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Puppet, Death, and the Devil:
Presences of Afterlife in Puppet Theatre

Edited by Nicola Pasqualicchio

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Didier Plassard and Carole Guidicelli – *Haunted Figures, Haunting Figures: Puppets and Marionettes as Testimonies of Liminal States*

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Nicola Pasqualicchio*

Introduction

Outside the specialist area, the idea of puppet theatre is still quite widespread, at least in its most known typology in the western world (glove puppets and string puppets), as a form of theatre intended for an infantile public. To this vision, prospectively distorted, a number of considerations on an ontological and anthropological level may be opposed, which highlight the particular link that this genre of performance has with issues related to death, alongside the historical evidence that would easily demonstrate that this assumption is false.

First of all, on an ontological level, the puppet theatre is an art based on the apparent (but credible) animation of simulacra of humans and of other living beings, and therefore already belongs in itself to that psychological category of the *Unheimlich* (uncanny) of which, at the beginning of the last century, first Ernst Jentsch (1906) and then Sigmund Freud (1919), also made a fundamental category of aesthetic reception. The disturbing sensation of cognitive indeterminacy and consequent psychic discomfort that characterise the *Unheimlich* has, in fact, a fundamental root in what constitutes the soul of puppet theatre:

> Among all the psychical uncertainties that can become a cause for the uncanny feeling to arise, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate. (Jentsch 1997, 12)

Statues, dolls, wax figures and other simulacra of the human are inevitably charged with this ambiguity, especially since popular beliefs of religious

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origin, which remain rooted in the unconscious of the rational mind, do not stop attributing to these anthropomorphic images the faculty of being haunted by supernatural entities, and in particular by the spirits of the dead. The condition of ambiguity between animate and inanimate is therefore also, and above all, a boundary condition between life and death, a boundary that reveals itself to be uncertain and violable.

> The puppets' link to death is not simply due to their having no one to move them . . . in many of their earliest manifestations, and still in certain Asian traditions, in Japan or Java, puppets were brought to life precisely to provide homes for the souls of the dead; they served as a means to repair a loss of life or to keep ancestral spirits alive, to give them a way to speak to the living. The puppet might also channel the presence of demonic spirits, or act as vehicle to contain energies at once creative and destructive. Death is at work, in fact, in many origin stories for the puppet theatre. (Gross 2011, 22)

The puppeteer is thus presented as the symbolically re-actualised incarnation of one who gives life back to the dead, and holds the key to the door that connects the earthly world with the afterlife. This door is often crossed, in fact, both in the scripts of traditional puppet theatre as well as in modern authors' reinterpretations. Therefore, many heroes of traditional puppet theatre (from Harlequin to Pulcinella, from Kasperl to Punch) end up having a privileged relationship with the afterlife and its inhabitants, in particular with Death and the Devil. The puppets fight, sometimes with a sword, but more often with their slapstick, against these two incarnations of the underworld, in duels that can take place 'in the sunlight' (when it is the demons that make their appearance in the human world) or in hell (when it is the Pulcinella or the Kasperl on duty who are attracted to the depths of the underworld). It should be emphasised that it is almost always the puppet that prevails, managing to win not only against the Devil, but also against Death, who is at times forestalled, but at other times, paradoxically, killed. However, this does not necessarily mean a victory for good: on the contrary, the puppets, in their duel against evil entities, seem to be contaminated by them, assuming their unbridled propensity for evil and stealing their immortality.

This possibility of assimilation of the puppets to the infernal entities seems to be, however, a trait of affinity present in their own origins, on which folklore scholars have often insisted: noteworthy, for example, is the hypothesis of the connection of Harlequin with the king of hell Hellequin and his diabolical *mesnie* (gang), as well as with the Alichino included by Dante among the devils of Malebolge. Already Paolo Toschi, in his classic study on the folkloric origins of Italian theatre, fixed the origin of most of the masks shared by *commedia dell'arte* and puppet theatre in carnival rites in which the masks

(Arlecchino, Zanni or Pulcinella) had clear demonic and frightening traits:

> we can believe without hesitation that the Zane has existed in northern Italy since ancient times as a carnival mask of infernal origin and of a burlesque character at the same time. The first *comici dell'arte* from northern Italy therefore took it from their Carnival. Finally, confirmation of his demonic character comes from the mask and clothes. The oldest Zanni iconography shows us that the leather masks . . . from the beginning were grotesque, even horrid and atrocious. (Toschi 1976, 210, translation mine)

Although sweetened over time, this demonic soul of the puppets is always ready to re-emerge, and in a more disturbing way the more the burlesque nature of the character is maintained. Besides, the grotesque to which the previous quotation refers is a trait that can be expressed much more freely and with more emphasis in the figures of the puppets than the *commedia dell'arte* performed by human actors, and that is why the demonic essence of the masks is expressed much more in the world of artificial actors than in that of real actors. This tendency, at least in Europe, has been expressed in particular in the context of glove puppets, both because they have a more grotesque appearance than string puppets and because they have a truly 'demon-possessed' rhythm and speed. Furthermore, their appearance on stage (and relative disappearance) from below confirms their symbolic link with the underworld, while string puppets, which are manoeuvred from above, have often been attributed a more angelic symbolic character (also, however, with strong disturbing potential).

The aspects mentioned so far also justify the propensity of the new experimental forms of puppet theatre developed in recent decades to address the issues of evil with a radicalism almost always unknown in the theatre of actors. As shows such as *Jerk* by Giselle Vienne highlights (see the article by Francesca Di Fazio in this issue), the 'antirealism' of this type of theatre allows us to cross borders of intolerability that 'normal' theatre cannot cross, at the same time conferring an unusual strength of truth to the themes and events treated. In these cases it is no longer necessary that, to be frightening, evil have supernatural connotations: when the Devil and Death turn out to be human, when hell becomes the earth we inhabit, when the force of evil transforms the victims' own life into an inanimate object, a broken toy, an entity that no longer belongs to life even if it does not yet belong to death (like, as in the performances by Giselle Vienne, in those on the Shoah analysed in the article by Plassard and Guidicelli) the puppet theatre confirms its extraordinary expressive potential in fathoming the darkest parts of the human being, of his inner hell.

The seven articles of this special section deal with this theme, sometimes favouring the historical dimension, and sometimes the theoretical one, or the analytical one. Didier Plassard and Carole Guidicelli, in "Haunted Figures, Haunting Figures: Puppets and Marionettes as Testimonies of Liminal States", analyse two different moments in the history of the relationship between puppets and the uncanny. The first is placed at the end of the nineteenth century and is exemplified through two texts for the puppet theatre by the Belgian symbolists Charles van Leberghe and Maurice Maeterlinck, where death is the protagonist, but without presenting itself in the traditional clothes welcomed by the nineteenth-century puppet theatre (a figure with a skull on its face and armed with a scythe): it is rather a widespread presence, the true substance of the drama, an invisible power that gradually invades the entire scene thanks to the atmosphere of threatening suspension that the liminality of puppet theatre makes possible. The second moment, closest to us, concerns the ability, which the contemporary puppet theatre demonstrates, to cross the territories of an apparently unspeakable evil, that of extreme violence and genocide, of the degradation and reification of humanity that no living actor could embody better than a puppet.

If death and hell, in the works examined by Plassard and Guidicelli, invade the territories of the human, the article by Francesca Cecconi instead takes us, literally, to hell, thanks to the journeys to the afterlife made by the protagonists of the three recent performances analysed by her, in the wake of the traditional *descensus ad inferos* of Pulcinella, Punch, Fagiolino etc. Between ritual and mythical reminiscences, references to the *commedia dell'arte* and contributions from new technologies, Cecconi's analysis is also interesting because it examines the theme in three different puppet theatre techniques: glove puppets, shadow theatre and robotic performance. It is particularly interesting, in the latter case, that the puppets are a certain number of spectators contained in a robotic exoskeleton that forces them to perform certain movements, placing them in the role of the damned of hell forced into the obsessive repetition of actions that are imposed on them by an external power.

Emily LeQuesne in her article "From the Grotto to the Grotesque: Puppets, Folklore and the Uncanny" frames her analysis, on the one hand exploring the beliefs linked to the animation of objects and in particular the simulacra of the human figure, whose friction with the rationalist attitude is at the basis of the sensation of the uncanny; on the other hand examining the aesthetic conception of the grotesque, which actually finds in the art of the puppets one of its privileged territories of expression, thanks to its tendency to excess or deformation, and to the propensity to simultaneously accept the dimension of the frightening and the comic, of the tragic and the burlesque. Meanwhile, the image of the 'grotto', to which the grotesque is etymologically linked, inevitably recalls the idea of the underground place where the soul descends, to be confined for eternity or to emerge victorious over death.

Instead, Mara Theodoritsi's article "Literal and Metaphorical Puppets as Supernatural Figures: Echoes of Classical Greek Theatre in Cervantes's Fiction" focuses on a great author and his contribution to the puppet theatre, in a key that intends to highlight his relationship with magic and the marvellous: Miguel de Cervantes, with particular emphasis on the interlude "The Marvellous Puppet Show" and two episodes of *Don Quixote*. Not only the chivalrous theme, but a certain widespread 'interior iconography' leads to a spontaneous connection between *el ingenioso hidalgo* and the world of puppets, in particular the Sicilian *opera dei pupi*: the author hypothesises that Cervantes might have been able to personally see some prodromal form in Sicily (the current *pupi* tradition dates back to the nineteenth century); whether it is true or not, what seems more likely is the existence of a transcultural dimension of puppet theatre in the Mediterranean area that connected Italy to Spain and the dramaturgy of the puppets to the stories of the paladins. Moreover, Theodoritsi is interested in highlighting the relationship with magic, and therefore with the supernatural world, of the puppets: in the interlude of Cervantes, for example, the puppeteers Cianfraglia and Cirinola claim the magical power of the puppet show, making their audience believe that the wonderful apparitions of their theatre (actually non-existent) are invisible to Jews and illegitimate children, leading all spectators, fearful of being attributed to one of the two categories, to pretend to see what is not there. The demons, in this case, are not on the scene, but they are represented by the hypocrisy and repressed fears that the deception of Cianfraglia and Cirinola bring out in the soul of the spectators.

Manuela Mohr in her article "Rethinking the Vampire: the Fantastic on the Puppet Stage" examines the way in which the demonic and vampire themes present in Jacques Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* are scenically treated in a staging for puppets, analysing in detail the staging created by the Salzburger Puppentheater. Mohr highlights how these themes, and that of vampirism in particular, are not identifiable with individual figures in this show, but permeate the entire representation. Each of the demonic figures that appear in the libretto (Lindorf, Coppélius, Miracle, Dapertutto) also takes on vampire traits; in general, these figures are made more complex by the staging, which draws the boundaries between one and the other less clearly. Their uncanny dimension is also highlighted by the fact that the characters sometimes show themselves to be aware of their puppet nature, for example taking positions that are impossible for a living being or fearing that someone might unscrew their heads.

With the article "Death, the Devil and the Wife: *Danse Macabre* Motifs in Nineteenth-Century Puppetry, from Punch to Kasperl" by Jean Boutan, we enter the tradition of German puppets, which has the character of Kasperl as its protagonist. The author, thanks to a careful survey of the dramaturgy for puppets of the nineteenth century, focusses on the similarity, as regards his relationship with Death and the Devil, between Kasperl and other comic characters of the puppet theatre, from the various servants of Don Juan (whose story has often been the subject of plays for puppets) to the English character of Punch. He also interprets this type of dramaturgy as a form of *danse macabre*, also on the basis of comparisons of an iconographic nature. Boutan's article makes the reversibility of Kasperl's character (and his analogues) clear with respect to diabolical figures: the puppet can show himself as bad like the Devil and Death (but also his Wife, often presented as a sort of devil) until it can be equated in all respects with a demonic entity.

Finally, the article by Francesca di Fazio "Figurations of Evil in Contemporary Puppet Theatre Dramaturgy" examines, starting from a vision of evil in art derived from Georges Bataille and from the category of *rire noire* (black laugh), four contemporary shows created by prominent personalities in the field of contemporary puppet theatre: Guido Ceronetti, Gigio Brunello, Gérard Lépinois (in this case, to be precise, we are talking about a text not staged) and Gisèle Vienne. These are four extraordinary interpretations of absolute evil, which in some cases assumes metaphysical connotations: whether it is a gruesome episode of cannibalism derived from a real news story or Harlequin's fall from a comic show into the abyss of Shakespearean *Macbeth*, the unstoppable chain of killings and the sequence of deaths into which a modern Polichinelle transforms the scene or the narration-representation of the heinous violence committed by a trio of serial-killers, the common denominator is the very particular expressive power that puppet theatre gives to these stories and these themes.

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Didier Plassard and Carole Guidicelli*

Haunted Figures, Haunting Figures: Puppets and Marionettes as Testimonies of Liminal States[1]

Abstract

The easy way marionettes and puppets can cross the boundaries between lifeless objects and living creatures makes puppetry the ideal artistic expression to picture liminal states between life and death. This ability, commonly used nowadays in puppet and marionette performances, leans on two major changes in the history of representations: the Romantic opposition of nature and technique, which transformed the animation of objects into a disturbing and uncanny experience, and the post-traumatic perception of human beings reduced to the status of things in the totalitarian regimes, genocides, and mass murders of the twentieth century. The article examines how, in two different contexts (the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, then the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century), poets and puppeteers can use these representations as the starting point of a new dramaturgy. Performed in 1892 at the Petit-Théâtre des Marionnettes de la Galerie Vivienne, Pigeon's comedy *L'Amour dans les enfers* ironically presents Arlequin and Pierrot as two ghosts who ask Pluto to bring them their widows, but the men are repelled by them because they look like two corpses. In van Lerberghe's *Les Flaireurs* and Maeterlinck's *La Princesse Maleine* (both 1889), we can see how the imagery of death, first stimulated by fairground shows and Holden's Théâtre des Fantoches, eventually transforms itself into a dramaturgy of slow and immaterial forces: death appears no more as a character or an event but as the very substance of the drama, a set of multiple effects and accidents that stretch across the whole performance. But puppetry can also provide visibility to annihilated, invisible people. Take examples from four plays about the Nazi death camps, one written during the Holocaust (Haschenburg's *Hledáme strašidlo,* 1943), then three contemporary ones (Segal's *Le Marionnettiste de Lodz,* 1984; Cagnard's *Les Gens légers,* 2006; Cuscunà's *È bello vivere liberi,* 2009). The article examines how puppets and marionettes are used as poetical and dramaturgical means, which make it possible to represent on stage the process of extermination and the haunting images it left in our memory.

Keywords: puppetry; death; symbolism; contemporary drama; Shoah; undead; Holocaust

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> Le Clastique est manifestation de la mort et
> affrontement au concept même de mort:
> jalon, trace ultime laissée par un vivant pour
> servir de repère aux survivants
> qui viendront rôder autour de l'art et du théâtre.
> (Lazaro and Lemahieu 1996)
>
> [The Clastic is a manifestation of death and
> a confrontation with the very concept of death:
> a milestone, the ultimate trace left by a living person to
> serve as a landmark for the survivors
> who will prowl around the art and the theatre.][2]

Introduction

Deeply impressed by the performances of Tadeusz Kantor's *The Dead Class* (1975) and by his manifest *The Theatre of Death* (Kantor 1977), contemporary puppeteers have more and more explored the potential of their theatrical instruments for "confronting" themselves and their audiences "with the very concept of death" (Lazaro and Lemahieu, 1996) which means with representing not only the event of death but all its possible variations and extensions in our sensibilities and imaginations.

The easy way marionettes and puppets can cross the boundaries between lifeless objects and living creatures makes puppetry the ideal artistic expression to picture liminal states between life and death. On the puppet or marionette stage, human bodies that stand at the threshold of their deaths, enter or come back from the afterlife as ghosts and dybbuks, and memories of vanished moments can find immediacy and obviousness with which the actors' theatre could hardly compete. Tightly connected to the grotesque, surreal, and fantastic, the puppet and marionette theatre is, therefore nowadays, a place where the circulations and exchanges between life and death often stand at the core of the dramaturgy. Not only do animated objects easily become alive or return to lifelessness, but by playing with the interactions of movement and voice, they can also perform ambiguous creatures and complex identities, such as figures haunted by ghosts or memories of the dead[3].

The hypothesis that will be examined here is this contemporary perception of puppets and marionettes as appropriate instruments for the staging of liminal states; this is the result of two major changes in the history of representations. The first one, which can be traced back to the nineteenth century, is the opposition of nature and technique developed by Romanticism, which progressively lead to consider the imitation of life by an artifact as a disturbing and uncanny (Gross 2011) phenomenon – an evolution that some Symbolist poets and artists made use of by turning over this repulsion and transforming it into an aesthetic experience (Bayerdörfer 1976, Plassard 1992). The second change is the trauma caused by totalitarian regimes, genocides, and mass murders since the twentieth century, which has shown how much human beings can be reduced to the status of objects, dehumanized and annihilated. In that case also, as we will see, the common perception can be reversed by a poetical decision. For contemporary playwrights and puppeteers, puppetry gives a body to those whose bodies have been annihilated, reduced to a thing or a cloud of smoke, and whose memory is still haunting us.

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[2] All translations by the authors.

[3] See Gisèle Vienne's performance *Jerk*, 2008.

1. From Romanticism to Symbolism

1.1. The Turning Point of Romanticism

As we have long known, the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century was responsible for a major epistemological break that gave way to a series of new antinomies, both in literature and art and in some sciences as well (Schlanger 1971). Nature and technique, and organism and mechanism, were no longer considered as different degrees within a common structure (like, for instance, in Descartes's system), but as two opposite worlds, respectively metaphorized by images of life and death. Not only did Romanticism, born out of this fracture, associate all kinds of technical simulacra with deadly menaces and fantastic visions (Boie 1979), but it also progressively modified the perception of puppets and marionettes in literary and artistic circles.

Commenting upon a marionette show by the artists of the Turinese Compagnia Sales, whose daily performances (from July till November 1858) met great success in Paris, the poet and playwright Charles Monselet wrote:

> Allez les voir, ces marionnettes nouvelles, sous le passage Jouffroy, et vous reviendrez épouvantés; croyez-vous qu'elles sont de grandeur naturelle? Oui! . . . L'effet est horrible; mais les enfants rient à en pleurer: doutez donc du succès!
>
> [Go and see them, these new puppets, under the Jouffroy passage, and you will come back appalled; can you believe they are of natural size? Yes! . . . The effect is horrible; but the children laugh so hard they cry: thus, don't doubt the success! (Monselet 1858, 63)]

One year later, in her novel *L'Homme de neige* (The Snow Man, 1859), George Sand drastically stressed an ontological difference between glove puppets (*burattini*) and string marionettes (*fantocci*). While the *burattino* was portrayed as a living being, almost a biological extension of the puppeteer's arm, the *fantoccio* was called an 'automaton' and its performance, when technically achieved, "a sorry, even terrifying thing" ("une chose triste et même effrayante", Sand 2004, 182). The technical evolutions introduced by the artists could only reinforce this judgment; during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the growing mechanical perfection and realism of string marionettes transformed their shows in miniaturized pantomimes and music-hall performances, arousing mixed feelings in the literary circles.

"These wooden people are a bit disturbing" ("Ces gens de bois sont un peu inquiétants") noted in 1879, as an understatement, Edmond de Goncourt in his *Journal* (Goncourt 1956, 17), after a performance of Thomas Holden's Théâtre des Fantoches – as if these extraordinary string marionettes had been wax figures or automata. Anticipating the complexity of analogies that, many decades later, Masahiro Mori described as the "uncanny valley" (Mori 1970), where a too-close imitation of the human being makes the robot similar to a moving corpse, puppetry in the late nineteenth century became more and more often associated with funereal imagery by poets and writers. But taking the opposite of this Romantic perception, Symbolists and Modernists had a positive interpretation of these analogies. They elaborated a new poetics in which the feeling of the uncanny and the affirmation of a *théâtre d'art* were closely related.

Already in his 1890 article *Menus propos – Le théâtre* (*Small talk – The Theatre*), Maurice Maeterlinck asserted that artificial creatures, wax figures for instance, should replace actors on stage, because "the atmosphere of terror where they behave is the very atmosphere of the poem; they are dead people who seem to be speaking to us, therefore august voices" ("l'atmosphère de terreur où ils se meuvent est l'atmosphère même du poème; ce sont des morts qui semblent nous parler, par conséquent d'augustes voix", Maeterlinck 2004, 200). Alfred Jarry, in *De l'inutilité du théâtre au théâtre* (On the uselessness to theatre of the theatre, 1896), claimed that even the glove puppet, as well as theatrical masks, remembered "the minerality of the skeleton" ("minéralité du squelette", Jarry 1972, 409). A few years later, Edward Gordon Craig profusely celebrated the beauty of death in one of the most paradoxical passages of his manifest *The Actor and the Über-marionette*:

> But from that mysterious, joyous, and superbly complete life which is called Death . . . that life of shadow and unknown shapes, where all cannot be blackness and fog as is supposed, but vivid colour, vivid light, sharp-cut form, and which one finds peopled with strange, fierce and solemn figures, pretty figures and calm figures . . .; from this idea of death which seems a kind of spring, a blossoming – from this land and from this idea can come so vast an inspiration, that with unhesitating exultation I leap forward to it and behold,

> in an instant, I find my arms full of flowers . . . (Craig 1908, 9)

These statements should not be understood as provocations or strange fantasies by some eccentric artists. On the contrary, they reveal how deeply the antinomy of nature and technique, connotated with the respective images of life and death, structured the aesthetical debates at the turn of the century. Puppetry, in this context, was withdrawn in artistic projects that radically modified its reception and, beyond the limitations of regional identities, popular theatre, or young audiences, began to use puppets and marionettes as specific theatrical instruments, endowed with their own qualities – among them, that of giving birth to the multi-faceted dramaturgy of liminal states.

1.2. Visions of the Hereafter

There are indeed many ways of representing death on stage: not only as the trespassing of a character or as the appearance of an allegorical figure, but also as a suspension of action, an alteration of time and space, or a vision of the hereafter. These dimensions began to appear in the Symbolist and *fin-de-siècle* dramaturgy for the puppet and marionette theatre.

In a little comedy performed in 1892 at the Petit-Théâtre des Marionnettes of the Galerie Vivienne in Paris, Amédée Pigeon's *L'Amour dans les Enfers* (*Love in the Underworld*), Pierrot and Arlequin meet again in the hereafter, where they also get to know Plato and Socrates. Getting bored with the peace and quiet of the Elysian Fields and longing for their wives Martine and Colombine, Pierrot and Arlequin ask Pluto to let the two women come and visit them. But when they arrive in the underworld, Martine and Colombine, annoyed by their deathly look, push back their former husbands and promptly return to the daylight.

Several times, Pigeon's play comically alludes to the physical aspect of the figures created by the sculptor Jean-Baptiste Belloc: inspired by the keyboard marionettes used in the mechanical cribs of Provence, they were manipulated underneath by a network of strings attached to a little set of keys; but they could only make a few hieratic movements. These solemn gestures, of course, perfectly suited most of the characters: the two philosophers' and protagonists' shadows (above all Pierrot's, because he died six months before Arlequin), and Pluto, god of the underworld. They underline the liminal state of such ghostly figures who could hardly move but, as Arlequin explained to Colombine, were not "completely dead" since they still could speak (Pigeon 1891, 46).

The dialogue indeed emphasizes the uncanny combination of life and death suggested by the sculpture and animation of the marionettes. The two women cruelly stress the semi-cadaveric appearance of their former husbands, their violet lips, or their funeral smell (Pigeon 1891, 46), thus letting the audience complement, with their imagination, the physical features of the marionettes. “They look like ghosts” (“Ils ont l’air de fantômes”), declares Martine, “not one ounce of flesh / On the bones” (“plus une once de chair / Sur les os”, Pigeon 1891, 47). When falling down in the underworld, Martine and Colombine scream in fear, as if they were in Dante’s Inferno: “You feel long, cold arms clinging on to you, / On swollen bodies I stumble and slide” (“On sent de longs bras froids qui s’accrochent à vous, / Sur des corps tout gonflés je trébuche et je glisse”, Pigeon 1891, 42).

Contrasting with the classical imagery of the Elysian Fields, which still appeared through the descriptions of a bucolic landscape with flowered meadows and peaceful woods, the emphasis put on the dark, the cold, and above all on the decomposition of flesh created a macabre and almost grotesque background for the comedy. Although Belloc’s marionettes were unfortunately lost, and no reproduction of them is known[4], the stiffness of their movements certainly helped to reinforce the mental images of living dead characters suggested by the play.

1.3. An Invisible Power

Both written in 1889, Charles van Lerberghe’s *Les Flaireurs* (*The Scenters*) and Maurice Maeterlinck’s *La Princesse Maleine* (*Princess Maleine*) are two plays where, in very different ways, funereal imagery stretches out on the whole dramatic action: death is no more represented as an event, or as a character, but as the very substance of the drama, an invisible power slowly invading the whole stage. The first one to be published, van Lerberghe’s play, could be called a minimalist tragedy. In a poor country house at night, an old woman and her daughter are woken up three times by some men knocking at their door. The first man pretends to bring a sponge and a bucket of water; the second one to bring a shroud; lastly, a group wants to enter with a coffin. Each time, the young girl tries desperately to defend the door and chase the intruders while her mother wants her to let them in. Finally, when the men break the door and burst in with the coffin, the mother screams and suddenly dies.

In Maeterlinck’s drama, Maleine is locked up with her nurse in a blind tower because, in love with the young Hjalmar, she refuses to obey her father and marry the Duke of Burgundy. When the two women finally escape, their country has been devastated by war, and nobody has been left alive.

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[4] Only two heads for the marionettes of *The Tempest*, performed at the Petit-Théâtre in 1888, have been identified. They are kept in the Musées Gadagne – Musée International de la Marionnette, Lyon.

They go to the realm of Hjalmar's father, where Maleine, disguised as a poor girl, becomes a servant in the royal castle. She discovers that Anne, queen of Jutland and mistress of the old King, wants her daughter Uglyane to marry Hjalmar. Maleine takes Uglyane's place on a date with Hjalmar and reveals her identity to him. Hjalmar thus gives up the prospect of marrying Anne's daughter and gets engaged to Maleine while his father progressively loses his mind. After trying to poison Maleine, Anne strangles her with the help of the old King, who, eaten up with remorse and madness, reveals their crime. The desperate Hjalmar kills Anne, then himself.

In both plays, dying becomes a long and iterative process, rhythmically organised by van Lerberghe in a series of three sequences repeating the same narrative structure until the final breaking of the door. However, the process is also somehow reversed because the ritual gestures following the death (washing the corpse, wrapping it in a shroud, and putting it into a coffin) become forewarning signs as if the two separate moments – just before and after death – were superimposed.

Maeterlinck's drama also radically modifies the perception of time, with sudden jumps and contractions in the first act contrasting with the iterations and the progressive slowing down of the action in the four following ones. Maleine can be considered as having died twice because, having been locked up in a blind tower like in a sepulchre and taken for dead by everybody, she comes back to the light of day only to be killed by Anne. Moreover, her resurrection seems incomplete, and after getting out of the tower, she looks more and more like a living corpse. Already mocked, before her imprisonment, she is later called by Anne "a wax beggar" ("mendiante de cire"), with a face "even greener as if she had been drowned for four weeks" ("plus verte qu'une noyée de quatre semaines", Maeterlinck 2002, 76) for her green face and white eyelashes. Everyone points out her thinness, weakness, and paleness, and the little child Allan asks why she keeps her eyes closed while awake. When he sees Maleine, the Fool looks immediately terrified and makes the sign of the cross in front of her as if he wants to ward off a ghost. Then, from the Doctor's monologue, we hear that Anne is trying to poison her, and we understand that Maleine's growing weakness does not come from the unhealthy air of the marshland as the inhabitants of the castle pretend but more probably from the diluted poison she is being administered. Then, in a long and terrible scene, Anne and the King strangle her with a lace, putting definitively an end to the young princess's half-survival after her entombment in the blind tower.

Dark nights, storms, gusts of wind, rain, hail, flashing lights, mysterious knocks on the doors, and other terrifying phenomena create a supernatural atmosphere throughout van Lerberghe's and Maeterlinck's dramas, to the point that a large part of the micro-events, movements, and words spoken can be interpreted as dreadful warnings. For example, before his secret date with Maleine, Hjalmar throws handfuls of soil at the owls surrounding him and notices that he has the hands of a gravedigger. Then he involuntarily throws some soil at Maleine too, and, hearing that she is not Uglyane, exclaims, "From which tomb did I emerge tonight?" ("de quel tombeau suis-je sorti ce soir!"), which strengthens the assimilation of the princess to the living dead (Maeterlinck 2002 a, 59-61). In *Les Flaireurs*, a few notes of organ music between the acts are heard as an anticipation of the funeral mass, and the bell marks the hour slowly as if it were sounding the death knell. Although the scene takes place in the middle of the night, the opening of a shutter lets a bright light enter through the window, drawing the shadow of a hearse on the wall.

1.4. Fantoches and Marionettes

Van Lerberghe and Maeterlinck were both born in the same district of Ghent, respectively in 1861 and 1862, and van Lerberghe's tutor was Maeterlinck's uncle. They became friends during their common schooling at the Sintbarbara College, then entered together into the literary life by publishing poems in the same journals. Both poets declared their first dramatic experiments, *Les Flaireurs* and *La Princesse Maleine*, as being intended for "a string-marionettes theatre" ("théâtre de fantoches"): the first one, through a subtitle on the front cover of his play's first edition[5] (van Lerberghe 1889); the second one, in a letter to the Belgian poet Iwan Gilkin[6] and when announcing its publication in the first edition of his collection of poetry *Serres chaudes* (1889) with the line, "*Princess Maleine*, drama in five acts for a string-marionettes theatre" ("*La Princesse Maleine,* drame en cinq actes pour un théâtre de fantoches", Maeterlinck 2002, 197). These mentions were clear allusions to the English showman Thomas Holden, whose Théâtre des Fantoches had come several times during the 1880s at the Ghent Fair as well as in Brussels, and to whom Maeterlinck namely alluded to in an 1890 notebook[7].

