolera, bella y caprichosa" (ibid.). Cirilo Villaverde's description in the original *Cecilia Valdés* is extensive and exhaustive, ending however with "such were her strange beauty, happiness, and vivacity that they coated her with a kind of enchantment, not allowing the spirit to roam but to admire her and ignore the lack or excess of her lineage. She was never seen to be sad, never to be in a bad mood, never to fight with anyone; nor did anyone know where she came from or how she supported herself" ("tales eran su belleza peregrina, su alegría y vivacidad, que le revestían de una especie de encanto, no dejando al ánimo vagar sino para admirarla y pasar de largo por las faltas o por las sobras de su progenie. Nunca la habían visto triste, nunca de mal humor, nunca reñir con nadie; tampoco podía darse razón dónde moraba ni de qué subsistía", 73-4).

nous. Furthermore, she is oftentimes depicted as darker either in hair, eyes or skin, in a departure from other representations of Mary that are more strictly European. In this way, the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre is meant to more closely resemble those to whom she appeared, something that we also see in the Virgen de Guadalupe. The fusion in this image allows for new manifestations of the religious image – it is a re-writing of the very image of the Virgin Mary, a revising that is seen in the syncretism of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre and Oshún.

Given this significant historical and social context, it is obvious why the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre is used as a reference for Cecilia Valdés, since this connection weaves Cecilia into the fabric of *cubanía*. However, the allusion is telling in Norge Espinoza Mendoza's play in that he is connecting Cecilia, a biracial nineteenth-century character who is neither religious nor virginal with a manifestation of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. This irreverent association mixes secular icons with religious in a way that connects these two different aspects of Cuban cultural production, while also rewriting their meaning – both Cecilia and the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre are changed through this process. In many ways, this connection between the two female figures that emerges from Espinosa Mendoza's text creates a new text, borrowing words from José Quiroga and his study of the palimpsest in the Cuban context: "It is a queer form of reproduction, one where two texts, two sites, two lives, blend into one continuous present" (2005: ix). This re-creation, or re-writing is a common trait in Cuban cultural production as Quiroga maintains: "the island is always being reinvented somewhere else" (xi). Nevertheless, the association or fusion of these two iconic figures of the feminine within Cuba hints at the overall rewriting in this play and how this re-visioning of two central Cuban female figures attempts to widen acceptable definitions of femininity and race within national definitions of identity.

Although Cecilia Valdés is one of the most re-written figures, and a character who attempts to re-write her own past and future, she is unable to escape her past in all her incarnations. Throughout Norge Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce*, her origins are constantly in the minds of the reader-spectators through the presence of one prop that occupies an important place because of its omnipresence on the stage: the crib.[8] Starting with the very first scene and remaining on the stage until the end of the play, the crib that the baby Cecilia had occupied comes to take on a central meaning within the story. This begins with the prologue when her grandmother and her father discuss her fate. At this point, the baby Ce-

[8] David Lisenby analyses the use of the crib in Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce* along that of the prop of Villaverde's novel onstage in Estorino's *Parece blanca*.

cilia has been left at the Real Casa Cuna, in an effort to hide her paternity and to pass her off as white, which, in the words of David Lisenby "inhibits a happy ending" (2012: 234). The crib here, occupied by Cecilia is in the background, giving the impression that she and it are at the orphanage (Espinosa Mendoza 2004: 23). The crib remains in the same place on the stage throughout the play and the characters, while not referring directly to the crib, often focus their attention plainly on this piece of furniture.

The crib occupies the figurative centre of activity at the end of the play after Leonardo has been killed and Cecilia has been dressed in the bloody veil and symbolically and literally returned to the beginning:

> *Al tiempo que se oyen los acordes del cierre, los actores salen a la vista del público y, cuidadosamente, toman a Cecilia, devolviéndola a la cuna del proscenio, a la que cubren con el propio velo, y que sigue iluminada débilmente hasta que, con el último y grandioso golpe de música, se pierde definitivamente en la penumbra del apagón final.* (68)
>
> [*As the closing chords are heard, the actors come out onstage and carefully pick up Cecilia, returning her to the crib in the proscenium and they cover it with its own veil, as it is still weakly lit until, at the last, magnificent chord, it disappears into the darkness of the final curtain.*]

Cecilia is returned by her fellow characters to the very place that she began the play, in a space of in-betweenness where she is neither one race nor the other, neither an orphan nor of the family. This suspension between definitions *is* the very definition of Cecilia.

One of the most important aspects of this play is the innovation of presenting the story of Cecilia Valdés through puppetry in addition to using live actors on the stage. This decision leaves the reader with many questions: how does this classic Cuban story change when puppets retell the doomed love between Leonardo and Cecilia? Is it inevitable that the story devolves into a farce of what the original is? Is this the very purpose of Espinosa's use of puppets? While some of these questions would be answered by the performance that the spectator would view, these are still important for this analysis in that they would be solved by the director, producer, etc., and thus are still part of the presentation.

Cuba has a strong tradition of puppet theatre as evidenced in the Teatro Nacional de Guiñol (TNG), a highly successful national theatre company founded in Havana in 1963, at a historical point when all cultural institutions were sanctioned by the Revolutionary government. The Teatro Nacional de Guiñol enjoys critical and popular acclaim in Cuba and abroad and points to an important foundation from the decade of the 1960s and both before and after. This theatre company is just one part of the long

practice of puppet theatre in Cuba that both predates TNG and follows it.[9] While much of the theatre associated with puppetry is aimed at children, not all is, as we see with the example of Espinosa Mendoza's *La virgencita de bronce*. This is without a doubt not a play intended for a young audience. In this way, the reader-spectator sees that the author specifies puppets for a different reason or reasons, such as parody or satire. As Federico López Terra argues: "It is a matter of intending/hoping to bind the ancient tradition of puppet theatre as spectacle for adults with the contemporary scene, which assumes a revaluation of this particular subgenre as a dramatic spectacle in general."[10] What's more, in a further effort that emphasizes one of the play's purposes and the general amalgamation that we find repeatedly here, it features both puppets and actors: "Four slaves (actor-manipulators)".[11] As Erin Finzer points out, the written text only mentions these characters in passing, though their importance can be seen in the performance of the play (2015: 41). Here this is a blending of borders that provokes a questioning that is characteristic of *La virgencita de bronce*, while simultaneously forcing the reader-spectator to understand the role of race and slavery in the definition of Cuban culture and history.[12] The silent actors play the pivotal role of slaves, manipulating the objects on stage in a seemingly overlooked role that speaks volumes through its silence.

The characters portrayed in Espinosa Mendoza's story of Cecilia Valdés are such icons within Cuban culture that their portrayal with puppets problematizes this idolization. Furthermore, the characters' behaviour in the play is ridiculous and exaggerated, a fact that puppetry complicates even more. Seeing a puppet gorge itself on food or licentiously attack another is not erotic or relatable but instead over the top and laughable. In this way, the reader-spectator is encouraged to interrogate this Cuban classic and its place within the production of culture. Cecilia is not a role model or an unattainable dream but a puppet put into ridiculous situations by her own decisions and those forced on her by others. Thus, Norge Espino-

[9] Norge Espinosa Mendoza (2011) presents a comprehensive and fascinating overview of the history of puppet theatre in Cuba from 1949-2011, archived on Cuban Theater Digital Archive.

[10] "Se trata de una obra que pretende religar la tradición más antigua del teatro de títeres como espectáculo para adultos con la escena contemporánea, lo que supone una revaloración de este particular subgénero como espectáculo dramático en general" (2011: 307). Federico López Terra presents a detailed analysis of the use of puppets in *La virgencita de bronce* that interrogates the layers of writing in the myth of Cecilia Valdés and the construction of theatrical genre in the use of puppets.

[11] "Cuatro esclavos (actores-manipuladores)" (22).

[12] Erin Finzer presents a fascinating analysis of the role of melancholia in *La virgencita de bronce*, examining the role of race and absence in this iconic figure and story.

sa Mendoza encourages a questioning of a literary icon in his portrayal and presentation of his version of Cecilia, a version that lines up in many ways with the other accepted ideas of the character but deviates in some meaningful portrayals.

The multiple versions of literary Cecilias that are discussed here are perpetuated within Norge Espinosa Mendoza's play at two distinct moments when Cecilia as the main character is fragmented into various different images, visually replicating the fragmented multiplicity that has emerged around this figure in Cuban literary culture. The first one comes in the second half of the play after Cecilia has been urged to give up Leonardo and immediately before she and Leonardo consummate their relationship. The scene begins with Cecilia being left alone onstage. This act of parting highlights Cecilia's solitude as well as her uniqueness in that, in her lowest moment, she has no one to guide or listen to her. The physical isolation of the puppet Cecilia mirrors the mental seclusion she feels and to which she has been relegated by her father, her grandmother, and Leonardo in that the first two do not share their knowledge of her parentage with her and the final one abandons her for a more 'suitable' and rich bride.

When Cecilia is left alone onstage, she calls to the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre to return Leonardo to her or she will go crazy, at which point she begins to cry against a broken mirror: "*The mirror shows her images: all replicas of Cecilia, but disfigured by her desperation. She is tormented by the images*".[13] This is an especially important moment within the play and within the tradition of Cecilia Valdés in that Espinosa Mendoza focuses the attention of the reader-spectator on the inner torment of the protagonist, making it physically real through the broken mirror and the disfigured replications of Cecilia. Just as a movie spectator may see an angel and a devil urging a character to choose a particular path, here multiple images appear before the spectators and the character. But the difference comes in both the multiplication of the protagonist (here, then, there is no exterior figure, just many Cecilias) and the disfigurement that they suffer. Both of these facts highlight the idea of an interior struggle that threatens to break Cecilia apart.

The focus here on the protagonist and the torment that she undergoes at her own hands is underlined in the addition to the original Cecilia of three other Cecilias, each with a distinct negative adjective that sets her apart but also reinforces their common origins: Cecilia *loca*, Cecilia *vieja*, and Cecilia *enferma*. As quoted above, these three figures are surprising and tormenting, forcing the original Cecilia out of her place of suffering for love and into a space of fragmentation and fear:

[13] "*Aparecen en el espejo sus imágenes: todas gemelas de Cecilia pero desfiguradas por su desesperación. Las imágenes la atormentan*" (Espinosa Mendoza 2004: 53).

Cecilia	(*Espantada.*) ¿Quiénes son ustedes?
Cecilia loca	Somos tú misma.
Cecilia enferma	Somos lo que serás.
Cecilia vieja	Somos lo que ya eres. (*Bailan y ríen cantando sus nombres.*)

(53)

[Cecilia (*Scared*). Who are you? // Crazy Cecilia We are you. // Sick Cecilia We are what you will be. // Old Cecilia We are what you already are. (*They dance and laugh singing their names.*)]

The three images of what Cecilia is or will be taunt the original and solidify her identification as fragmented.

The second time Cecilia is multiplied is in the eighth and penultimate scene after Cecilia has learned that Leonardo is about to marry Isabel but before she urges Pimienta to attack her lover. Cecilia, abandoned again by her friends and her lover, is heartbroken that Leonardo would betray her by marrying another woman. This complete desertion of Cecilia again causes the earlier fragmentation:

Cecilia	(*Llamándola en vano.*) ¡Nene! ¡Nemesia! (*Entrando a la casa.*) ¡Mamita! ¡Abuela! (*Pausa.*) Nadie, abandonada siempre y para siempre. ¡Dios mío, qué crueldad! Se casa, me traiciona, me humilla. (*Solloza contra el espejo roto.*) ¡Cabrón!

Aparecen las imágenes de Cecilia, vestidas con gastados trajes de novias, ensangrentados. La rondan y se burlan.