Nonetheless, it was certainly not to Thomas Holden that van Lerberghe and Maeterlinck wanted to entrust their first dramatic experiments. Holden's Théâtre des Fantoches, with its multiple tricks, comedy, and agility of its string marionettes could not fit with the hallucinating slowness of the action in both plays. As we can infer from Maeterlinck's notebooks and the drafts of *Un théâtre d'androïdes* (Capiau-Laureys 1977), the essay he was writing in the late 1880s, and which would lead to the article *Menus propos – Le théâtre* (1890), the *fantoches* the two poets dreamt of were much closer to wax figures: they should have been life-size imitations of human actors, "beings with no destiny" ("des êtres sans destinées", Maeterlinck 2004, 200), empty simulacra to be filled with the 'souls' of the characters. The famous *Vénus au repos* (Resting Venus) of the Spitzner Collection – the wax figure of a sleeping woman, with a mechanism lifting her chest slowly as though she were breathing – which Maeterlinck saw in the Ghent Fair of 1887, gave him the idea of those "beings deprived of life" ("êtres privés de vie"), able to awake "the strange impressions felt in wax figures galleries" ("les étranges impressions éprouvées dans les galeries de figures de cire"), and that according to him should substitute living actors (Laoureux 2008, 210).

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[5] "Original legend and drama in three acts for the string-marionettes theatre" ("Légende originale et drame en trois actes pour le théâtre de fantoches", van Lerberghe 1889: front cover).

[6] "Princess Maleine, a rather long drama, in five acts, for a puppet theatre ("Princesse Maleine, un drame assez long, en cinq actes, pour un théâtre de fantoches"), Maurice Maeterlinck, letter to Iwan Gilkin, 24 March 1889, qtd by Fabrice van de Kerckhove in Maeterlinck 2002 a, 197).

[7] Thomas Holden's Théâtre des Fantoches came to Ghent in 1883, 1884, 1887, and 1890. See Maeterlinck 2002b, 1107-8.

Even if they were not supposed to become the ideal performers for the whole play, Holden's *fantoches*, as well as other fairground attractions like the 'Pepper's ghost' optical illusions[8], largely inspired Maeterlinck, as we can see in his drafts for *La Princesse Maleine*: ("Maybe rather, in the 3rd act, for the marionette scene, a scene of the story of a haunted castle – Flemish, with bones falling down through the chimney, etc." ("Peut-être plutôt, au 3e acte, pour la scène des marionnettes, une scène d'une histoire de château hanté – flamande, avec des ossements qui tombent par la cheminée, etc.", Maeterlinck 2002, 1061).

The dancing skeleton, decomposing and recomposing itself, was a beloved act of marionette shows performed by Holden, the Tiller and Clowes families, and many others[9]. As already noticed by Fabrice van de Kerckhove, the idea of the 'falling bones' seems directly inspired by Thomas Holden's performances (Maeterlinck 2002 b, 1108). The 'marionettes scene' imagined by Maeterlinck would therefore have been something more than an interlude for *La Princesse Maleine*, or a tribute to the dumb show in *Hamlet*; it would have acted as a concentrate of the funereal atmosphere of Hjalmar's castle, and even a precipitate of the whole drama. Another project for *La Princesse Maleine*, that of an 'aquarium theatre' with a mermaid figure, had also very likely been suggested by the Théâtre des Fantoches because "L'Aquarium sous la mer" ("The Aquarium under the see") was the first scene of Holden's classic *pantomime-farce La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*), a performance that Maeterlinck could also attend at the Ghent Fair (Maeterlinck 2002 b, 579-80; Ginisty 1879, 2).

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[8] A 'Pepper's ghost' effect, based on an optical illusion first used by John Henry Pepper in 1862, is the appearance of a spectral image through its reflection on a plate of glass rotated around its vertical axis at 45 degrees. According to Fabrice van de Kerckhove, Maeterlinck planned to use it in *La Princesse Maleine*, then in *L'Intruse* (*The Intruder*). See Maeterlinck 2002, 830.

[9] A description of this act called by Holden *Le Squelette magnétique* (*The Magnetic Skeleton*) is given by Edmond Sée who saw it in 1879 (Sée 1896). The brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière filmed an anonymous performance of it under the title *Le Squelette joyeux* (*The Merry Skeleton*) (1897).

Thomas Holden's Théâtre des Fantoches can therefore be seen as a direct source of inspiration for Maeterlinck's first dramas. It provided the young poet's imagination with concrete images which echoed the impressions given by his readings of literary works (for instance Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairy tales, or E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Die Serapionsbrüder* and *Die Automate*), as well as by the paintings and engravings of the artists he admired (Laoureux 2008). But, enriched by the dialogue with these artistic influences, as well as with other kinds of performances like the wax figures exhibitions, or the "tableaux vivants" (Rykner 2012), this first impulse given by the marionette shows was to be further elaborated in the process of playwriting.

1.5. Towards Invisibility

All the apparatuses of spectral apparitions and more or less sinister jokes, closely related to the performances of travelling marionette theatres, were indeed erased by the author in the final version of his play. Only a few inexplicable phenomena were left, such as clothes moved by a breath of air inside the bedroom during Maleine's monologue in the fourth act (Maeterlinck 2002 a, 101), or a knocking on the door preceding its self-opening at the end of the third act (Maeterlinck 2002 a, 91). This last supernatural event echoed Maleine's first entrance in front of the King, a few scenes before – an already disturbing apparition, because it immediately followed the King's statement "I believe that death begins to knock at my door" ("Je crois que la mort commence à frapper à ma porte", Maeterlinck 2002 a, 74) and preceded his unexpected faint.

Giving up visual imagery of macabre acts inspired by marionette shows and fairground attractions, Maeterlinck carries over the effects he wanted to produce with them to supernatural but invisible forces, whose presence is more suggested by language than shown through scenic tricks. With its multiple iterations, its breaks (the many short exclamations "*oh!*" and "*ah!*[10]", the mirroring questions and answers, or the young Allan's persistent stammering, for instance), its emotional charge, and its hesitations, the dialogue creates an obsessive and stifling atmosphere, pointing at some immaterial threatening presence – the 'third character' that the author theorized in the foreword to the 1901 edition of his *Théâtre* (Maeterlinck 1979, XVI). Surrounded by an invisible power which almost petrifies them, the protagonists seem to move at a slower pace towards their own disappearance.

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[10] "LE ROI: Oh! il y a!... il y a ici!...
ANNE: Quoi? quoi?
LE ROI: Il y a ici!... Oh! oh! oh!

Just like his friend Charles van Lerberghe, Maeterlinck made an intensive use of off-stage voices and noises, light and shadow effects (Gillain 2005), and echoes and repetitions in order to stimulate the spectator's imagination through his or her emotional involvement. At the crossroad between Thomas Holden's performances and the exhibitions of the Spitzner's wax figures collection[11], the poets' shared dream of a *théâtre de fantoches* can therefore be analysed as the starting point of two different ways for a dramaturgical renewal.

On the one side, the marionette stage, with its many scenic tricks, visual transformations, metamorphic objects (Ginisty 1879, 6), and magical light and sound effects, served as a model for a theatre in which scenery and machinery took an active part in the performance. The "Apotheosis" of Holden's pantomime *La Belle et la Bête*, for example, was composed of the following *tableaux*:

> La Cascade du Niagara. – La Pluie d'or. – Le Palais des Roses. – L'Apparition des Fées. – Descente de la voûte. – Apparition du Bon Génie. – Grande chute d'eau. – Effet magnifique, produit par l'eau naturelle, et la lumière électrique de plus de mille nuances.
>
> [The Niagara Falls. – The Golden Rain. – The Palace of Roses. – The Fairies' Apparition. – The Descent of the Vault. – Apparition of the Good Genie. – Great WaterFall. – Magical effect created by natural water, and electric light with more than a thousand shades. (Ginisty 1879, 2)]

Both *Les Flaireurs* and *La Princesse Maleine* made extensive use of all the possibilities of the scenic apparatus, thus shifting the gravity centre of the play which did not take place in the interpersonal conflict anymore but in the tensions between the protagonists and their environment – or, to quote Peter Szondi, which laid no more in the dramatic action, but in the situation

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(*Il ouvre la porte en tâtonnant et s'enfuit.*)"
["THE KING: Oh! there is! there is here!...
ANNE: What? What?
THE KING: There is here!... Oh! oh! oh!
(He opens gropingly the door and escapes." (Maeterlinck 2002 a, 127)]

[11] Maeterlinck saw this collection at the Ghent Fair in 1887. See Laoureux 2008, 78, 270.

(Szondi 1983: 49). Death from this perspective manifested itself almost in every detail, every sound, every change of light, and every movement on stage – as Maeterlinck would explain in the foreword for the 1901 edition of his plays, "the infinite, dark, hypocritically active presence of death fills all the interstices of the poem", ("la présence infinie, ténébreuse, hypocritement active de la mort remplit tous les interstices du poème", Maeterlinck 1979, IV).

On the other side, the idea of a *théâtre de fantoches* leaded also to imagine half-living characters, men and women desperately struggling against death that had already begun to take possession of their body, or of their mind, in *La Princesse Maleine* – and, in the case of *Les Flaireurs*, a death that was plainly accepted by the mother, but refused by her daughter. In both dramas, the process of dying was therefore the very core of the theatrical performance, it led to the dream of half-living creatures: performers able to give a scenic existence to liminal states where movement and voice, already frozen by the grip of death, became immobility and silence, "two things that cannot be reached without automata", ("deux choses qu'on ne peut obtenir sans les automates", Maeterlinck 2002 b, 1107).

2. Holocaust's Haunting Figures

"Pars quae apparet sine parte quae non apparet nihil est" ("A visible part is nothing without the invisible one"). This is one of the Latin proverbs invented by Claudia Castellucci for *Bros* (2021), her brother Romeo's performance. Although their project, in this case, is to expose the mechanisms of power and institutional violence in our contemporary societies, *Bros* also questions the power of effigies. One of the most striking images of the show is that of a group of men in black uniforms, lined up and facing a naked articulated male statuette on a pedestal. The men salute him as the statuette nods and wags its mouth to address them – an image that awakens the memory of every European citizen conscious of his history… It looks as if the memory of the fascitisation of Europe or, more generally, the fascination with violent totalitarian power could not do without an artificial figure (here half totem and half automaton). This underlines the deadly nature of the effigy and the cult it arouses.

2.1. Taming Death

Speaking of dramas dealing directly with the Holocaust, we observe that, in a number of cases, puppets or marionettes are involved, in a paradoxical back-and-forth between life and death forces. It is obvious in *Hledáme* *strašidlo*[12] (*Looking for a Ghost*), a short play written for puppets in 1943 in the Terezín ghetto by Hanuš Haschenburg, a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy killed one year later in Auschwitz. This grotesque farce exposes the mechanisms of the Nazi regime and its power: King Analphabète Gueule 1er, to force his subjects to think like him, wants to make a ghost out of the bones of all the persons over sixty years old. Thanks to this skeleton, that "will haunt the people and thus meet all the requirements of the modern man" ("hantera les gens et répondra ainsi à toutes les exigences de l'homme moderne", Haschenburg 2015, 21), he hopes he will rule through fear. Despicable people, but also ordinary characters, behave monstrously: a man wants to get rid of his grandfather who can be used to make "little bricks, gunpowder, or a Viennese schnitzel", ("des briquettes, de la poudre ou une escalope viennoise", Haschenburg 2015, 28), and a woman cries and refuses to give up the bones of her grandmother but still looks forward to the rewards she would get. But before the King could make the ghost, his henchmen find Death, arrest her, and bring her to the King, who recruits her to haunt the kingdom. But Death no longer frightens anyone. Scattered throughout the play, the signs of death are grotesquely turned upside down. They teach us to laugh at death in an attempt to tame it. And the play ends with a small fairground show created by the Jew, Mordekai: two puppets, King Analphabète Gueule 1er and Death, argue in a ridiculous way…

Three contemporary texts have been selected for analysis here, written by artists of different languages, cultures, and generations – each of them building a bridge, through the puppet or the marionette, to this painful memory. In *È bello vivere liberi* (*Living Free is Beautiful*) (2009), the actress, puppeteer, and playwright Marta Cuscunà tells the life story of the young Italian resistance fighter Ondina Peteani up to her deportation to Auschwitz. This female figure, emblematic of women's freedom and emancipation, is set up by Marta Cuscunà as a model for the young women of today.

On the contrary, the actor and writer Gilles Segal, a Romanian Jew who became a French citizen, chose a fictional protagonist – a Jewish puppeteer who escaped from Auschwitz and lived hidden in a maid's room in Berlin with his puppets, convinced that the war in 1950 was still not over. *Le Marionnettiste de Lodz* (*The Puppetmaster of Lodz*) (1984) also allowed Segal to resurrect, through the puppets, bits and pieces of the culture of the Jewish ghettos in Central Europe.

As for writer Jean Cagnard's play *Les Gens légers* (*The Light People*) (2006), it was commissioned by the French company Arketal, directed by puppeteers Greta Bruggeman and Sylvie Osman, as a play about the Shoah. Without once mentioning the Holocaust or the name of any concentration camp, this play for actors and puppets was written as a parable in which, through a poetical diversion, the inexorable fate of humans, condemned to go up in smoke, is depicted.

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[12] All quotations of this play come from Jolana Duškova's and Alžběta Tichá's French translation of the original Czech (Haschennburg 2015).

2.2. Mental Dissociation

Each of these plays assigns the puppet or the marionette a different place within its structure and gives it different functions. Marta Cuscunà's work is divided into a series of chapters – just like the historian Anna Di Gianantonio's biography of Ondina Peteani (Di Gianantonio and Peteani, 2012). The title of each chapter is announced by the performer who takes on all the parts, changes her voice, and carries all the registers, from the most comical one to the most dramatic. The text is an avalanche of stories and lines that follow one another very quickly, highlighting the actress's highly embodied performance. Many pieces of music accompany this story, told most of the time with an infectious enthusiasm and life force. Only two sequences are reserved for puppets, each time to portray the protagonist's encounter with death.

The first sequence tells the story of how Ondina Peteani, together with another *partigiano*, was charged with finding and executing a spy who, thanks to his talent for disguise, had managed to infiltrate and denounce several resistance networks. This episode, taking the form of a play within the play, is staged in a puppet booth. Marta Cuscunà herself handles the three *burattini*: Ondina, Stecchi, and the traitor Blechi. All the components of popular glove-puppet shows are used: quiproquo, *chassé-croisé*, disguise, and final caning. The figure of the traitor, whose sculpted head is a skeleton skull, re-enacts the traditional scene where Pulcinella kills Death with a stick. Political murder is thus derealised, and death mocked.

This use of a puppet booth and glove puppets marks the first turning point in the show. The protagonist, Ondina, is indeed a positive character who, so far, aroused the audience's empathy. Simulacra make it possible to "give figurability" (Sarrazac 2002: 65) to the assassination through a kind of literal act. The unrepresentable is made visible through a materiality that refers to nothing but itself: a wooden figure. Nonetheless, once the puppet is unsheathed, the naked hand of the manipulator, bloody, emerges from the puppet booth; the performer's flesh is not free of the crime, and the stain remains.

The puppet takes over from the actress in the second turning point of the show with the deportation to Auschwitz and the experience of the extermination camp. There, in contrast to all that happened before, silence and immobility reign. Speech, still abundant in the *burattini* scene, is reduced to almost nothing. The play area is nothing more than a puppet stage in the shape of a train carriage; it opens up to reveal a camp barrack with a trapdoor on one side and an oven and chimney on the other. Ondina has changed into a frail white doll with a head a little too big for her very thin figure and huge eyes eating her face. Stripped of her dress, then of her hair which falls to shreds, she is nothing more than a skeleton whose bones are easily broken with a shattering noise that resounds in the silence. Beside her lays the body of another woman, or rather what remains of it: an almost larval silhouette, so dark that it almost completely blends into the background.

The discomfort we feel is first reinforced by the fact that the puppet is not directly touched by the performer. To manipulate it, she wears black rubber gloves that pass through a laboratory isolator. Then the puppeteer, on sight, reminds us of the gap between the protagonist and her puppet double. We can see simultaneously what Ondina looked like before her deportation and what became of her in the camp. Here, the inspiration came from Ondina's testimony. She said that she managed to survive the internment through a mental process of dissociation, by trying to look at what she experienced in the camp as though it was happening outside of herself. The animation of the puppet shows this process of mental dissociation, this splitting, which allowed the isolation of the life force from the mortifying experience.

2.3. A poetic Parable about Annihilation

Like Marta Cuscunà, Jean Cagnard has no personal link with anyone who has lived through the experience of the Nazi camps. By combining the universality of mankind in its vulnerability and the singularity of the figures in their particular destiny, he leads us to experience fragility. Moving away from a direct representation of the atrocities committed in the camps, the writer chooses to make us feel the horror little by little through a poetical diversion. The play is in two parts entitled *Prendre le train* (*Taking the Train*) and *Les Gens légers* (*The Light People*): two metonymies for deportation and extermination.

The play begins with a brief preamble relating a very ordinary experience, that of taking the train. A series of simple actions (such as buying a ticket) is associated with physical perceptions and sensations: "Waiting for it to start / The heart beating like a small engine / Very slightly overturned when it starts" ("Attendre que cela démarre / Le cœur qui bat comme un petit moteur / Très légèrement renversé quand cela démarre"). The first scene continues in a simple and prosaic tone with a man and a woman walking down the street and finding a little ash heap in which they recognise a succession of human forms – their relatives, then themselves.

> Femme On dirait l'oncle Nathan.
> Homme Tu as raison. Quand il a trop bu de café.
> Femme Vingt-cinq cafés.
> Homme On dirait ma mère, quand elle est en colère; Aniechka.
> Femme C'est mon cousin Vladek, celui que tu ne connais pas… Maintenant, tu le connais.
> Homme Il a un petit air à l'instituteur de Schlomo, tu ne trouves pas?
> Femme Oui.
> *Temps.*
> On dirait toi, la nuit, quand tu dors la tête sous l'oreiller.
> Homme On dirait toi, le matin, quand tu n'as pas rêvé.
>
> [Woman It sounds like Uncle Nathan.
> Man You're right. It does. When he's had too much coffee.
> Woman Twenty-five coffees.
> Man It sounds like my mother, when she is angry; Aniechka.
> Woman That's my cousin Vladek, the one you don't know… Now you know him.
> Man It looks a bit like Schlomo's teacher, don't you think?
> Woman Yes.
> *Time.*
> It looks like you at night, when you sleep with your head under the pillow.
> Man It looks like you in the morning, when you haven't dreamed.
> (Cagnard 2006, 12-13)]

The perceptual experience becomes so vertiginous that it resembles a poetic experience. Here, in fact, "the gaze opens up a horizon under which it goes beyond the thing to be seen" ("le regard ouvre un horizon sous lequel il outrepasse la chose à voir"), as Henri Maldiney wrote about Francis Ponge's poems (Maldiney 1973, 49). Through the gaze, the object is revealed: the phenomenology of perception becomes phenomenology of the imperceptible, then ontology, but a negative ontology. *The Petit Tas de Cendres* (*Little Ash Heap*), this "Being" (*Seiende*), is indeed made up of a multiplicity of beings changed into nonbeings, going up in smoke and remaining only as traces. As Merleau-Ponty wrote, "seeing is entering a universe of beings that show themselves, and they would not show themselves if they could not be hidden behind each other" ("voir, c'est entrer dans un univers d'êtres qui se montrent, et ils ne se montreraient pas s'ils ne pouvaient être cachés les uns derrière les autres" 1964, 82). Visual perception has the dual ability to break down the different elements of an object, open up the perspectives of the gaze by always giving us something else to see, and preserve the power to synthesise the different aspects of the object. It opens and unfolds as much as it condenses. But the revelation of the phenomenological experience of the scene is ultimately up to the reader or spectator because the succession of the names mentioned by the man and the woman, all of which sound Jewish, allows us to make the link to the Holocaust. The title of the play suddenly becomes clear: 'The light people' are those who went up in smoke, of whom only ashes remain.

In this same scene, when the metonymy of the ash heap suddenly takes on its full meaning, time and space are disrupted. Night falls suddenly, then the light returns abruptly before going out again, in an increasingly accelerated manner, and the man and the woman, disoriented, no longer find their way home.

In the next scene, Petite Fille (Little Girl) meets a man who, with the help of a large crank, is working to "to shrink the sky" ("rétrécir le ciel", Cagnard 2006, 17), to make all horizon and colour disappear, as if to empty the world of all perspective, of all idea of transcendence. Death takes the form of a progressive suffocation – physical, metaphysical, and poetic altogether. The two characters will meet twice more in the play; the man will sometimes be busy filling and starting trains, and sometimes he will continue to shrink the sky, but this time by dancing with a chimney (from Petite Fille's point of view) to produce smoke.

Jean Cagnard thus places his play "under the child's gaze" ("sous le regard de l'enfant", Le Pors 2022). The stage directions in Scenes Seven and Twelve state that Petite Fille had been watching the man for a while (Cagnard 2006, 35, 58): she tries to distract him from his task, sometimes by offering to play a calculating game and sometimes by offering to dance. Through her poetic and plastic vision of human activity, however, the horror of the Holocaust is revealed. For example, when the man agrees to play a mental arithmetic game with her, she answers 'six million', the number of victims of the Shoah, every time. Or, when she looks into the trains, the stage directions state "Little Girl leans keenly on what is not seen" ("Petite Fille se penche vivement sur ce que l'on ne voit pas") and it is again she who reveals what the man is unable to see (Cagnard 2006, 37). Through her words, she shows the image of absolute despair at the bottom of the abyss:

> Y'en a plein qui pleurent, et les autres ils boivent leurs larmes parce qu'ils ont soif . . . Je les vois bien. Ils sont tellement serrés qu'on dirait qu'ils ont tous la même tête . . . On dirait qu'ils crient un peu.
>
> [Plenty o' them cry, and the others drink their tears because they are thirsty . . . I can see them. They are so tightly packed that it looks like they all have the same head . . . They seem to be shouting a little. " (Cagnard 2006, 37-8)]

The naivety of the child's view combined with a change of scale (here the train seems to be reduced to the size of a toy) reinforces the feeling of suffocation and spreads the unease. It conveys to us the terrifying story of the deportation.

The whole play is organised around a series of reductions and disappearances until the final one of humans flying away in smoke. The sky gradually shrinks and darkens, and the size of the houses decreases until they become hiding places with trains running through them; food becomes scarce, and furniture, plates, and cutlery disappear, making "the act of eating strange and shaky" ("l'acte de se nourrir étrange et bancal", Cagnard 2006, 20). The shrinking of living space forces humans to squeeze against each other until they form a wall where individuals no longer exist. The disappearance of people can be very violent with the irruption of a train smashing the floor of a house, "shattering the eyes, ears and heart" ("en éclatant les yeux, les oreilles et le cœur", Cagnard 2006, 34), and taking away the members of the family.

The second part of the play begins with a *mise en abyme* in the form of a small puppet theatre set up by the deportees to resist the horror. Disappearance is treated in a buffoonish way: Chevalier Estomac (Knight Stomach), after swallowing a potato peel, flies away as if in a parable of those who die by going up in smoke. The ultimate disappearance is that of Petite Fille in her last encounter with Petit Tas de Cendres, which has become a mountain. She has lost her childlike look and, despite being seven and a half years old, feels old and staggers, falling under the weight of the 'light people' who float like clouds above her head. Faced with her friend Petit Tas de Cendres, who is still hungry, she decides to let herself be devoured. But Jean Cagnard chooses to transform her into "a very pretty picnic basket" ("très joli panier pique-nique") and the last stage directions end with "lunch is ready, Big Little Ash Heap…" ("à table, Gros Petit Tas de Cendres…", 2006, 75). Even in this form, lightened by the poetical diversion, the child's sacrifice symbolises the ultimate point of annihilation and the height of horror.

2.4. Puppetry against Death

The core dramaturgical principle of *Le Marionnettiste de Lodz*, Gilles Segal's play, is that of the confusion created by puppets and marionettes between dead and living beings. This confusion is first and foremost the confusion in which the spectator finds himself at the beginning of the play. The action takes place in Berlin in 1950. Finkelbaum is a Jewish deportee who has escaped from Auschwitz and has been living in a locked maid's room for five years, convinced that the war is not over. As the caretaker has left a few errands outside his door, he prepares breakfast while talking to a human form lying in the bed, presumably his wife. She makes a few movements, grunts a little as if she wants to sleep again, and refuses to get up while he jokes with her and makes some amorous teasing. Then he takes her out of the bed, and we discover that she is in fact a large doll that he is manipulating.

We understand a little later that this doll is a kind of reincarnation of Ruchele, his young wife who was gassed in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. He lives with her as if she were still alive, in a suspended time of pregnancy for five years. We see him touching her belly and, thinking that she is about to give birth, calling his father (another puppet), and then a doctor (a third one) who declares that this is a false alarm: Ruchele is only three months pregnant. The beloved woman is thus resurrected but frozen in an eternal present, like a photograph that has survived the years. She is also destined to play the leading female role in the puppet show Finkelbaum is preparing.

Ruchele's effigy is coupled with a ghost, visible only to her husband. At the end of the play, Finkelbaum is visited by his friend Schwarzkopf, with whom he escaped from Auschwitz, and the three of them sit down at the table to drink some brandy brought by Schwarzkopf:

> Le regard de Finkelbaum voit Ruchele se lever, aller vers le coin-cuisine, prendre deux verres et revenir avec. Schwarzkopf, lui, voit Ruchele rester à sa place, inerte. Il voit deux verres près de lui, il les prend et les pose devant Finkelbaum juste au moment où celui-ci voit sa 'Ruchele' poser ses deux verres au même endroit ! Finkelbaum la remercie et la voit venir se rasseoir à sa place de départ.
>
> [Finkelbaum's gaze sees Ruchele getting up, going to the kitchenette, taking two glasses and coming back with them. Schwarzkopf, on the other hand, sees Ruchele remaining in her place, inert. He sees two glasses near him, picks them up and puts them down in front of Finkelbaum, just as Finkelbaum sees his 'Ruchele' putting her two glasses down in the same place! Finkelbaum thanks her and sees her coming and sitting back down in her original place. (Segal 1992, 44)]

In the maid's room, smaller puppets represent the deportees of the extermination camp that Finkelbaum made in preparation for an autobiographical show: "The Tragic-Comic Life of Samuel Finkelbaum, Puppeteer! Hundreds of puppets! A dozen sets!" ("La Vie tragi-comique de Samuel Finkelbaum, marionnettiste! Des centaines de marionnettes! Une dizaine de décors!", Segal 1992, 14). He also plans to build more puppets in order to reconstruct the Lodz ghetto, where he lived with all its inhabitants.

When, at the end of the play, Finkelbaum agrees to leave his maid's room to follow Schwarzkopf to Antwerp and packs his bags, we see him hesitate in front of the group of puppets representing the deportees. But this moment, when we might think that he has come to his senses and has finally allowed himself to be convinced that the war is really over, is instead the moment when the haunting images of the atrocities experienced in the camp return and materialise: manipulated by a puppeteer "dressed all in black as if in Bunraku" ("tout de noir vêtu comme au Bunraku"), Finkelbaum "begins to move like a Japanese puppet" ("se met à bouger comme une marionnette japonaise"), and throws the puppets of the deportees into the lit stove while those of the S. S. "come to life and start to walk around slowly" ("s'animent et se mettent à déambuler lentement"), surveying the scene (Segal 1992, 47-8). The stage space becomes a mental chamber and shows the moment when Finkelbaum's mind collapses: when he recognises Ruchele's body in the pile of corpses he had to put into the crematorium.

In the camp, Finkelbaum only found the energy to survive because he hoped that the Allied troops, whose approach was imminent, would free him and his wife before her delivery and the birth of their child. It was in this hope that he repeatedly stole Schwarzkopf's bread rations and that Schwarzkopf, who could see this, let him do it. As he prepares to throw Ruchele's puppet into the stove in his Berlin maid's room, the past and the present merge, blurring the relationship between the living and the dead. Suddenly, Ruchele's voice, like that of a dybbuk, takes possession of Finkelbaum and begins a loving dialogue with him. But it is also Schwarzkopf's mind, at this moment, that changes: holding the puppeteer and his doll close to him, cradling them both as if they were children, he locks himself inside the maid room with them and responds in turn with a doubtful formula "They say that… they say that…" ("On dit ça… on dit ça…") when the concierge asserts one more time that the war is over (Segal 1992, 48).

Conclusion

Puppetry is certainly not the only way modern and contemporary stages deal with such difficult matters as the fear of death, the distress caused by a definitive loss, or the haunting memories of those who passed away – nor is it the most significant one. As Marvin Carlson stresses in his essay, *The Haunted Stage*, every theatrical performance could be called a "memory machine" (Carlson 2001), and this memory is deeply linked to the dynamics of disappearance and mourning. Nonetheless, being a simulacrum, the puppet has the ability to depict not only the disappeared ones, but also the process of their disappearance: their turning into a corpse, or something near to a corpse, a half-living body, an undead, a ghost.

The recognition of this ability can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when the opposition of nature and technique began to modify the image of puppetry and to associate it, in some poets' and artists' views, with the world of mechanical artifacts and deadly inventions. First with Romanticism, then with Symbolism and Modernism, that turned this association into a weapon against commercial and institutional theatre, puppets and marionettes progressively became effigies (Plassard 1992) and ideal performers for liminal states and offered models for a decentred dramaturgy.

But the experiences of mass murder in the twentieth century, and particularly of the Holocaust committed by the Nazis – the industrial destruction of entire populations, dehumanisation, and a reduced status to things, and even materials (hair, gold, etc.) – introduced new significations into the confrontation of humans and objects. Puppets and marionettes, in this perspective, appear as remains of the murdered, moving substitutes for those who disappeared, as well as, through metonymy and poetical diversion, they can give visibility to the haunting images of the deportees. Because actors could hardly depict, with their living bodies, the dehumanisation process in the extermination camps, the double nature of artificial figures, both dead objects and images of living beings, makes it possible to get closer to that unrepresentable. Walking through the desolated landscapes of inhumanity, where death is the horizon and the ground we pace, puppets and marionettes might be the best travelling companions, reminding us of the frailty of our existences and making that journey liveable.

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Journey into Hell: a Tour through Puppetry

Abstract

One of the most frequent topics in puppet theatre is the representation of the close relationship between the earthly and the otherworldly dimensions, often dealing with narratives that refer to crossing the boundaries between human and non-human, between life and death. Many puppetry techniques deal with this theme: from carnal puppets to visceral guarattelle, from shadows to robots. The aim of this essay is to analyse some of the puppet theatre techniques that have dealt with the theme of the journey to hell in order to trace a path that investigates assonances and divergences. The study starts with an analysis of Pirù, demoni e denari by the Walter Broggini Company. The show is inspired by the famous story of Orpheus and Eurydice but becomes humorous through the use of glove puppets. The analysis continues through an example of shadow theatre, El Gran Baile by the company Cosmonautas Teatro de Sombras, where the main theme is the reunion of the living and the dead, then discusses the show Inferno by Louis-Philippe Demers and Bill Vorn, in which the audience is asked to perform, wearing teleguided exoskeletons. Man, the puppeteer par excellence, is finally manoeuvred by the inanimate, in this case, robot machines in a real Inferno where everyone becomes an unwitting victim.

KEYWORDS: Hell; shadow; puppetry; robot; journey

One of the most common topics in puppet theatre is the representation of the strong relationship between the earthly and otherworldly dimensions, confirmed by the kind of technique that involves a manipulator giving life to something inanimate. This relationship is consolidated by an inclination to create stories that relate to crossing the threshold between human and non-human, between life and death. It is in this context that many techniques of puppetry deal with the topic of the journey to the Underworld: from puppets to marionettes, from shadows to robots. Each of them, with its own features, entrusts its characters to plays in which the element linked to the Afterlife is present, not only as the destination of a journey, but as an archetypal symbol of death and rebirth.

In the interesting catalogue of the exhibition *Di qua e di là dal mondo, umani e non umani nei burattini di Bepe Pastrello*, in which some rooms of the Museo Casa Giorgione in Castelfranco Veneto were set up, between December 2019 and June 2020, with important pieces from the most significant

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Italian puppet collections, Cristina Grazioli points out the strong connection that underlies any technique of puppetry and the concept of animation:

> The threshold between the earthly and the otherworldly, the real and the fairy-tale, is an element intrinsic to the universe of the figures, where the human is confronted with a different, non-human status, inherent in the relationship between the living body of the manipulator and the inanimate object on which he breathes life: an image that speaks of the relationship between life and death. (2020, 32-3, translation mine)

In puppet theatre, characters such as devils or death are depicted like any other character: they are corporeal, have a face (usually representing the skull) and express themselves as earthly beings – they can talk, manipulate objects, strike other characters, etc. They are human beings, only with the feature that they belong to the Underworld. The other characters either interact with death and the devils in a shameless manner, unafraid and trying to fool them, or have a reverential fear that is manifested through the trembling of the puppets.

The lyrical vision of an immaterial death moves away from the techniques of puppet theatre: from glove puppets to the world of *guarattelle*, but also in shadow theatre, and thus vanishing and characterised by the use of a transcendental element such as projection, death is represented as a tangible element. This physical, concrete nature of death is reflected in the popular culture in which these techniques originated. Death is tangible because puppets and shadows can oppose it, can fight it and succeed in defeating it. Puppet heroes such as Pulcinella, Punch and Fagiolino[1] conquer death, they beat it – often with a fast-moving slapstick – and this is a clear apotropaic act that avoids the fear of death itself.

In the puppet show we meet heroes – even if they often hide behind clumsy expressions and rely on luck – who manage to defeat the enemy, even if it presents itself in the form of death, thus succeeding in pursuing the longed-for immortality. The plays in which these characters act, most of which have a happy ending, have as their leitmotiv a meeting between the living and the otherworldly being. This encounter can take place in the world of the living, into which Death or messengers of the devil come to demand the lives of the living; or in the Underworld, with a descent into Hell.

In the literary context, the theme of the descent to the underworld has been much studied and investigated, while its scenic translation in puppetry is not so well known. The aim of this research is to analyse three traditions of puppet theatre – glove-puppets, shadow theatre and robot – which are strongly connected to the theme of the journey to the underworld, both in terms of the type of animation and the dramaturgy proposed. Through the suggested examples it will be possible to understand how the descent to the underworld is represented from a scenic point of view, the relationship that the characters have with death, and the dramaturgical role of the descent. To best exemplify these features, we will examine three shows: *Pirù, demoni e denari* (1992) by the Walter Broggini Company, *El gran Baile* (2017) by the Cosmonautas Teatro de Sombras Company and *Inferno* (2015) by Bill Vorn and Louis-Philippe Demers.

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[1] Fagiolino is a traditional puppet from the Emilia tradition, created by Cavazza, a puppeteer from Bologna, but which became famous through the performances of Filippo Cuccoli (1806-1872) and Angelo Cuccoli (1834-1905). It is a puppet that was created along with other masks following the French Revolution.

1. *Pirù, demoni e denari*

Pirù, demoni e denari (1992) by the Broggini Company[2] is an example of glove puppets show. The setting is that of comedy, played with misunderstandings and incomprehensions that trigger laughter and comic effect.

The artist Walter Broggini had already worked on the theme of death with a wordless show for adults characterised by the use of black humour, in which death – unlike in classic puppet plays – wins over man. The show in question is entitled *Solo* (1986) and is still in the repertoire together with all the other shows of the Broggini Company; it is a work played "on the thin border between macabre and ironic" (CWB website) through the use of table marionettes animated according to the Japanese technique of bunraku. The topic of the show is the desperate attempt of the human being to escape death.

After this first work, Broggini decided to involve himself primarily with the tradition of puppets, creating two works related to the topic of death with Pirù, the puppet of his own invention, as the protagonist[3]. Some puppeteers used historical characters from the Commedia dell'Arte, such as Harlequin or Pantalone, while others invented their own puppet, but always with similar characteristics to those of the Comici dell'Arte. Each puppeteer has their own character puppet, which they use as the main hero of their adventures and often represents the character who, despite the difficulties, manages to achieve a happy ending. These heroes are usually of humble origins; until the eighteenth century, they were simple servants (like the characters Harlequin and Brighella in the Commedia dell'Arte). After the French Revolution, these characters served in noble or royal houses and were characterised by wearing a livery. It was at this time that masks such as Gianduja, Gerolamo, Meneghino, and Stenterello were created. From the twentieth century, these characters are no longer simple servants but turn into the working class that characterised most of the people who were employed in the 1900s. These were characters such as Bargnocla, created by puppeteer Italo Ferrari, who played the role of a shoemaker.[4] Another important aspect of Italian puppets, which is unique on an international level, is that some characters have become regional masks. Some puppets have become so famous that they have been identified as the mask of a particular regional area; this characteristic is reinforced by the use of dialect by the puppets, who express themselves and speak like locals.

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[2] The Broggini Company was officially founded in 1986 by puppeteer and artist Walter Broggini. Over the years, the company has developed its own repertoire and research area, which has led it to work on marionettes and puppets with public performances. I would like to thank Walter Broggini for allowing me to interview him for this essay. The following quotations come from the interview conducted on 8 January 2022. See http://www.compagniawbroggini.it/ (Accessed 8 January 2022).

[3] The Broggini Company has created a trilogy on the theme of death with the shows: *Solo* (1986), *Pirù, Pirù* (1987), *Pirù, demoni e denari* (1992).

Broggini's original idea was to create a character that reflected a distinct regional origin and its own dialect, and it was with these features that Pirù was born as the Varese[5] puppet in 1987. Pirù is a character who mixes different features coming from several masks: he has some elements typical of the Zanni of the Commedia dell'Arte, but also features that are close to the newer masks created after the French Revolution, such as Gioppino from Bergamo or Fagiolino from Bologna. Pirù is also aesthetically reminiscent of the English Punch or the German Kasperl.

> Pirù has a large, hooked nose, cheeks as red as the tip of his nose, a wide, cheerful smile, and wears a warmly coloured patchwork dress (a harlequinade of yellows, reds, oranges and indigo). On his head he wears a pointed cap with a rattle on top (in the first Pirù a rattle from a late nineteenth-century Kasparek). And like Punch, he wears a rare feature in Italian glove puppets: two legs dressed in red and white striped trousers, white socks and black shoes. (Rizzi 2019, 102, translation mine)

After *Solo*, Broggini seemed to want to realise a new vision linked to the sphere of death: "ricercavo una speranza, anche se illusoria" ("I was looking for hope, even if it was illusory", translation mine). This vision led to the creation of two other works on the theme of death, both starring Pirù, with a totally different change of perspective: in these two representations it is Pirù who wins over death, in the first case by saving his wife Elvira, in the other Eurydice.

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[4] Other successful examples in the more recent history of puppetry are Areste Paganos of the Is Mascareddas Company (Sardegna) and Lomè of the Teatro Medico Ipnotico (Parma).

[5] The Varese area did not have its own mask of reference; in that area the puppeteers used the character of Gianduia.

Pirù, Pirù (1987), the second chapter of the trilogy, presents the protagonist with Death, who has fallen in love with him and wants to lead him to the Underworld. Pirù tries to escape, but due to a misunderstanding, Death takes his wife Elvira with him. The poor puppet is accused of his wife's disappearance and for this reason imprisoned. In order to escape from the penitentiary, he makes a pact with Death himself. Once released, Pirù will not respect the agreement and starts a gruelling duel with Death, which he wins.

In the third performance, *Pirù, demoni e denari*, the famous myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is taken up and reworked. Pirù finds himself employed by Orpheus, who is married to Eurydice not for love but for money. Orpheus curses his wife and wishes that she could go to Hell. After several imprecations against Eurydice, two messengers from the Underworld come to take her to Hell. Orpheus is happy, but some of the servants disapprove of the situation and the master is forced to send Pirù to ransom his wife. Pirù will have to descend into the Underworld and deal with two devils, Beelzebub and Ezekiel, the first representing the evil demon, the other the foolish one. The story has a happy ending with Pirù's victory over the two devils.

In this last chapter, which is the only one in which there is – despite the various dealings with Death – a real descent into the Underworld, from a scenographic point of view, Broggini prefers a portable stage in which the characters act in the shadow, without backdrops or showy props. It is a bare black box, from which the different characters appear from below: even during the descent into hell, Pirú does not seem to descend below the proscenium, but the devils appear from below with a spectacular effect in which a lot of smoke is involved.[6] Only in the final scene does Pirù descend to save Eurydice. Hell is identified, however, not only through the use of smoke, but also through two simple symbolic objects: on one hand a bell, placed on the right, which represents the "bell of the Underworld", and on the other, on the left, a pit. The gate to the Underworld is here interpreted literally as a door to which one must ring a bell to gain access, while the pit is the symbol par excellence of the descent into the Underworld.[7]

[6] Smoke has always been an element of puppet shows, especially when it is linked to magical illusions or the appearances of demons and devils. In some collections we can see historical examples of embryonic 'smoke machines' such as pipes or hand-made constructions made even from old DDT (para-dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) packaging.

[7] Among the wells made famous as a means of connection with the Afterlife is St Patrick's Well in Orvieto, whose origin comes from an Irish legend that identified the well as the preferred means of descent to the Underworld. Anyone who did not believe

Pirù goes to the Underworld on two occasions – the first time at the request of Orpheus who sends him with a false ransom to recover his wife Eurydice. The deceived demons become even more angry at Orpheus, threatening him that he will never see his wife again, which in reality will bring great happiness to the singer who can no longer stand his wife. The second time, Pirù goes with the servant Osvaldo and the two have to struggle against the devils Beelzebub and Ezekiel. They are two characters that fully reflect the classic Zannis of the Commedia dell'Arte: one cunning and clever, the other naive and foolish. Once Beelzebub has been killed, Pirù searches for the place where Eurydice has been hidden and for this reason he needs to physically descend below the stage. Broggini's idea of the Underworld is not linked to the concept of death, but to a vision of the Afterlife similar to the medieval one, in which the souls of the damned are not inactive bodies, but animated and forced to perform actions.

The Spanish critic Toni Rumbau (2017) describes the performance in these terms:

> . . . a comedy with Pirù as the main character, with a plot based on the abduction of Euridice and 'Orpheus' journey to hell, which is interspersed with situations that dismantle the characters and lead them to the comedy of the absurd and of misunderstandings, to arouse laughter, intrigue and surprise at the denouement. . . . Broggini controls his puppets with skill and with splendid, confident voices. The demon appears with a spectacular flare, the result of the good use of a powerful fire-pipe, one of the most powerful we have ever seen, and the scenes are marked by simple objects, which allows the puppets to play with them. The puppeteer controls the timing with expertise and grabs the audience immediately, well provided with the corresponding effects and with a text full of gags and irony. A very well-written text by someone who knows the writing of the ancient "scripts". (Translation mine)

Where Rumbau uses the word "script", he means the entire creative process, not only the text, that Broggini adopts for his representations. The artist from Varese begins, following a primordial idea, to work on the image by creating a storyboard in which he hypothesises some of the moments he wants to recreate on the stage. From these he will construct the characters and any essential sets. Once the props have been produced, he starts to create his own script, improvising the dialogues and collecting everything that can be derived from the improvised acting. The resulting text will only become stronger once it comes into contact with the audience.

in the afterlife could embark on a journey into the well, until they reached the deepest part where they would find the damned intent on atoning for their sins. The descent was not straightforward, and whoever undertook the journey would have to overcome a number of complex tests in succession.

According to Broggini, the myth of Orpheus is merely a pre-text for recounting the impossible idea of bringing a person back to life. In fact, the famous scene in which Orpheus has to walk back along the road from the Underworld without ever turning around or other key features of the myth, such as the poet's singing skills, are totally absent. The story is totally rewritten and hinges on the ambivalence between life and death, truth and fiction. The puppet is an inanimate being, a piece of wood, and yet, if endowed with life, is even capable of beating Death with a stick.

2. The South American Tradition: Shadow Theatre and *El Gran Baile*

Another of the leitmotivs linked to the world of the Underworld is the image of the ghost of a dead person haunting a living being, which finds its representation through the technique of shadow theatre. A shadow, being abstract and immaterial, represents, from a technical point of view, the double of something tangible.

> All true effigies have a double, a shadowed self. And art fails the moment a sculptor believes that as he models he liberates a kind of shadow whose existence will unsettle him. Like all magic cultures displayed in appropriate hieroglyphics, true theatre has its own shadows. Furthermore, of all languages and all arts, it is the only one whose shadows have shattered their limitations . . . For theatre, just as for culture, the problem remains to designate and direct shadows. And theatre, not confined to any fixed language or form, destroys false shadows because of this, and prepares the way for another shadowed birth, uniting the true spectacle of life around it. (Artaud 1970, 6-7)

The souls of the deceased can be represented by the world of shadows, precisely because of their immateriality, and in some cases find in theatre the best artistic expression in which to represent their living memory. In the same way, the shadow is the most faithful representation of the disappearance of the body that can move into the Afterlife. One of the South American traditions known and exported all over the world is that of portable theatres specialising in shadow puppetry. These are small constructions in which the artist acts out a story using two-dimensional silhouettes and/or puppets that can be enjoyed by one or a maximum of two spectators at a time (in technical terms, this is referred to as *lambe lambe* format). The entire set is structured in such a way that the artist is autonomous in the performance. The spectator can watch the performance through a small hole or peephole in the structure, and he is also provided with headphones to listen to the background.

It is a unique show: the spectator is the only one who can watch the performance that the artist creates on the spot exclusively for them. The simplicity of the story and the use of silhouettes make the show accessible to all kinds of audiences; indeed, it is a performance that we can easily find in street theatre festivals.

An example of *lambe lambe* theatre is *El Gran Baile* (2017) by the company Cosmonautas Teatro de Sombras,[8] which tells the story of an old woman on the last day of her life. The silhouette of the old lady moves from one side of the room to the other, leaning on a chair with extreme difficulty; the day seems endless until death arrives, stylistically represented by a skull, a black cloak and a scythe, taking her to the Afterlife. It is an unusual Afterlife; the lady seems to have regained her strength and dances with Death (this time in the guise of Catrina Méxicana), her final 'grand dance' to the sound of Gloria Estefan's *Conga*.

Unlike the other examples cited so far, the journey into hell proposed in this show has an extremely positive connotation: the Afterlife is a wonderful place to celebrate and be happy about the things achieved in life. This thought reflects the Mexican tradition of Día de los Muertos, the celebration in which the dead are remembered through a ceremony in which people dress up in bright and colourful clothes. Candles, flowers and food are prepared and left near the graves in honour of the dead.

This connection with the famous Mexican festival is confirmed by an interview I held with the artist Sonia Alejandra García, creator and performer of the show.[9]

> El proceso creativo de El Gran Baile ha sido muy incosciente y por lo tanto algo terapeútico . . . yo había estado viajando durante más de dos años por Latinoamérica, y en ese viaje me había encontrado con la muerte de diferentes formas. Había acompañados duelos, y había sido acompañada durante el duelo de mi maestro, aprendiendo con la ayuda de personas sabias, que el dolor puede transformarse. Había vivido por primera vez el día de muertos en Oaxaca, México, y había visto con mis propios ojos lo que mi abuela me contaba cuando yo era niña; las personas comían sobre las tumbas, cantaban, los niños jugaban. Pero no era solo eso, había entendido que la muerte es triste y alegre a la vez.
>
> [The creative process of El Gran Baile has been very unconscious and there-

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[8] Cosmonautas Teatro de Sombras is an independent company created in 2015 by Sonia Alejandra García (Buenos Aires, Argentina) currently based in Oaxaca, Mexico and Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her work is based on shadow theatre in relation to the audience through different performances, both group performances and shows for a single spectator. See https://sombrascosmonautas.webnode.mx/ (Accessed 6 July 2021).

[9] I would like to thank Sonia Alejandra García for the materials and information provided. These quotations are taken from a personal interview with her.

> fore therapeutic . . . I had been travelling for more than two years in Latin America, and on that journey I had encountered death in different ways. I had accompanied bereavements, and I had been assisted in the grieving of my teacher, learning with the help of wise people, that pain can be transformed. I had experienced the Day of the Dead for the first time in Oaxaca, México, and I had seen with my own eyes what my grandmother had told me when I was a child; people eating on the graves, singing, children playing. But it was not only that, I had understood that death is both sad and joyful at the same time. (Translation mine)]

From the experience of watching this celebration, Sonia Alejandra García has rethought the concept of death, creating a performance that moves away from the idea of fear to embrace a totally positive attitude: "no puedo decir que había entendido algo, pero me había asomado a un mundo menos lógico y más espiritual, desde done ver la muerte y tenerle menos medio" ("I cannot say that I had understood anything, but I had looked out into a less logical and more spiritual world, from where I could see death and be less afraid of it", translation mine.)

In this show we encounter two types of Death: the first is the classic personification of death with a black cloak and sickle, while the second takes up one of the most representative icons of Día de los Muertos, the Catrina Mexicana. This character originates from an illustration by José Guadalupe Posada (1851-1913) of the beginning of the twentieth century that literally depicts "an elegant skull". Posada strongly criticised his own society, which tended to become more and more like Europeans, denying their own roots. He therefore drew a female skull surmounted by a large hat that reflected the style of the early twentieth century.

The theatre of the Cosmonautas company takes place in a small brown suitcase surmounted by the sign "Teatro", which has an opening in the lower part into which the artist inserts the silhouettes she manoeuvres during the performance. There are four silhouettes: the old lady, the first death, the second death, and a chair. For Alejandra García, this last element, which might at first glance resemble a simple prop, has a unique power in representing "un lugar metafísico, el espíritu de la obra" ("a metaphysical place, the spirit of the work", translation mine). Indeed, the first element that started the creative process of the show was the chair. Alejandra García imagined a chair that has been occupied by generations and generations.

In shadow theatre performances, light is the key element; in this case black and white dominate, becoming bright and colourful when the old lady finally reaches the Afterlife: red, orange, pink, a set of stroboscopic lights accompany the celebration that consecrates death. The spectators do not feel sadness, they do not feel that the journey to the Afterlife is a narrow one; on the contrary, they identify it as a pleasant place not to be afraid of: “El Gran Baile habla de un tabú para nuestra sociedad, y encima lo descraliza. La muerte está aquí entre nosotros y está sonando Gloria Estefan… ¿Bailamos?”. (“El Gran Baile deals with a taboo for our society, and on top of that, it desecrates it. Death is here among us and Gloria Estefan is playing… Shall we dance?”, translation mine).

3. New Infernal Visions: a Robotic Performance

The latest example of this journey into the Underworld is dedicated to a show that has a ‘talking title’: *Inferno* which premiered in Italy in 2015 during the Roma Europa Festival. The show conceived by Bill Vorn and Louis-Philippe Demers – two artists who work mainly with robotic elements – is inspired by different models of Inferno: on the one hand, Dante’s famous work, on the other, the Chinese Buddhist worldview behind the Singapore Haw Par theme park[10] where the idea of the Ten Courts of Hell[11] has been physically realised.

Inferno is a participatory robotic performance, in which twenty-five spectators are invited to wear exoskeletons that descend from above, which will control the movements of the participants. These prostheses are placed on the performers’ upper limbs and back, effectively blocking the movement of this part of the body, which will be electronically controlled by the programmers Bill Vorn and Louis-Philippe Demers, who are positioned at a console at the centre of the stage.

In some descriptions of the performance, the constraint of the person’s movements is referred to as a punishment, like those imposed in Dante’s circles of Hell. The punishment differs according to the circle of Hell in which the spectators find themselves: at times they are able to move their limbs freely, at others they are blocked or manoeuvred into performing other actions.

Once the exoskeletons have been placed on the selected spectators, they are left free to experiment: the prostheses have lights that turn on and off, movements are allowed despite the fact that the equipment is heavy. But at one point the room is darkened, and electronic music sounds play along with flashes of light framing the protagonists on stage. The journey to the Underworld has begun, the programmers Vorn and Demers slowly accustom the actors’ bodies to the constraints, and metaphorically it seems as if they are descending Dante’s circles, step by step, as the body is asked to move more and more. As long as the body is left free to move, the more daring try to keep in time with the techno music, which can become deafening, but the freedom is short-lived: the lights on the prostheses come back on and the automaton dance starts again.

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[10] A theme park devoted to Chinese mythology located in Singapore, designed in 1937 by Aw Boon Haw and his business partner Aw Boon Par.

[11] A part of Haw Par Park where the horrible agonies of sinners in the Afterlife are depicted.

The actors' gestures are the same, as in a perfect choreography, but these movements are imposed upon them and the feeling of the observer is that of watching damned bodies forced to perform specific sequences. The louder the music becomes, the more the participants' gestures can gey amplified, when the lights on the prostheses turn on and they too become a rhythmic and choreographic score in the dark of the room.

The machine imposes a broken gesture, which is never fluid and takes up the sense of automation that is part of the collective imagination linked to the world of robots. The exoskeleton devised by Vorn and Demers has antecedents that can be traced back to the early twentieth century. As early as 1917, the inventor Leslie C. Kelley designed a kind of backpack to carry a steam engine on the back, and this prototype was the model for the first exoskeleton created in 1960 at the US Department of Defence (see Morbin 2015). The project was called Hardiman and was based on a hydraulic system that allowed its wearer to increase their strength. Aesthetically it is very similar to the one proposed by Vorn and Demers, but it had little success because the structure was very bulky and allowed slow and dangerous movements.

This type of exoskeleton can be considered as a wearable robot, precisely because it consists of an external structure that can be easily worn by a person. They are often used in the medical field for rehabilitation, assistance to the disabled or even some neuro-motor control studies. Vorn and Demers' project is directed towards the performance field, presenting exoskeletons, automata and other robotic forms in their performances.

The great power of *Inferno* lies in the creation of a double reality: on the one hand the twenty-five spectators manoeuvred by robotics, on the other an audience unable to move, watching human marionettes manipulated from above via cables by an invisible God.

The meaning of damnation and the concept of Hell are justified and reinforced by the fact that the remaining part of the audience knows the identity of the other participants, and they could also be part of that experiment. If we observe the performance with a neutral gaze, we might assume that those who are performing are professional dancers, but the additional value of the show is given by the fact that those coordinated and precise gestures are the result of the machine acting on them, dominating and manipulating them.

The artists themselves relate their performance to a different vision of the Afterlife than has always been portrayed. There are still the damned and sins to be atoned for, but we have to imagine the Underworld as something different and reflecting an Afterlife that also takes into account technology and the events of recent years. This is a vision that envisages and considers the Afterlife in the sense of a dimension "after the technological life".

> The unification of man and machine is, in a certain way, an expression of the punishment for the technological sins committed for the sake of progress. The more we blend with technology, the more it drives us through the inner circles of a state of loss. We want to exploit this theme to build the aesthetic concept of the work, not as just another version of Dante's Inferno, but as a hypothetical answer to the afterlife (in the sense of "after the technological life"). (Demers and Vorn 2015)

The audience that does not act on stage turns into Dante and watches the damned being punished.

In this example it is the human being who is manipulated, the roles have reversed and it is the inanimate that manages the human being.

The person is forced to raise their arms in the air as a symbol of surrender, the lights go out and damnation seems to be at an end. This vision proposed by Vorn and Demers seems to take up the cultural trend linked to science fiction in which electronic manipulation subdues the human being. In the 1976 essay *Man, Android and Machine*, the writer Philip K. Dick – who more than anyone else has described the hells presented by technology – wrote the following:

> We humans, the warm-faced and tender, with thoughtful eyes – we are perhaps the true machines. And those objective constructs, the natural objects around us, and especially the electronic hardware we build, the transmitters and microwave relay stations, the satellites, they may be cloaks for authentic living reality inasmuch as they may participate more fully and in a way obscured to us in the ultimate Mind. Perhaps we see not only a deforming veil, but backward. Perhaps the closest approximation to truth would be to say: "Everything is equally alive, equally free, equally sentient, because everything is not alive or half alive or dead, but rather lived through". (quoted in Warrick 1984, 269).

Dick's vision parallels what Grazioli expressed in the quotation cited at the beginning of this essay. The threshold between the living and the non-living becomes void if we take the assumption that any element can be crossed by life. The moment this happens, we are all living beings with the same characteristics: we are all manipulators or we are all manipulated.

Conclusion

This journey into the Underworld by means of some of the techniques of puppetry has shown how the journey was mainly characterised by two sequences: the crossing of the threshold and the arrival in the Afterlife. The moment of passage emerges as crucial: the crossing of a hypothetical frame that does not change the stage set-up but the psychological situation of the characters.

In the glove-puppet show with Pirù as the protagonist, we have two descents into the Underworld: the first is marked by an 'apparent descent' because the protagonist rings the bell, but in the next scene it is the devils who appear from below; the second is performed by Pirù himself who physically goes under the stage. The old lady in Cosmonautas Teatro de Sombras is the only one of the examples to evolve completely: her meeting with Death ratifies her rebirth in the Afterlife, and this is translated on stage by the transition from black and white to colour and joyful music. The infernal robotic version crosses the threshold of the Afterlife at the same moment in which the spectators equipped with an exoskeleton no longer have freedom of movement and they are chained to the gesture imposed by the machine. In all these cases, the change occurs in the moment when something that seemed familiar inadvertently becomes foreign, and this is indicated by the overt or metaphorical crossing of the threshold.

If we take up what was outlined by Freud in his famous essay on *Das Unheimliche* first published in *Imago* in 1919, among the factors that trigger the feeling of disorientation typical of the uncanny we find animism, omnipotence of thought and above all involuntary repetition, all elements that we can find in the examples given so far. Monica Cristini, in an essay related to the theme of the uncanny, clarifies that Freud:

> highlights . . . the doubt that an inanimate being can be alive, which can arise in the face of wax figures, puppets and automata; the phenomenon of the double; the continuous recurrence of an event or action, a compulsion to repeat that is uncanny because of the perception of a non-domination of self; silence, darkness, solitude. (2018, 31, translation mine)

We find in all three examples the onset of doubt in the face of something unreal: the wooden puppet that becomes first flesh and then spirit during the descent into hell, the shadow of the old lady that is transformed into a soul, or the machine that from a simple creation of man becomes his manipulator. What the viewer perceives is a moment of disorientation that can become uncanny.

A good example is Masahiro Mori's 1970 theory called *Uncanny Valley*, in which he investigated the feeling of empathy generated by the vision of certain figures, both moving and stationary, on a sample of people. The characters chosen for the experiment were robots, puppets, anthropomorphic automatons and zombies. From this study he deduces that the feeling of pleasantness of the sample of people grows as the creatures' resemblance to the human figure increases, until the extreme realism creates an opposite reaction that oscillates between being disturbing and uncanny. This happens, for example, when confronted with the maximum realism represented by corpses and zombies, which are not automatons but dead bodies, while the uncanny ends when the sample observes representations of puppetry such as bunraku.

When we observe puppets and shadows acting as human beings we feel a sense of pleasantness, but when we see the machine dominating the human being and making them perform automatic gestures it is the theme of anguish that takes over. The journey to the Afterlife is a journey into the depths of human fears, and even from a dramatic and theatrical point of view we attempt to ward off this feeling by contrasting it (*Pirù, demoni e denari*), overcoming it (*El Gran Baile*) or confronting it with the Uncanny (*Inferno*).

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From the Grotto to the Grotesque: Puppets, Folklore and the Uncanny

Abstract

Do our collective unconscious memories of folk traditions, ritual, and pre- and early Christian use of puppetry influence responses to puppetry today? What is an uncanny response to puppetry? Historically, many societies have at times deemed puppetry to be foolish or even illegal: it was dismissed by the Christian suppression of Paganism, and later through the banning of idolatry, and since the Enlightenment period through the mockery of indigenous folk traditions. From the "ensouling" (Nielson 2001, 33), of statues in a sacred grotto to the grotesquery of the uncanny brought to life through puppetry, and onto political protest through animation of effigy and statue, this article will explore links between folklore and puppets.

Keywords: puppets; uncanny; folklore; pagan; grotesque; statue

> To speak of puppets with most men and women is to cause them to giggle… they tell me it is "a funny little doll"… Let me again repeat that they are the descendants of a great and noble family of Images, images which were indeed made "in the likeness of God"; and that many centuries ago these figures had a rhythmical movement and not a jerky one; had no need for wires to support them, nor did they speak through the nose of the hidden manipulator.
> (Craig 1980, 90)

Both John Bell in his essay, "Playing with the Eternal Uncanny. The Persistent Life of Lifeless Objects", and Victoria Nielson's exploration of the spiritual and supernatural gnosis of puppets, "The Secret Life of Puppets", explore the origins of our collective modern experience of the uncanny in relation to puppets. Nielson states,

> "for Westerners from ancient times through the Renaissance, moreover, a statue or other human-made image was not regarded as an entity divorced fromnature by human artifice, but rather as a natural object on a par with a seashell or a seed" (2001, 38).