(63)

[Cecilia (*Calling in vain.*) Nene! Nemesia! (*Going into the house.*) Momma! Grandmother! (*Pause.*) No one, always abandoned forever. My God, how cruel! He's getting married, he's betrayed me, he's humiliating me. (*She sobs against the broken mirror.*) Bastard! *The images of Cecilia appear, dressed in a ruined wedding dress, bloodied. They surround her, laughing at her.*]

Again, in a moment of anguish, Cecilia leans against the broken mirror and is confronted by fragmentations of herself. This time, in a foreshadowing of the bloodletting that will happen at the wedding, the fragmented Cecilias are dressed in a worn, bloodied wedding dress, though they continue to taunt her through their very presence and their verbal interaction. Just as we saw in the initial fragmentation of Cecilia above, this scene echoes the narcissism while it also highlights the social and financial limitations that would have been available to Cecilia in this situation. The bloodied wedding dress underlines her inability to escape her fate. She is defined by her beauty and her inability to leave behind the social definitions that bind her, a reality that mocks her through the presentation of her fragmented self.

The mirror that is central in the fragmentation of Cecilia Valdés that we see in the two scenes analysed above take on extra significance in light of the fourth scene during the conversation where the grandmother, at the urging of don Cándido, tries to convince Cecilia to give up Leonardo, without revealing why. In this exchange the two women remember Cecilia's childhood, a simpler, happier time (43). These memories cause Cecilia to remember the story of Narcisa, told to her as a child and recounted and acted out on the stage with puppets against a white wall. The story that the grandmother, Chepilla, tells is that of a "capricious and foolish girl" ("niña caprichosa y majadera", 44) named Narcisa. This girl is very beautiful and is given little gifts by others but does not listen to her grandmother. One night she follows the sound of music into a dark alley and meets a sinister man who entices her with jewels to follow him. She follows him but he quickly turns into a hideous figure, who turns out to be the devil, and does not allow her to leave him to return to her grandmother. The story, obviously told to Cecilia to make her more suspicious of others and more obedient to her grandmother, is punctuated at parts with the following warning: "Oh, Narcisa, / beautiful girl, / don't go, / don't lose yourself" ("Ay, Narcisa, / niña hermosa, / no te vayas, / no te pierdas", 45). This bedtime story serves the primary purpose of scaring Cecilia into obedience; however, the re-visioning here of the ancient Greek myth of Narcissus, who is so enamoured of his own image that it causes his death is indicative of this Cuban re-telling.

The Cuban version presented here re-imagines this story where the main character becomes female and the fatal flaw is disobedience, not excessive self-love. These two changes offer an opportunity to analyse the purpose in returning to this story within this context. First, there is a condemnation in the actions of the female – Narcisa should not be seduced by the sweets and the pearls that are offered to her. Here, the young girl is shown to be on a path to perdition because she wants and accepts these small gifts and does not listen to the warnings from her grandmother. In this way, the young girl's actions are restricted because of her beauty and she is punished because of the actions of others. While some of the original Greek versions of Narcissus present a dismal view of women as jealous, this version from Espinosa Mendoza reveals how the woman is held responsible for the misdeeds of others, thus creating an interrogation of what it means to be a woman of beauty – this is both her salvation and her downfall.

Throughout this study, when faced with crucial episodes in the re-written text, the reader-spectator has been forced to ask whether this scene is a re-visioned one or from the original. Espinosa Mendoza's use of the Narcisa episode does appear in Cirilo Villaverde's original *Cecilia Valdés*, prompt-

ing the next question of how loyal the later version is to the first. While the twentieth-century text does remain rather loyal to the earlier one, there are obvious departures, prompted perhaps by the change in presentation (theatre, not novel) and profundity (about fifty pages versus approximately 600 pages). While these two differences are important, the moment and manner of presentation of the Narcisa episode stand out as more important in this analysis. In the Villaverde novel, Chepilla, the grandmother, tells Cecilia the story, for what seems to be the first time, as a way to warn her about the dangers of disregarding the elder woman's advice and to scare her away from strangers: "Well, girl, this is what happens to the girls that don't take their elders' advice".[14] The purpose of the story is the same in Espinoza Mendoza's re-visioning of the Cecilia Valdés myth ("these things happen / to the one that didn't listen to her grandmother)",[15] however, the moment and manner of introduction is very different. Here, in a play with a prologue and nine scenes, the story of Narcisa comes at the end of the fourth scene, virtually in the middle of the play. Thus, we have already met Cecilia and, in contrast to its use in the novel, the introduction of the Narcisa story does not need to explain who she is but instead offers a more in-depth explanation of Cecilia and of the relationship between her and her grandmother; we now know that Cecilia is headstrong and will do as she wishes. Furthermore, the scene comes at a crucial moment in the play where Chepilla is trying to dissuade Cecilia from associating further with Leonardo given the incestual nature of their relationship. In this way, the story serves as a way to illustrate that Cecilia has always done as she wanted rather than as she is advised, but also that Cecilia is in need of comfort and can find it from her grandmother. We see this particularly in the fact that the story is presented as one that has repeatedly been recounted by the grandmother to Cecilia (44). Here, then, within the very play of *La virgencita de bronce* we see the idea of re-writing and re-visioning from within. So it is not just the figure of Cecilia Valdés that is recycled within the story but also Cecilia does her own re-visioning in order to further her own needs. Here she is in search of comfort while her grandmother is looking for obedience.

This new re-visioning of the story of Narcissus where Narcisa becomes the responsible party through her passivity connects with Hélène Cixous's ideas on women and writing. We see this particularly when Cixous considers the juxtaposition of absence and presence. This discussion takes place around the idea of woman's fate in love where desire is in the realm of the masculine and the suppression or even absence of it is feminine. In this

[14] "Pues esto es, hija, lo que le sucede a las niñas que no hacen caso de los consejos de los mayors" (Villaverde 1992: 88).

[15] "que estas cosas suceden / a quien a su abuela no oyó" (Espinosa Mendoza 2004: 45).

way, woman stays in the dark, according to Cixous: "she is in the shadow. In the shadow he throws on her; the shadow she is" (1975: 67). We see the need to keep woman and her desire in check through the story of Narcisa, who follows the figure which rapidly mutates once it has her in its grasp. This story, as Chepilla herself notes, is meant to be a cautionary tale that inhibits Cecilia's behaviour, dampening her curiosity and her desire.

This fear of action, of being active, in the words of Cixous, has provoked a self-loathing on the part of women, where they are alienated from their own bodies and desire, what she names an "antinarcissism": "A narcissism that only loves itself if it makes itself loved for what is lacking" (1975: 68). In this way, Cecilia would need to deny her sexual desire and suppress her emotions, pretending that she feels love (and only love), and wait for Leonardo to pursue her. However, this inhibition of desire and repression of action that Cixous highlights in the ideal female does not happen in the re-visioning of Espinosa Mendoza's Cecilia Valdés since the amorous relationship between Cecilia and Leonardo is sexually consummated at the end of the sixth scene, a fact that they both actively want: "*It looks like they are going to claw one another, but then suddenly, they jump on top of one another with a big kiss*"[16] (though, it can be argued, that Cecilia initiates this: "Well, come here, I'm going to give you a smack"; "Pues acérquese, que le daré un coscorrón", 54). In this way, Espinosa Mendoza creates a new model where Cecilia's desire is as central as Leonardo's, where she does not have to become absent in order to have a presence in the scene and on the stage. Espinosa Mendoza, then, writes a new space for the woman that allows desire and action. In this way, we return to Cixous in how she identifies in writing the place of the other: "a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds" (1975: 72, emphasis in the original). Through writing, Espinosa Mendoza creates a Cecilia Valdés that exhibits this ability to break free from the system. However, it must be understood that within the context of the Cecilia Valdés story, this opening is brief and virtually nominal. The destruction of Cecilia and her aspirations at the end of all the versions, even Espinosa Mendoza's play, underline the lack of opportunity and future for women, particularly of colour, in Cuba.

Nevertheless, when considering the role of re-writing national literature for the stage, this juxtaposition of absence and presence together with the role of writing in opening a new space that exists outside the cur-

[16] "*Parece que se van a arañar pero, de pronto, se lanzan uno sobre el otro uniéndose en un gran beso*" (Espinosa Mendoza 2004: 54).

rent system of repression is particularly important given the context of re-visioning. First, the contradiction between absence and presence is central in re-writing in that the authors choose which texts to re-produce and which not, which episodes within the texts are highlighted versus which are not. Thus, though Cecilia is not able to break through completely, her repeated re-visioning from new and innovative spaces hints at a future possibility for her and definitions of Cuban womanhood. Further, as we see with the example of Cecilia Valdés, the authors of these texts can manage to write outside the system, creating a space where the characters can contest the current system of repression. It is this second point that underlines theatre's ability to question and push boundaries.

Despite the lack of repression in the female desire in *La virgencita de bronce* and the apparent openness that Norge Espinosa Mendoza represents in his play, there is no complete escaping the traditional story of Cecilia, where she becomes the victim of her own violence. Furthermore, embodied in the figure of in-betweenness, we see that Espinosa Mendoza presents an alternate view of what it means to be a Cuban woman. On one hand, the play offers a widening definition of what is Cuban womanhood and how it is defined, while on the other, Espinosa Mendoza interrogates these traditional definitions to question their centrality and their importance within national definitions. The reader-spectator of *La virgencita de bronce* sees that despite the advances that the play suggests, there is no way to completely break the system in which we exist and the struggle must continue.

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Gherardo Ugolini*

The Seven at War from Thebes to Aleppo. On Two Performances at the Greek Theatre of Siracusa

Abstract

Aeschylus' *The Seven Against Thebes*, directed by Marco Baliani, and Euripides' *The Phoenician Women*, directed by Valerio Binasco, were staged at the Greek theatre of Siracusa for the 53rd Festival del Teatro Greco from 6 May to 8 July 2017. Although the two plays deal with the same episodes of the Theban myth, that is, the siege of Thebes by the Argive army and the fratricidal conflict between Eteocles and Polynices, they adopt different dramaturgical, ethical, and political perspectives. Both stagings involved estranging and modernizing devices. Baliani succeeded in vividly rendering the motif of fear aroused by wartime violence, turning it into the *leitmotiv* of a production set within an archaic universe whose anthropologically-based values are cast as universal. *The Phoenician Women* turned out to be less convincing, since Binasco's innovative choices, such as Eteocles' ostentatious violence, the chorus of female refugees speaking with an Eastern European accent, and Oedipus' disturbing presence on stage from the opening of the play, did not fulfil their dramaturgical potential coherently and homogeneously.

KEYWORDS: Aeschylus; Euripides; Thebes; Siracusa; Greek tragedy; Baliani; Binasco

The organizers of the 2017 edition of the Siracusa classical festival ("Il teatro e la città" [The Theatre and the City]), which ran from 6 May to 8 July 2017, chose to stage Aeschylus' *The Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' *The Phoenician Women*. Not only do both tragedies rely on the Theban cycle, but they also deal with the same episodes of this mythical saga: the siege of Thebes by the seven Argive heroes and the fratricidal conflict between Eteocles and Polynices, which ultimately leads to the extinction of the Labdacides family.[1] This choice was inherently very risky for a number of reasons regarding both the two texts and their *mise en scène*. As regards Aeschylus' *The Seven Against Thebes* (dating from 467 BC), the problem was to make such an archaically-patterned tragedy, if not spectacular, at least entertaining for the audience. This was no easy task since the ma-

[1] The third play of the Festival's programme was Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, translated by Olimpia Imperio and directed by Giorgio Barberio Corsetti; the main cast included Salvatore Ficarra and Valentino Picone. It premiered at the Greek Theatre of Siracusa on 29 June 2017.