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Puppets are liminal; alive yet not alive. There is an intrinsic uncanniness to puppets which comes from the anthropomorphisation of an inanimate object. Puppets have been utilised all over the world and across many indigenous spiritual systems for millennia, with both inert and animatable figures employed in ritual, religion and play. They were used as fertility symbols by European Palaeolithic peoples. They were held aloft during religious processions as personifications and celebrations of Gods and Goddesses in fifth- century BCE Greece. The shadow puppets of Bali and Java (Walang Kulit) are seen as the manifestation of beings that live on a purely spirit plane; they perform for both the audience on Earth and a supernatural audience. In some areas of the South Pacific and some parts of Africa, puppets were and still are used as a hostfor the spirit of an ancestor or departed loved one. Today, some First Nations in North America utilise puppets in ritual; the Hopi culture uses puppets in a fertility rite.

In Europe, the live animation of figures and objects for performance, whether puppets such as doll like sculpture, marionettes, shadow or inanimate objects such as a bunch of sticks, a rock or hat, can be traced back to third-century CE Athens. In pre-historic times, Cro-Magnons were creating figures from clay and stone. It seems for as long as humanity has been fashioning figures from raw materials we have been anthropomorphising objects.

I will be focussing on British folklore and puppetry with some references to European examples. There is little written about British or European puppetry during the period between 400-1200 CE but puppets, masks, poppets, idols, and objects of worship imbued with *anima* were as evident then as they continue to be; theurgy involving puppets has been a tradition for millennia. It was, at times, deemed foolish or even illegal by the Christian church, initially by the suppression of Paganism, later through the banning of idolatry, and then the dismissal of indigenous folk traditions since the age of enlightenment. Bell says:

> modernity – by which I mean developments in secular, humanist, and rationalist culture beginning in Western Europe during the sixteenth century and continuing to thisday – has had a fundamental problem with puppet, mask, and object performance. Puppetry's primitive roots, animism, irrationality and its basic contradictions with realismmake an art form that would not easily adapt into modern culture's interest in civilisation (versus nature), realism, rationality, text, and bourgeois art. (2014, 44)

Folklore is a recent ideation, the meanings of which change in the place and time of response. As a concept it is somewhat of a misnomer in that the term folk is "unequivocally a 19th Century understanding" (2021, 24). As Peter Harrop says: "I raise Jacques Derrida's famous difference. This conception, with its twin inference of endless difference alongside meaning deferred time and again, lends itself to folk performance" (24). Folklore can be a dismissive term, as patriarchal, capitalist thinking seems to relegate the rituals and entertainments of the historically rural poor to a diminished position of just folklore, not unlike the relegation of puppetry to just kids' stuff. A definition of folklore performance in the *Routledge Companion* says: "It can be conventionally dramatic but neither plot nor character is a prerequisite. It always harnesses performativity" (Harrop and Roud 2021, 1). However, puppetry within spiritual belief systems and as folkloric practice has never fully gone away, even if we feel further from it now than at any other time. It can still be seen in everyday life; in the use of mascots, good luck charms in the shape of pixies, in voodoo dolls and in fictional homunculi. The idea that automata or a talking statue were a conduit to the Gods or specifically, the Judeo-Christian God, was represented more fully in written history, from the twelfth-century. These animated beings were a form of theurgy and many of their characteristics may have been born in the Pagan sensibilities of an earlier era. Max Von Boehm lists Cro-Magnon puppets (for want of a more nuanced noun) as including: *Losskindel* or *Loess* dolls – loam formations that appear to have ahuman form. He suggests that Palaeolithic sculpture often appears to imply that the materials "suggested the object finally represented by the artist" (1956, 25). What Van Boehm terms "figurestones" (ibid.) are an ancient form of pareidolia – the occurrence of seeing patterns and particularly living forms or faces within inanimate objects. Many historians and theoreticians believe that these ancient figures are a form of ancestor worship rather than idolatry; the dead person merely exists in a new way or different place and the doll, sculpture, or puppet forms a substitute for them. All the spiritual qualities of the deceased pass into the sculpture. Puppets from this era are also believed to represent the sacred. As Nelson says of her delight at a Cro-Magnon puppet she observed in the American Natural History Museum, a human figure carved from mammoth bones with holes for twine to articulate it: "I was forgetting, however, that the Upper Pleistocene was a time when art served religion, not entertainment. The puppet was a God, or at least a sacred talisman" (2001, 25).

Are these objects all puppets? Across the world in the twenty-first century, puppetry is utilised in theatrical or art performance, ritual, exhibition, protest, and in various applied contexts: therapy and education. Puppetry can be, mimetic, surreal, symbolic or anthropomorphic. What determines a puppet? Eileen Blumenthal posits that it could be about the mode of manipulation or that it is a performance for an audience or oneself, only coming to 'life' through animation, unlike a doll that "continues to keep their imagined life even when they are alone" (2005, 230). Puppets come in all sizes and scales: "puppets are the size of fetishes, saints, relics, voodoo dolls, and talismans" (Gross 2011, 39). I believe that anything with real life substance, that can be seen or felt by another can be manipulated as a puppet.

The puppet straddles the liminal space of alive/not alive, object/being, the material world/the other realm. Steve Tillis observes that debate still continues as to whether puppetry is descended from the religious figures of yore or is merely movable figures that share coincidental similarities. He says: "in either event, the similarity between the two suggests that the religious figure might indeed lend to the puppet something of its sacred aura" (1990, 13).

The animation of figures is what Nielson calls 'ensouling' whether through or for "religion (the realm of belief) . . . or art (the realm of make-believe or imagination)" (2001, 30). Peoples of late antiquity pursued 'the spiritualising of matter' (20) and animated statues, or ensouled idol performance were evident in ancient religious rituals. Frederik Poulson describes a "first-century CE bust of Epicurus with a hollowed-out centre culminating in a discreet hole in the great philosopher's mouth . . . made for a tube through which a priest, crouched behind a wall, couldspeak" (2001, 44).

Nielson explains the origins and reasons for religious statues, ensouled idols and puppets of thetheatre of the Gods:

> Through all the ancient cults, the spiritualising of matter . . . became the religious goal of these first centuries after Christ. This quest also extended to human-made images that were intended as concrete links to the spiritual. If all things in the material world are simulacra, copies, of the true World of Forms, then statues and people alike (and especially statues if they took the shape of humans) acted not just as passive vessels but as magnets to the energies of the higher world, drawing down the gods' powers and materially embodying them. (2001, 33)

As Christianity took hold as the dominant religious dogma across the Mediterranean area towards the end of the fifth-century CE, statues and idols were toppled, and Nielson suggests that "the main reason pagan statues were routinely mutilated was that they were commonly perceived as being alive; this seemed to be the only sure way to kill them" (43). Puppets were perceived as idolatry and therefore evil and outlawed by Christianity in England in the Middle Ages because of their direct lineage from the animated Pagan statues of antiquity, believed to be alive and the material embodiment of the gods. That matter ensouled should be seen as demonic. Ester Fernandez recounts examples of seventeenth-century Christian disdain for the notion of "fraudulent performance objects in secular entertainment contexts" (2021, 82). These examples of fundamental Christians breaking musical instruments, tearing off masks and destroying the shows of itinerant puppetry performers are an example of a reformation-era determination that belief in magic is only acceptable in Christian teaching. Anything outside of miracle within scripture was heathen, pagan, evil and certainly not scientific or rational.

Moving, often string-operated figures are recorded all over the world from Pre-Christian times. Marionettes appear to have originated as mobile sculptures in Egypt and gradually travelled to Europe. Around 450 BCE, Herodotus reported sculptures of a God of fertility with a twenty-inch string operated phallus, carried in procession through Egyptian villages (Speaight 1990, 24). The word 'marionette' originates in the French for 'little Mary'. Within the Catholic church in Mainland Europe around the thirteenth-century CE, religious statues were transformed into marionettes to be utilised in scripture-based plays. Nielson observes

> references in medieval English miracle plays to 'Gods on strings' . . . date from 1200 and the occasional continued wonder is noted, such as a crucifix in Boxley, Kent whose eyes and head were made to move by the monks at significant moments and puppets used by pre-reformation English priests to enact the passion (2001, 49).

Right up to the Reformation, the Medieval-Christian church utilised hand-controlled automatons, such as, "crucifixes which moved their heads and showed blood oozing from the wounds in their sides, as well as Madonnas which shed tears" (Van Boehm 1956, 253). This was a popular form of religious education and propaganda until the sixteenth century, when the church again denounced puppetry, this time as devilry. People were burned as witches and heretics for practising puppet theatre and for using dolls and puppets in a ritualistic manner. The early Christian church's dislike and destruction of ritualistic puppets and automatons sprang from a disease with the living/not living liminality, a fear of magic, Paganism and the propensity for puppets to elicit a visceral and (as yet undefined) uncanny response from spectators. "By the sixteenth century a common alternative word for puppet in the theatrical sense would be maumet or mammet which originally meant 'idol'" (Cutler Shershow 1995, 26).

In pre-Roman times, large wicker cages housing criminals would be set alight as punishment and to stop the evil abilities of the incumbent from blighting crops or killing people (Early 1935, 26). These practices were outlawed by Roman colonisers, but might some sub-conscious memory linger as we watch giant puppets in procession through the city or the effigy of Guy Fawkes (or other wrong-doers) go up in flames? In France, during plague years in the mid-fifteenth century, giant figures processed; "figures made of wickerwork, with brightly painted wooden heads, the father twenty-one feet high, the mother eighteen to twenty and the children twelve to fifteen. Ten or twelve persons were required to move the largest" (Ibid.). Giant processional puppetry is recorded as far back in England as 1415, as effigies of Gog and Magog were present in a royal procession to greet King Henry the

Fifth. Gog and Magog, the ancient giants of Albion as the pre-Tudor era version of the legend has it,[1] were captured and chained to the gates of Brutus's palace in London and tasked with protecting the city and the country. The fifteenth-century puppets no longer survive, but there have been many incarnationsof the Gog and Magog puppets over the centuries.

> In 1605 they were stalking on stilts, in 1672 they were 15 feet tall, seated in chariots and "moving, talking and taking tobacco" . . . In Cromwell's time they were destroyed, but at the accession of Charles II a fresh pair appeared. These made from wicker work, perished in the Great Fire of London; the next pair had their 'entrails' eaten by rats; their fine wooden successors, carved in 1708 were too heavy to move and remained in the Guildhall . . . Portable wicker work figures, fourteen foot high were made . . . for the Lord mayors show in 1827. The wooden giants of 1708 were destroyed in an air raid in 1940, and replaced by a fresh pair, which still stand in the Guildhall. (Simpson, and Roud 2000, n.n.)

There is a long tradition of image magic in the British Isles and the use of poppets, puppets or dolls as the focus of a desired outcome; everything from ridding the world of one's enemy to helping the safe birth of a baby has long been practised and studied. In June 1954, a Dr. Nimmo-Smith reported finding a puppet hanging from a willow tree next to the river in Oxfordshire, "beautifully dressed in clothes made of straw or dried grass. Some sort of bonnet covered the head, there wasa skirt and the arms and legs were supplied or suggested by little sticks" (Beecham 1956, 159). M.R. James wrote in "The Hanging Oak": "the custom for those who wished to secure a successful issue to their affairs . . . to suspend from its boughs . . . puppets rudely fashioned of straw, twigs, or the like rustic materials" (1911, 75). Whether James' report is purely fictional or not it has echoes of the hanging puppet of Oxfordshire, for which no origin nor reason was ever discovered as to why it was there, although extensive local research was undertaken at the time. Reports of image magic using effigies in Scottish Highland tribal tradition are mentioned by Max Von Boehm; "*corp creadh* – an image of white clay with black glass-bead eyes and teeth made of splinters of wood, which is supposed to represent the person on question" (1956, 61). If placed in a river the invocation is for the death of the person. Similar figures were carried around local towns and villages around the time of elections and, "the nails with which they were pierced showing contempt for the candidate" (61). This sort of practice is still seen today at political demonstrations in the UK and elsewhere, with puppet effigies of politicians considered untrustworthy or guilty of wrongdoing.

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[1] See the entry "Gog and Magog" in Simpson and Roud 2000.

1. The Grotesque

The grotesque has its origins in the sixteenth-century fashion for grottos, particularly within the grounds of the gardens of the nobility. This fashion for wealthy noblemen to enjoy *alla grottesca* translated to the French as *crotesque* and in turn to grotesque in English by around the 1640s (Jacobs 2014, 8). According to Victoria Nielson, the grotto was "the place of birth and death, passing away and re-birth, descent and resurrection" (2001, 2). The grotesque in art and literature is a close sibling of the uncanny. As Danielle Jacobs attests in: "Entering the Grotto of the Biomechanical Puppeteer; Exploring the Grotesque in Stop motion Puppetry", the grotesque manifests in art and literature at the juncture between the horrific and the comic. What is considered grotesque now may not have been so in another era, the nightmare apocalyptic visions of Hieronymus Bosch may be considered by today's audience to be horrific and also somewhat funny but to his contemporary audiences, they were terror complete. Philip Thomson summarises Wolfgang Kayser's definition of the grotesque as:

> The grotesque is the expression of the estranged or alienated world, that is the familiar is seen from a perspective which suddenly renders it strange (and, presumably, this strangeness may be either comic or terrifying, or both). The grotesque is a game with the absurd, in the sense that the grotesque artists plays, half laughingly, half horrified, with the deep absurdities of existence. The grotesque is an attempt to control and exorcise the demonic elements in the world. (1972, 18)

The grotesque has its origins in the Pagan worship of and at sacred streams, wells, and Goddess grottos. The word *grotta* in Italian derives from *crypta,* a Latin word for cave or hidden pit. The creature growing and reaching up from the ground, from beneath the earth or living in a dark cave or grotto is a repetitive theme in British folklore. Think of the troll whose permission we must ask to cross the bridge, or being pixie-led to take a wrong turn, these creatures often appear in stories and puppet shows. Perhaps our collective perception of many puppets, as uncanny, magical or grotesque, originates in our shared Pre-Christian belief in these creatures and the soul of the inanimate. Feelings of the uncanny are a response and as Wolfgang Kayser states, the grotesque is also only experienced through reception. Some of the key themes as laid out by Kayser in so-called grotesque works of art are: "monstrosities, grotesque animal incarnations, the fusion of organic and mechanical elements, insanity and quasi-insanity and the mechanical brought to life" (Jacobs 2014, 10).

Grotesque animal incarnations are seen in the hobby horses of folkloric performance across Europe. In "The Hobby Horse and Other Masked Animals", Violet Alford states that in Britain, hobby horses are "laughed at but generally welcomed" but in previous centuries, "they were anathema to the Church and considered a danger to Christian people. This was because they were known to continue pagan practices which were diabolic. The old gods . . . quickly became devils to ecclesiasts – but not to their flock" (1978, 155). The Obby Oss of Padstow, Cornwall, perhaps one of the more well-known still performing today, is what Alford refers to as "the horse-skull creature, inspiring both fear and awe, in which the bearer is entirely concealed" (2). Alford visited in the 1960s and reported that the Old Oss chases after young women; finding one, he backs her against a wall and encircles her in his large black cloak, "the married women laugh, the girls shriek, for it is well understood that this piece of luck forecasts the birth of a child" (5). This feels grotesque and somewhat uncanny to me, but perhaps not for the same reasons spectators of this tradition might have felt in past centuries. Now the obviously masculine symbology of a male horse as a symbol of fertility is clear. Nearly sixty years on and there is a slightly less assaulting approach these days, although young women are still chased by the Oss. There are three main types of hobby horse as described and defined by Alford. The tourney horse: a term describing a rider and horse in one, in which the person "carries around his waist a light frame of wood or basketwork, from which a curtain hangs almost to the ground, hiding the human legs . . . on the front of the frame a horse's head, generally of wood, often with a hair mane, fixed at the back is a tail of hair, twigs, wool or even leaves" (3). This type also often includes a pair of false human legs hanging astride the sheeted frame as if attached to the visible human rider. The skull and pole type is not confined solely to horses, Alford lists, "the stag, the goat, a donkey, a bull and a cock" (4), and that these animal guises were called upon to discharge their duties at the carnivals around ancient feast and festival days across much of Europe, such as summer and winter solstice, May Day and harvest time (or Lammas). These duties are to bring good luck, ensure a good harvest, the return of the sun and for fertility.

In England on Plough Monday in the mid-1800s, plough hands and farm workers were given free rein, akin to the similar law-free days during carnival in then British colonies. The farm hands and ploughmen would go from house to house seeking gratuities or reward with no redress. Various of these men "wore costumes, coloured their faces . . . to enliven the effect" (Harrop and Roud 2021, 109).

These disguises include hobby horses that would pull a plough around the village or tourney horses that would tease and pester the women folk. This guising and puppet play may have been an influence on North American Halloween Trick or Treat games. Many ex-farm labourers emigrated to the USA in the 1870s and 1880s as a result of the agricultural depression in the UK. The Mari Lwyd is a type of skull and pole horse. In Wales, on a dark night, sometime between the winter solstice and the start of the new year, you may hear a knock at your door or a tapping on the window. Pull back the curtains and peer into the blackness, there's nothing there. Or is there?A flash of white, your eyes adjust; a monstrous skeletal creature with a horse's skull for a head atop a flowing white sheet, adorned with ribbons and bells, the eye sockets filled with pieces of glass stares back at you from the darkness. Chaotic and disconcerting, Mari Lwyd is calling. Mari Lwyd and her attendants will then engage those inside in a poetry battle or song verse off. Each group performing rhyming verses in response to the other until the household group are beaten and must let Mari Lwyd inside. She creates havoc and again chases the girls and women in this wassailing tradition.

The Cambridge straw bear, a bear version of the hobby horses seen plough jagging was revived inCambridgeshire in 1980 and travels around many of the local pubs on the first Monday after ploughing, in earlier eras it would have jagged or begged for gratuities at the larger houses in the locale. The Straw Bear and the Welsh Mari Lywd can both be seen in the twenty-first century, continuing a folkloric practice that usurps the class system through law-free and uncanny performance, then as now.

2. Animism and the Uncanny

Puppets are liminal: alive yet not alive. There is an intrinsic uncanniness to puppets which comes from the anthropomorphisation of the inanimate or the animism of an object. Over many centuries the puppet's journey from spiritual, magical and/or religious object of *anima* to becoming the 'low' cousin of so-called proper theatre, the target of ridicule and unfairly diminished to the realm of kids' stuff, has taken those of us in Western secular society further away than ever from the uncanny experience that is the possibility of a psychic and magical encounter with puppets. Basil Jones describes animism and puppetry as:

> A belief in the life of objects and the life of things around us. We suspect that objects mayhave a life and that dead people might have an afterlife. So when we go into the theater and the lights go down and we once again are shown objects – i.e. puppets that are brought to life, I think it ignites a smoldering coal of ancient belief in us that there is life in stones, in rivers, in objects, in wood. I feel it's almost part of our DNA that we all left Africa believing in the life of things, as animists. (Qtd in Posner, Orenstein and Bell 2014, 290)

Many in the modern and postmodern secular world have relegated a belief in the spirit or life of things not human to a position of ridicule – as primitive or childish, and as John Bell suggests, "the animism attached to puppets, masks and performing objects thus becomes a problem of modernity" (qtd in Nielson 2001, 46). Bell contextualises modernity, as spreading across the world since the seventeenth century, rationalizing so-called civilised people to separate the human (as rational, superior and authoritative) from the natural (as subordinate, tame-able and exploitable). Yet these ancient and in modernist terms, pre-civilised perceptions, beliefs and responses to the *anima* within objects continues. This deeply ingrained human response to object, doll and puppet clashes against our trained rational imperative to send our sixth sense responses to the realm of childish silliness, and as a result the notion of the uncanny is born. In this respect, only a modern or indeed post-modern spectator could respond to puppetry with a sense of the uncanny. As Bell says, "belief in the animism of objects was a marker of one's relative cultural sophistication. Uncivilized and savage peoples believed in such things, while civilized modern men and women categorically rejected these ways of thinking" (2014, 49). This is a response that negates the complexities of puppetry spectatorship; the visceral nature of people's response to performing objects is a concept that goes far deeper than a dismissive relegation to the realm of kids' stuff. The Victorian obsession with childhood, and later the advent of cinema and TV did much for the infantilising of puppetry. While references to folk art, although true up to a point, perhaps say more about the social mindset of some early twentieth-century historians and anthropologists; those who equated primitive, ancient beliefs and folk traditions with otherness, naivete and ignorance and things only to be acknowledged in the context of anthropological research.

Kenneth Gross suggests that "the puppet serves as an ambassador or pilgrim to human beings from the world of things" (2011, 33). To the so-called rational mind, the concept of animism is absurd, childish, over the top – much like many adults' response to puppetry. We may ignore it but perhaps out of the corner of an eye, when alone, in the half-light we are not entirely convinced that objects do not indeed have their own life. As Freud said:

> We – or our primitive forebears – once regarded such things as real possibilities; we were convinced that they really happened. Today we no longer believe in them, having surmounted such modes of thought. Yet we do not feel entirely secure in these new convictions; the old ones live on in us, on the look-out for confirmation. (Qtd in Posner,Orenstein, and Bell 2014, 48)

Explorations of the concept of the uncanny then, are modern or indeed post-modern musings only.The historic journey from animism to rational denial of *anima*, has subsequently led to discussion about why some people can be disturbed, unsettled or spooked by inanimate things. "What looks like a child's doll may be equally a votive offering, a magical fetish, or an actor in a sacred puppet play" (Gross 2011, 50). And it is this unsurety, this non-rational questioning that so many try to suppress, that can resurface and manifest in an uncanny response.

Jentsch and subsequently Freud, who, in response to Jentsch, would write his own exploration of the Uncanny, were both writing from a European, white, middle class, male, early twentieth century position of notable privilege.[2] Their theories about the emotional or psychological effect a known, unknown or unfamiliar familiarity can have on people resonate through puppetry. Ernst Jentsch first discussed the term uncanny, in his essay "The Psychology of the Uncanny" written in 1906, ten years before Freud:

> With the word *unheimlich*, the German language seems to have produced a rather fortunate formation. Without a doubt, this word appears to express that someone to whom something 'uncanny' happens is not quite 'at home' or 'at ease' in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him. In brief, the word suggests that a lack of orientation is bound up with the impression of the uncanniness of a thing or incident. (1906, 1)

Talking of Freud and Jenstch, Bell suggests "their concept of the uncanny defines the power of objects as a problem, not a window into the nature of the material world and its agency" (2014, 46).

3. Imbuing Objects with *Anima*

When confronted by a puppet that lives the uncanny response is prevalent for many. Animism is the uncanny. Without the life of imbued animism, the puppet is yet another lifeless object. The uncanny manifests in anthropomorphism also, as every spectator of puppetry anthropomorphises. Especially if the puppet is abstract, an object otherwise employed in real life, such as a kitchen utensil or 'just' a bunch of twigs. For me, sometimes the uncanny response is a desire to feel empathy with the thing I see or experience. Other times, the uncanny response is the recognition of a situation or behaviour; the feeling that I recognise this but I do not quite recognise it and therefore I cannot empathise with it, I am confused by this familiarity. As Jentsch wrote:

> Among all the physical uncertainties that can become a cause for the uncanny feeling to arise, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an

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[2] "The weaker the critical sense that is present and the more prevailing psychical background is affectively tinged. This is why women, children and dreamers are also particularly subject to the stirrings of the uncanny and the danger of seeing spirits and ghosts" (Jenstch 1906, 12).

> apparently living being really is animate and,conversely doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate. (1906, 8)

The experience of the uncanny can be pleasurable but is not always so, many people are disturbedby puppets. As John Bell points out, both Jentsch and Freud's approaches problematise the uncanny, "by associating the uncanny with doubt, uncertainty, abnormality, disturbance and other undesirable effects, Jentsch also problematises the uncanny, something Freud would press even further" (2014, 46).Why should it be that a feeling of the uncanny is seen as negative? Some people of course, do respond with genuine fear to puppets but the inherent contradiction of the uncanny is to be attracted and repulsed in equal measure. Many people are drawn to puppets because they are delighted by the uncanny aspect. Otakar Zich, a precursor to the Prague school of linguistics, talks of two options for human response to puppets;one is accepting them as themselves and nothing else and therefore finding them funny, that the other is that

> puppets can be taken for live beings in that we put emphasis on their apparent manifestations of life (their movements and speech) and take these shows with sincerity. Insuch a perceptive mode, the awareness of the factual un-liveness of puppets moves to the background and it is apparent merely as a sensation of something inexplicable, a certain mystery that raises a sense of amazement. In this case puppets have an un-canny effect on us. (2015, 93)

Petr Bogatyrev disagrees with Zich's descriptions stating that an audience might find puppets funny or uncanny if they always perceive them in relation to human theatre and that to take puppetry at face value as an art form with its own system of signs not related to human theatre allows it to be itself and therefore not funny or unsettling by comparison. Yet, how many people do this when watching puppetry? Very small children perhaps are wont to respond in this way but I have to agree with Zich, that some of the things people most enjoy about puppetry is that it creates a sense of comedy and/or the uncanny. A puppet can only be itself; it is not the actor signifying the character, it is the character. This is the paradox of the un-canny at play.

Our modern and postmodern perception of the material and natural world as other, not-alive, and not-sentient can be traced in the Western world to the early Christian church, "once the human likeness was no longer worshipped, it became an idea, not an idol, partaking of the insensible territory 'imaginary' instead of the insensible territory "holy" (Nielson 2001, 60). Our apparently rational and logical perception is challenged when confronted by the unknown known, the unrecognisable friend or the intensely familiar stranger. Perhaps our collective perception of many puppets, particularly human shaped, realistically featured and believably manipulated, as uncanny, magical or grotesque, originates in our shared pre-Christian belief in the soul of the inanimate. The Uncanny is the phenomenology of puppetry, and that seems to be the essence of experiencing it. The very phenomenology of it, is what creates a sense of the uncanny. Victoria Nielson observes the puppet as threat to human in fiction and drama particularly across the twentieth century and suggests, “these stories play on the contrast of an animate object invested with the aura of childhood innocence that is suddenly infused with (always) demonic energy – the upsurgence of the supernatural grotesque from the least anticipated source” (58).

4. Contemporary Puppetry and Folklore

Many of the historical examples given in this article still exist in some form today, the Padstow Obby Oss still performs and Mari Lwyd is growing in popularity again across Wales. Religious statues or indeed ensouled idols are evident the world over; they can be seen in examples that span a millennia and across many land masses. In an example given by Victoria Nielson, “when the first department store in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, opened with dress mannequins on public display in the 1970s. Citizens rioted because they believed the souls of someone’s ancestors were being desecrated” (2001, 26). Were the people, whose belief that these mannequins were ensouled idols rather than mere plastic human shaped clothes hangers, experiencing an uncanny response? To be viscerally and emotionally disturbed by these objects could be seen as an uncanny response, to an outsider, but is it uncanny if it is within someone’s belief system? Having been raised in a secular Christian society but within a family on one side vehemently atheist and on the other whole heartedly Pagan, I have often responded with an uncanny feeling and or a viscerally uncomfortable moment when confronted by the grotesque imagery of a large and detailed crucifix, although I have never responded this way to ancient statues of Gods.

Giant processional puppets such as the Sultan’s Elephant created by Royale de Luxe have visited many countries including the UK and been seen by many thousands of spectators. Remembering one of their performances, puppeteer Sophie Powell says,

> “the whole thing felt like a physical experience, uncanny, yes – tied up with the heat and the noise of the festival, overwhelming but for a variety of reasons. I loved it. I credit it with making me realise that puppets could tackle the epic – both narratively and emotionally go anywhere”.[3]

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[3] Private email conversation between Emily LeQuesne and Sophie Powell (January 2022).

Giant processional puppets have been utilised for political and educational reasons also, seen at the Cop26 meeting in Glasgow in 2021: "STORM is a ten-meters tall goddess of the sea . . . Made from entirely recycled materials, the giant puppet STORM's eyes are the colour of oyster shells, her hair thick strands of kelp, her voice the chorus of the waves. Aided by eight puppeteers, STORM will walk the streets of Scotland".[4]

Little Amal is "3.5 meters tall living artwork of a young Syrian refugee child walked across Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and the UK to focus attention on the urgent needs of young refugees".[5] Puppeteers UK director Hannah Bainbridge saw Little Amal in London,

> I was rendered speechless. I remember looking up at her and just being in total awe, it was visceral. This is unusual because there's a puppeteer inside Amal, and four around her – I remember thinking her minute movements and decisions were very impressive, I started to disregard the puppeteers, forgetting that she wasn't real! I think if asked to interact with her up close I would have felt nervous.[6]

Although these examples are obviously puppets, objects purposefully made and manipulated by people for an audience, I would argue that there is a link from ensouled idols, image magic and processional puppetry to the puppeteering of statues in protest actions.

At the time of its toppling, was the statue of notorious Bristol slaver Edward Colston a puppet? As Sarah Plummer observes when discussing the toppling of statues in North America:

> When people gather around a statue of Columbus, entwine him with ropes, and pull him down, what is it if not an act of puppetry? It's a performance between human and non-human, and its meaning is greater than the sum of its parts. This is an act of solidarity, not with the ideology or ideas behind the monuments, but with the objects themselves as they fall, break, sink, or are covered over with paint of possibilities. (2022)

The toppling, dragging and struggle to ultimately tip the Colston statue into the river on June 7, 2020, at a #BlackLivesMatter protest in central Bristol, England, was certainly protest, but it was also puppet theatre. A performative mirroring of the dragging, struggle and enslavement of Africans via Colston's death ships to the same harbour in past centuries. An object manipulated by people while many others watched and applauded.

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[4] https://visionmechanics.org/ (Accessed 10 May 2022).

[5] Home - The Walk (walkwithamal.org) (Accessed 10 May 2022).

[6] Private email conversation between Emily LeQuesne and Hannah Bainbridge (January 2022).

Artist and writer John Ruskin described grotesque art as composed of "two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful" (qtd in Nielson 2001, 256). The toppling of the Colston statue was grotesque; the object in question, a character of a once real and feared person but also a caricature imbued with different meaning by its contemporary audience; white power, and the enslavement of Africans, at once both ludicrous and repellent. It was also uncanny, as the crowd watched and cheered as the manifestation of this man's legacy drowned in the docks before them. This theatrical political protest at the commemoration of such evil was not only an act of defiance and protest but image magic in its most public form. The uncanny feeling and visceral reaction many people have to puppetry is the phenomenological response. Phenomenology in theatre has been said to be about the "sensory effects of theatre" (Fortier 1997, 39) or the "lived experience" (38) and it is the very uncanniness of puppets that can make the experience a visceral, multisensory and emotional one. Experiencing the uncanny is a phenomenological response to puppetry.