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

jority of scholars deem the play's finale spurious,[2] while also pointing out that its dramatic texture mostly consists of long *rheseis* [speeches] delivered by the messengers and Eteocles' decryption of the shields. *The Phoenician Women* (dating from 410-08 BC) poses a different set of problems: first of all, its considerable length (1760 lines), which inevitably calls for cuts, secondly the huddling of many characters on stage, and finally the complicated unfolding of the plot, refracted through different viewpoints.[3] Indeed, we can safely affirm that *The Seven* and *The Phoenician Women* are particularly difficult to stage today, and it is not coincidental that the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico di Siracusa [National Institute of Ancient Drama of Siracusa] has rarely produced them in the many decades of its activity.[4]

On the other hand, staging these two plays during the same season allowed the audience to appreciate the different ways in which Aeschylus and Euripides developed a common thematic core in the light of their different dramaturgical, ethical, and political perspectives referable to two very different historical moments, separated by seventy years. Aeschylus' *The Seven Against Thebes* belongs to a time in which the memories of the Persian wars were still vivid and alive in Athens: consequently, the motif of the military siege is treated with almost epic tones, seemingly aimed at concealing the intestine nature of the conflict. Yet, the mutual fratricide, being the unavoidable outcome of Oedipus' curse, is later viewed as just another catastrophe hitting the Labdacides *genos*, who are forced by the will of the gods to atone for their forefathers' guilt generation after generation. Euripides' approach is widely different: he wrote in the troubled years of the restoration of the Athenian democracy after the oligarchic coup of 411 BC, and he re-interpreted the mythical events leaving aside the idea of theodicy and insisting on the characters' psychology, on the often mean motivations that spur their action, and, in general, on the most lugubrious and pernicious aspects of civil war.

[2] In the finale of *The Seven Against Thebes* (861-1077) a messenger announces the decision, which is attributed to "counsellors (acting on behalf) of the people" (δήμου προβούλοις, 1006), to bury Eteocles and to leave traitor Polynices unburied. Antigones immediately rebels against this (1026-41) and the chorus split into two opposing factions. For a succinct but exhaustive recapitulation of the philological debate about the dubious authenticity of this finale, which seems to imply Aeschylus' knowledge of Sophocles' *Antigone*, see Taplin (1977: 169-91), Hutchinson (1985: 209-21), Centanni (1995: 199-209). See also, among others, Barrett 2007 and Judet de La Combe 2011. We do not know whether the prohibition against burying Polynices' body already appeared in the epic tradition. In Pindar (*Olympian* 6.15; *Nemean* 9.24) there is no trace of it and Polynices is cremated with his Argive comrades. Even Pausanias (9.18.3) mentions a version of the legend in which the corpses of Eteocles and Polynices are placed on the same pyre. The motif of the unburied body recurs therefore in the Athenian theatrical production only.

[3] In ancient times, *The Phoenician Women* was a hugely successful and frequently performed drama and its text was therefore often altered and variously augmented.

[4] The *Seven* has been performed only three times at the Teatro Greco di Siracusa: in 1924 (translated and directed by Ettore Romagnoli), in 1966 (translated by Carlo Diano and directed by Giuseppe Di Martino) and in 2005 (translated by Monica Centanni and directed by Jean-Pierre Vincent). The *Phoenician Women* was staged only once, in 1968 (translated by Enzio Cetrangolo and directed by Franco Enriquez). Suffice it to look at repertories and studies on this topic to verify the nineteenth- and twentieth-century meagre theatrical fortune of these two plays (see, for instance, Zoboli 2004; Flashar 2009).

This noted, it must be remarked that the two directors achieved quite uneven results. Marco Baliani, director of *The Seven Against Thebes*, accomplished the arduous task of mounting an original production that succeeded in having a strong emotional impact upon the audience through a consistent and refined modernizing strategy applied to Aeschylus' play.[5] *The Phoenician Women*, directed by Valerio Binasco, was not as brilliant and successful: the director's choices exasperated the conflict between the two brothers, enhancing its tone and violence, while scattering comic touches within the overall tragic frame, with a strident effect which undermined their potential for relieving the tension.[6]

Baliani's production especially aimed at thematizing the war motif and suggested a universal perspective by alternating the mythical past of the war between Thebans and Argives with present-day war scenarios.[7] In this regard, the director faithfully followed a previous staging of the *Seven* by Mario Martone in the Assoli hall of the Teatro Nuovo in Naples in 1996.[8] At the time Baliani played Eteocles, but also served as assistant director and contributed to Martone's meticulous preparatory work and in-depth analysis. The Neapolitan staging vividly survives in Martone's 1998 film *Teatro di guerra* [*Theatre of War*] in which the siege of Thebes is constantly associated with the one of Sarajevo.[9] Twenty years later the topical references are different: the war in Syria, Islamic terrorism, the sieges of Damascus and Mosul. These contemporary events are hinted at both visually (soldiers wearing camouflage uniforms, the women and men of the chorus clad in animal skins that later turn into typical middle-Eastern attires) and aurally (the clattering of horses' hooves, the rumble of helicopters, the blast of machine-guns and cannon fire and so on, until the final edict announcing the end of the war, Thebes' victory, and the prohibition against burying the 'traitor' Polynices, spoken in a stentorian voice through a loudspeaker which produces an inevitable estranging effect).

[5] *Sette contro Tebe* [*Seven Against Thebes*] by Aeschylus directed by Marco Baliani, translated by Giorgio Ieranò, costumes and stage design by Carlo Sala, music by Mirto Baliani, choreography by Alessandra Fazzino; the cast included Marco Foschi, Aldo Ottobrino, Anna Della Rosa, Gianni Salvo. First performance: Siracusa, Teatro Greco, 6 May 2017. After Siracusa, the production toured the country and had to be adapted and revised according to the requirements of the different theatres. It was mounted at the Terme di Baia (20-21 July 2017), at the Teatro Antico in Taormina (3 August 2017), and at the Teatro Romano in Verona (15-16 September 2017).

[6] *Fenicie* [*Phoenician Women*] by Euripides, directed by Valerio Binasco, translated by Enrico Medda, costumes and stage design by Carlo Sala, music by Arturo Annechino. The cast included Isa Danieli, Guido Caprino, Gianmaria Martini, Simone Luglio, Giordana Faggiano, Michele Di Mauro, Alarico Salaroli, Matteo Francomano, Massimo Cagnina, Yamanuchi Hal, Simonetta Cartia. First performance: Siracusa, Teatro Greco, 7 May 2017.

[7] As early as the fifth century BC, Aeschylus' contemporaries called *The Seven* "a drama full of Ares" (δρᾶμα . . . Ἄρεως μεστόν). See Gorgias, 82 B 4 D.-K., Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1021.

[8] Translated by Edoardo Sanguineti and directed by Mario Martone. First performance: Naples, Teatro Nuovo, 19 December 1996.

[9] Produced by Teatri Uniti and Lucky Red in collaboration with Rai Cinemafiction. The cast included, among others, Marco Baliani, Andrea Renzi, Anna Bonaiuto, Iaia Forte, Roberto De Francesco, Toni Servillo, Peppe Lanzetta, Angelo Montella. The director recollected the theatrical performance and the film in Martone 1998. For a commentary on the film (*Teatro di Guerra*) and its connections with the 1996 theatre production, see Fusillo 2002; Orsini 2005: 86-100; Ricciardi 2014a: 284-326; Marinai 2015; Torrence 2017.

While in Aeschylus' version the impending war is at first presented as brought on by external enemies and its intestine nature is openly revealed only at a later stage, in Baliani's staging it is soon apparent that this is an internal and fratricidal conflict. This effect is achieved by the early introduction on stage of Antigone (unconvincingly interpreted by Anna Della Rosa) as the chorus leader, while the chorus itself is not exclusively feminine but includes men, which symbolizes the whole community.[10] As is well known, in Aeschylus' *The Seven* Antigone appears all of a sudden only in the finale and speaks against the decree prohibiting Polynices' burial thus igniting a new division among the citizens. Setting aside the disputed authenticity of the play's ending, Baliani's alteration – also adopted by Martone in 1996 – is perfectly justified and attuned to the dramatization of the conflict as belonging to the *polis*' and the Labdacides family's internal affairs; and this choice fundamentally aimed at stressing the idea that any war is inevitably a civil one.

The motif of the war and the atrocities it inescapably produces is connected to the one of fear, whose extensive presence in Aeschylus' text is however almost exclusively conveyed by the evocative power of words. In the Siracusa staging, fear (*phobos*) was spectacularized and tremendously emphasized through a visual and especially auditory escalation, which produced a sort of emotional curve on stage. It was a feeling that kept growing until it peaked in the ending, when no reconciliation is ultimately possible. As Marco Baliani remarks in his "Appunti di regia" [Director's Notes], appended to the theatre programme, "fear is the protagonist of the whole play, and is fuelled by the sounds, yells, and echoes of the enemy army surrounding the city".[11]

Fear-stricken and anxiously anticipating the impending danger, the Theban people call for divine protection by performing tribal rituals around the imposing leafy tree standing at the centre of the sandy stage. Replacing the marble statues of the gods of Aeschylus' text, the tree becomes indeed a totemic object charged with a strong symbolic value. It is a place where archaic worship can be carried out, in continuity with the ancient tradition, a sacred space where people can bring libations and hang votive offerings. The besieged citizens cling to their tree, which, however, finally collapses marking the ultimate downfall of the Theban royal family. Eteocles himself, Thebes' fierce leader who prompts his fellow-citizens to contain their fears, falls prey to anguish and evil premonitions. This troubled but warring Eteocles was masterfully interpreted by Marco Foschi who first appeared on stage haranguing from a raised position behind the cavea, thus making the distance between the king and his people physically prominent (see fig. 1). In the play he initially behaves like a political and military leader and abides by the city's laws and traditional religious rules, and rules his city like a helmsman guiding his ship in a tempestuous sea (see 2ff., 62). Yet, the events, which follow in rapid succession, and above all the awareness of the inexorable curse that weighs on the house of

[10] The interpretation of the chorus in the staging of ancient tragedies has always been the severest of tests for directors. See on this Treu 2006; Foley 2007; Meineck 2013.

[11] "[È] la paura la protagonista dell'intera opera, una paura fomentata dai suoni, dal clamore e dagli echi dell'esercito nemico che circonda la città" (Baliani 2017).

Laius soon make him realize that he is "a fragile hero" and the victim – just like the other characters – "of a spiritual deadlock, a suspension of the action before the massacre or the ultimate fight which will be unescapably ruinous".[12]

Fig. 1: *The Seven Against Thebes*. Eteocles (Marco Foschi) and Antigone (Anna della Rosa). INDA archive.

The Siracusa *Seven* were also successful in originally translating into stage action what in the Greek original was evoked by words only. This is the case of the military engagement between Thebans and Argives that Aeschylus does not show but has the messengers narrate on stage. Baliani turned Aeschylus' diegesis into mimesis by means of an animated fighting choreography: samurai-like, the soldiers wrestled hand-to-hand using long poles, while a cloud of smoke wrapped them. The scene in which Tiresias is interrogated was similarly effective; Aeschylus' drama just touches upon the blind prophet's prediction of the Argive attack (24-9), whereas Baliani transformed it into a shamanic performance. At first the old *mantis*, blindfolded and wearing a bizarre bird costume sporting feathers and a long beak, stood into a trance and drew concentric circles in the sand without saying a word and then started dancing wildly to exhaustion (see fig. 2).

[12] "[U]n eroe fragile"; "di uno stallo dell'animo, una sospensione di azione in attesa del massacro o della estrema lotta che porterà comunque rovina" (Baliani 2017).

Fig. 2: *The Seven Against Thebes*. The Tiresias scene. INDA archive.

The long scene of the shields was similarly treated: the competent king correctly interprets the shield-icons of the enemies and plans his military reaction against the besiegers by sending seven Theban heroes to the gates where they will face their correspondent Argive adversaries (375-685). This episode, which in Aeschylus is an exaltation of Eteocles' dialectic cleverness, was transformed here into a spectacular primitive dance, distinctly reminiscent of an initiation ceremony. As they were called to the fight, the chosen warriors climbed a mobile wooden grating – yet another totemic object whose shape, square on the outside and round on the inside, alluded to the shields – and subsequently descended from it in order to receive from the king an apotropaic mask that each of them hung upon the gate which fell to his lot. The use of masks and primeval rituals is not unusual in contemporary stagings of Greek tragedies, as many examples from the 1960s onwards show; in this respect it is worth mentioning Siracusa's 1960 *Orestiade* [*Oresteia*], translated by Pier Paolo Pasolini and directed by Luciano Lucignani, with Vittorio Gassman in the protagonist role.[13] An anthropologically-based approach is common in ancient theatre studies and is instrumental in projecting Greekness on an archaic and primitive backdrop, thus highlighting its distance from the present, while also endowing it with a universal hermeneutic value.[14] The presence of the old singer (*aoidos*), interpreted by Gianni Salvo, fitted into this approach. In the prologue and epilogue, he introduced himself as the theatre's 'caretaker', as a sort of *genius loci* who informed the audience about the antecedents of the Labdacides' myth and exhorted them to preserve the memory of the events sculpted in the site's ancient stones.