As Eileen Blumenthal states, "while any statue, can be used as a puppet, some statues have a proclivity for it. Life size three dimensional figures of people and animals have an obvious advantage in seeming alive" (2005, 231). Political protest through the performative puppeteering that is the toppling of statues, is direct action as witness performance or gesture performance. David Graeber says:

> The mocking and destruction of effigies is of course one of the oldest and most familiar gestures of political protest. Often such effigies are an explicit assault on monumentality. The fall of regimes are marked by the pulling down of statues . . . similarly, during George Bush's visit to England in 2004, protesters built innumerable mock statues of Bush, large and small, just in order to pull them down again. (10)

As such, the statue repurposed as puppet in or for protest is a mockery of the permanence of that monument, particularly when that monument symbolises and personifies the subject of the protest. A phenomenological response can be visceral, and a visceral response can be because of a perception of the uncanny. As Prof. Philip Schwyzer says:

> Reformation iconoclasts might spit on religious icons, daub them with urine or feces, or invite them, ironically, to save themselves. In some cases, religious images that had attracted particular veneration were sent to Smithfield to be burnt in public, mimicking the execution of traitors. Likewise, at Bristol, protesters took turns kneeling upon Colston's neck, recalling the horrifying death of George Floyd under the knee of a policeman in Minnesota. In such acts of ritual humiliation, the status of the monument seems to flicker uneas-

> ily between dumb matter and a living human body. These moments can be intenselyuncomfortable to witness. (2020)

Do our collective unconscious memories of an ancient belief that the spiritual qualities of the deceased pass into sculptures of them, influence our responses to the puppeteering of statues? Is there an uncanny response in the visceral pleasure of seeing the statue of Colston – an artificial person in the literal sense but also a representation of the state, drowning in the river? A postmodern processional statue of a now fallen God, or a type of reclaiming of the effigy or monument. From the articulated statues of pre-Christian times to the fraudulent performance objects of the reformation to the guerilla puppetry of statue toppling; perhaps the uncanny idea ofthe animism of objects has come full circle. A now changed perception of statues as capable of disobedience in certain hands; the puppet made me do it becomes the statue made me drown him!

Puppetry can bypass rationality and link us into something more primal or transrational – andtherefore deepen our responses to what is being said. That is the crux of why puppetry remainspopular and has so much to give, whether as theatre performance, procession or exhibition. Folkloric puppetry practice ranges from Palaeolithic pareidolia, Pagan ensouled idols, processional statues of the gods, animal entities used in seasonal rites, effigy as image magic, early Christian fraudulent oracles, puppet miracle plays, to contemporary giant processional puppetry and statue toppling as object manipulation in political protest. All of these practices, whether collectively culturally remembered or seen by our own eyes, contribute to our sometime uncanny responses to the grotesquery of puppetry as folklore and folklore as puppetry.

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Mara Theodoritsi*

Literal and Metaphorical Puppets as Supernatural Figures: Echoes of Classical Greek Theatre in Cervantes's Fiction

Abstract

In this article, I seek to contribute to recent trends in Cervantes Studies on the transnational dimension of Cervantes and on Cervantine theatre by discussing, on the one hand, the relationship of the Spanish author to the history of puppet theatre and, on the other, the significance of puppets in the theatrical interlude "The Marvellous Puppet Show" and two episodes in Part Two of *Don Quixote*. I review some of the literature on the inspiration that Cervantes might have drawn from the Sicilian *Opera dei pupi* and the Spanish *teatro de títeres* (including puppet-based hagiographic plays), and I suggest including classical Greek theatre in what has been called the "Mediterranean cultural framework" of *Don Quixote*. My analysis of "The Marvellous Puppet Show" focusses on the portrayal of the townspeople as if they were puppets and of the two swindlers as if they were liminal figures between the realms of the human and the supernatural. In that of "The Assembly of Death", I compare the encounter of Don Quixote and his squire with the theatrical company of Angulo el Malo to a satyr play. With regard to the episode of Master Pedro's puppet show, I note the similarities with classical Greek theatre in the dynamics between performers and audience.

Keywords: Cervantes; puppet theatre; Mediterranean cultural framework; classical Greek theatre; metatheatre

Introduction: The Transnational and the Theatrical in Cervantes

In the last chapter of the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Cervantes*, Bruce R. Burningham refers to the last twenty years as "*the* Golden Age of Cervantes criticism" (2021, 648). Drawing on the MLA International Bibliography database, Burningham notes that more has been published on the Spanish Golden Age author in the first two decades of the twenty-first century than over the whole of the twentieth. In light of this exponential growth, he provides an overview of the major trends in Cervantes scholarship since the turn of the new millennium. Although it is not his intention to be exhaustive for lack of space, Burningham identifies no less than eleven trends, and points to three more that are likely to explode in the coming

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years. His chapter thus provides a clear picture of the breadth and diversity of contemporary Cervantes scholarship.

The present article lies at the intersection of two of these trends. Under the heading "*Transnational and International Cervantes*", Burningham surveys the publications that deal with Cervantes's connection to authors and literatures from around the world. He notes the paradox that "this most 'Spanish' of authors" has become the most "international" of Spanish authors (656). Under "*Cervantes, Performance, and Theatre*", Burningham makes reference to the publications on "performance and its relation to Cervantes's theatre" (662). While Cervantine theatre has historically been overshadowed by his prose fiction (and his prose fiction has in turn been largely eclipsed by *Don Quixote*), the rise of theatre and performance studies in the latter part of the twentieth century fuelled the recent surge of interest in it. In what follows, I seek to contribute to these trends by discussing, on the one hand, the relationship of Cervantes to the history of puppet theatre and, on the other, the significance of (literal *and* metaphorical) puppets in some of his works of fiction.

1. Cervantes as a Pivotal Figure in the (Literary) History of Puppet Theatre

In his study of puppets in European modernist and avant-garde drama, the late comparatist Harold B. Segel hailed *Don Quixote* for featuring "one of the first memorable appearances" of puppets on the literary stage in the chapters that make up the so-called Master Pedro episode in Part Two (1995, 5).[1] Cervantes's *magnum opus* preceded in this regard other works of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature that included puppet imagery, such as Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair*, Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Battles of Coxinga*, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Junkdump Fair*. In the context of Cervantes's *œuvre*, however, *Don Quixote* was not the first of his works of fiction to feature puppets. As Segel pointed out, the theatrical interlude "The Marvellous Puppet Show" was written around the same time as Part One of *Don Quixote*. It took some ten years, nevertheless, for this and other Cervantine interludes to be published in the volume *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses, nunca representados* (*Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes, Never Performed*).

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[1] Cervantes demonstrated a keen familiarity with the generic, technical, and social aspects of puppetry in *Don Quixote* and elsewhere. Jerez-Gómez notes that the episode of Master Pedro gives a remarkably accurate representation of the motifs, the characters, and the dynamics between performers and audience of Sicilian puppet theatre. Fernández argues furthermore that "the technicalities of the *pupi* no doubt inspired the marionettes portrayed by Cervantes", which Master Pedro "manipulate[s] from above using wires that could control very precise movements" (2021, 84; see also Díaz-Plaja 1977, 144). Cervantes was also a shrewd observer of the social status and lifestyle of puppeteers in sixteenth-century Spain, which served as a springboard for him to venture into the picaresque genre (see Gasta 2015).

Cervantes's career as a playwright began not long after he returned to Spain from Algiers, where he remained imprisoned for five years after he embarked on a voyage from Italy and was taken captive by Barbary pirates. Frederick A. De Armas has observed that sojourns in Italy were "almost de rigueur for Spanish poets and other thinkers during the Golden Age", as well as for "writers of prose fiction" (2006, 3). According to De Armas, "Italy was for Cervantes and others both a familiar and a foreign land" (3). Sicily (which became incorporated into the kingdom of Aragon in the late thirteenth century) and Naples (which was seized twice from the French between the mid-fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries) were the most familiar Italian territories for Spaniards in the Golden Age. In the case of Cervantes, his sojourn (which famously included his participation in the Battle of Lepanto) lasted for six years. During this time, he travelled extensively through the Italian Peninsula and came into direct contact with "Renaissance art, architecture, and poetry", which he subsequently "mirrored in many of his literary texts" (5).

Italy holds in this regard a prominent place in the history of puppet theatre, particularly the Sicilian *Opera dei pupi* (opera of puppets). The presence of puppets in Sicily was documented already in the fourth century B.C. by the Greek philosopher and historian Xenophon. His Socratic dialogue *Symposium* (4.55) features a conversation between Socrates and a man from the Sicilian town of Syracuse who is hired to entertain the guests at a dinner party with his troupe of musicians, dancers, and acrobats. When the man is asked what he prides himself on the most in his art, he replies that it is the fools who come to see his shows because "they make me my living by coming to watch my marionettes" (Marchant, Todd and Henderson 2013, 621).[2] Xenophon's *Symposium* thus provides anecdotal evidence of the popularity of puppet theatre in the late classical period and its connection with Sicily. The question of the place of birth of *Opera dei pupi* remains, however, "a matter of speculation" to this day (Cavallo 2012).

In the 1920s, the Sicilian writer and scholar Luigi Natoli noted the possibility that the roots of *Opera dei pupi* lay in the Spanish *teatro de títeres* (puppet theatre). As he remarked,

> [A] puppet theatre that portrayed fictional stories and battles between

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[2] Similarly, the Greek historian Herodotus made reference in Book Two of *The Persian Wars* to "the use of puppets a cubit long moved by strings" during the Egyptian Festival of Khoiak Godley (335).

> Christians and Saracens already existed in Spain since the sixteenth century… Now, it is not going too far to argue that…this tradition could well have been imported by the Spaniards, in the same way that the Tribunal of the Holy Office, the Jesuits, the penchant for ceremony, the allegorical processions, the *autos de fe*, [and] bullfighting, were imported to us. Three centuries of close ties between the two regions; the dependence or union of Sicily with the Crown of Spain, the continued relations, inevitably produced reciprocal exchanges. (1927, 117; translation mine)

To support his hypothesis about the origins of *Opera dei pupi*, Natoli pointed to *Don Quixote* as evidence that the Sicilian *pupi* might have appeared around the same time as the Cervantine knight-errant (117-18). His argument centred around the figure of *i paladini* —the legendary knights of Charlemagne's court in the eight century who fought against the Saracens. Natoli noted that the type of plate armour that *i paladini* wear in the *Opera dei pupi* is (similarly to Don Quixote's) characteristic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet, the *Opera dei pupi* began to be documented in Sicily only in the eighteenth century. According to Natoli, it is very unlikely in this regard that eighteenth-century puppet makers could reproduce armours that were centuries old. To represent historical or mythological figures, puppet makers usually drew on popular iconography, or else they dressed their puppets in contemporary clothes. Moreover, once a puppet character was added to the repertoire of the *Opera dei pupi*, it remained unchanged.

Looking from a different angle at the relationship of *Don Quixote* to the history of puppet theatre, the historian J.E. Varey notably referred to the Master Pedro episode as one of the best-known literary depictions of the origins of *teatro de títeres*. Varey noted that the earliest records of puppet theatre in Spain date from the thirteenth century. String puppets and glove puppets were introduced by wandering minstrels from Italy and France (and possibly from North Africa) and were initially related to animal entertainment (particularly monkeys) because of the uncanny response that they triggered in the audience.[3] As Varey pointed out, "both monkeys and puppets present us with a grotesque and minute parody of life; both seem to be human but are not" (1954, 172 n. 2; translation mine).

In addition to the entertainment purposes that *teatro de títeres* served, puppets began to be used in the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) for religious purposes to the detriment of flesh-and-blood actors. As Esther Fernández has noted, puppet-like sculptures of Christ became a staple of Holy Week celebrations across Europe in the late medieval and early modern period for the reason that their "lack of consciousness allowed the[se] figures to insinuate and preserve the infinite consciousness of the divine" (2019, 60). When the emphasis that Trent placed on morality made actors seem "unsuitably artificial when materializing the divine or morally in danger when representing spectacular excess", puppets took their place in Spanish playhouses due to their liminal position between, on the one hand, the human and the divine, and, on the other, the human and the supernatural elements of saints' lives, which included "[f]lights, apparitions, transformations, miracles, and martyrdoms" (65). Fernández points apropos of this to the religious iconography that puppet-based hagiographic plays (known by the name of *máquina real*) shared with the portable puppet theatres known as *retablos*, which "functioned as a spiritual dramatic frame demarcating the indoctrinating religiosity being performed on the stage of the playhouse" (66).[4]

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[3] For an overview of the history of puppet theatre in Spain, see Ortega Cerpa 2012. In addition to various kinds of puppets, Ortega Cerpa mentions the appearance of automata (which were introduced into Spain by Arab engineers) in the twelfth century.

To borrow a phrase from the late Günter Böhmer (1971, 7), the "roundabout way" in which the genealogy of *Opera dei pupi* can be traced (from Sicily and Greece in the late classical period to Italy, France, and Spain in the late Middle Ages, to the Kingdom of Naples and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in modern times) ultimately reveals the *transcultural* dimension of puppet theatre in the Mediterranean area.[5] Jesús David Jerez-Gómez (2012) has referred in this regard to the "Mediterranean cultural framework" that permeates the Master Pedro episode in connection with Sicilian puppet theatre and noted how the episode anticipated some of the characteristics of the *Opera dei pupi*. Below I extend the Mediterranean cultural framework to include classical Greek theatre by drawing on satyr plays and New Comedy as a lens to read the Master Pedro episode and another episode in Part Two of *Don Quixote*. First, however, I turn to the interlude where Cervantes began to exploit the figure of the puppet to blur the boundaries between diegetic levels and, by so doing, between the natural and the supernatural realms: "The Marvellous Puppet Show".

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[4] Llosa Sanz 2008, 155-7 draws attention to the sacred dimension of secular *retablos* (like the ones depicted in the works by Cervantes discussed here) and the ritual aspect of theatrical performance.

[5] My use of the term *transcultural* is drawn from the work of the theatre scholar Alfonso de Toro, who describes transculturality as "the processes of hybridization, the cultural deterritorializations and reterritorializations, and . . . the site of negotiation between what belongs to others and what belongs to oneself" (2005, 7; translation mine).

2. The Magical Power of Imaginary Puppets: Moving Back and Forth Between Reality and Appearance in "The Marvellous Puppet Show"

In penning one of the first memorable appearances of puppets on the literary stage, Cervantes picked up on the association of puppetry to animal entertainment and religious worship to engage with the longstanding philosophical problem of what constitutes reality, whose roots (to go back to the transcultural dimension of puppetry) can be traced to ancient Greece, where "*to be real* [w]as the fundamental meaning of 'be'" (Graeser 1977, 385).[6] Carolyn Lukens-Olson has observed in this regard that "the distinction between reality and appearance" is a common theme in four of the interludes in Cervantes's *Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes* (2021, 387). In contrast to the other three, however, "The Marvellous Puppet Show" is the only interlude that features puppets — or, rather, where the imaginary performance of a puppet play on a *retablo* is what triggers the dramatic action.

The interlude tells the story of two swindlers named Chanfalla and Chirinos who turn up in a small town in the company of a musician named Rabelín. Chanfalla introduces himself to the town's governor and his entourage as the director of the so-called marvellous puppet show. He explains that the show is known by that name "por las maravillosas cosas que en él se enseñan y muestran" (because of the marvellous things that you can see and learn from it) (Cervantes 2012, 89; 1996, 100).[7] Even more intriguingly, Chanfalla claims that the puppets are actually invisible to those who were born out of wedlock (known as *bastardos*) and to Jewish converts to the Christian faith (known as *conversos*). The governor decides to hire the troupe to perform on the eve of his wedding with the daughter of the town's alderman and pays them in advance.

Over the course of the show, Chanfalla and Chirinos take on role of narrators of what is allegedly taking place on the stage (which they put behind a blanket), while Rabelín provides the musical accompaniment.

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[6] Two notable early examples of the discussion of puppets in relation to this question are Aristotle's τῶν θαυμάτων ταὐτόματα (automatic marionettes) in Book One of *Metaphysics* (983a15) and Plato's imaginary θαύματα (objects of wonder) and οἱ θαυματοποιοί (makers of these objects of wonder) in Book Seven of the *Republic* (514b1-6). The mathematician and engineer Heron of Alexandria later provided a description of an automatic puppet theatre that was put in motion by cylinders and wheels in Περί ΄Αυτοματοποιητικής (*On Automaton-Making*), which is considered a foundational work in the field of robotics. That the association of puppets and automata to the problem of appearance and reality reached its apex in grotesque drama (whose roots lie in the festivals of Dionysus) further highlights the importance of ancient Greece in this regard (see Barasch 1988, 560).

[7] All the translations of "El retablo de las maravillas" are from Cervantes 1996.

Afraid of the consequences of saying that they cannot see the puppets, the members of the audience become improvised actors by reacting in a knee-jerk and increasingly absurd fashion to the descriptions of the stage action. Only the governor admits by way of a dramatic aside that he does not see the puppets, but he decides to keep it to himself because he assumes that everyone else is acting *bona fide*.

Towards the end the show, a military quartermaster comes in unexpectedly and notifies the governor that a group of cavalry soldiers is about to arrive in town and that they will need to be accommodated. The town's mayor reacts by arguing that the quartermaster is just another puppet and accuses Chanfalla of purposely trying to deceive them. The governor, who believes that the mayor does indeed see the puppets, intervenes to say that "verdaderamente estos hombres de armas no deben de ser de burlas" (I don't believe these cavalrymen can be a hoax) (100; 107). The argument between the mayor and the governor leaves the quartermaster perplexed, whereupon the mayor urges Chanfalla to resume the show so that the quartermaster may see the puppets with his own eyes.

The quartermaster grows even more perplexed at the spectacle that follows when the mayor's nephew pretends to be dancing with one of the show's characters while the others cheer him on. The quartermaster ends up being accused of secretly being a *converso*, and a sword fight erupts between him and the governor's entourage. Chirinos then takes down the blanket behind which the stage supposedly lay and says that "el diablo ha sido la trompeta y la venida de los hombres de armas" (the arrival of the cavalry was the work of the devil) (101; 108), while Chanfalla concludes that the extraordinary event that they have witnessed has proven the show's efficacy.

The removal of the blanket at the end of "The Marvellous Puppet Show" suggests that the trick that has been played on the townspeople can be extended more generally to the audience and the readers. Cervantes seems to point in this direction from the very title of the interlude. The alleged marvels of the show lure not only the townspeople into the hands of Chanfalla and Chirinos but also theatregoers in the first place to witness something that is doubly deceptive: a theatrical play performed by puppets. Yet, what the audience encounters is not quite the marvellous play described in the title but a *meta*play where the townspeople's improvised performance is but an extension of their performance as respectable members of Spanish society (Abel 2003; Alter 1975).

The peculiar significance of puppets stems in this regard from their transformation into tokens of the divine and the supernatural in the context of the Tridentine Counter-Reformation. As Fernández remarks, "Cervantes was conversant with the innovative intellectual and scientific horizons that were emerging at the time" — namely, Renaissance humanism, Copernican heliocentrism, and organized skepticism (2021, 79).[8] Fernández recounts the shift that took place in the early days of the Protestant Reformation from an "animist and supernatural" to a "rational conception" of artificial animation that resulted in the "demonization of fraudulent performance objects", such as mechanized crucifixes and theatrical costumes, props, and masks (82). Cervantes displayed a kindred skepticism towards the divine and the supernatural properties of puppets in "The Marvellous Puppet Show". Nevertheless, he did so by disposing of the actual puppets and portraying the townspeople as if *they* were puppets in the hands of Counter-Reformation orthodoxy.

As Leonie Pawlita has noted, "the audience [of Chanfalla and Chirinos's play] accepts the rules of the performance because these rules also determine social life in general" (2019, 349). In order not to be accused of being *bastardos* or *confesos*, the townspeople thus find themselves having to straddle the borderline between the real world depicted in Cervantes's play and the legendary world of Chanfalla and Chirinos's play-within-the-play. The fear of exclusion and persecution, along with the embrace of dogmatism upon which their recognition as legitimate members is conditioned, makes them vulnerable to manipulation by those who can profit from their predicament.

The combination of fear and hypocritical dogmatism that Chanfalla and Chirinos instill in the townspeople by laying the rules of the puppet show is reminiscent of the magical powers wielded by the liminal figures that mediate between the realms of the human and the supernatural. Álvaro Llosa Sanz has likened in this regard the pair of swindlers to "mediums or mediators" who capitalize on the symbolic order internalized by the townspeople to throw fantastical images "like spirits or demons casting out forces – affects or passions – from the soul of the magician to that of the victim" (2008, 160; translation mine). Llosa Sanz argues that Chanfalla and Chirinos's role as what the Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno called "hunters of souls" is ultimately proven when "the [spiritual] bonds and the faith established by the logic of the puppet play and its meaning" result in "the transposition to reality of all the demons [that have been] previously conjured" upon the arrival of the quartermaster and in the deadly confrontation that follows (164-5). From this perspective, the remarks that the two swindlers make after they remove the blanket can be read as an acknowledgement of their role as intermediaries of the supernatural by releasing the inner demons of the townspeople.

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[8] López Piñero 1979 is the standard reference on the impact that the Counter-Reformation, as well as economic and demographic factors, had on the development of science and technology in Spain. For an overview of recent publications in Cervantes Studies that deal with science and technology, see Burningham 2021, 654-5.

3. Don Quixote in the Company of (Supernatural) Actors: Transgressing Diegetic Levels in “The Assembly of Death”

The magical power of Chanfalla and Chirinos’s puppet show is reversed in Part Two of *Don Quixote* when the knight-errant refrains from fighting a troupe of actors. Jill Syverson-Stork has observed that in Part Two, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza become “the puppets of characters who try to control them”, as “the two heroes [are] purposefully and sometimes cruelly deceived by others” (1986, 61). In Part One, it is Don Quixote himself, by contrast, who “falls victim to the illusions he himself creates” (ibid.). The episode known as “The Assembly of Death” plays a pivotal role in this transition by featuring a group of dramatic stock characters that hints at the role that puppet theatre plays in Part Two of the novel.

Titled “De la extraña aventura que le sucedió al valeroso don Quijote con el carro o carreta de Las Cortes de la Muerte” (Regarding the strange adventure that befell the valiant Don Quixote with the cart or wagon of The Assembly of Death), henceforth “The Assembly of Death”, the chapter finds the knight-errant and his squire headed to a jousting tournament after trying to pay a visit to lady Dulcinea in her hometown of El Toboso.[9] Don Quixote is feeling “el más desdichado de los hombres” (the most unfortunate of men) because Sancho has fooled him into believing that the evil enchanters put a spell on him so that, instead of the fair and fragrant Dulcinea, he saw an ugly peasant girl who stank of raw garlic (2004, 623; 2003, 520).

As they go on their way to the city of Saragossa, Don Quixote and Sancho are startled by a carriage that appears to be driven by “un feo demonio” (a hideous demon) and filled with “los más diversos y extraños personajes y figuras que pudieron imaginarse” (the most diverse and peculiar personages and figures that one could imagine) (625; 523).[10] The strange creatures turn out to be actors from the theatrical company of Angulo el Malo who are travelling from town to town to perform a Passion play titled *The Assembly of Death*. The coachman explains to Don Quixote that “por estar tan cerca y excusar el trabajo de desnudarnos y volvernos a vestir, nos vamos vestidos con los mismos vestidos que representamos” (because it is so close, and to save ourselves the trouble of taking off our costumes and putting them on again, we are dressed in the same clothes we perform in) (626; 523). The coachman then introduces the characters played by the actors who are sitting in the cart: "aquel mancebo va de muerte; el otro, de Ángel; aquella mujer, que es la del autor, va de Reina; el otro, de Soldado; aquel, de Emperador, y yo, de Demonio" (that young man plays Death; the other one, the Angel; that woman, who is married to the manager, plays the Queen; this one is the Soldier; that one, the Emperor; I play the Demon) (626; 523).

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[9] All the translations of “The Assembly of Death” and the Master Pedro episode are from Cervantes 2003.

[10] The personages and figures mentioned by the narrator are “la misma Muerte, con rostro humano; . . . un ángel con unas grandes y pintadas alas; . . . un emperador con una corona, al parecer de oro, en la cabeza; . . . el dios que llaman Cupido . . . [y] un caballero armado de punta en blanco” (the most diverse and peculiar personages and figures that one could imagine . . . [:] Death himself, with a human face; . . . an angel with large painted wings; . . . an emperor wearing a crown, apparently of gold, on his head; . . . the god called Cupid . . . [and] a knight in full armor) (625; 523).

Wary of his own senses after finding out about the enchantment of Dulcinea, Don Quixote quickly rules out the possibility of actors being the personages and figures he initially thought and bids them farewell. Yet, his mind starts to play tricks on him again when the troupe's jester attempts to steal Sancho's donkey and his squire refers to the jester as "el diablo" (the devil) (628; 524). Expecting to unfold a new adventure, Don Quixote confronts the troupe of actors as if they were the characters in *The Assembly of Death*. It is only when Sancho draws his attention to the fact that "entre todos los que allí están, aunque parecen reyes, príncipes y emperadores, no hay ningún caballero andante" (among all those people, even though they seem to be kings, princes, and emperors, there's not one knight errant) that Don Quixote agrees to "dej[ar] estas fantasmas y volv[er] a buscar mejores y más calificadas aventuras" (leave these phantoms and again seek better and more appropriate adventures) (630; 526).

One of the leitmotifs that have been identified in *Don Quixote* is the relationship between the author and his characters. Jorge Luis Borges, who had "a lifelong obsession" with Cervantes (González Echevarría 2020, 141), referred to this relationship as an extension of the feedback loop between "dreams and reality" that permeates the novel (128). As the Argentinian writer noted,

> [I]n the second part of the book, we find, much to our surprise, that the characters have read the first part and they have also read the imitation of the book written by a rival [Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda]. And they abound in literary judgments and they take the side of Cervantes. So, it is as if Cervantes was peeping in and out of his own book all the time and, of course, he must have greatly enjoyed this game. (129-30)[11]

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[11] More recently, the founder of the Spanish puppet theatre company "Puppeteers of Binéfar", Paco Paricio, has also referred to the metaliterary intrusions of Cervantes in Part Two of *Don Quixote* as a veiled response to Fernández de Avellaneda:

> When Don Miguel decided to write the second part, it's as if he said to Avellaneda (or whoever it was that was hiding behind that name): now I, Cervantes, the author of the first part, the creator of the character of Quixote, will write the real second part, and where you put a theatrical play at a roadside

Scholars have characterized Cervantes's intrusions in *Don Quixote* as a form of authorial control. Yet, instead of merely conflating the voice of the characters with that of their author, they have noted the panoply of voices found in the novel, starting from the prologue, where the author writes that "yo, aunque parezco padre, soy padrastro de don Quijote" (though I seem to be the father, I am the stepfather of Don Quixote) (1; 3). Fernández has remarked that "*Don Quijote* scholarship has long accepted the allegorical role of the novelist as a master puppeteer because of his skillful manipulation of multiple intertwining narratives" (2021, 83). The "apparition" of the actors in "The Assembly of Death" foreshadows in this regard the role that puppet theatre plays in Part Two. Not only are the actors explicitly connected to the world of theatre (and, by association, to *theatrum mundi*), but the roles they play correspond to various types of theatrical masks — both in the sense of dramatic device and of *persona*.[12]

The "turba alegre y regocijada" (happy and cheerful throng) encountered by Don Quixote and Sancho is reminiscent here of the satyrs of the ancient Greek cult of Bacchus, who always appeared together (629; 525). Satyrs were noted in Attic theatre for their grotesque features and indecent behaviour. At the same time, they were known for their love of music and dance. Some of the characters played by the actors in Angulo el Malo's company appear similarly associated with a combination of grotesque and sublime qualities. As the narrator recounts after Don Quixote's exchange with the coachman,

> uno de la compañía . . . venía vestido de bojiganga, con muchos cascabeles, y en la punta de un palo traía tres vejigas de vaca hinchadas . . . comenzó a esgrimir el palo y a sacudir el suelo con las vejigas y a dar grandes saltos, sonando los cascabeles; cuya mala visión así alborotó a Rocinante. (627)
> (a member of the company . . . was dressed as a fool, wearing a good number of bells, and at the end of a stick he was carrying there were three inflated cow bladders . . . began to fence with the stick and hit the ground with the bladders and leap high into the air, shaking his bells; this terrible sight). (524)

> inn, I will put something more popular, more metaphorical, which will allow me [to write] a better adventure for the knight, I will put a puppet play. And not only that, for the said Alonso Quijano will participate in the plot. It's not actor's theatre as you think, it's puppet theatre. (Rumbau 2020; translation mine)

[12] The characters of Demon and Death are of special significance among the cast. As the coachman says to Don Quixote, he always plays "en esta compañía los primeros papeles" (in this company . . . the leading roles), and the Devil is "una de las principales figuras del auto" (one of the principal figures in the play) (626; 523). The centrality of the character of Death is reflected in turn in the title of the Passion play that they perform. Death is, moreover, "la primera figura que se ofreció a los ojos de don Quijote" (the first figure that appeared to Don Quixote's eyes was that of Death himself) (625; 523).

The classical scholar Richard Seaford has underscored in this regard the demonic nature of satyrs, who had "numinous powers of their own, and . . . represented in effect a *thiasos* [that is, a theatrical company] of Bacchic celebrants" (quoted in Griffith 2015, 34). Dionysiac *thiasoi* entered the stage unexpectedly to introduce a comical element through amusement, trickery, and deceit. They represented "an antidote to death and its demons" by acting as a counterweight to the tragic plot of satyr drama (Stevanović 2009, 269).

Seaford likewise notes that satyr plays "often involved . . . encounters with a precious and transformational new invention or person, and their eventual restoration to the company of Dionysos himself" (quoted in Griffith 2015, 34). Don Quixote and Sancho could be seen in this regard as another theatrical company that crosses paths with that of Angulo el Malo. Don Quixote himself displays his Dionysian side and his eagerness to join Angulo el Malo's company when he says to the coachman "mirad si mandáis algo en que pueda seros de provecho, que lo haré con buen ánimo y buen talante, porque desde mochacho fui aficionado a la carátula, y en mi mocedad se me iban los ojos tras la farándula" (consider if there is any way in which I can be of service to you, and I shall do it gladly and willingly, because ever since I was a boy I have enjoyed the theater, and in my youth I was a great lover of plays) (627; 524).

The insertion of magical and demonic characters is a common theatrical technique that serves to interrupt the dramatic action and create suspense. It can also be associated with the transposition of characters between different narrative levels, which (similarly to the feedback loop between reality and appearance in "The Marvellous Puppet Show") constitutes a paradigmatic diabolical act. From a narrative perspective, this transposition involves a kind of metalepsis on the level not only of discourse, but also of space and time that in *Don Quixote* results in the *mise en abyme* produced by the ghostly actors, seen as demonic masks. The line of separation between the narrative levels becomes in this way blurred, leaving the audience and readers confused.[13]

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[13] This confusion likewise applies to the actual number of "phantoms" sitting in the carriage, which is never clarified. As the narrator remarks, there were "otras personas de diferentes trajes y rostros" (others with various outfits and countenances) (626; 523) in addition to the characters presented by the coachman. The carriage thus makes the impression of being enchanted. This may seem to break the spell of the story and openly reveal Cervantes's authorial control. Nevertheless, it also serves to highlight the element of fantasy in the narration.

4. Staging an Old (True) Story: the Illusion of Reality in the Master Pedro Episode

In comparison to "The Marvellous Puppet Show" and "The Assembly of Death", the Master Pedro episode is the only one of the three texts that features real puppets. Told in chapters twenty-five to twenty-seven of Part Two, the beginning of the episode finds Don Quixote and Sancho having arrived at an inn at the same time as the mysterious puppeteer Master Pedro, who "traía cubierto el ojo izquierdo y casi medio carrillo con un parche de tafetán verde" (had his left eye and almost half his cheek covered with a patch of green taffeta) (2004, 744; 2003, 623). By the nature of his profession (as well as the mystery of his identity), the character of Master Pedro resembles a character from a Greek New Comedy play.[14] The innkeeper welcomes him and says excitedly: "llegue el mono y el retablo, que gente hay esta noche en la venta que pagará el verle y las habilidades del mono" (Bring the monkey and the puppet stage in, because tonight there are people in the inn who will pay to see the show and the monkey's talents) (745; 623). The innkeeper explains to Don Quixote that the monkey that accompanies Master Pedro has "la más rara habilidad que se vio entre monos ni se imaginó entre hombres . . . de modo que nos hacer creer que tiene el diablo en el cuerpo" (the rarest talent ever seen among monkeys or imagined among men . . . [which] makes us think that he has the devil in his body) (745; 624). It appears that the monkey has the power of divining (mostly) anything he is asked about the past or the present, which he whispers into Master Pedro's ear for him to speak it out.[15]

After watching the monkey allegedly divine what Sancho's wife was doing at that moment, Don Quixote seems to agree with the innkeeper: "hallo por mi cuenta que sin duda este maese Pedro su amo debe de tener hecho pacto tácito o espreso con el demonio . . . de que infunda esa habilidad en el mono, con que gane de comer, y después que esté rico le dará su alma" (in my opinion this Master Pedro, his owner, must have made a pact, either implicit or explicit, with the devil . . . to grant his talent to the monkey so that Master Pedro could earn his living, and when he is rich the devil will take his soul) (748; 626). In addition to the divining monkey, Master Pedro's puppet show is performed (similarly to "The Marvellous Puppet Show") with the help of a narrator, who tells a grotesque-humoristic version of what the Cervantes scholar Diana De Armas Wilson describes as "an old Carolingian liberation narrative with human simulacra" (2007, 250): the rescue of Charlemagne's daughter Melisendra from the Moorish king Marsilio by his nephew Don Gaiferos. Cervantes manages in this way to infuse the episode with theatricality by having Master Pedro (who plays both the puppet master and the puppet) perform a popular legend with which the audience is already familiar.

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[14] One of most common character types in Greek New Comedy was the trickster, and one the most common plot elements was mistaken identity. One might also think of Master Pedro along the lines of an Italian *furbo* or a Greek *panourgos*.

[15] The same alleged talent appears in a later chapter titled "Que trata de la aventura de la cabeza encantada, con otras niñerías que no pueden dejar de contarse" (Which relates the adventure of the enchanted head, as well as other foolishness that must be recounted), where Don Antonio Moreno takes Don Quixote into a room where there is a bust that, according to Moreno, "tiene propiedad y virtud de responder a cuantas cosas al oído le preguntaren" (has the property and virtue of responding to any question spoken into its ear) (1023; 866).

The dénouement of the episode displays a patent metatheatricality that follows in the footsteps of classical Greek theatre. It could be argued that the play represents an *embolima* of sorts and reflects the double function of the Greek chorus. While Master Pedro proceeds with the ritualistic performance in the present, he and the audience become immersed into other chronotopes and are placed in the position of addressee of a story filled with "curvas . . . transversales . . . y . . . contrapuntos" (curves . . . transverse lines . . . and . . . counterpoints) (752-3; 630). There are moments where the puppeteer even puts himself in the place of the audience. After Don Quixote urges the narrator to tell the story of Don Gaiferos and Melisendra more straightforwardly, Master Pedro jumps in and says to the narrator: "muchacho, no te metas en dibujos, sino haz lo que ese señor te manda, que será lo más acertado" (boy, tend to your business and do what the gentleman says, that's the right thing to do) (753; 630). When Don Quixote later complains about the show's lack of historical accuracy, Master Pedro even addresses the knight-errant directly by saying: "no mire vuesa merced en niñerías, señor don Quijote, ni quiera llevar las cosas tan por el cabo, que no se le halle" (your grace should not concern yourself with trifles, Señor Don Quixote, or try to carry things so far that you never reach the end of them) (754; 632). The audience (and readers) are hence invited to participate as co-writers and co-narrators in a collective metalepsis (in its literal sense of *participation*) that results in methexis.

The distancing of the narration from the narrator leads to the suspension of narrative discourse and opens the floor to walk-on parts. Don Quixote becomes carried away by both the narration and the "inaccurate" staging of the legend. Confused between the fictional reality and the outward reality, he ends up taking the puppets for the characters that they represent (similarly to Angulo el Malo's company) and jumps on the stage to save the life of Melisendra's puppet. The knight-errant, who has by then become another of Master Pedro's puppets, ends up committing a "diabolical" act by knocking the puppet theatre to the floor and beheading some of the puppets.[16] Readers are thus treated to a theatrical play within the novel that takes place simultaneously with the adventures of Don Quixote, on the one hand, and the performance of the puppet play that the knight-errant chooses to "direct" on the stage, on the other.

The ferocity of this scene serves to illustrate the pact of violence that characterizes metatheatrical plays according to Martin Puchner (in Abel 2003). The destruction of Master Pedro's theatre could also be seen from the lens of the Bacchic *sparagmos* and similarly be likened to the "revenge plot" in Euripides's tragedy *The Bacchae*, which "works on the basis of a *mise en abyme* and degenerates into a cruel and perverted anti-theater" (Bierl 2018, 226).

Conclusion

In his overview of publications on "Transnational and International Cervantes", Burningham makes reference to the groundbreaking monograph *Transnational Cervantes*, where William Childers argues for the need to "dissociate…[Cervantes's] work from European post-Enlightenment modernity and connect…early modern Spain with other temporalities and geographies" (quoted in Burningham 2021, 656). There is a strong tendency in this regard to think of the transnational and international dimension of Cervantes in terms of the influence he has exerted on authors and literatures from around the world (not without reason, to be sure). Yet, the connection of his *œuvre* to other temporalities does not always need to take early modernity as its starting point.

The "memorable appearances" (Segel 1995, 5) of puppets (literal or otherwise) in Cervantes's fiction shows how closely linked he was not only to the culture and politics of his time (as in the cases of *máquina real* and *retablo*) but, more broadly, to the history of puppet theatre (as in the Sicilian *Opera dei pupi* and the Spanish *teatro de títeres*). As well as the connection to earlier temporalities, one must not lose sight of the Cervantine connection to other geographies. Greek theatrical culture is a case in point in this regard, as this article has shown.

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[16] It should be noted that the dénouement of Master Pedro's puppet show is more akin to a traditional Italian *intermezzo* than to a Spanish *entremés*. As the seventeenth-century actor and playwright Andrea Perrucci noted, "the Spanish [*entremeses*] end in dancing and singing; the Italian [*intermezzi* end] in whacks on the shoulder with a cardboard stick, or a wooden dagger" (2008, 374). The stick in Italian *intermezzi* is a phallic symbol that was commonly featured in Renaissance *Commedia dell'Arte* — specifically, it was associated with the nose of the character Pulcinella, which was "of Greek origin and, in the last instance, ancient-Neapolitan (Magnogreek)" (Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani 1992, 365; translation mine). The significance of the stick goes back to the satyrs and centaurs.

Ultimately, exploring the connection of Cervantes with other temporalities and geographies should result in a better understanding of the paradoxical status of Cervantes noted by Burningham as both the most Spanish of authors and the most international of Spanish authors.

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Manuela Mohr*

Rethinking the Vampire: the Fantastic on the Puppet Stage

Abstract

This article examines the new production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the Salzburger Puppentheater under the direction of Philippe Brunner (2019). Afterlife figures such as the devil, the vampire and the ghost are not always identifiable figures located in one single body. They are interiorised, becoming an expression of psychological distress, and spread to many characters. The staging with string puppets in Salzburg dematerialises the afterlife figures and helps rethinking their traditional characteristics.

Keywords: fantastic; Hoffmann; devil; vampire; interiorisation; psychologisation

In 1851, a play for actors called *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (*The Tales of Hoffmann*) was written by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré. Barbier transformed it into a libretto for Offenbach's opera of the same name (1881). At the Salzburger Marionettentheater, Offenbach's opera was first staged in 1985. Then, in 2019, the Marionettentheater announced a new production of *Hoffmann*.[1] The three main story parts (Olympia, Giulietta and Antonia inspire love leading to tragedy) are well known. Hoffmann and his friends meet in Luther's tavern; the former recalls one by one the three women he has loved and his suffering. Olympia is not a real woman but an automaton; Giulietta fakes her love for him and steals his reflection; Antonia dies under mysterious circumstances. E.T.A. Hoffmann's fantastic works belong to a fantastic type called "exterior", in opposition to the "interior" type which came up in the middle of the nineteenth century under the influence of Poe's fantastic stories, and which is more psychology-oriented.[2] Whereas ghosts, devils, vampires and other afterlife figures materialise in Hoffmann's conception of

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[1] *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), Salzburger Marionettentheater, premiered 13 April 2019. New production by Philippe Brunner, staging by Günther Schneider-Siemssen, costumes by Bernd-Dieter Müller. The author would like to express her gratitude to Mr. Brunner who provided many useful details for this research.

[2] On this matter, see for example the introduction to Calvino 1983, and also Castex 1951.

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the fantastic, they appear more interiorized in the libretto, as an expression of inner turmoil. How does puppetry deal with these figures, and to what extent do the specificities of string puppets, the dramaturgy and the staging affect the questions and challenges that come with the particular interaction of the vampirical and the diabolical figure in the Austrian production?

The dramatic experience interacts with literary fantastic but works in its very own way when it comes to vampires. Although the devil is explicitly invoked and incarnated by the male antagonists, the vampire is not an identifiable character. His presence is discreet. Research on nineteenth century fantastic literature has pointed out the transformations of the diabolical figure becoming a literary theme (Milner 2007) and the assimilation of vampires and ghosts (Sangsue 2018). However, we are interested in the implications of the staging of Hoffmann's works at a string puppet theatre in the twenty-first century. Therefore, we will see how details of the staging lead to a rethinking of the vampirical figure and the specific possibilities of string puppets to explore mental, invisible processes. The devil and the vampire are strongly related. The staging with string puppets can ask in what way they lead to a special configuration of the fantastic genre and the vampirical figure. A puppet theatre choosing Offenbach's opera shows that the puppet can capture a fantastic world in a unique way while at the same time having to find solutions to the staging of afterlife figures evoking ontological issues.[3]

1. Evil Afterlife Figures: from Hoffmann to Offenbach

In Hoffmann's fantastic stories, which came to France in 1829 translated by Adolphe Loève-Veimars, the devil is strongly related to the *Doppelgänger*. The devil functions as the hero's antagonist and is responsible for the division of the individual who becomes a stranger to itself. A part of the individual's identity is repressed, allowing the evil *Doppelgänger* to come forward. The devil maintains his traditional characteristics: he tempts innocent souls, promising them what they desire in exchange for their soul. Medardus, the protagonist of *The Devil's Elixirs* (1815), drinks from the potions he was told to keep; his uncanny *Doppelgänger* then feels the need to drink blood. Hoffmann was familiar with the vampirical figure. He discreetly associates the devil and the vampire, an aspect one also observes in Offenbach's opera and in Philippe Brunner's production at the Marionettentheater. Hoffmann is interested in showing how madness is induced by stories about the devil and the vampire, i.e. how words and narratives cause loss of control or acts of violence associated to these afterlife figures.

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[3] "We are able to realize a whole number of Hoffmann's visionary shapes along with figments of Offenbach's lively imagination that are inevitably unattainable on 'full-size' opera stages. The irreality associated with the *Tales of Hoffmann* is thus a challenge" (Ludwig 2019).

In every act of the libretto, a diabolical opponent apparently prevents Hoffmann from being with the woman he loves. However, a closer look reveals that several characters combine multiple diabolical traits as well as characteristics of other afterlife figures. Therefore, they defy the limits between each other and contaminate Hoffmann by their presence. The characters between life and death question stable identities, but Offenbach's opera does not refer to the vampire like the Austrian string puppets. Hence, the vampirical figure is not displayed in the same way. This offers the possibility to highlight particular consequences of the interaction of the devil and the vampire in the libretto, and to track the specificities of Brunner's work.

The story which forms the framework of the libretto is set in master Luther's tavern. The owner's name relegates to the religious sphere. Martin Luther was feared as a dangerous opponent of the catholic doctrine. According to Luther, God does not bargain: the human being has to take responsibility for his actions in the present, as we cannot change the past. The libretto does not emphasize Luther's potential to be an antagonist. As we will see, Brunner confers more depth to Luther and works on the diabolical opponent influencing character dynamics by playing with light and colours.

Lindorf is Hoffmann's opponent. Irritated and egocentric ("Le conseiller Lindorf, parbleu! Tu ne connais pas le conseiller Lindorf?"[4], Salzburger Marionettentheater 2019, 1 ["The councillor Lindorf, by Jove! Do you not know the councillor Lindorf?", translation mine]), he is dislikeable from the very beginning. Lindorf subjects the servant Andres to a rude interrogation about the beautiful singer Stella. The competition for Stella's love favours Hoffmann ("Mon rival est aimé, je ne le suis pas" (2) ["My rival is loved, and I am not"]), but he fakes carelessness and still has an ace up his sleeve: "[J]e suis vieux, mais je suis vif!" (2) ["I am old, but full of life"]. He will never tell his exact age, but his vividness is evident. Lindorf never stops conspiring, observing and plotting. He unites a strange power in a body defying physical limits. He therefore describes himself as an afterlife figure. Given that the vampire has to be active in order to provide for himself, movement is a component of a vampire's definition.[5] Musical *Leitmotive* emphasize the diabolical traits of Hoffmann's opponents. When Lindorf and others appear and the word "devil" is pronounced, a specific bass motif sounds. This arrangement by Offenbach (Oeser 1977, 25) links the afterlife figure to the music and transforms it into an obsessively recurrent mental issue, the *idée fixe*. After the Kleinzach-song, Hoffmann offers to talk about "ces folles amours" (Salzburger Marionettentheater 2019, 5) ["This mad love"]. Of course, it was the song's lyrics that made him think about the past. However, there is another reason: as an afterlife figure, Lindorf who is also on stage brings back memories of another figure between life and death, that is Olympia the automaton.

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[4] The German translation of Salzburg's bilingual libretto says "zum Teufel" (1), a significant choice, as Lindorf invokes the devil twice during his short interaction with Andres: "[V]a-t-en au diable!" ["Go to hell!"]. All translation mine, unless otherwise stated.

[5] "[L]e déplacement est consubstantiel au vampire" ("[M]ovement defines the vampire") (Sangsue, 2018, 46).

Coppélius enters when Hoffmann is alone at Spalanzani's house, as if he had waited on purpose to catch an unstable and enamoured soul. Dapertutto also prowls around, waiting for the right moment to strike. Both resemble the devil and the vampire. Dapertutto uses Giulietta to get to the reflections she subtracts from those who trust her. Maybe he makes her work for him because he does not have a reflection or a shadow either. According to some superstitious beliefs, vampires can lack both. He makes Hoffmann wonder whether he is "le jouet de l'enfer" (6) ["Hell's toy"]; he maliciously comments on his "pâleur mortelle" (ibid.) ["deathly pale"]. Hoffmann's pale skin can indicate vampirisation. Nevertheless, the devil and the vampire are not just deathbringers. They can offer immortality or a longer life. Religious and mythological accounts state that the devil wanted to create life, for which he was punished by God. In the nineteenth century, fewer people believe in him or picture him as a hideous creature. As the devil's religious power fades, his power in the artistic field rises. He transforms into a familiar and human-like character (Milner 2007, 48), stimulating new aesthetical interpretations for this role. The vampire is one of the demon's maleficent creatures. A pact with the devil can lead to a vampirical condition of the victim. He is also related to ghosts since the nineteenth century, a general term including vampirical figures (Sangsue 2018, 7). The vampire is a cursed being: he suffers from his condition he did not choose deliberately. The ambivalence of the devil and the vampire is highly stressed in Brunner's production by means connected to the possibilities of the puppet.

Spalanzani is the creator of a woman without blood in her veins. Hoffmann says: "[L]a vie manque à ce regard, le sang à ce visage" (Salzburger Marionettentheater 2019, 8) ["These eyes are missing life, this face is missing blood"], as if Spalanzani has drunk the blood of his daughter, which makes him a vampire. His manipulative power becomes manifest in the way he arranges Olympia's performance in front of the ball guests. He tells them that his daughter will do everything they want although it is really him who pushes and drags Olympia to the right place and makes her speak and sing at the right moment. Nevertheless, Spalanzani and Coppélius both have to concede defeat. Spalanzani cannot earn any money with Olympia destroyed by Coppélius in a rage (we will see how Brunner modifies this detail and inserts the effects in a broader perspective), and Coppélius cannot claim his 500 ducats from the bankrupt Jew Elias. Neither Hoffmann nor his antagonists win.

Antonia's mother emerges from a life-sized portrait, a fantastic *topos*. Antonia reaches out to her in a moment of despair, after having already shown signs of a mysterious illness. At first, the stage direction indicates: "[s]a mère lui apparaît" (29) ["Her mother appears before her eyes"]. The following stage directions call the deceased mother "une voix" (ibid.) ["a voice"] and "le fantôme" (30) ["the ghost"] even after Antonia has explicitly identified her. The lack of specificity of the libretto and the repeated identification audible for the public and other characters create a discrepancy. With the mother rising from the dead and the daughter being killed, Miracle combines the evil powers of the devil and the vampire. But the mother is herself a ghost, a vampire and a devil.[6] Crespel sees in Antonia his deceased wife and says "quelle illusion me poursuit" (23) ["what illusion persecutes me"], but the German translation in Salzburg's bilingual libretto refers to the ghostly figure: "illusion" is translated "Spuk" meaning spook or ghost. The dead mother sucks the life out of her own offspring. Antonia's music stresses that her feelings do not come from her: she expresses herself through songs that could have been part of her mother's repertoire.[7]

Living characters, an automaton, figures between life and death, visible and invisible figures appear together, questioning categories and limits between various forms of existence. Intrinsically fantastic (Plassard 2014, 13), the puppet can intervene in such a configuration in its very own way. It becomes an expression for particular bodies and mental states by rethinking mechanicity and hybrid life forms, thus broadening the range of expressions of the vampirical afterlife figures.

We have considered the evolutions and specificities of the afterlife figures from E.T.A. Hoffmann to Offenbach, and presented the main male characters who, in Brunner's production, seem to be Hoffmann's antagonists and have certain traits in common. In the following, we will see how Brunner uses concepts and implications related to the imaginary world of the machine.

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[6] This particularity shows that the diabolical figure is not limited to male characters.

[7] "Antonias Gefühlsäußerungen sind aus zweiter Hand. Sie singt von Gefühlen, sie äußert sich in Kunstprodukten, . . . vom Aktbeginn . . . bis zum Finale. Dort produziert sie sich mit vollem Einsatz, wie auf Podium oder Opernbühne, mit einer Arie im Donizetti-Stil, die, hart an der Grenze der Banalität, offensichtlich dem Repertoire der Sängerin-Mutter entnommen ist" (Oeser 1977, 17). ["Antonia's expression of feelings is a reach-me-down. She sings about emotions, she expresses herself through artefacts . . . from the beginning of the act until the finale. There she commits entirely to her performance, as if she was on a podium or a stage, with an aria in the style of Donizetti which, at the limit of triteness, has obviously been extracted from her mother's repertoire, who has also been a singer"].

2. Machineries and Mechanisms

In Brunner's production, Olympia is the only character who is not a string puppet but a remote-controlled, partly mechanical partly electronical figure. Olympia's evilness is much more problematic because she is staged like a vampire's victim who takes revenge on her torturers who are at the same time perpetrators and victims with a complex inner life. Her two "fathers", Spalanzani and Coppélius, show more evil traits related to afterlife figures through specific staging choices. The puppet transforms the afterlife figures with respect to questions and challenges about identity and relationships. Olympia's artificiality and her state between life and death are dealt with in a way that does not leave room for doubt. For this, the zombie figure is used: Olympia mostly holds her arms up in front of her, and this gesture resembles the typical posture of a zombie (Fig. 1). The all-invading presence of artificiality establishes a dialogue between Offenbach's opera and the puppet. Artificiality introduces considerations on inner processes and uncertainty of identity.

The projections on the back of the stage during the first scenes of the Olympia act are black and white anthropomorphic figures. The second figure to the left seems to be a woman in distress on a table under which scientific instruments can be seen. Science resembles torture: this detail is part of a staging which makes Olympia a strong female figure trying to scotch her cruel father's plans. When Coppélius enters the stage,[8] Olympia is not directly illuminated any more. The attention is directed towards Coppélius, meaning that there exists a conflict between these two. It is almost as if Olympia wanted to hide from him. The semi-darkness surrounding her gives her a life-like appearance because there is not enough light for the audience to determine whether she moves or not. Ambiguity is therefore a threat for human beings and their psychological integrity, but an opportunity for puppets (Wolfson 2018, 212). As Olympia seems most powerful with little light, she evokes the vampire who cannot tolerate sunlight.

During the argument between Spalanzani and Coppélius, the automaton's eyes constitute an important part of the latter's reasoning. As Olympia has

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[8] The libretto indicates that Coppélius carries a bag. On the puppet stage, he does not have one, but carries everything in his coat pockets. Coats and capes are the traditional attire of vampires.

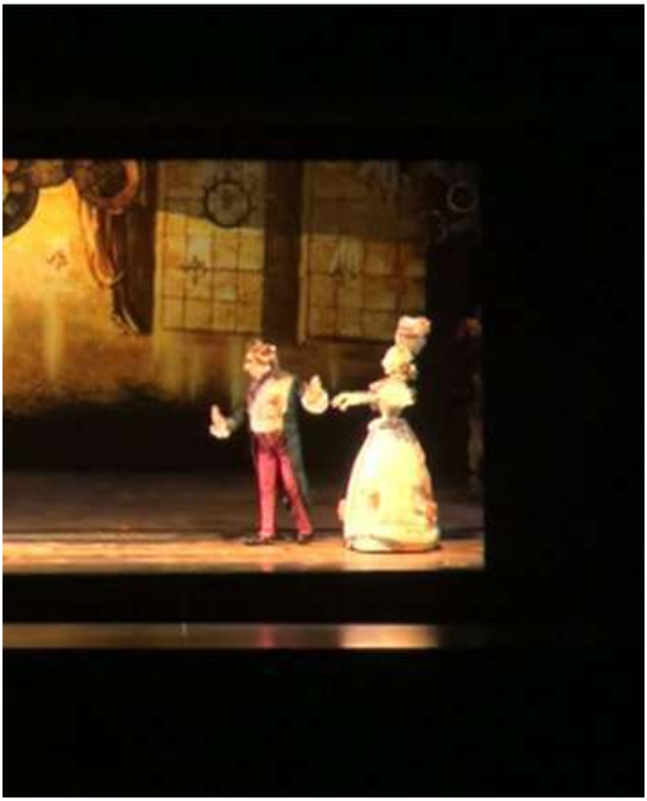

Fig. 1

his eyes,[9] he should be considered her father and get his fair share. A kind of a horrific genetic creation process is evoked. Spalanzani declares that Olympia is his daughter, suggesting that Olympia inherited mostly *his* genetic make-up. Coppélius then makes a spyglass appear in the air which flows over Hoffmann's head. When the hero turns around, the audience discovers that he wears a pair of pink, round-shaped glasses. A comical moment of surprise ensues. The expression "to wear rose-coloured glasses" is taken literally to state that Hoffmann sees Olympia with different eyes, namely Coppélius' reality-distorting ones. The hero's glasses are related to the love he feels for Olympia, but they also take on a darker meaning because a part of the whole world remains hidden from his conscience, as Hoffmann never puts them down. This lasts until Hoffmann loses his "eyes", triggering Olympia to lose hers. As soon as he does not wear his glasses any more, Olympias eyes pop out of her head and keep dangling under her face. The very special lighting chosen for Olympia at that moment creates pitch-black shadows surrounding her eyes, which accentuate her empty eye sockets. She almost looks like a demon. This has an absolutely shocking effect which persists until she leaves the scene. Cochenille pushes Olympia from the stage; a green light flashes several times, then something explodes and the stage goes dark. In the libretto, Coppélius destroys Olympia right after Hoffmann breaks his glasses. However, in Brunner's production, Olympia is not destroyed,[10] only broken. The staging shows that the enchantment is over and suggests Olympia's rebellion against her fathers.

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[9] Coppélius may have given her the eyes he had previously stolen from children. From the opening of the opera, eyes are an important motive. The devil and the vampire are at the same time predators and seducers; this is why they are often associated to cats. The performance begins with two lights resembling two cat's eyes shining in the dark. The eyes have a slightly different colour, announcing Coppélius' assembly of "eyes". The left eye closes before the right one, almost as if the animal winked, like a huge, dangerous creature foreshadowing evil things to come and setting the tone for afterlife figures.

During Coppélius' presence on stage, an enormous single eye pulsates on the back of the stage. Circles and gear hang from the ceiling, one looks like a clock and another like a steering wheel. They convey a mechanical imagery pointing Olympia's artificial nature, but the clock and the wheel are related respectively to time and space. Olympia defies both (an automaton cannot die and she can roll anywhere very quickly without getting tired), just like devils and vampires do. When Olympia moves, a mechanical whir can be heard. Spalanzani makes her execute movements which only make sense for humans, such as the hand movements following her voice going up and down. What serves as facilitation to real humans is no more than a reproduction of their imperfection. Olympia never risks singing out of tune, but only being out of batteries. Suddenly, she bends forward and her voice gets deeper and deeper. This is a very intriguing detail.[11] Quickly, Spalanzani has to straighten her back until her voice goes up. Another unexpectedly comical scene occurs when Olympia leaves the scene rolling backwards: Spalanzani panics and rushes behind the stage where he pushes her in the right direction until Olympia comes out rolling forward again. One has the impression that Olympa sabotages her father's plan. When she forces him to catch her, Spalanzani adopts a posture similar to a puppeteer or a hypnotist, putting his arms in front of him and fixing Olympia with his eyes. The comical moments of the staging are not an indication of parody. They offer a comic relief and make funny scenes significant with respect to the way specific staging choices point towards essential ontological issues related to afterlife figures.

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[10] What is more, the public discovers a strange figure in Spalanzani's laboratory. It seems to be a female body in a glass case. Could it be Olympia's prototype or even a newer version of her?

[11] Philippe Brunner confirms that Olympia's voice going deeper is used in order to make the audience understand that her batteries are dying. He wanted to find an acoustic expression for her technical problem.

In Brunner's production, Spalanzani is not quite the mean and carefree villain figure he appears to be in the libretto. He has to overlook, and is in charge of, everything and everyone. It is only natural, then, that he is very agitated, walks around very fast and waves his arms a lot. Secretly tormented, Spalanzani often looks directly to the guests, encouraging them to admire his daughter. As he tries to induce the "right" opinions, his ambition is to enter and to control their feelings. He is not only craving approval, as the libretto states, but also seems scared because his identity as a proud father of an irreproachable daughter is at stake. During Olympia's performance, Spalanzani leans far backwards several times, remaining in a position that only a puppet can maintain. His position is important because even him, Olympia's creator, seems overwhelmed by his creature. Hoffmann's friend Niklaus approaches Olympia from behind her back after Spalanzani has stepped aside for a second, but as soon as he sees Niklaus, he comes running and chases him away. Spalanzani goes as far as to stand between Niklaus and Olympia so that the young man cannot see her at close range. But with the guests to enchant and Niklaus to monitor, Spalanzani has so much to do that he calls Cochenille for help who guides the guests to another room whilst Spalanzani prevents Niklaus from coming too close. Finally, Niklaus gives up and follows the guests; however, he never attempts to inform Hoffmann about the doubts he obviously has. When Hoffmann follows Olympia around, Niklaus makes no convincing effort to prevent his friend from doing so.

The afterlife figures are reconfigured and function as catalysts of the plot and relationship dynamics. Making characters side with the antagonists or suggesting the hero's betrayal by those he calls his friends underlines the dynamics of vampirism. The staging reinterprets the affinities of afterlife figures who give new impulsions to the puppet stage. As we have seen how the imaginary world of machines and mechanisms influences characters, the stage design and the character dynamics, we will show how a vampirical dimension invests these elements of Brunner's production.