[13] On this famous staging, see Bierl 2004: 62-9.

[14] On the 'tribal classicism' of this interpretation of the *Seven*, see Auteri 2017.

The production of the *Phoenician Women*, directed by Valerio Binasco, had a few analogies with Baliani's *Seven against Thebes*. As in the *Seven*, a character, the female coryphaeus, played by Simonetta Cartia, introduced the action and summarized past events before the actual beginning of the play. Besides, her Eastern European accent immediately provided a clue to the estrangement and modernization effect the *mise en scène* wished to achieve. Indeed, as happens in Euripides' drama, the whole chorus was composed of foreign women. In the original play, the Phoenician women are pilgrims on their way to Delphi who, trapped at Thebes, become involuntary witnesses of the siege; in Binasco's version the women's clothes, their accessories, their cardboard suitcases, the melodies they sing, and their accent were remindful both of World War II deportees and of today's refugees on the Balkan and Eastern routes. Expressionless masks covered their faces emphasizing their anonymous belonging to a mass of people forced to leave their country. They acted in fact as external viewers of the story thus endowing the events with a universal meaning and existential rate, whose perennial worth goes beyond the contingencies of time and space.

As in Baliani's *mise en scène*, the stage was dominated by a huge tree; yet, differently from the one in the *Seven*, this tree had dry branches and sticking out roots, which could be interpreted as "the passage from Aeschylus' age to Euripides', seen as devoid of lively political perspectives"[15] or as an allusion to the Labdacides' impending doom. The large flat space of the orchestra was covered by a red cloth, probably to symbolize the shedding of blood in the *polis* during the war. In this area, uniformed soldiers moved around while stentorian military commands were heard coming from the loudspeakers. All in all, the setting brought to mind a barracks town or a militarized community, which constituted a further *trait d'union* with Aeschylus' *Seven*. In fact the play opened with the excessively pathetic tones of a mourning Jocasta (Isa Danieli) who, sighing and moaning, recalled her family's misfortunes and prayed to Zeus that he put an end to her tribulations. In the meantime all the other characters spread out across the stage, some on the wings and some in the back; among them was the old and blind Oedipus – interpreted by the Japanese actor Hal Yamamuchi – who, in Euripides' drama, does not appear on stage until the end of the play. This idea of turning the protagonists of the story into second-degree spectators of the events was undoubtedly a most original directorial choice; yet, such metatheatrical and nearly-Brechtian estrangement device ended up being hardly effective in the staging of a Greek tragedy, especially one so densely populated with characters. As a result, the spectators eventually felt as if they had watched a half-sketched experiment, undefined and lacking direction or purpose.

The protagonist of Binasco's *Phoenician Women* was definitely Jocasta (fig. 3), while the other characters moved around her and never seemed to emerge fully in the performance, thus remaining in a secondary and nearly accessory position. Binasco drew on various elements of the ancient mythological tradition, turning Jocasta into the symbol of universal and unconditional motherly love and the guard-

[15] "[I]l passaggio dall'epoca eschilea a quella euripidea, vuota ormai di prospettive politicamente vitali" (Barone 2017).

ian of the family customs of an accursed and unfortunate *genos*. Nonetheless, her last-moment attempt to reconcile her sons and save them from the fratricidal duel proved unsuccessful. Evidently, the director wanted to highlight the polarity between the female and male universes; in Binasco's vision, the former is characterized by a longing for peace and reconciliation as well as willingness to pursue dialogue and mutual understanding, while the latter is dominated by violent and prevaricating impulses. Antigone (Giordana Faggiano) also had a share in this ideological polarity when she restlessly tried to spot her exiled brother from Thebes' walls, although never failing to show her unreserved devotion towards her aging father.

Fig. 3: *The Phoenician Women*. Jocasta (Isa Danieli) and Polynices (Gianmaria Martini). INDA archive.

Eteocles (Guido Caprino) was presented as a particularly violent and unrestrainedly ruthless character. The director's interpretation rested on some despotic accents Eteocles uses in Euripides' drama when he exalts tyranny and declares his craving for absolute power even if it is unjust (499-525ff.). The Siracusa production, however, brought his aggressiveness to the extreme, as not only words but also stage action was imbued with it. Eteocles knocked down his brother Polynices (Gianmaria Martini) and punched him while his thugs restrained him. Such brutality reached its peak in the Argive soldier scene: the prisoner was chased after, captured, tied down, blindfolded by Eteocles' guards and eventually killed by Eteocles himself, who slit his throat on stage. Significantly enough, this final act of violence occurred at a key moment in the play, that is, right after the loyal Creon (Michele di Mauro) had urged the king to appoint seven Theban heroes to defend the city gates against the Argive attackers. This display of ferocious strength may be read

as a rather transparent allusion to the barbarities of Islamic terrorism, even though the exhibition of a bloody human sacrifice appeared to be totally disproportionate and out of place. This turned out as especially disturbing since the highlighting of the gory aspects of the drama was paired with an exaggerated pursuit of ludicrous and grotesque effects. Such combination was particularly evident when the messenger (Massimo Cagnina) announced Thebes' victory and the imminent duel between Eteocles and Polynices and, later on, the two brothers' deaths and Jocasta's suicide. The grotesque found its iconographic representation in the messenger's bizarre helmet and his cautious gesturing; yet, what the audience found particularly hilarious was his awkward Sicilian accent and his stock-phrase, "chiedo scusa" "I beg your pardon". The oscillation between high and low registers, comedy and tragedy, may prove a successful dramaturgical device, but in Binasco's *Phoenician Women* it seemed to have been employed casually, showing no clear direction or function.

All the same, one of the most felicitous moments of the performance, worth mentioning here, was the Tiresias scene. The prophet (Alarico Salaroli) was played as a staggering and sulky old man, in a loose red dressing-gown and flip-flops, holding a plastic bag in which he kept the golden crown he won thanks to his excellence in the divinatory art. At Creon's request to show the Thebans how they could find a way out and be saved, Tiresias responded with an uproarious fit of laughter; this completely cancelled the prophet's hieratic solemnity – which, in the *Seven*, Baliani had reinterpreted as shamanic rituality. Binasco's rendering of the Tiresias scene, however, highlighted, if indirectly, a few undertones of the Euripidean text. Firstly, the characterization of Creon as a loving father, who put the life of his son, Menoeceus (Matteo Francomano), before the *polis*' well-being and secondly, Menoeceus' own metamorphosis. Early designated by Tiresias' vaticination as a sacrificial victim, the boy gradually turns from a weak youth, completely subjected to his father's will, into a tragic hero ready to give his life for his country. It is precisely this transformation – and Menoeceus' decision to die as a sacrifice for his people – that unlocks the action, ultimately allowing Thebes to win the war.

In addition to this, Oedipus' appearance on stage in the final scene was both gripping and successfully accomplished (fig. 4). If for an Athenian audience of the fifth century BC, his entrance must have come as a surprise, Siracusa's spectators were already familiar with his presence. As pointed out above, the old blind king had been sitting on stage, veiled and in silence, since the beginning of the play, while Jocasta, his mother-wife, lovingly assisted him. His imposing and menacing figure stood as the concrete representation of Thebes' misery, and his body physically symbolized his family's damnation. Only after his two sons' deaths and the fulfilment of the curse, did Oedipus stand up and speak, accepting to go into exile. As happened with the chorus of female refugees, the peculiarity of Oedipus' portrayal heightened the estranging effects of the production and, at the same time, allowed for the boundaries of the myth to be stretched to a universal dimension.

Fig. 4: *The Phoenician Women*. Oedipus (Hal Yamanuchi). INDA archive.

In an interview Valerio Binasco explained the choice of a Japanese actor – Oedipus sported the oriental looks and the foreign accent of Japanese actor Hal Yamanuchi who delivered a charismatic interpretation of the character – underlining his difference with the other heroes of the mythical saga:

> For Oedipus I needed someone coming 'from afar': he belongs to a different story from that of his kin. He already belongs to the sacred and the myth. . . . [Oedipus] is not lacerated by psychological issues: he is stony, solid, archaic. He is animated by a completely different expressive tradition than the other characters of the drama, whom Euripides depicted as his own 'contemporaries', that is, full of weaknesses, uncertainties, and nervous complexities. Oedipus is different. He comes straight from the heroic times. The time of heroes finishes with Euripides. But Oedipus is still there, he is one of them. No one can sustain the weight of his singularity.[16]

As a matter of fact Oedipus, for all his being archaic and hieratical, eventually leaves his homeland and goes into exile. He, too, becomes a refugee.

English translation by Carlo Vareschi.

[16] "Per Edipo mi occorreva anche qualcuno che arrivasse 'da lontano': Edipo appartiene a una storia diversa da quella dei suoi famigliari. . . . Appartiene già al sacro e al mito non è dilaniato da temi psicologici: è arcaico, pietroso, solido. È mosso da una tradizione espressiva molto diversa da quella degli altri personaggi del dramma, che Euripide delinea in modo molto 'contemporaneo', pieni di debolezze, di incertezze, di nervosa complessità. Edipo, no. Lui viene direttamente dal tempo eroico. Il tempo degli eroi finisce con Euripide. Ma Edipo è ancora lì, tra loro. Nessuno riesce a reggere il peso della sua estraneità" (Di Rosa and Tisano 2017).

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Eric Nicholson*

"La terra in palcoscenico": Playing the Common Grounds of Aeschylus and Shakespeare

Abstract

These director's notes offer reflections on as well as an account of the theatre project carried out in Spring 2017, in Verona as part of a practice-based research on Aeschylus and Shakespeare. The project involved the preparation, rehearsal, and performance of an experimental hybrid script, bringing together scenes in the original English and in Italian translation from Shakespeare's *Richard II* and Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*. The final production, entitled "*Riccardo II* in-contra i *Sette contro Tebe*", was performed by a cast of mainly student and non-professional actors, and was then the object of discussion within a seminar on staging kingship and power in classical and early modern theatre.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Aeschylus; hybrid script; experimental performance

Reflecting on the "Practice as Research (PaR)" experimental theatre project that I conducted during the spring of 2017 in Verona on Aeschylus and Shakespeare, I have become increasingly mindful of Horace's observation, made at the opening of his *Ars poetica*:

> Say that a painter's caprice joins the neck of a horse to a human
> Head, and adds plumage of multiple hues to the random-assembled
> Bodily parts, till the woman of beautiful features above ends
> Up as a fish and disgustingly ugly below: on admission
> Into the studio, friends, could you manage to stifle your laughter?
> (Hor. *Ars poet.* 1-5)[1]

Although the script that I prepared and edited, cutting and pasting together passages and scenes from Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Shakespeare's *Richard II*, was less outlandish and ludicrous than the bizarre creature concocted by Horace's imagined painter, it did ensure that extraordinary risks and challenges would accompany an original and audacious endeavour. What was I presuming to do?! It already would be a major dare to ask a cast of part-time, mainly non-professional actors – many of them absolute beginners – to perform difficult scenes from either a rarely staged ancient Greek tragedy or a rhetorically intricate Shakespearean history play. To attempt both at once would border on the Quixotic, to say the least. An additional hazard was the fact that the actors had only one

[1] Translated by Charles E. Passage (Horace 1983: 359-60).

* New York University, Florence - en27@nyu.edu

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month to study and learn the script, and only one week to rehearse it together, before our public performance at the Teatro Laboratorio, Verona. Thus the very logistics of the project increased the danger that instead of a bold, thought-provoking cross-pollination, our well-intentioned efforts would produce a random, grotesque distortion. While I was seriously attempting to emulate the ancient Roman dramaturgical practice of creative *contaminatio*, i.e. grafting two previous plays together to form a new one, I was well aware that – to borrow the words of Queen Isabel in *Richard II* – our unusual plant might "never grow" (3.4.101) and that our theatrical experiment could mutate into a strange laboratory animal. Like the mythical empusa or chimera, it would dissolve into a strange mixture of too many clashing, incongruous, and unpleasant elements.

It was something of a leap of faith, then, for me to supersede qualms about presumption, and stay committed to the goal of achieving a worthwhile theatrical experience. Paradoxically, the accident of the project's unlikely inception turned out to be its eventual artistic design. In this regard, *tyche*, the aleatory factor of chance, proved favourable in various ways, the most crucial being the exceptional readiness of the ensemble to prepare themselves and collaborate constructively during a brief, pressure-filled rehearsal process.[2] At first we boosted ourselves with the awareness of our quirky originality, of our being the first group ever to stage any kind of amalgam of *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II*. Then, as the script took shape, and we explored its possibilities through the trials and errors of rehearsal in real time and space, we discovered a number of unexpected, dynamic connections between the two plays. What had seemed a blurry happenstance – caused by the fact that the Verona Festival Shakespeare was hosting the premiere of Peter Stein's production of *Riccardo II* in July, and the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico (INDA)'s adaptation of *Sette contro Tebe* in September – came into focus as both an enlightened and destined choice. In specific terms, how did the links between these two plays – so vastly different in time, plot, language, mytho-historical frames of reference, and dramaturgical devices – gain clarity and pertinence, evolving into a viable hybrid? Our experimental theatre practice was aimed at giving both actors and audiences the chance to address intertwining questions of kingship, state power, familial competition, military sieges, and civil wars, as played out from ancient to modern times. With the burden of having to limit the eventual performance time to a maximum of just over an hour, it was imperative to select scenes and passages that might have elements organically interrelated through parallels and/or contrasts. We needed to

[2] The production was accomplished through collaboration with Thespis Society, Verona, and Teatro Scientifico - Teatro Laboratorio, Verona, and was staged as part of the "Kingship and Power" international theatre studies conference organized by Thespis Society and held in mid-June 2017. My profound, grateful thanks and recognition go to Elena Pellone (Richard), Dafne Abbruzzino (Bolingbroke), Mario Cestaro (Gaunt/Messenger), Giorgio Rossini (Eteocles), Teresa Brenzoni, and Silvia Zambelli (Messenger-Spies), David Schalkwyk (Northumberland/Salisbury/Servant), Federica Murana (Queen Isabel), Francesca Annechini, Alessandra Bonetti, Alessandra Chiariello, Malina Gradinaru, Lidia Latella, Stella Martina Loiodice, Anna Marconcin, Carlotta Nuca, Margherita Piccoli, Martina Piubello, Ludovica Ramponi, Jessica Turato, and Ludovica Turozzi (the Choruses), Noemi Bressan (Bushy/Gardener), Giovanni Centomo (Aumerle), and Salvatore Crucè (Carlisle).

locate at least one pervasive keynote or *leitmotiv*, or in more modern and precisely dramaturgical terms, a Brechtian 'gestus'. For this purpose, it made a positive difference to start not with the texts of the two plays, but with their physical-material apparatus: put simply, with their props and set items. *Seven Against Thebes* is famous for its lengthy set-piece descriptions of the seven giant and elaborately decorated off-stage shields wielded by the Achaian champions laying siege to the city, which then 'materialize' on stage in the one shield held up by the ruler and defender of Thebes Eteocles as he prepares to meet his brother Polynices in their mortal duel.[3] On the other hand, the most prominent and suggestive prop in *Richard II* is the mirror brought to Richard at his request during the deposition scene, which he then contemplates, reflects upon, and shatters into "a hundred shivers" (Shakespeare 2011: 4.1.289).[4] Contrasting emblems of kingship, then, the one expressing military strength and associations with heroic valour, the other evoking the widely read historical-political treatise *The Mirror for Magistrates* and the fragility of regal power; at the same time, they could be connected through similar shape, giving an essential quality to their metonymic significance for their kingly holders. Since shields of the Greek heroic age – the most famous, in both epic and tragedy, being those of Achilleus and Hektor – are typed as circular, it was a straightforward choice to make Richard's mirror a round one. In turn, the circle became the physical and symbolic through-line of our hybrid production. The classic Greek theatre features a circular *orchestra* at its centre, where during the performances of tragedies a twelve-person Chorus danced, sang, chanted, and interacted with the individual characters. To replicate this layout, I arranged for a circular 'stage-within-the-stage' to dominate the central part of the square, wooden-floored playing space of the small 'black-box' Teatro Laboratorio in Verona where we would eventually perform. The circular zone beside and beneath Eteocles and Richard would itself mirror the shield and looking-glass they would respectively hold, while communicating the key idea that the stories as well as thematics of the two plays – sharing such elements as tensions between *genos* and *polis*, kin-murder and civil bloodshed, and difficult questions regarding divine right and will – formed part of a repeated and ongoing cycle. In our interpretation, then, considerations of linear influence and diachronic patterns yielded to an emphasis on the cyclical and uncanny, though not the 'universal'. The original script of *Richard II* itself provided a master-trope for our staging, through its prominent stress on chiasmus, most richly deployed in Richard's declaration "Ay, no; no, ay, for I must nothing be" (4.1.201): we likewise would pursue contrasts, antitheses, and above all circular reflections, seen for instance in our mixed-period costuming, with Eteocles and York both in modern formal suits and ties, the Choruses in all-black skirts and tops (with a few coloured scarves and occasional military accessories), and Richard with medieval style robe, sceptre, and golden crown. Throughout, I was guided by the critical as well as creative understand-

[3] Among various articles and commentaries that helped to guide my research and interpretation of *Seven Against Thebes*, I am especially indebted to Isabelle Torrance's study of the play (2007). I also gained and applied valuable insights provided by Taplin 1977, Easterling 1997, and Aloni et al. 2002.

[4] All references to *Richard II* will be taken from this edition.

ing that our heterodoxical production would engage with several PaR approaches, methodologies and philosophical standpoints.[5]

Good fortune but also design helped us in the form of the new, eloquent, and theatrically viable translation of Aeschylus's *Septem* by Guido Avezzù, which deserved thorough, careful, and dynamic rendition through live speaking and movement. Fortunately again, the cast of university and secondary school actors was large enough to permit the use of a Chorus, to give full expression to Avezzù's outstanding translations of the play's powerful *stasima*, uttered by the young, fearful maidens of the besieged city of Thebes. Would our *Seven Against Thebes* Chorus, however, potentially and awkwardly clash with the script of *Richard II*, which has no Chorus whatsoever? I attempted to solve this problem by introducing a Chorus into Shakespeare's play, who would represent members of John of Gaunt's household, and who could also double as Welsh soldiers in the scene (2.4) in which the unnamed Welsh Captain bids adieu to both Salisbury and Richard's cause. The Captain ominously cites withered "bay trees", "meteors", a "bloody moon", and other ill-boding "signs" (2.4.8-15) that "forerun the death or fall of kings" (2.4.15), while Gaunt's monologues likewise delineate, in objectively descriptive terms, the decline, corruption, and "shameful" self-destruction of Richard's realm, foretelling a ruinous future. In other words, these speeches have an already vatic, choral energy that invites collective as well as individual utterance. The preponderance of women in our cast also worked to positive effect in this case, as Gaunt's retainers/Welsh soldiers became more closely linked via gender to the maidens of Thebes. The choice meant losing the compelling one-on-one 'showdown' between the agèd dying Gaunt and the young insolent Richard, but we gained the impassioned resonance of voices of the usually subordinate and/or marginalized.[6] Communal support and feminine variation thus complemented the sense of Gaunt as "a prophet new inspired" (2.1.31), his personal masculine status still communicated through his performance by a male actor, who became in the process a kind of authoritative Koryphaios.

The dying Gaunt scene also enabled our hybrid to gain definition, or at least avoid inchoate scrambling. By eliminating all of Act One, with its focus on the extraneous (for our purposes) dispute between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, we foregrounded the play's urgent concern with the fate of its territorial setting, "this earth of majesty", "this blessèd plot, this earth, this realm, this England, / This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings" (2.1.50-1). Later in the play, Richard returns from Ireland, to kneel and "salute" the "Dear earth" of his realm, declaring that "weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth, / And do thee favours with my royal hands" (3.2.10-11). The classic 'mother earth' personification, and the symbolic

[5] Among the last-named are emphases on "doing" and "making art" as ways to explore and also open up debates on a range of social, political, and cultural phenomena. Important publications on Practice as Research include Barrett and Bolt 2010 and Freeman 2010

[6] In this regard, it is worth noting our debt to and shared concerns with recent re-visitations of classical Greek tragic female characters, in particular Clytemnestra, accomplished by Avra Sidiropoulou (*Clytemnestra's Tears*, staged in New York in 2001 with Kristin Linklater), Elisabetta Pozzi (*Clitemnestra*, performed at Verona in 2016), and Ellen McLaughlin (staged reading of her version of the *Oresteia*, Verona 2017).

paradigm of England as a "sea-wallèd garden" – one now "full of weeds", "choked" and "disordered", "swarming with caterpillars" (3.4.43-7) – then attains complete embodiment and articulation in the crucial scene (3.4) set in the Duke of York's garden, featuring a politically-laden conversation among three actual Gardeners, and the awkward encounter between one of them, called "old Adam's likeness" (3.4.73) and the "Poor Queen" (3.4.102) Isabel.[7] These richly dramatic and symbolic moments – themselves sometimes trimmed or even fully lopped off in other productions – became vital and indispensable ones for us, especially as they provided palpable connections with our selected scenes from *Seven Against Thebes*. "You can never bring in a wall" (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.1.61), but we did bring in the fundamental basis of a garden, by filling the central circular area of our stage with fresh *terriccio*, i.e. actual soil/gardener's mulch. Along with a gold satin-covered 'armchair/throne', placed at downstage right, and seven plain black wooden pedestals (more on these later) lining the upstage border, this circle of earth was the dominant, continually visible component of our set. It served as the focal point for the Chorus of Theban Maidens, while recalling the earthen characteristics of the ancient Greek orchestra. Moreover, the text itself of the *Septem* fortuitously invokes Mother Earth as well. In his long opening exhortation to his Theban people, Eteocles implores them to help the city, its altars, and its religious worship, for the sake of the children and (in Avezzù's translation), "la madre terra, amatissima nutrice. Perché lei si è caricata ogni peso, quando muovevate i primi passi su questo benevolo suolo, e per sé vi ha cresciuti, perché da cittadini portaste lo scudo, e foste affidabili nel momento estremo, come oggi" (*Sept.* 16-20).[8] Doomed by his father Oedipus' curse to die at the same moment with his brother-enemy Polynices, Eteocles ultimately will fall into the earth that he has fought so hard to defend, and to rule over: for as the Messenger confirms in his account of the two brothers' simultaneous mutual killing, "Possiederanno la terra che potranno avere nella tomba" (*Sept.* 818).[9] Happy coincidence once more solidified and integrated the connecting verbal tissues of our two plays, and our central set component – itself about two meters in diameter – therefore served as the tangible, three-dimensional articulation of a chain of images and ideas.

Still, there remained the question of finding not only physical, verbal, and symbolic coordination, but also a dramatic framework for the interface of the two plays. In this respect, both the guiding agenda of Thespis Society and Shakespeare's own oeuvre came to the rescue: Thespis seeks to explore and publish find-

[7] For enhanced understanding of this and many other aspects of *Richard II*, I gratefully acknowledge illuminating lectures by Susanne Wofford, the introductions and notes by Charles R. Forker and Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin to their respective Arden Third Series (2002) and Oxford World's Classics (2011) editions of the play, and numerous critical essays, including those by Thomas M. Greene (1995) and Stephen Orgel (2011: 7-35).

[8] ἡ γὰρ νέους ἔρποντας εὐμενεῖ πέδῳ, / ἅπαντα πανδοκοῦσα παιδείας ὄτλον, / ἐθρέψατ' οἰκητῆρας ἀσπιδηφόρους, / πιστοί γ' ὅπως γένοισθε πρὸς χρέος τόδε. All Greek references will be to Hutchinson 1987 ["Earth your Mother. / She reared you, on her kindly surface, crawling / babies, welcomed all the trouble of your nurture, / reared you to live in her, to carry a shield / in her defense, loyally, against such needs as this"]. All references in English translation will be to Grene and Lattimore 2013.