3. Vampirical Machinations

Nathanaël's entrance in the first act makes him appear suspicious. He hides behind the back of the Muse; when she turns, he stays behind her, his back against hers, and they turn around by 180 degrees at the same time. The Muse transforms into Nathanaël in order to stay next to Hoffmann because she feels neglected. Nevertheless, this movement seems vicious because he hides behind another string puppet. Entering the stage whilst hiding behind something is ominous, as this is also the way Dapertutto[12] comes on stage, for example. Nathanaël then flows into the dark back of the stage by making a huge step in the air. When everyone enters the tavern in the first act, Lindorf stays at his separate table at the left of the stage. He is partially hidden in the shadows (Fig. 2), illuminated only by a bluish light which confers him an eerie aura. At first, he is the only one of the characters present on stage who is in a blue luminous spot. Later however, the same light is also directed towards Luther. The bluish cold colour contrasts with a warmer yellow used for the other figures. This is indeed a relevant aspect because Luther defects to Hoffmann's enemy and will not protect him from Lindorf's racketeering taking places at his tavern. At the end of the first act, those who remain visible on stage when the lights slowly fade are Lindorf and Luther. Back in the tavern after the Antonia act, a warm, yellow light illuminates everyone but them.

Also in the first act, when Hoffmann's mind is about to wander to the woman he once loved, Nathanaël stands behind him and thinks he is going mad. Hoffmann's respiration is difficult, as he is in emotional distress, but Nathanaël bent over his neck seems to analyse him (he does not understand what is going on with his friend and interrupts his thinking) as if he could see into his head and take it off, making his puppet-status once again obvious. Traditionally, the vampire bites the victim in the neck; therefore his position suggests that a vampirical force threatens Hoffmann. Indeed, as Hoffmann sings, two young men to the right seem to whisper to each other.

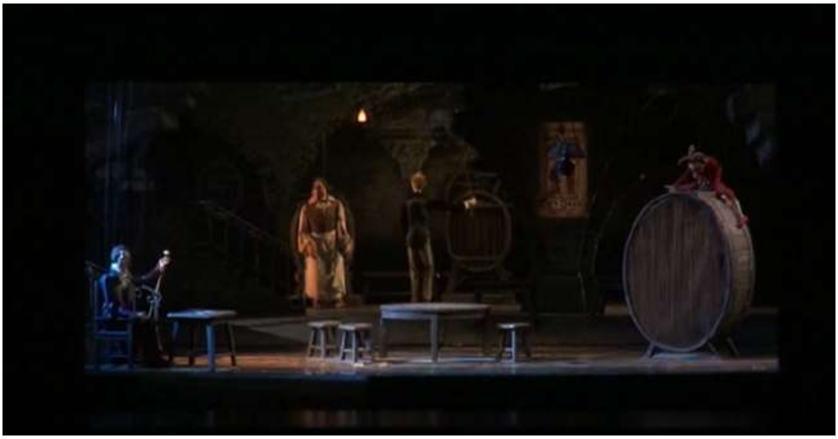

Fig. 2

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[12] When he first appears, smoke rises from his body, as if he was a diabolical creature smelling like sulphur.

This gesture points towards a conspiracy or at least a lack of compassion and interest in Hoffmann's feelings. Finally, in the last act, Nathanaël leaves Hoffmann alone, who falls on his knees in despair. Hoffmann struggles to be a real part of a community or a group.[13] As the vampire is a solitary figure, the staging makes him become more and more motionless and do things that question his mental health.

At the beginning of the second act, Hoffmann is alone on the dark stage. He seems to walk with caution, putting his entire sole of foot on the ground, feeling his way. He walks slowly and is ultimately swallowed by darkness. The string puppets who put their whole foot on the ground when they walk convey Hoffmann's disoriented and lost state. Physical properties of the puppet's body gain importance as they give an insight in a character's mind, and the foreboding of this scene indicates that Hoffmann faces, and will lose against, an ominous force.

Then a little light illuminates the hero who converses with someone. The scene is still very dark, therefore his interlocutor only becomes apparent when the light gets brighter: it's a statue! However, Hoffmann is clearly turned towards it and makes gestures in its direction. He even tries to speak to another statue right next to the first one before noticing a third statue, ending the dialogue and disappearing briefly from the stage. The statues are illuminated one by one as Hoffmann tries to speak to the first and the second one. This is an eloquent staging element. It blurs the lines between animate and inanimate figures even before Olympia appears. The confusion is not limited to her but emerges as a larger concept. Thus, this scene can account for amalgamations of categories and characters. In fact, Hoffmann always needs to interact in order to exist. He never managed to distance himself from the women he loved: interestingly, in some versions of Offenbach's opera (Oeser 1977, 24) and also in Brunner's production, Hoffmann has "not a single monologue, solo aria without other listeners, or commentary on himself to himself" (ibid.) ["[K]einen einzigen Monolog, keine Solo-Arie ohne Lauscher, keine Aussage über sich selbst zu sich selbst"]. He only emerges as a character through others. In the middle of the second act, Hoffmann aligns with the three statues, standing as immobile as them. He stands between the first (the smallest) and the second statue (a little taller) so that their four heads form a perfect straight line guiding the eye towards the centre of the stage where the great eye pulsates. Hoffmann finds his place between these inanimate figures, leading to an exchange of characteristics: he becomes more like a statue whereas the statues seem more alive.

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[13] In the last act at the tavern, the young men form a group and sway simultaneously to the music, but Hoffmann stands farther away from everyone. Again, Hoffmann stands out as a solitary figure who cannot integrate any social group. As an outsider, he is vampirised and becomes the very same thing that has destroyed his life.

At the beginning of the Giulietta act, Hoffmann is in a dream-like state. He contemplates without moving. The servant has to shake his arm in order to guide him to Giulietta in the seashell. Hoffmann then sings for the guests with a glass of wine in his hand. He wants to give a toast but nobody else has a glass. Hoffmann is excluded from the group. At the end of the act, the servant kills Giulietta with a lime-green, poisoned drink. As both Hoffmann and his antagonist carry a glass, they become complementary figures. The limits between individuals are problematic; figures communicate and correspond, their characteristics overlap.

In the following scene, Dapertutto hides behind a statue and glides on stage. He shows himself and small lights at the statues go on. As a diabolical figure, he reminds us that "Lucifer" means "light-bringer". The light in Dapertutto's chest glows in a bright yellow when Giulietta appears. He is a torn figure with a burning desire, as the round-shaped light covers exactly the spot of his heart. When his chest light is on, the lights of the statues are off. An incompatibility of those lights is suggested; as they cannot shine at the same time, an inner conflict emerges between Dapertutto's vulnerable side (he loves Giulietta) and his evil side (he is Lucifer). The staging makes afterlife figures more complex by giving them contradictory, tormenting feelings.

An interesting difference between the libretto and the staging concerns the duel between Hoffmann and Schlemil. According to the libretto, the former takes Dapertutto's sword and kills the latter, but on stage, Dapertutto makes two swords appear from the ground (where Hell might be, this underlines his diabolical nature). The swords kill Schlemil without Hoffmann ever touching them. This makes Dapertutto stand out as a figure with magical powers he uses for his own interests, related to the devil as well as to the puppeteer, the vampire and the mesmerist, insofar as he controls other characters and objects.

How the characters' bodies are positioned to one another says a lot about their relationship. In Brunner's production, character dynamics expresses ambiguous feelings. This translates to parallel back and forth body movements: characters are trapped in a hesitation between attraction and repulsion. These contradictory emotions are vividly expressed when several characters approach and retreat again and again in a synchronised way, or when one character repeatedly approaches another one who backs off. This is what happens at Crespel's music room and is related to hypnosis that induces a state of mind similar to the victim of an afterlife figure. Antonia is forbidden to sing because her father fears for her health. She dies singing, accompanied by Miracle. Of the three family members, the mother is the last one to be seen on stage: at first, Antonia is illuminated, then Antonia's father. Only then the portrait of the mother becomes visible. It is slightly inclined to the left, an early sign of her animation. When the mother moves, Miracle touches the frame and a light behind the upper part of the frame goes on. Rather than in a portrait, the mother seems to be in a cage or a showcase. During the examination performed by Miracle, Antonia is offstage. The doctor waves with his hands and mumbles Antonia's answers to his questions. Miracle's behaviour imitates a *séance* or a suggestion session. A very intense moment is created as a crystal blue light illuminates a door opening abruptly, then closing noisily. When the door is open, Antonia's voice is louder and strident. She is singing in pain because her favourite activity has been transformed into a harmful one. Finally, as Antonia lies dead on the floor and Hoffmann enters, he does not look at her or touch her. His friend Niklaus[14] guides him to a chair. Only Antonia's father exteriorises his grief by throwing himself over his daughter.

The interactions between Crespel and Miracle show how the puppet, the vampirical figure and the reflection on mental states are intertwined. When the doctor arrives, they greet each other with *la bise*, an occasion for Miracle to get dangerously close to his neck – he could bite him like vampires do. From this point on, Miracle enchants Crespel who adopts an impossible posture defying the laws of physics, leaning backwards like a plank in an angle of about 45 degrees. Antonia's father behaves as if he was possessed. Then the doctor suddenly glides behind the chair Crespel is sitting in, although he has walked normally before. The string puppets can glide and therefore underline the supernatural or treacherous nature of a character. They achieve a unique effect making Miracle a supernatural afterlife figure flying just above the ground. Behind the chair, the doctor resembles a devil with horns because of his hair, but also a puppeteer because of his posture. They both walk with their head turned to the right, their arms slightly open and stretched out. Crespel is under Miracle's hypnotising influence. Whereas the doctor had to stay very close to his victim in the beginning, he can now control him over a greater distance, from one end of the stage to the other. Again, Crespel bends backwards into an improbable position stressing how ambiguous their relationship is.[15] The hypnosis performed by the doctor receives a particular expression with regard to string puppets when he juggles with his potions: the flacons fly away from his hands and come back like yo-yos. He uses them as if they were weapons, pushing Crespel into a corner. Then Miracle lays his back on the piano, still juggling, like a possessed.

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[14] Niklaus has arrived on scene with a huge jump over the harpsichord. Those who can fly are suspicious figures.

[15] Once he tries to get up from the piano chair, but Miracle just has to turn in order to make him sit again. Then, when an eerie green light shines brighter and brighter and leaves green reflections on Miracle's cheek, Crespel makes an effort to attack the doctor and get him out of the house, but all he achieves is the extinction of the green light. Miracle's power cannot be defeated by Crespel. It is interesting to note that the green colour is linked to death. For example, in the Giulietta act, the green lights are the last thing we see on stage after Giulietta has been poisoned.

Some figures are conscious about their puppet identity. Crespel's servant Frantz looks at his bent leg, holds his arm above it and moves the arm and the leg as if he knew he was a string puppet, pulling an invisible string to move the leg up and down. Hoffmann himself makes a strange and unique movement in the first act: he rapidly moves his head to the left and to the right several times. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Sandman*, Nathanaël is afraid of the mean man visiting his family's house who could unscrew his head. He imagines being treated like a puppet; emotional suffering and puppet identity are strongly linked. The intertextuality underlines how string puppets not only execute movements impossible for real humans, but also use their puppet identity, made explicit, to explore how individuals influence each other's inner life. When the puppet signals that it knows about its puppet identity, a loss of control becomes evident, closely linked to vampirisation and hypnosis.

In Brunner's production, numerous degrees of animation and life and death are displayed. Not everything that comes to life has a physical body (Kleinzach materializes; he becomes an animated character moving like Hoffmann's antagonists), and not every character has exactly one identity. Julie Postel has identified the concept of an existence between bodies in contemporary puppet plays (Postel 2019). The possibility of the fantastic at the theatre has recently attracted the attention of certain scholars (Bionda 2016) but Brunner's production challenges already existing concepts and theories because it requires a thorough reflection on the interiorisation of afterlife figures and because it transposes literary procedures on the scene, acknowledging the specific forms of presence and movement of the string puppet. Characters resemble other characters or objects; the exchange of characteristics could support the hypothesis that the puppet allows to soften up the strict distinctions between the figures of afterlife which are not located in one puppet body: they appear between characters or between a figure and an object. The string puppet dematerialises the devil and the vampire. The female figures also question the validity of categories and limits. Olympia does so by her hybrid nature, Giulietta by stealing a part of an individual's identity, and Antonia by resembling her mother so much that she practically relives her life. Brunner's production can rearrange, reinterpret and rethink afterlife figures: string puppets become a particular mode of communication conferring them new opportunities, asking new questions through an already existing text.

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Jean Boutan*

Death, the Devil and the Wife: *Danse Macabre* Motifs in Nineteenth-Century Puppetry, from Punch to Kasperl[1]

Abstract

In the wake of Romanticism, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the late medieval motif of the *danse macabre* was rediscovered in the knockabout scenes between comic figures of hand-puppet theatre and personifications of Death and Evil. The *Punch and Judy* shows in England, Carl Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater* in Germany, as well as the first printed Jan Klaassen plays in the Netherland, show how puppet repertoire drew on the grotesques of the *danse macabre* to refashion Hans Holbein's representation of an individual, everyday life struggle with death. The adaptation of the motif to the domestic context of the petty bourgeoisie leads to the addition in puppet theatre of a third character, more terrible than Death and the Devil, namely the hero's wife.

KEYWORDS: hand-puppetry; Romanticism; satire; hybrid genres; England; Germany; the Netherlands

> Hurra! Den haben wir jetzt! Wart', du Klapperbein[2], du sollst mir nit wieder kommen. Jetzt geht's erst recht los, denn jetzt ist der Tod umgebracht und alle Welt wird schreien: Vivat Kasperl, der den Tod bezwungen.
> Radi-ridi-rulala – rulala – rulala,
> Radi-ridi-rulala – rulala – rulala.
> (Reinhardt 1924, 76)
>
> [Hooray! We have him now! Wait, you rattle-leg, you shall not come again. Now it's just getting started, because Death has now been killed and all the world will shout: long life to Kasperl, the one who defeated Death. / Radi-ridi-rulala – rulala – rulala, / Radi-ridi-rulala – rulala – rulala.]

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[2] *Jan Klapperbeen* is an old low German name for the Grim Reaper (Erbelding 2006, 15-16).

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1. Macabre Motifs in Puppet Repertoire

The motif is well-known in *Punch and Judy* shows and is to be found in several European traditions: the hero beats all his opponents to death, and when at last the time of his well-deserved punishment has come, he kills its supernatural executor too, be it the devil or an allegory of death in the shape of a skeleton puppet. In today's Punch and Judy shows, the original figure of the devil is sometimes replaced by a ghost (Byrom 1988, 25), who made his first appearance in the repertoire in the scenes 8-9 of the *Punch and Judy* play that was anonymously published by "Papernose Woodensconce esq." in 1854 (the play is divided into 23 scenes). It has been suggested that the ghost was a late British invention, in comparison with the Italian model of the show: however, the addition of the ghost character, especially when it precedes the final apparition of the devil (in the "Papernose" version), brings the plot of the Punch shows into close proximity to the old Don Juan plays of the European repertoire of the eighteenth century (cf. Collier 1828, 54-61 and 67), where the confrontation of the hero with the "stone guest" announced his descent to Hell in the finale.

Death and the devil had originally the same function from the very beginning: both carried away wicked people at the end of the play, and it was probably an accepted conclusion of the eighteenth century puppet shows that a villain like Punch was to suffer the same fate (Speaight 1990, 171). At least from the nineteenth century onwards, the situation changed in favour of the hero, and Punch now got rid of his "dark antagonists" (Byrom 1988, 25). The reason for this development may lay in his progressive evolution from secondary to leading role. In the repertoire from the eighteenth century, when the Italian Pulcinella or the German Hanswurst or Kasperl were for the most part still playing the role of servants,[3] the opposition between master and servant often overlapped with the contrast between tragic and comic characters, as may be seen, for instance, from the several Don Juan plays with puppets or actors that spread throughout Europe at that time. Whereas Don Juan could not escape his tragic end, his servant always survived, even though he had not necessarily been much better than his late master. As the comic character later on gained autonomy – and especially in glove puppetry, that casted different play style and repertoire – he retained this characteristic feature. He did not only survive, but fought back against the "horrid, dreadful personage[s]" (as the author of the "Papernose" play, supposedly Robert Brough, had the devil; Papernose 2001, 29) who crossed his way, and eventually defeated them.

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[3] As for Punch: "Punch of *Punch's Opera*, the bawdy marionette shows of the eighteenth century, was certainly a star in the sense of being the star comedian, but generally speaking, his actions were incidental to the drama and had no significance in it" (Byrom 1988, xi).

An account of a Punch and Judy show from 1813 thus records the fight of the hero with both Death and the devil, which would become rather unusual in English puppet theatre:

> Death at length visits the fugitive [Punch], but Punch lays about his skeleton carcase so lustily, and makes the bones of his antagonist rattle so musically with a *bastinado*, that "Death his death's blow then received." Last of all comes the Devil; first, under the appearance of a lovely female, but afterwards in his own natural shape, to drag the offender to the infernal regions, in purgatory to expiate his dreadful crimes. Even this attempt fails, and Punch is left triumphant over Doctors, Death, and the Devil. (Collier 1828, 69)

The character thus becomes practically immortal. That he kills a ghost, and even beats death to death, is of course ironic.

The face-to-face confrontation with death on the stage of a theatre, namely in so-called morality plays, seems to be a plausible origin of the *danse macabre* motif in medieval iconography (Jugan 2021). The above-mentioned scenes might have initially operated as a counterpart to such motifs in early-modern drama. Indeed, the connexion between traditional puppet characters and sometimes very ancient representations of death has been repeatedly stressed. The cruel and somewhat devilish Pulcinella resembles the comic figure from the Atellan farce in Ancient Rome, Maccus or Pullus Gallinaceus, a hook-nosed hunchback character (Eruli 2014, 15-19). In sixteenth-century Germany, the comic character of the puppet scene was called "Meister Hämmerlein" (Master Hammer) and was even more explicitly a figure of the devil[4] (Purschke 1984, 31-2). But Meister Hämmerlein also shared some attributes with the later Pulcinella-like characters, such as a bludgeon (Punch's stick, Kasperl's *Pritsche*) and a tongue whistle, or swazzle (Kasperl is the only one who does not use this instrument). This example suggests that the comic figure of the German and Dutch traditions, unlike the English Punch (Byrom 1988, xi-xiv), is not a mere reproduction of the Pulcinella-type, but has its own origins in medieval and early modern German theatre.[5]

However, the continuity of such traditions is, in the absence of any written evidence, not to be overrated (Purschke 1984, 51; Byrom 1988, xii). The available sources already show, on the contrary, an intense circulation between the different repertoires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the first record of a Punch and Judy show by John Collier, based on the Italian puppeteer Giovanni Piccini's performances of the play in London in 1827, is only one late example of the numerous cultural transfers in the European culture of that time. The names of the protagonist themselves are basically loan-words: Mister Punch in London, Putschenelle in Hamburg, as well as the French Polichinelle, obviously originate from Pulcinella, whose name had become a synonym for a marionette in the European reception of Italian puppetry since the sixteenth century (Purschke 1984, 59; Bartoš 1963, 30). The question of historical continuity in puppet theatre has not so much to do with a specific character as with the confrontation of this polymorphic puppet character with death, finitude and damnation.

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[4] It is unclear whether the devil had its name from the puppet, or the puppet from the devil (Purschke 1984, 31).

[5] I would like to thank Lars Rebehn (Puppentheatersammlung Dresden) for drawing my attention to this fact.

These closely related themes in the Christian worldview, notwithstanding their allegedly religious or mythical origins in puppet theatre (Magnin 1981, 208-20 and 281-92; Simmen 1972, 6), have, of course, undergone in the modern repertoire a process of secularisation, which led to the staging of death in a domestic context we know from the Punch and Judy shows, or from Kasperl theatre in the German speaking countries. As a result, both Mister Punch and the *Privatier* (private citizen) Kasperl Larifari, as Count Franz von Pocci (1807-1876) liked to name him, were represented from the nineteenth century onwards as petit bourgeois, living on their own: the household then became the battlefield of the protagonist's everyday life struggle with death and evil. Other opponents to the main character were of supernatural or monstrous nature, such as the long-stretching-neck individual or the "beast" that was later on to become a crocodile (for Punch as well as for Kasperl and Jan Klaassen). Most of them, however, were of a more social character. The most prominent one is the hero's own wife (Judy in England, Grete in Germany, Katrijn in Netherland), who is in general hardly an adjuvant, but rather an opponent to him. The audience could thus identify with the figures on stage, especially as glove puppetry also marked a socio-cultural difference by addressing the fairground public (Till 1986, 9-12) – a feature that Pocci's string puppet Kasperl obviously inherited from the fair shows in Munich (85-86).

This process of secularisation allows further comparison with the *danse macabre* motif (namely in the *Dance of Death* series by Hans Holbein, 1497-1543), insofar as it resulted in a similar treatment of the theme in traditional iconography and modern-times puppetry, through the combination of grotesque and death motifs. It may also more specifically explain why the early nineteenth century saw the rise of considerable interest in this kind of repertoire, the new aesthetics of Romanticism having opened minds to hybrid genres and unfixed forms of art, such as were to be found in folk culture (Eversberg 2012, 35). The very first publication of a Punch-text by John Collier (1789-1883), in 1827-28, is characteristic of contemporary book aesthetics, combining the play script itself with an extensive critical apparatus and, of course, the illustrations of George Cruikshank (1792-1878). Collier's text edition, along with the accompanying commentary that sounded much like a parody of philological discourse, were regarded as an early attempt at literary forgery by an author who became famous later on for his Shakespeare forgeries (Speaight 1970, 81-2). We have to take into consideration, though, that Collier's editorial choices had to reflect a dramatic form that was no less hybrid: in comparison with classical theatre, Punch had relatively little text, and the plot was simple enough to leave room for the virtuosity of the manipulator: indeed, glove puppetry displayed a specific choreography and required specific body work from the puppeteer (Technau 1992, 39-61), which would certainly deserve a closer examination than can be provided in this article. Punch's fights were dances in any case,[6] and his final duel with the devil might be therefore considered as a modern-times *danse macabre* (cf. Erbelding 2006, 16-17).

Collier saw puppet theatre as nothing less than the heritage of medieval Mystery plays (Collier 1828, 23-4 and 28). Yet the first German puppet-play editions give an even more striking example of the use of Romantic aesthetics in the valorisation of this repertoire in the first half of the nineteenth century. The publications of the Stuttgart bookseller Johann Scheible (1809-1866) in the series *Das Kloster* (The Cloister, 1845-1850) included some of the most famous plays from the puppet repertoire in the general context of dark Romanticism. Scheible's interests as a publisher lay in folk culture and furthermore in occultism and demonology. To fit into this program, not only Faust, but also Don Juan were primarily interpreted as necromancers. As an introduction to the publication of three Don Juan plays in 1846, Scheible reproduced an article by August Kahlert. Kahlert also refers to festival traditions in Madrid in order to underline the link between the Don Juan puppet and vanity motifs:

> Ein reisender [August Lewald] behauptet, daß noch heute am Fastnachtsdienstage Don Juan als Puppe vom Kopf bis zu Füßen weiß gekleidet, mit Mantel und Federbarett angethan, auf weißem Kissen knieend von vier Männern auf dem Prado herumgetragen werde. Vielleicht eine Ermahnung an das Volk, das Göttliche über dem irdischen Jubelrausche nicht zu vergessen. (Kahlert 1841, 115)
> [A traveller claims that still today, on Shrove Tuesday, four men carry around a Don Juan puppet on the Prado: he is dressed in white from head to toe,

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[6] In the Hamburg version of the Punch and Judy show (see below) published by Johannes E. Rabe under the title *Putschenelle ist tot, vivat Putschenelle* (Putschenelle is dead, long life to Putschenelle), we can see Putschenelle entering the dance of two Moors before he eventually knocks them both away.

> wearing a coat and feathered cap, and kneeling on a white cushion. Perhaps an admonition to the people not to forget divinity for the sake of earthly glee.]

Unlike Collier, though, Scheible, as well as Karl Simrock (1802-1876), the first editor of the puppet *Faust*, in 1846, were not so much interested in the Hanswurst/Kasperl character itself, as in the traditional, almost classic repertoire of the eighteenth century. This does not mean, of course, that there were no puppet shows in Germany comparable to Punch in England. The oldest preserved text cited by Johannes E. Rabe in his *Kasper Putschenelle* study of glove-puppet theatre in Hamburg dates back to 1840-1855, and its plot was evidently inspired by Punch (Rabe 1912, 88). The anonymous publication was accompanied by twenty illustrations, some of which were reproduced after Cruikshank (83). Yet Rabe did not believe that the Hamburg puppet tradition originated in the Punch shows: hand-puppetry had its own tradition in the German speaking countries, which was broadly known under the generic name *Kasperltheater.*[7] The face-to-face confrontation of Kasperl with Death and the devil did not at first attract the attention of philologists (Rabe published his essay only in 1912), but rather that of artists like Franz von Pocci or Carl Reinhardt. In the following discussion, we will focus on the latter's work.

2. Round Dance Between Kasperl, Death and the Devil

Carl Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater* was first published in 1852 in *Münchener Bilderbogen* (Munich Picture Sheets), a famous illustrated journal to which Franz von Pocci also contributed at the time. This work consists of a series of around forty illustrations with text accompaniment in the form of a dialogue (Reinhardt is sometimes considered a precursor of today's comic books). Although the text includes stage directions, those scenes were not actually meant to be staged, but rather to record what happened in the puppet booths, which we otherwise know only from memoirs and other testimonies. The engravings depict the characters at mid-body, like hand-puppets:

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[7] Pocci's first engagement with the Kasperl figure in the almanac *Was Du willst* (What you want, 1854; reprinted a year later in *Münchener Bilderbogen*) consisted of three plays for shadow theatre and one puppet play. The last shadow play ends in the form of a prologue: on the picture we can see people gathering around a street puppet booth. We can therefore assume that the following play, *Kasperl in der Türkei* (Kasperl in Turkey), was initially designed for glove-puppets. So was, in any case, the collection *Neues Kasperltheater* Pocci published in 1855 (cf. Purschke 1984, 53-54). This demonstrates that before his encounter with puppeteer Josef Leonhard Schmid (1822-1912), Pocci mainly associated Kasperl theatre with glove-puppetry.

unlike Cruikshank, Reinhardt does not represent the booth, and his characters are more realistic (they don't imitate puppets). Yet all the scenes are composed with two, or at the most three, characters, as if they were to be performed by only one puppeteer. The play also replicates the loose plot and somewhat disjointed style of street puppet shows, such as the British Punch and Judy shows.

Most of all, the six scenes from Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater* display a series of routines, that is, typical patterns of action: Kasperl hangs the hangman ("Kasperl als Rekrut in der Türkei" [Kasperl is a Recruit in Turkey]), the devil pops out of a box ("Kasperl und der Teufel" [Kasperl and the Devil]), Kasperl knocks Death out ("Kasperl und der Tod" [Kasperl and Death]). This last scene begins with a vignette showing how Kasperl carries to the front of the stage the corpse of the devil he has killed a few scenes earlier, and eventually throws it out of the booth, just as Punch would do. This is also the only vignette before the brief epilogue ("Kasperl macht Schluss" [Kasperl concludes]) where a detail of the puppet booth is to be seen.

In the very last vignette of the cycle, Reinhardt gives in to the pleasure of drawing how Kasperl dispatches the Death skeleton with his bludgeon. Only here the illustrations cease to represent the actual happening on the stage of a puppet theatre: in this specific case, the iconographic tradition of the *danse macabre* seems to prevail. Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death*, in particular, was widely received in the nineteenth century (Knöll, 2018) and the motifs underwent an extraordinary revival at the time (Denhez-Gabion 2000, 97). It is thus highly unlikely that Reinhardt did not bear them in mind as he drew this vignette, being obviously more interested, as a draughtsman, in the graphic qualities of the scattered skeleton than in the dramaturgical aspects of the scene. Indeed, the scene could not be performed with glove puppets, unless of course the performers used an additional string marionette for the show – a transformation marionette that could indeed recall the famous *Dance of the Skeletons* by Nuremberg painter Michael Wolgemut (1434-1519)[8] – yet Reinhardt's illustrations give no indication of this.

Death isn't the only macabre apparition the comic figure has to fight with in this cycle. Kasperl must also face two devils, which makes the occurrences of such "dark antagonists" more frequent than in any comparable play, where those characters often do not occur until the end of the play. Reinhardt actually combined various scenes from traditional puppet shows, as known from the fairs. The routine with the gallows, where the main character eventually hangs the hangman, intervenes here as a conclusion to the first episode, whereas other plays would usually set it at the end of the show, since the character of the hangman, with a specific name in the English tradition, Jack Ketch quite often announces the arrival of the devil: in an 1841 illustration from *Punch* magazine we can even see Punch hanging the devil himself, which suggests that the two characters were sometimes identical. Reinhardt's second episode is a Don Juan play in a summarised form: at the end, the devil carries Don Juan away. In what follows, Reinhardt begins to link the episodes together. Thus the devil who pops out in the fourth episode presents himself as the brother-in-law of the devil who had carried Don Juan away. Kasperl kills him and then carries his dead body to the front of the stage in the last episode, the sixth. The third and the fourth episodes feature Kasperl's wife, with appearances of her rival, Karline, in one of them, and of an indeterminate beast in the other.

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[8] It was indeed a famous trick from the eighteenth century onwards. At Southwark Fair in 1752, Parsloe announced "a moving skeleton, which dances a jig upon the stage, and in the middle of his dance falls all to pieces, bone from bone, joint from joint, all parts of his body separate from one another; and in the twinkling of an eye up in his proper proportion, and dances as in the beginning." (Speaight 1990, 172)

Numerous reprints up to the twentieth century have made Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater* an important work in the development of puppet repertoire in the German speaking area and the Netherland (Paërl 1985, 11). It provided later playwrights (rather than puppeteers, apparently) with the basic action and dialogue patterns of the so-called traditional puppet theatre, that were henceforth available in print format. The last scene in particular contributed to the critical fortune of the work, as we can see from textual comparison with similar scenes of encounter between Kasperl (or Kaspar) and Death in more recent literature. The first lines between the two characters in Reinhardt's text are as follow:

> DER TOD […]: Ich bin der Tod, der Menschenfresser, ra-ra-ra-ra.
> KASPERL: Ei, iß Schweinebraten, der schmeckt dir besser, ra-ra-ra-ra.
> (Reinhardt 1924, 73)
> [DEATH […]: I am Death, the Man-Eater, ra-ra-ra-ra. KASPERL: Come on, eat pork roast, you'll like it better, ra-ra-ra-ra.]