[9] ἕξουσι δ' ἣν λάβωσιν ἐν ταφῇ χθόνα. ["They shall have what land suffices for a grave"].

ings on the relations between ancient classical and early modern European theatrical traditions, relations that Shakespeare himself confronted and modulated. In *Hamlet*, the title character devises his plan to "catch the conscience of the king" (2.2.540) by staging the Italianate "Murder of Gonzago" (474) only after he has seen and heard the First Player deliver his old-fashioned 'passion'/monologue of Aeneas to Dido, narrating the fall of Troy, and "hellish" (401) Pyrrhus' slaughter of "old grandsire Priam" (402). In humble emulation, then, I decided that after hearing the news of Gaunt's death and Richard's seizing of his deceased uncle's lands, the Duke of York would present the performance of a Greek tragedy to the rash young king, announcing it with the inserted line "faccio vedere a Sua Maestà la seguente scena, come uno specchio". This scene, of course, was the opening one of *Seven Against Thebes*, and while its main players made their first entrance during our performance, the seven 'statues' of the gods (Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, and Artemis) to whom the maidens pray and bring offerings were played, in masked tableau vivant-style, by Gaunt, York, and five members of Gaunt's household members/Chorus, standing on the seven pedestals lining the stage. Our Richard remained in his "throne", seated next to the Queen, Bushy, and Aumerle, watching the Aeschylean drama unfold up to the Chorus's shared cry, "Cosa possiamo attenderci da tutto questo?" (356: †τίν'† ἐκ τῶνδ' εἰκάσαι †λόγος† πάρα; "From such things what shall one augur?") at the end of the third strophe of their second *stasimon*. Notwithstanding the admonitory vision offered by the fearful, agitated Chorus of besieged Theban maidens – from their anguished entering shout of "Threumai!" (78: θρεῦμαι) to their vivid, harrowing imaginings of roving bands sacking the city while suckling babies get torn from their mothers' breasts[10] – our Richard stayed resolute, declaring in Italian, with a slight modification of the original script, "Pensate quello che volete, fatemi vedere quello che volete, noi prendiamo nelle nostre mani le sue argenterie, i suoi beni, i suoi denari e le sue terre" (*Richard II*, 2.1.209-10). Not for him my director's advice to the Chorus members, encouraging them to read recent news accounts and look at photos of the 2015-17 violent military-civilian traumas and sieges of Aleppo, Syria, and Mosul, Iraq.

This first 'play-within-the-play', then, did not "catch the conscience of the king" (*Hamlet*, 2.2.540), making his Phaethon-like rush toward his own defeat and deposition even more reckless and irresponsible. In contrast, neither Richard nor Isabel stayed on-stage to watch our second selected scene from *Seven Against Thebes*, presented by the Gardener immediately after the Queen's exit with curses directed at him, so that his additional line was spoken directly to the audience in the theatre: "Ma non abbiamo già sentito questo tipo di storia tragica? Non l'abbiamo già vista?".[11] Bound in by our own time constraint, we skipped over the descriptions of the shields of the six other attackers of Thebes, and resumed with the Messenger's climactic report of the seventh, that of Polynices, followed by the determination

[10] As Guido Avezzù notes (in his footnote to these lines, in his unpublished translation), with an apposite allusion to Goya's famous prints, the Chorus's words provide a "visualization of the disasters of war" ("visualizzazione dei *désastres de la guerre*").

[11] Another rhetorical and performative link between the two plays is the prominence of cursing, related to divine will, a pattern incisively elucidated by Robert S. Miola (forthcoming).

of Eteocles to fight a decisive duel with him, "Re contro re, e fratello contro fratello, da nemico combatterò il nemico" (*Sept.* 674-5).[12] Surrounded by the Chorus, Eteocles then knelt in the soil-filled circle while being armed by the Messenger/Spy, until he rose, brandishing his spear in one hand, and with his other holding up his shield – adorned with a full-colour reproduction of Caravaggio's painting of Medusa's severed head – in full view of the audience. Following the exits of the young headstrong king and then of the anxious Chorus, aware of the foretold mortal tragedy about to transpire outside the city walls, the Gardener returned one more time to his task, though the 'fruit trees' (played by two of Gaunt's followers standing on pedestals and holding actual apples and apricots) had also exited. In the same earth that Eteocles had just trampled, and under green-tinted lighting, he "set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace" (*Richard II*, 3.4.105). Finally, with his royal mantle, crown, and sceptre handed over to his cousin Bolingbroke, the deposed (and wiser) Richard played the presenter of our third 'play-within-the-play' scene, lines 792 to 835 of *Seven Against Thebes*, in which a new Messenger tells the Chorus of the salvation of their city, but also of the two brothers' mutual killing of each other: "La città è salva, ma per la reciproca strage la pianura si è imbevuta del sangue dei congiunti" (*Sept.* 820-1).[13] These words uncannily anticipate those of Bolingbroke/King Henry IV himself, in his speech that opens the next play of the second tetralogy, when he optimistically and erroneously predicts "no more the thirsty entrance of this soil / Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood" (*Henry IV*, *Part One*, 1.1.5-6). Our Bolingbroke, now watching the Aeschylean performance in the same exact attire Richard was wearing in the first scene, perhaps did take some note of what he beheld, including the Chorus's final grasping and holding up of handfuls of earth, as they faced him and cried in unison, "Long live the King!". This was the last gesture of regal ceremony – another shared aspect of the two plays – that we employed, recalling the brief 'dumb show procession' of Richard and his retinue with which we opened our performance, but deliberately contrasting with the solitary isolation suffered by the deposed king in Pomfret Castle. For this concluding scene, we placed the dimly lit Richard alone in the middle of the central earthen pit, where he had earlier played the "golden crown like a deep well" (*Richard II*, 4.1.184) routine with his cousin Bolingbroke. If things had come full circle, then they partook of the sense that Richard would soon be swallowed up by the same Mother Earth over which Eteocles contended with his brother, feeding it with their dying blood. During the concentrated rehearsal process, we therefore devoted special attention to Richard's *anagnorisis* of his impending return to dust and nothingness, articulated in his concluding insight that "whate'er I be, / Nor I nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased / With being nothing" (5.5.38-41).

At this point in Shakespeare's original script, "*The music plays*" from an unseen source, and again good fortune allowed us to render this haunting climactic

[12] ἄρχοντί τ' ἄρχων καὶ κασιγνήτῳ κάσις, / ἐχθρὸς σὺν ἐχθρῷ στήσομαι. ["King against king, and brother against brother, foe against foe we'll fight"].

[13] πόλις σέσωται, βασιλέωιν δ' ὁμοσπόροιν / πέπωκεν αἷμα γαῖ' ὑπ' ἀλλήλων φόνῳ. ["The city is safe, but through their mutual slaughter, / The ground has drunk the blood shed each by each"].

effect with a live performance. Thanks to the clarinet-playing talent of Alessandra Bonetti, Richard and the audience heard the strains of Chopin's "Nocturne, Op. 9, no. 2", which aptly and suggestively closed a series of pieces played by Ms Bonetti, at key moments of our production. These included Ennio Morricone's "Gabriel's Oboe", marking among other transition points the final choral effect of the play: Ms Bonetti's playing of a few bars of this piece preceded the speaking in unison of Gaunt's line "they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain" (*Richard II*, 2.1.8) repeated in Italian as "soffia verità chi soffia le parole con affanno". This idea of painfully breathing the truth was crucial for our interpretation, for the same line had been spoken as the opening one of the entire performance. The Chorus itself sometimes served as an off-stage instrument, for example echoing some of Richard's lines during the final monologue in the prison cell. Thus the musical 'soundscape' of the production, beyond the scripted words spoken by the characters, also vibrantly connected the two plays. Ms Bonetti's compellingly executed clarinet performances, which included Astor Piazzolla's "Oblivion" and part of Mozart's "Clarinet Concerto in A Major K. 622" (this latter as accompaniment of a brief balletic dance during the Gardener's Scene), provided thematic bridges as well as specific expressions of mood, and were supplemented by recorded versions of brief segments of Edward Elgar's "Enigma Variations" (the "Nimrod" passage, used at the very beginning and ending of our production), and Händel's "Overture" for the "Royal Fireworks Music", used for announcing the ceremonial entrances of King Richard. In choosing these particular pieces, I aimed to develop a contrast between the concentrated, introspective and private mood conveyed by the live solo clarinet playing, and the formal, ostentatious, and public associations transmitted by the full, recorded professional orchestras. Our carefully selected musical score, then, also made a significant difference in smoothing and clarifying the variegated 'tesserae' of our hybrid mosaic. Above all, music has the advantage of transcending particular linguistic and semantic limitations: without its use, our bilingual script would have posed even more difficulties of comprehension for both the actors and the audience. In keeping with our Practice-as-Research approach, the live clarinet also enabled us to experiment with a modern variation on the ancient Greek *aulos*, the wind instrument played at various points during performances of tragedies. By using it for the off-stage music scripted by Shakespeare to accompany the second half of Richard's final soliloquy, we thus devised another palpable link between our two plays and their distinct musical performance practices.

Together with Ms Bonetti's renditions, we were crucially supported by the technical expertise of Luca Cominacini, the sound and lighting technician/operator at the Teatro Laboratorio. Mr Cominacini's creative and logistical assistance, especially during two final rehearsals, was also invaluable for providing coherent shape to our production. Our collaboration included the discovery of unexpected yet dramatically appropriate shadings and colours for specific lighting effects – for example, a lurid and disturbing reddish tinge focused on Eteocles during his opening harangue – and the overcoming of problems such as illuminating Richard's 'majestic eagle-like' apparition on the parapet of Flint Castle (3.3). We managed to spotlight, with increased wattage, an alcove-space located nearly two meters above the main stage, thus obtaining a fairly convincing sense of the king's

final moment of splendour before his self-described mythically tragic descent into the "base court", where his enemies await him: "Down, down I come like glistering Phaeton" (3.3.177). The spotlighting thus helped to diminish the awkwardness of this moment, as did a deliberately humorous, almost self-parodic execution of Richard's grandiloquent lines and semi-somersaulting tumble. Like the live clarinet music, these and other special lighting effects became vital to our interpretation, but only because they were achieved through organic on-the-spot experimentation, variation, and adjustment: I would never presume to claim that I had plotted out these specific stagings with preliminary conceptual rigour. Once again I recalled Brecht's wise observation that in theatre practice, "the proof of the pudding is simply in the eating" (1974: 119) and Peter Brook's advice to directors that they never follow an exactly written plan, because above all theatre "aesthetics are practical" (1972: 111), dependent on constantly changing, evolving factors of time, space, and relationship.

In conclusion, I need first to recognize the numerous flaws of the production, most of them caused by my own deficiencies *vis à vis* the poetic and dramaturgical brilliance of Aeschylus and Shakespeare. There were myriad gaps, missed opportunities, and clumsy choices that I would wish to adjust in an *encore* staging: for example, I would commission consistently Greek-style masks for the 'statues' of the gods, and I would use not only woodwind but also live percussion music. At the same time, and more importantly, I need to acknowledge and give boundless thanks to dozens of remarkably diligent people, whose talents and generosity made our preparation and production of "*Riccardo II* in-contra *I Sette contro Tebe*" a fully worthwhile as well as truly unique experience. I have been emphasising the frequent good fortune that blessed our project, but unfortunately one of the individuals who made it possible, and with whom I most wished to share our work, is no longer with us. Soon after we had started preliminary meetings and conversations, our dear friend and highly esteemed Shakespearean mentor, and the outstanding Italian translator of *Richard II* (2014) Alessandro Serpieri passed away. There is no way to replace his loss, but he has given us an immensely rich legacy, and it was an honour to dedicate our final performances of the play to him. Serpieri's deft and thoroughly playable translation enabled our bilingual version to function smoothly, especially in the agile interpretation of Richard by Elena Pellone. At times incorporating eloquently translated Italian lines into her skillful, sensitive, and compelling speaking of the original Shakespearean passages, Ms Pellone achieved an original and dynamic performance of the part. Fiona Shaw's celebrated mid-1990s Richard, with Deborah Warner's direction, provided a notable and useful precedent for our cross-gendered casting, but Ms Pellone pursued her own distinctive course, time and again finding unexpected nuances of thought and emotion. She convincingly portrayed both the acute, quick-witted intelligence and the touching, vulnerable humanity of the king who learns to become nothing. Ms Pellone's professional experience and dedication, combined with her affability and positive energies, helped to inspire her non-professional fellow actors to perform exceptionally well. A genuine and highly admirable team spirit developed among the cast members, evident not only in Richard's and Bolingbroke's complex, sharply focused interaction, but in the strong, attentive and committed performances of

the rest of the ensemble. Through their conscientious and good-natured participation, these actors accomplished an inevitably rough but also satisfying rendition of our authentically 'laboratory' script, after less than two weeks of group rehearsal. We were also constructively and genially assisted by my professional acting and directing colleague Roberto Andrioli, who led an extremely useful early rehearsal on movement, gesture, and physical acting.

Last but far, far from least I need to give my heartfelt thanks and most sincere, admiring acknowledgment both to my colleagues in Thespis Society, and to our hosts at the Teatro Scientifico - Teatro Laboratorio di Verona, Giovanna Caserta and Isabella Caserta. The generous and indefatigable collaboration of the latter, and the patient, congenial, and brilliant guidance of the former – namely Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliazzi, and Lisanna Calvi, with support also from Nicola Pasqualicchio and Gherardo Ugolini – sustained us through our project. *Grazie mille a tutti, allora!* I feel blessed to have countless memories to treasure of our production. On this note, I will always recall the magical moment when the entire cast, led and cheered on by Isabella Caserta, laid the circle of moist earth on the stage, crying "Viva la terra in palcoscenico!".

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Raphael Cormack*

Arab Arts Focus – Edinburgh: Review

Abstract

In 2017, the Edinburgh Festival featured for the first time an Arab Arts Focus, which included ten separate performance pieces from across the Arab world. Soon, the critical responses began to focus more on the visa issues that the performers and crew had been having than on the performances themselves. However, for Arab artists at the moment (especially those performing in Europe), the work that they create is not detached from these issues of movement but, in fact, they resonate frequently through the pieces performed in this focus. Looking at six of the plays performed at the Festival, this article examines how artists engage with the idea of movement: from the refugee experience of the Palestinians and Syrians, to Youness Atbane's use of movement to interrogate the figure of the 'Arab artist' and Hanane Hajj Ali's fifty-year old protagonist jogging through Beirut.

Keywords: Arab; Theatre; Edinburgh; Movement; Refugee; Migration; Levantine

2017 was the 70th anniversary of the Edinburgh Festival. After all this time there was still space for innovations and this year's expansive programme also featured the "first showcase of Arab arts at the festival": the Arab Arts Focus (Ellis-Petersen 2017; Burgess 2017). A selection committee of twelve cultural curators and 'operators' from around the world chose ten shows written by and featuring Arab artists and performers to show at the Festival. The programme aimed to offer "different and non-reductive discourses on the Arab World" and "[change] stereotypes about the Arab region; opening the door for mutual understanding at a time it is needed the most" (Arab Arts Focus 2017). The Artistic Director, Ahmed El Attar,[1] added to this, saying that "it's really no secret that the Arabs are being stigmatised all over the world right now. There is one-sided discourse about the Arab world all over the news; the bombings, the terrorism . . . It's very important that we can allow audiences across the world to hear these different voices in order for us to start this different dialogue" (Burgess 2017).

After the Festival started, however, the story became less about cultural dialogue than about the obstacles that had been raised against it, particularly by the British Home Office. Around a quarter of the performers had their visa applications rejected as did four of the production team of ten; one had their visa cut short by a week. An article appeared in the *Guardian* around half way through the

[1] I have followed existing transliterations of Arabic names where they exist, which leads to a little inconsistency but maintains the personal preferences of people discussed. Hence e.g. Ahmed El Attar but Mudar Alhaggi.

* University of Edinburgh - raphael.cormack@googlemail.com

festival reporting on the showcase and how it had been "beset by visa difficulties" (Ellis-Petersen 2017). One of the shows, a production of Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous' classic 1969 play *The Elephant, Your Majesty* was cancelled totally. Other shows had to make considerable changes and overall the costs ran to at least £5,497. The Festival Coordinator, Sara Shaarawi, was quoted in the *Guardian* saying "I don't think people realize how difficult it is for Arab performers to present their work here" (ibid.). An article in the *MailOnline* later appeared, also reporting on the visa difficulties, but mistakenly reporting that the whole showcase had been cancelled (Tingle 2017).

Arab artists and theatre practitioners are frequently forced to confront these kinds of restrictions to their travel and the imbalances of power which create them. It is not surprising, then, that so many of the productions in this Arab Arts Focus were concerned with movement, in its multitude of meanings. This article will look at a selection of the pieces that the Arab Art Focus brought to the Edinburgh Festival and show the approaches they took to this concept, which became such a central theme not only of the works themselves but of their experience of putting on their work in Edinburgh.

Palestine: Refugees, Prisoners and Walls

Modern Palestinian national identity has come to be defined, in large part, by movement of different kinds. The first, and foundational, way that twentieth-century Palestinian identity has been affected by movement is the experience of forced displacement and the refugeehood. This theme reappears in a large amount of Palestinian writing. Edward Said, who wrote frequently and famously about Palestine and the Palestinian diaspora, summed it up, saying that "Palestinians . . . know that their own sense of national identity has been nourished in the exile milieu" (2001: 178; see also Sa'di 2002; Schultz and Hammer 2003). The Nakba ('catastrophe') of 1948, understandably, hangs heavily over so much Palestinian cultural production and was most clear in Edinburgh in Amer Hlehel's production of *Taha*, a play that he starred in and wrote based on the life of the Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali. It was first performed in Arabic in Haifa and has also been performed in Ramallah and Amman (Quḍāh 2016). It was then translated into English by Amir Nizar Nuabi and, a few weeks before the Edinburgh performance, it had been part of the Shubbak Festival in London (Taylor 2017).

Much of the action, as are many of his poems, is dominated by the bombing raid on Taha Muhammad Ali's village of Saffuriyeh and his family's subsequent flight to Lebanon in exile, their secret return across the border and move to Nazareth. Taha, a teenager in 1948, is portrayed as a rather hapless victim of events. Despite what his father and other villagers are telling him, he does not believe they will be forced to leave their home so he spends his last money buying two lambs from the market to sell at Eid. His father is proved right and Taha's shame is immense. He loses the two lambs, symbols of his naivety and innocence (and much more), in the family's flight to Lebanon.

The themes of exile and movement are expressed in more oblique ways too. The climax of the play sees Taha Muhammad Ali go to an Arabic poetry festival in Europe. Surrounded by the great Arabic poets of the time, of whom he is rather in awe, Ali shyly gets up to read some of his own work. He slowly makes his way from his seat to the podium but does not realize that a bag has wound its strap around his feet and he is dragging it across the floor. The audience's laughs increase as Taha moves further along the stage but he cannot tell why. Eventually, when he does realize the source of their mirth, he is too humiliated to give the introduction that he has prepared and so skips straight to his own poems (which it takes him a long time to find in his bag anyway). It is not hard to read this scene as a metaphor for the Palestinian condition. As they travel the world they always drag behind them the shame of 1948, obvious to everyone else. Wherever a Palestinian may go, this stays with them.

The other side of the Palestinian experience in the West Bank and Gaza (as opposed to the diaspora) is defined by a lack of movement. The most powerful symbol of that is the West Bank Wall (exactly what this wall should be called is the subject of much debate). Hassan Abdulrazzak's play *Love, Bombs and Apples* features one story that makes use of the heavy symbolism of the wall. The first of three monologues performed by British actor Asif Khan is in the character of a Palestinian man, talking to a well-meaning NGO worker at a party. They go for a drive and he manages to convince her to have sex with him against the wall, claiming it is a political statement but actually motivated more by lust (if lust and politics ought to be separated thus). The character's subversive use of this symbol of Palestinian disempowerment is the centre of the play's opening vignette.

The other Palestinian play featured at the Arab Art Focus was *And Here I Am*, which was brought in as a replacement for *The Elephant, Your Majesty*. It is a one-man show based on the life of the main actor, Ahmed Tobasi, written by Hassan Abdulrazzak. Tobasi is a graduate of Juliano Mer-Khamis' Freedom Theatre in Jenin, whose life as an 'armed resistance fighter' followed by his time in prison and then his embrace of theatre is acted out on stage as he bounds excitedly from one corner to the other, tossing various props around. As Tobasi's story ends, he tells about how he was invited to a theatre festival in Belgium but ran off to Norway where he can seek asylum. In the final scenes, we see posters of Tobasi's dead friends lined up along the back of the stage and he himself is in Europe. The internal conflict between leaving Palestine to live safely in Europe and abandoning your friends who have died alongside you is, therefore, embodied on the stage. Again, the idea of movement and travel is foregrounded frequently in this play.

Given that all of these themes are so frequent and strong in Palestinian cultural production, it is no surprise to see the two Palestinian plays (and Hassan Abdulrazzak's play, *Love, Bombs and Apples* with a Palestinian story in it) dealt with issues of movement so prominently.[2] However, it was not only the Palestinian plays which engaged (or were forced to engage) with this idea in creative ways.

[2] There was a children's play called *Jihan's Smile* that also came from Palestine but it only played for half of the festival and I was not able to see it.

Your Love is Fire: Syrian Exile

Since *The Elephant, Your Majesty* was cancelled, *Your Love is Fire* [*Ḥubbak Nār*], written by Mudar Alhaggi and directed by Rafat Alzakout, was the only Syrian play to feature in the Arab Arts Focus. The title comes from a famous 1959 song by the Egyptian star Abd al-Halim Hafiz; in part, this title and its overtones of love and violence reflect the plot, in which a conscript in the Syrian army, Khaldoun, comes home on leave to his lover in Damascus, Rand. Rand's friend, Hala, is also there and is trying to convince them to leave for Berlin. The action eventually descends into arguments about fidelity, the dangers of staying in the country and the possibility of escape. However, the title of the play and the use of the song at the beginning of the show also have an ironic edge. This is a piece about the collapse of the old order represented by the songs of Hafiz and the nostalgia is tinged with violence. The lyrics replicate this contradictory pull of desire and pain: "Your love is a fire I don't want to extinguish or leave for a minute . . . you have worn me out with the sweetest torture" (Ḥāfiẓ 1959).

Of all the plays in the focus, this was probably the most seriously affected by visa rejections.[3] Two of the four actors in the production were refused visas and, therefore, they were forced to continue with half the cast. In one case, Muʾayyad Rumiyya, the absence actually could be said to have contributed a new angle to a point of thematic interest in the play itself. The character that he was supposed to play was "the writer". As has been quite common in Arabic plays since the 1960s, the playwright is a character in this play who intervenes in the action itself.[4] He is supposed to be guiding that action as he himself traces his own journey from Syria through exile in Beirut and then to Germany. However, in the action, the writer's detachment and his inability to engage with what is happening in his hometown of Damascus becomes a genuine block to the action. Several times the actors stop and sit still for a while as they demand the writer to give them something to do.

The Edinburgh production attempted to solve the problem of this actor's absence by projecting a recording of his lines over the speaker system. In many of the parts when he is supposed to communicate directly with the cast, the production introduced a mobile phone, through which they could interact with his recorded voice. Although it might take away from the impact of having the writer on stage, this solution only makes the detachment in the play more obvious and separation of the writer from the action. In a play about the mental difficulties of exile, the writer's ghostly presence seems fitting and the solution to their visa problems added something to the play.

The second absence, Amal Umran who plays Khaldoun's lover Rand, was a more significant loss, dramatically speaking. The apartment that Khaldoun appears at is supposed to be inhabited by Rand and Hala alone. So, Rand's absence from the stage is extremely noticeable. As we have with the part of the writer, we can attempt to read thematic interpretations into this palpable loss to the onstage dy-

[3] The other particularly affected performance was a *Dance Double Bill* with performers from Egypt and Palestine who were denied visas.

[4] Perhaps the most famous example of this trope is Yusuf Idris' 1964 play *al-Farafir* but it also appears in many other places such as the Tunisian ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Madanī's *Dīwān al-Zanj*.

namic. For instance, we might note that a large part of the discussions between the two lovers, Khaldoun and Rand, is about leaving or not being present: Rand complains that Khaldoun is away all the time with the army, Hala tries to convince them to leave Syria and go to Europe, Khaldoun begins to learn of another man who has been visiting the apartment when he is away but who never appears on stage. To witness these arguments on stage through a disembodied voice reinforces the split in this relationship, the time they spend apart and their difficulties communicating directly.

However, unlike the writer and his mobile phone, this loss of this actor is not so easy to incorporate into the script and forces the audience to do a lot more work themselves, to become their own director and to assemble the action themselves. This was clearest in the final scene set in the apartment in Damascus. The two actors on stage sit down in silence and the audio of a fight between Khaldoun (who is present) and Rand (who is not) is played through the speakers. The characters argue and the fight ends with a gunshot. In the version with all the actors it is clear that Khaldoun has killed himself but in the Edinburgh version the audience is left in doubt about where the bullet have gone: into Khaldoun or his lover.

Some reviewers found this a difficult experience but ultimately rewarding. One said that the Edinburgh version of the play "loses something in dramaturgical clarity [but,] as a result of this, it gains political potency and emotional heft" (Kulvichit 2017). The inability of the actors to travel reinforced a central tension in the play, which was so focused on the difficulties of travel (both logistical and emotional) and how they affect a Syrian's picture of the war.

Youness Atbane: *Second Copy: 2045* and 'The Art Dynamic'

Second Copy: 2045 is a show that deals with movement in a very different way to the Syrian or Palestinian shows but it is still deeply involved with the concept. Youness Atbane is a Moroccan visual artist and choreographer who "lives and works between Casablanca and Berlin" (Atbane 2015). This performance is a re-enactment of a fictional documentary made in 2045 that documents that Moroccan art scene of the early twentieth century. Atbane plays one of the artists who is interviewed by the film maker and presents his artworks, though at times this framework seems largely forgotten.

The show begins, as Atbane explains, with a performance that played over the final credits of the (imaginary) 2045 documentary. In it, Atbane's body has been occupied by two competing forces, his early twentieth-century self and his 2045 self. He moves across the stage with difficulty; at times, his arms must drag his legs along with his torso and, at others, he lies sprawled on the floor being pulled in different directions. Immediately the audience is asked to think about movement and its relationship to the figure of 'the artist'.

Throughout this performance, Atbane has said, he is "trying to talk about the role of artists in a society like ours and to define it" (2017). One crucial way he does this in the performance is by thinking about movement. He does not use it primarily to think about exile or refuge but to interrogate what an artist ought to be

– specifically an 'Arab artist'. During one part of this performance, a group of 'Arab artists' are set alongside each other. To represent these artists, he uses plastic cups with heavy stones placed inside them; these stones, the audience is told, are the artists' 'identity'. Atbane does not offer us an interpretation of this image but, if we keep the idea of movement in our heads, there are several possibilities. 'Identity', something so central to people's conceptions of the 'Arab artist', is a heavy weight in the transparent and thin frame of a plastic cup. Is he saying that identity keeps the artist grounded and strong or that a focus on identity impedes their movement? Is he saying both or neither? This is another instance of Atbane using ideas of movement as a way of visualising artistic production and thinking about the contradictions and restraints imposed on 'Arab artists'.

Second Copy does not only focus on the individual artist but Atbane also comments playfully on the wider art world. Atbane begins one segment of his show by holding up a square white sheet, which, he tells the audience, is 'art'. Then he produces an electric drill and feeds the white sheet into the head of the drill. As the sheet repeats its spirals in front of the audience, Atbane tells the audience that this is the contemporary Moroccan art 'dynamic', punning with the movement of the drill and the 'dynamic' of art.

The focus of *Second Copy* is not primarily on the trans-national movement of Arab art across borders but it does not ignore it either. Atbane's satire of the construction of the 'Arab artist' cannot ignore the role of European interest and funding, especially given the context of the performance in Edinburgh as part of an Arab Art Focus in Europe. Along with the white sheet that stands in for 'art', the performance also features an EU flag (the picture that accompanies the section in the Arab Arts Focus programme also includes this flag). Atbane lays the EU flag on a sheet of Perspex, which becomes 'the European platform' for the Moroccan art dynamic. Then, wraps the drill and white sheet in an EU flag and this becomes a European research project. His touch is light and none of the images are used to make crude points but there are layers of satirical intent. We can never ignore the presence of Europe, both showcasing and limiting the movement of Atbane's theatrically constructed 'dynamic'.

Jogging around Beirut with Medea

One of the stand-out pieces of the whole Arab Arts Focus was Hanane Hajj Ali's *Jogging*. It is a show, ostensibly, about the jogging routine of a Lebanese woman in her fifties in Beirut, written and performed by Hanane Hajj Ali. In it Ali plays a version of herself. All of the issues surrounding movement that have been discussed in this article and more are present under the surface of this one-woman show. Like so many of the other plays, *Jogging* had its own problems with the visa issues surrounding the showcase. The Syrian technician was absent for the first few performances (including the one I attended) but was eventually given permission to come to the UK. Ali began the performance by making an audience member read out a prepared statement in which she compared the British visa process with the censorship that she had experienced in Lebanon. She also apologized for the problems that arose from this missing technician.

The action of the play begins with Ali in a tight black jump suit and a hijab doing her stretches and exercises on stage. As she does it, she recites Arabic words beginning with Kh-: ". . . Kh r f (senility) – Kh r k (violated) – Kh r m (penetrated) – Kh r a (shit)" (Ali 2016: 8).[5] While reciting these words, she contorts her body into various different positions in the course of her warm-up. Then she sets off on her run through Beirut, a modern day *flâneuse* letting her mind run. The first incident sets the tone for the rest of the play: as she contemplates the beauty of the bird song she is reminded of the Quranic verse saying that every bird song is a prayer (Quran 24: 14). Shortly after, the exalted tone of the narrative is cut when "a piece of pigeon shit fell into [her] eye" (Ali 2016: 11). She asks herself, playing with the religious sensibilities of her audience, "Could a creature praise God while shitting?". In an interview, Ali has said that the play is "really all about questioning the so called 'sacred trio' of taboos: politics, religion and sex" (Ali 2017). She sets this tone from the very beginning of the play.

As the only one-woman show in the Focus, it is hard not to draw some inferences about the gendered nature of her movement through the city. Moving freely through the city has, since the time of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, been constructed as a male activity. Ali's work comes at a time when female interactions with the city are being increasingly interrogated and the concept of the *flâneuse* is being investigated (see esp. Parsons 2000). Although Ali does not explicitly broach this concept at length it is always under the surface of the play and is frequently hinted at. Part of this hinting is her frequent references to her desires as a woman. As Ali jogs through Beirut, she plays out her sexual fantasies:

> God when I remember what I dream about I die of shame! Sometimes I stand in the middle of the road and ask myself: could it be right? How could such dreams enter the head of an upstanding lady like yourself, who is faithful and virtuous, a lady that loves her husband so dearly. Then I curse myself. (Ali 2016: 12)

As a performer too, she also physically unleashes many of the sexual properties of her own body, stressing, rather than concealing, her femininity. She also relishes confronting the audience with the sexuality of a fifty-year-old woman wearing a *hijab*, the kind of woman who is supposed to keep that sexuality hidden. In an interview, she has said that "the play also illustrates how free a veiled character really could be on stage, whether that's regarding her body, the things that she discusses, or her dreams" (Ali 2017). The play exploits the perception that a *hijab* represents enclosure and oppression and gives free rein to the central character's desires as she jogs through the city. The play is built around her movement.

Before long it becomes clear that the figure of Medea looms large in this play. It begins as a passing reference. As an actress, Ali has always wanted to play the classical roles, she says: Phaedra, Andromeda, Cassandra, Antigone, Hercules, Oedipus. Then she mentions Medea, "I've been obsessed for a long time with Medea" (13). The rest of the play is built on this train of thought and on Medea, the archetypal exiled woman.

[5] The script of the play was published in 2016 as *JOGGING: Theatre in Progress*. It contains Arabic, English and French. In this article, I quote from Hassan Abdulrazzak's English translation.

At first she tells the story of Medea (citing Pasolini's *Medea* as her main model but adding that "If Euripides was alive during Pasolini's time, he would have killed him", 13-15). Then three stories about Medea, each more detailed and involved than the next, make up the action of the rest of the play. The first story is Ali's own and is only a few lines; she thinks that her obsession with Medea began when her own seven-year old son got cancer. "I loved him so much I wished he would die so he would not suffer" (15).

From her story, she begins to think of other Lebanese Medeas. She thinks about a woman whom she had heard about called Yvonne. Her husband worked in the Gulf, training horses for a Sheikh. One day, Yvonne had

> prepared a fruit salad with honey and whipping cream doused with a significant quantity of rat poison. She gave the salad to the girls. They fell into a deep sleep. She made a tape for her husband. She ate from the same salad and slept beside her daughters. The neighbours later found the four bodies. (16)

Ali is fascinated by the case and speculates what might have been on the tape. Was her husband in the gulf a Jason, sleeping with other women? What could have driven her to do this? She does not give an answer.

The final case is the longest, that of Zahra. She grew up through the Lebanese resistance movements, first Leftist and then Islamist. Through it she has been in love with a man called Muhammad and borne him three children. However, he does turn out to be a Jason and leaves her for the love of another woman. She does not kill the children herself but begs God to make her a mother of martyrs and her wish is fulfilled. Two of her children die in the 2006 war with Israel and the third dies in Syria after he refuses to kill innocent civilians. They died for the state. The play ends with Ali running round and round in circles after she has finished out reading Zahra's son's last letter from Syria.

Ali called this play "theatre in progress" and this points to its complexity and openness to interpretation. The concept of movement, as we have looked at in the previous plays, can give us a way in. Here, though, it is a movement that is connected to being alone. The final scene of the play reinforces this. Ali, alone on stage, runs in circles for longer than is quite comfortable. We see her just after she has read out an extremely emotional letter to a mother from her last son. The mother is now alone and Ali is alone on stage, running. Her jogging has been about being alone in the city and her characters are alone because of movement. Medea left Colchis and, now that Jason has left her, she is alone in a foreign land. Yvonne was left by her husband's emigration to the Gulf. Being alone is not always negative. As she jogs and exercises, Ali shows the power that being alone can give you but, by portraying Medea, she also shows the other side of that power. As a play about leaving – leaving the company of others, leaving your home, etc. – this is also a play about moving.

Conclusion

Putting on an Arab Arts Focus always invites questions. One of the biggest of these is what makes these arts 'Arab'? Should we really group together Moroc-

cans with Syrians, Egyptians with Palestinians or is this just forcing people into a mould? The nature of 'Arabness' is not a debate that is likely to be solved soon. However, this showcase has revealed that there are certain themes that recur across art and theatre from the region, which mean they can be productively put together, at least.

If the Arab Arts Focus has showed anything, it is that there is one collective experience that almost all Arabs share: denial of visas. The refusals from the Home Office were not limited to a particular nationality but included Egyptians, Palestinians and Syrians. In other words, merely coming to this showcase in Edinburgh forced these Arab artists to confront their collective lack of freedom of movement across the world.

It is not a surprise, therefore, to see themes of movement repeated in so much of their work. In the case of the Palestinian and Syrian plays this was seen in the themes of exile, refugees and restrictions in movement. In Youness Atbane's *Second Copy: 2045* the play drew more literal comparisons between movement and artistic expression. In Hanane Hajj Ali's *Jogging*, movement was used in several ways to work through ideas of both freedom and abandonment and the intersections of movement and gender. In almost every case, this was a productive lens through which to view these plays.

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25,00 €

ISSN 2421-4353