In Frankfurt actor Alphons Müller's *Porzinelltheater* (1875), this rime is only adapted to the verse form of the play text (Reinhardt's is in prose):

> DER TOD: Ich bin der Tod und Menschenfresser.
> KASPAR: Iß Schweinebraten, schmeckt dir besser!
> (Müller 1878, 16)
> [DEATH: I am Death and Man-Eater. KASPAR: Eat pork roast, you'll like it better.]

Death then warns Kasperl or Kaspar it is time to die: he answers in the same manner that he has no time to die and begs Death to come later (in a hundred years, according to Reinhardt's version). In his version of the Faust myth *Das* *lasterhafte Leben des weiland weltbekannten Erzzauberers Christoph Wagner* (The depraved life of the once world-famous magician Christoph Wagner, 1925), German writer Klabund (Alfred Henschke, 1890-1928) rewrote this scene in turn. He made a few alterations to the text, but held to the principle of stichomythia during the whole exchange between the two speakers:

> DER TOD: Ich bin der Tod, der Menschenfresser. –
> KASPER (*erschreckt*): Wärst du zu Haus geblieben, wär's besser.
> (Klabund 1925, 26)
> [DEATH: I am Death, the Man-Eater. – KASPER *(frightened)*: If you had stayed home, it would be better.]

In Klabund's play, Kasper succeeds in fooling Death so that he doesn't harm him. The last line of the scene is even closer to Reinhardt's text, as Death leaves the stage with the motto: "Ich bin der Tod, der Menschenfresser", and Kasper answers: "Friß du Speck mit Klöße, das schmeckt besser!" ("Eat bacon with dumplings, you'll like it better!"; 29).

Later authors only borrowed the dialogue patterns – the plot is entirely different from one playwright to the next. Klabund integrated this scene in a rewriting of the well-known Faustus play for puppets. In Müller, the appearance of Death is part of a short play entitled *Doktor Stackelbix*, which is reminiscent of the scene with the doctor in the English Punch tradition rather than Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater*, where the character of the doctor does not occur. Despite staging the Kaspar character, Müller called his play collection *Porzinell-Theater* (*Porzinell* being derived from *Polichinelle*, and an ancient word for a puppet in general), and thus replaced it in the broader tradition of European puppet theatre. However, those examples show that Reinhardt's work had by this point become part of the cultural heritage of German playwrights for puppets. It provided a collection of reusable patterns and literary topoi that were soon to be found in a series of publications, but without any explicit reference to Reinhardt.

In the first of the short plays anonymously published by Gräbe and Hetzer in Sonneberg, most likely in the interwar period, under the title *Caspertheater* ("Casperl will Soldat werden" [Casperl Wants to Be a Soldier]), the main character, who is represented on the first page as ventripotent and humped like Polichinelle or Punch, encounters the devil instead of Death. The lines are very different from the previous quotes, yet the unknown author maintains the strict parallelism between both speeches, as well as the characterisation of the macabre figure through a harsh and rasping onomatopoeia ("ra-ra-ra-ra" by Reinhardt):

> TEUFEL: Ratsch, Ritsch, Ratsch. Wer hat mich in meiner Ruhe gestört. Wer ruft mich?

> CASPER: Ritsch, Ratsch, es hat dich kein Mensch gerufen. Es war nur ein Unteroffizier.
> (An., *Caspertheater*, 3)
> [DEVIL: Ratsch, Ritsch, Ratsch. Who has disturbed my peace? Who is calling me? CASPER: Ritsch, Ratsch, no man called you. It was only an officer.]

In Reinhardt's play, Death says one last time "ra-ra-ra-ra" before Kasperl dispatches him with his bludgeon. In "Casperl will Soldat werden", Casper strikes down the devil and pronounces the words "Ratsch, Ritsch" himself before laying the dead body of his opponent on the edge of the puppet booth, in the traditional position (that is, as Reinhardt depicted it in his illustration): "die Beine hängen nach innwendig und der Kopf nach außen" ("the legs hang inwards and the head outwards"; ibid.). The scene does not only show a role reversal but also how Casper takes on the attributes of the devil, namely the rasping noise with which he entered the scene. The main character of this series of plays is particularly wicked and brutal: Casper proves here, like the Italian Pulcinella or the English Punch, to be as evil as the devil himself. Yet this equation also applies to the character's relation to Death. The dialogues show the reversibility of the comic figure and the personification of death he encounters. In one of the first puppet plays published in Dutch within the collection *De poppekast* (The Puppet Booth, 1852), the Death character, who presents himself incidentally as "de dood van Pierrot" ("the death of Pierrot"; Meilink 1969, 67), comes to tell Jan Klaassen that he must change roles with him. Jan protests that he is not a mere "remplaçant" (a substitute):

> JAN KLAASSEN: Ben jij de dood? Zeg eens, vriend! Waarom blijf jij dan niet op het kerkhof, bij je broêrtjes en zusjes?
> DE DOOD: Wij moeten verwisselen; en daarom moet jij met me meê.
> JAN KLAASSEN: Wissel jij dubbeltjes… maar ik wissel niet: ik ben geen remplaçant; ik exerceer niet, ik dank je, en ik ga niet meê met je naar de kazerne.
> (ibid.)
> [JAN KLAASSEN: Are you Death? Tell me, friend! Why don't you stay in the graveyard with your little brothers and sisters? DEATH: We have to change; and therefore, you'll have to come with me. JAN KLAASSEN: You change dubbeltjes (Dutch coin)… but I won't change: I'm not a substitute; I won't drill, thank you, and won't go with you to the barracks.]

In the following lines, Jan Klaassen appropriates one of the epithets traditionally attributed to Death in the Dutch as well as German-speaking area:

> JAN KLAASSEN: Zeg eens, vriend! wat ben jij dan, de zoete of de bittere dood?
> DE DOOD: Ik ben de zoete dood.
> JAN KLAASSEN: En ik ben de bittere Jan Klaassen. (*Hij neemt zijn klomp, en wil den Dood wegschoppen, die daarop verdwijnt.*)

> (ibid.)
> [Jan Klaassen: Tell me, friend! what are you then, the sweet or the bitter Death? Death: I am the sweet Death. Jan Klaassen: And I am the bitter Jan Klaassen. (*He takes his clog and wants to knock Death away, but he disappears.*)]

One is the death of the other: the characters of the puppet play are interchangeable because they have no real identity (although the rewrites of the nineteenth century endeavoured to endow the main character with national identity: Byrom 1988, xiv), they are nothing but functions in the "dramatic configuration" (Polheim 1997) of the play. The composition of the play, the interaction between the figures and the stage choreography (especially in puppet theatre) determine, in the end, who beats whom.

3. The Wife Character: Satire and Allegory

Reinhardt's plays put on stage another character with supernatural features, one whom Kasperl is probably more afraid of than Death and the devil, namely his wife. She appears for the first time in "Frau Kasperl und die Köchin" (Madame Kasperl and the Cook) and struggles against the cook Karline, to whom Kasperl has promised marriage. As usual, Kasperl settles the dispute by knocking them both out, and puts the bodies in a box which, at the end of the play, he is set to throw in the river and thus drown them. In "Kasperl und der Teufel", the devil steals the box and replaces it with another, a round one, from which he emerges and seizes hold of Kasperl. At the end, Kasperl kills him and announces his intention to burn the box. In the next episode, the supposedly dead Madame Kasperl suddenly pops out of the round box (the devil's box) and starts to hit Kasperl, calling him a "Weibertotenschläger" ("wife-killer"; Reinhardt 1924, 61). Kasperl throws her out (of the puppet booth?) along with the box. Her last appearance is at the beginning of "Kasperl und der Tod", where she announces to Kasperl the arrival of Death before running away.

The treatment of the character is particularly incoherent. The conception of the whole cycle as a collage of various scenes from the street puppet shows may of course explain such unmotivated reappearances. In "Kasperl und der Teufel", though, the comic effect of the wife popping out of a box when no one was expecting her to do so (all the more so, as she is supposed to be dead) could justify the sequencing of the scenes. These constant resurrections have above all a satirical function: Kasperl cannot get rid of his wife, although there is nobody he would be happier to get rid of. You escape Death and the devil more easily than your own wife, because a wife is hell on earth. This misogynistic motif is of course far from being new, and was already to be found in an earlier Don Juan play (around 1813), where Kasperl, standing before the door to Hell, bids his master farewell with the words:

> Und, g'sötzt, Ös kemmt's in d'Höll,
> Seid's meiner eingedenk,
> Und griaßt's m'r dort mei Greath,
> Dö isch g'wiss in d'Höll,
> Und sâgg's: i lâß ihr sog'n
> Daß i iaz heiret'n wöll.
> Und suach'n miaßt's Ös sie
> Bein Luzifar, ihren Hearn,
> Denn ear hât selb'r g'sâgg:
> Gleich und gleich g'sellt si gearn.
> (Kaiser 2005, 190-191)
> [And let's say you go to Hell, / Do remember me, / And greet my Grete there, / She's certainly in hell, / And tell her: I let her know / that I now want to get married. / And you have to search for her / Near Lucifer, her master, / For he himself has said: / Birds of a feather flock together.]

The killing and the resurrection of the wife, traditionally known as Grete, have a long tradition in Kasperl theatre, at least in the south German area. In Austria, glove-puppets were forbidden to speak for almost a century and the plays therefore had no text, but the account by writer Felix Salten (1869-1945) of the Vienna Prater shows gives us a clue about what was happening in the puppet-booth around 1912. At the beginning of the show, Kasperl killed his wife Grete with a hammer. It was sheer accident: the audience had by then evolved into a children's one, therefore the main character could not be as ruthless and cruel as before. The routine with the box was very similar to Reinhardt's scenes where Kasperl also trapped the night watchman as he sought to check the contents of the box. Here Kasperl inadvertently killed the doctor and then, on purpose, the Jew to whom he intended to sell the box with the two corpses in it: he eventually put three bodies in the box. In the show as we learn from Salten, the devil appeared to carry Kasperl away, but an angel came to prevent him doing so and resurrected Grete so that man and wife could live happily ever after (Salten 1912, 116-23).

Another play from the Central European tradition by the judge August Franz Rokos, from Cheb in Bohemia, *Der Schmied von Jüterbock und sein Geselle Kasper* (The Blacksmith of Jüterbock and His Journeyman Kasper, 1922) has a very similar scene to the one described by Salten in which Kasper accidently kills his wife, puts the body in a box and then murders a policeman by suffocating him in the box, as the latter wants to check its contents. Kasper is then about to throw the box in the water, just like Reinhardt's character, before the devil shows up. The main difference in Rokos' play from the previous ones, especially from the Vienna Prater show, is a significant one: it is not an angel, but the devil himself who resurrects Kasper's wife. In the following, Gretl will plague her husband so much that he wishes to die. Yet Death avoids Kasper since he had played a nasty trick on him. At the end, he still finds a way to clear himself of the policeman's murder in order to get into paradise. The conditions laid down by Saint Peter specify the meaning of the wife motif in Rokos' play, namely that marriage is purgatory:

> Skt. Peter: Ja einmal kannst du in den Himmel kommen, aber nicht gleich. Du bist im Essen und Trinken allzu unmäßig und mußt daher noch ein paar Jahrln im Fegefeuer verbringen.
> Kasperl: Im Fegefeuer? Wo ist denn das wieder?
> Skt. Peter (*lachend*): Unten auf Erden bei deiner Gretl. (*Er macht ihm die Himmeltüre vor der Nase zu und verschwindet.*)
> (Rokos 1922, 64)
> [St Peter: Yes, you can go to heaven, but not right away. You are too intemperate in eating and drinking and must therefore spend a few more years in purgatory. Kasperl: In purgatory? Where is that again? St Peter (*smiles*): Down on earth with your Gretl. (*He closes the doors to heaven in his face and disappears.*)]

Rokos' play deliberately borrows from several sources of alleged folk culture, starting with the subject itself, which comes from the tale "Der Schmied von Jüterbog", first published in 1836 by Ludwig Bechstein (1801-1860), whose folk tales became very popular in the nineteenth century and afterwards.[9] There is no doubt that Rokos knew about Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater*: the sequence of the box scene, with Kasperl wanting to throw it into the water, is a clear example of intertextuality. The playwright was therefore very conscious of the specificity of each repertoire when he stated, on the cover of his publication, that the play was intended for glove-puppets as well as for string-puppets. The target audience in so-called Sudetenland may have been more familiar with the latter, as both Bohemia and neighbouring Saxony were mostly famous for their carved marionettes (string-puppets; Blecha and Jirásek 2008, 40); through its connexion to the Viennese Kasperl theatre and to Reinhardt's illustrated sheets in Munich, Rokos' play also refers to the Central-European hand-puppet tradition.

In this regard, we might consider *Der Schmied von Jüterbock* as, to some extent, a reflexive work on these regional traditions. However, the connexion of Gretl with eschatological representations, such as hell or purgatory, is not a particularity of Franz August Rokos' interpretation of the older repertoire.

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[9] Bechstein came back to the theme of "Der Schmied von Jüterbog" with a tale called "Die drei Wünsche" (The Three Wishes), after which Franz von Pocci wrote one of his most popular plays.

Indeed, it was already to be found in the above-mentioned play "Langhals en de dood" in 1852. In this play, Jan Klaassen attacks Langhals (Long-neck, a neck-stretching figure who also appears as an interlude trick in the text of puppeteer Piccini's play published by John Collier) and gets hurt. He complains to his wife Katrijn, but she tells him she regrets that the blow didn't kill him, and praises the lovely funeral she would have given him. Jan wants to thank her with a blow, while Katrijn threatens him with death. The ensuing chase is described in the stage direction as follow: "Jan Klaassen neemt zijn klomp en wil Katrijn er meê raken; in eens komt, in plaats van Katrijn de Dood te voorschijn." ("Jan Klaassen takes his clog and wants to hit Katrijn with it; suddenly, Death appears instead of Katrijn"; Meilink 1969, 67).

Such an unexpected substitution produces a comical effect and has a satirical dimension too. In the play, Jan Klaassen at first still believes that he is facing his wife, uttering an ironical, as much as insulting compliment about her: "Nou ziet mijn wijf er ter dege mooi uit!" ("Now my wife looks really nice!"; ibid.) With this routine, which the spectator would at first sight perceive as a metamorphosis, Katrijn moves from the familiar, domestic sphere of the main character to that of the supernatural beings who populate the play. The character of the wife would initially embody everyday life in its most prosaic aspects: in this regard, Katrijn is not only a caricature, she is also an allegory. Therefore, there could be no better representation of what Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) called "le tragique du quotidien" ("the tragedy of everyday life"; Erbelding 2006, 25) than her being changed into Death, with the only difference that here, satire plays down the sacred significance of death, and thus deactivates its tragic effects.

In the conclusion of Rokos' play, the idea of purgatory had a similar function (satire isn't absent from the play either). Indeed, it defined an intermediate state between earthly life and the hereafter, especially since purgatory, for Kasperl, was located down on earth, by his wife. Satire brings together everyday life and supernatural elements in a similar way, enabling a hybridisation of genres that we must, however, distinguish from the aesthetics of romantic irony (Galmiche 2012, 777-81): firstly, because this tradition originates in a literary output that predates Romanticism, and hadn't much to do with the Romanticists' attempts to write for puppets (Rebehn 2021); secondly, because the first records of hand-puppet theatre texts display features that are quite opposite to the poetics of the romantic school as defined by Friedrich Schlegel, beginning with eclecticism and plurality of styles, "low mimesis" (Dimić 2010) and "sick humour" (Byrom 1988, 16).

In this regard, string-puppets seemed more easily integrated into the romantic aesthetic, as several examples would show. Heinrich von Kleist's essay on marionette theatre is probably too isolated a case to be cited here, although the dramatist's acquaintance with the poet Clemens Brentano

(1778-1842) in Berlin suggests a common interest for puppets in the romantic circles in North Germany. Brentano was indeed among the romanticists who undertook to write for puppets (but eventually gave up; Rebehn 2021), and in the endnotes to his drama *Die Gründung Prags* (The Foundation of Prague, 1814), he even compared the *Alraune* (mandrake) with Hanswurst, and, with obvious satirical intentions, Satanism with the theatre business in general (Brentano 1814, 426-427). Yet the plays for string-puppets that were published by Scheible in the above-mentioned collection *Das Kloster* still provide the best example of romantic interests for this specific type of theatre.

Reinhardt's interest in glove-puppetry represented a completely different aesthetic line, one that was devoid of romantic pathos and romantic taste for the marvellous. His work in the *Münchener Bilderbogen* has certainly more to do with the "aesthetic of ugliness", as first theorised by philosopher Karl Rosenkranz (1805-1879) one year later, in 1853: even today, German puppeteer Joachim Damm admits to being struck by the downright ugliness of Reinhardt's Kasperl pictures (Damm 2018). Nevertheless, the engagement of nineteenth century authors with glove-puppetry re-enacted medieval imagery in the same way the Romanticists purposed to do. The comments of John Collier on the Punch and Judy shows as a heritage of Mystery demonstrate that his generation was fully aware of the historical origins of glove-puppetry in the Middle Ages. To this extent, Reinhardt's *Kasperltheater* was indeed a revisited *danse macabre*, even if the sources of the nineteenth century iconography would more likely date back to the Reformation period, namely to Hans Holbein's secularised version of the theme. Given Reinhardt's artistic education in Dresden and Munich, the reference to such motifs was probably conscious.

Is then Kasperl's wife, Grete, with the mainly satirical, but partly allegorical, features of her representation on the puppet stage, a distant descendant of Brueghel's *Dull Gret*? The idea of a direct lineage is of course very questionable (Byrom 1988, xii). It is more likely that the first printed records of puppet shows in the early and mid-nineteenth century reinvented at the same time the folklore from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which would definitely be in line with the artistic trends of the Romantic period: in this respect, the engagement of writers with puppetry was truly modern. Glove-puppetry did not have the same literary qualities as the dramas for string-puppets and did not arouse the same interest among Romanticists, yet the few available textual and graphic records from that period give valuable clues about its evolution. The broad reception of Collier and Cruikshank's edition of Punch and Judy, the imitation and even plagiarism of their work in Germany (Rabe 1912, 83) and, last but not least, the similarities between Cruikshank's and Reinhardt's artistic projects suggest that many early glove-puppet scripts were inspired by this very publication. In other countries, the texts are not available: in the lands under Austrian rule, for instance, glove-puppets were not allowed to speak. We know little, or nothing, about the Czech *rakvičkárna*, the "little coffin" theatre of that time (Blecha 1998; Zapletal 2014, 36; Kleinová 2016, 46).

The unfixed form of traditional puppet theatre, however, gave the writers room for reinterpretation of the ancient motifs. The relatively free interaction between the characters within the dramatic configuration of the shows was the occasion for many role changes, and Death and the devil themselves had to enter the dance as simply as one of the crowd: unlike the allegories of death in the medieval *danses macabres*, they were eventually defeated. Puppet theatre meets traditional iconography of the *danse macabre* insofar as both are a hybrid genre, mixing satire and allegory together. This was not the result of a continuous development, though, but that of a modern reconstruction. In puppet theatre, the nineteenth century celebrated its reunion with Death – in the words of Michel de Ghelderode[10] inaugurating the new year in the Toone marionette theatre of Brussels: "Ainsi fut retrouvée cette wandelende dood, cette mort promenante, résidu lointain des chambres rhétoriciennes qui elles-mêmes avaient adapté les peintures moralisantes des danses macabres, du Triomphe de la Mort qu'on peut voir au Prado." ("Thus came back this *wandelende dood*, this Wandering Death, a distant residue of the chambers of rhetoric which themselves had adapted the moralising paintings of the *danses macabres*, the Triumph of Death that is to be seen in the Prado"; Ghelderode 1952, 5).

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[10] The characters of Death and the devil also occur in Ghelderode's plays (Erbelding 2006, 16). A drawing with a short dialogue by Michel de Ghelderode and José Géal, *Pitje la Mort*, revisits the traditional theme of *danse macabre* by showing a Death marionette drinking beer with the marionettes of Pitje and Poeternoester (Botsford 1980, fig.11).

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Francesca Di Fazio*

Figurations of Evil in Contemporary Puppet Theatre Dramaturgy[1]

Abstract

Puppets' fictitious nature allows them to figure raw themes in all their concreteness on stage. In a close alternation of tragic and comic tones, contemporary puppet theatre faces the darkest fantasies appealing to traditional techniques and post-dramatic staging. Four different plays from the second half of the twentieth century and the early 2000s of the French and Italian repertoires reveal how the scenic space of the puppet booth may become a landscape inhabited by obscure figures. Ceronetti's *La iena di San Giorgio* creates a modern anti-hero out of an old popular gory legend. In Brunello's and Molnár's *Macbeth all'improvviso*, glove puppets abandon comedy to collapse into a tragic situation with no escape. In *La Chpocalypse*, Lépinois employs the character's typical routines to draw on the page a macabre dance. In Jerk, Cooper, Vienne, and Capdevielle concert their skills as authors, directors, and performers to stage a text that spellbinds a heinous story. Moreover, the plays analysed provide several examples of how the use of puppets activates dramaturgical processes that impact the text's mechanism, creating a link between the writing and its staging.

KEYWORDS: puppet theatre dramaturgy; figure theatre; contemporary dramaturgy; playwriting; repertoire

1. "Entering the region that wisdom tells us to flee"

> Il est nécessaire à la vie quelquefois non de fuir les ombres de la mort, de les laisser grandir au contraire en elle, aux limites de la défaillance, à la fin de la mort elle-même. (Bataille 2016, 51)
> [It is necessary for life sometimes not to flee from the shadows of death but rather to let them grow within it, at the limits of failure, at the end of death itself.][2]

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[2] All translations are mine.

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In his famous essay *La littérature et le mal*, Bataille uses Michelet's essay on witches and their function during the Middle Ages[3] as a starting point to reflect on the theme of evil. According to Bataille, despite the instinct to escape death and chase it away as far as possible, human beings are nonetheless drawn into a confrontation with it. Descending into death's depths appears as the ultimate response to the need to avoid it. Arts, and in particular the performing arts, respond, Bataille argues, to this special need. According to Aristotle's notion, tragedy evokes the feelings of pity and fear to overcome, through catharsis, the confusion that they provoke. At the same time, Bataille sees the artistic experience as a way to face the present, anguished feelings that one tries to avoid. The aim would thus not only be to purify oneself from these feelings but to use them to experience life more immediately:

> À cette fin nous servent les arts, dont l'effet, dans des salles de spectacle, est de nous porter au plus haut degré possible d'angoisse. Les arts - au moins certains d'entre eux - sans cesse évoquent devant nous ces désordres, ces déchirements et ces déchéances que notre activité entière a pour but d'éviter. (Cette proposition est même vérifiée dans l'art comique). (2016, 51-2)
> [To this end we are served by the arts, whose effect, in theatres, is to bring us to the highest possible degree of anguish. The arts - at least some of them - constantly evoke before us those disorders, those tears, and decays that our entire activity is designed to avoid. (This proposition also occurs in comic art).]

In the short addition in brackets, Bataille does not give further examples but simply states that also comic arts can cause a strong feeling of anguish. Laughter does not, therefore, lead to distancing the fear of death but rather to lightening it:

> Si nous rions, si nous pleurons, c'est que, pour l'instant, victimes d'un jeu ou dépositaires d'un secret, la mort nous parait *légère*. Cela ne signifie pas que l'horreur inspirée par elle soit pour nous devenu étrangère : mais qu'un instant nous l'avons dépassée. (2016, 52)
> [If we laugh or cry, it is because, for now, as victims of a game or keepers of a secret, death seems *light* to us. It does not mean that the horror inspired by it has become alien to us: but that we have overcome it for a moment.]

Thanks to the immediacy of this approach, the comical tone is another way, in addition to the tragic one, to face fears caused by the possibility of death. The comical can represent the absence of life and attain a level of anguish sufficient to overcome it and feel it more "lightly". As finite beings, Bataille argues, humans need to get as close as possible to the very object of their terror, to visit the extreme of their possibilities in order to feel life more deeply and, thus, feel safer.

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[3] Michelet, 2016. In this essay, Michelet proposes an original reinterpretation of the figure of the witch. No longer seen as a culprit and a threat to society, the witch is rehabilitated and seen as the result of the society of the time, a palliative to the difficulties experienced by the people in the feudal society of the Middle Ages.

The history of popular folklore and its artistic manifestations are full of correspondences between comic expression and its essential apotropaic function. In outlining the figure of the jester between the Middle Ages and the modern age, Piero Camporesi describes him as a priest of an alternative form of religion, based not on the dogmas of faith but on those of the agrarian cultural model, regulated by the inevitable alternation of life and death. Laughter was thus used in ritualistic moments to exorcise the fear of death and propitiate the continuation of life:

> L'immagine del mondo elaborata dalla cultura agraria vedeva nel riso lo strumento magico primario, lo scongiuro più potente per la creazione e la ricreazione della vita. Scaturisce da questa fondamentale premessa legata all'esorcismo fecondante del riso l'elemento comico, farsesco e parodistico proprio del mondo popolare, immerso in una cultura fisiologica ed escrementale, in una oscenità apotropaica, prescritta e rituale.... (Camporesi 1991, 31)
> [The image of the world developed by agrarian culture saw laughter as the primary magical instrument, the most powerful spell for the creation and recreation of life. From this fundamental premise, linked to the fecundating spell of laughter, springs the comic, farcical, and parodistic element of the popular world, immersed in a physiological and excremental culture, in an apotropaic, prescribed, and ritual obscenity....]

The so-called "pagan" or "satanic" rites, such as the Black Mass or the Sabbath, are identified by Bataille as a popular response to a substantial gap left by religious rites at the time of the Church's decline. Once the rites were lost, "le sabbat peut-il être tenu pour un dernier mot. L'homme mythique est mort, nous laissant ce dernier message - somme toute un rire noir" (Bataille 2016, ; "the Sabbath can be held as the last word. The mythical man is dead, leaving us this last message - a black laugh after all"). The "black laugh", witchcraft, and similar rituals would have spread, as Michelet had already claimed, concerning the figure of the witch, within an oppressed working class left without cardinal points. The exaltation of life, to be such, needs to pass through the negation of life itself, or at least the negation of those social and religious principles that would like to keep it intact from the shadow of death and its ghosts.

> Ce que le rire enseigne est qu'à fuir sagement les éléments de mort, nous ne visons encore qu'à *conserver la vie* : tandis qu'entrant dans la région que la sagesse nous dit de fuir *nous la vivons.* Car la folie du rire n'est qu'apparente. Brûlant au contact de la mort, tirant des signes qui en représentent le

> vide une conscience redoublée de l'être, à réintroduire – violemment – ce qui devait être écarté, il nous sort, pour un temps, de l'impasse où ceux qui ne savent que la conserver enferment la vie. (Bataille 2016, 52)
> [What laughter teaches is that in wisely fleeing from the elements of death, we still aim only at preserving life: While entering the region that wisdom tells us to flee from, *we live it.* For the madness of laughter is only apparent. Burning at the contact with death, drawing a redoubled consciousness of being from the signs that represent its emptiness, to reintroduce - violently - what should have been discarded, it takes us out, for a time, of the impasse where those who only know how to preserve it lock up life.]

In choosing to write for a medium such as puppet theatre, some contemporary authors seem to be conscious of this "apparent madness of laughter". The artistic potential of the violent reintroduction of "what should have been discarded" resides in the "black laugh" that they materialise in their works. From the character of Polichinelle - cousin of English Punch, defined by Antoine Vitez as the "incarnation of absolute evil, of joyful evil" - to the post-dramatic staging of Gisèle Vienne, puppetry has never ceased to face the mind's darkest fantasies. In the scripts and shows examined here, themes such as violence, murder, drugs, perversion, and cannibalism are conveyed through manipulation techniques that affect the dramatic writing itself. The techniques they refer to are, on the whole, traditional: string puppets for Ceronetti, glove puppets for Brunello and Lépinois, glove puppets and ventriloquism for Vienne and Cooper. The straightforwardness of the medium not only arouses the immediacy of laughter but also conveys the anguish of death, the need for terror, and the vice of crime. What happens to violent legends and Shakespearian tragedies if puppets relive them? How can the story of a murderer be represented with puppets? Four texts and performances will be analysed to support the following hypothesis: there is, in puppet theatre, a specific language that leads authors, puppeteers, and directors to use its mechanisms in order to express different figurations of evil.

2. If the Villain is Seen as an Artist: Exaltation of Evil

In 1970, the Turinese author Guido Ceronetti and Erica Tedeschi created a small puppet theatre called Teatro dei Sensibili. Ceronetti wrote numerous texts for this miniature theatre, all staged using small string or rod puppets, sometimes accompanied by actors playing in front of the puppet booth. The first work staged by the Teatro dei Sensibili, *La Iena di San Giorgio. Tragedia per marionette*, is a reinterpretation of an older play. The story of the "Iena di San Giorgio" ("St George's Hyena") has often been staged by puppeteers, especially in northern Italy, between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The legend probably dates back to a news item from Piedmont in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1835, a butcher from San Giorgio Canavese, Giorgio Orsolano, was sentenced to death following the killing of three young girls who were first raped and then cut into pieces to conceal the crime and make it appear that they were victims of wild animals. Popular opinion later spread the accusation that Orsolano, known as "the hyena" because of his heinous crimes, had used the flesh of his victims to make the products of his butcher shop.

The "Iena di San Giorgio" is just one of many stories around the theme of cannibalism that were told in puppet booths. One possible antecedent is the Venetian legend of the early sixteenth century about the *luganegher* (butcher) Biagio Carnico. The plot is similar: Biagio Carnico is known for the deliciousness of his *guazzetto* (a typical Venetian dish), which, it turns out, is prepared with the addition of children's meat. Once identified as the criminal, the hideous *luganegher* is condemned to death. The story had some literary success (Foscarini 1844; Forti 1850), and re-proposals of the Biagio Carnico legend have been found in several puppeteers' repertoires[4]. An early twentieth-century version of the *Iena di San Giorgio* by puppeteer Gualberto Niemen (then published in 1999) is the one Guido Ceronetti refers to for his reinterpretation. Niemen's text is short and essential, devoid of secondary plots. The protagonist is Gianduja, a typical Piedmontese puppet character who, with his stick, defeats the *Iena* and brings things back to order. The character of the butcher-hyena has few lines, being the necessity of Niemen's text: its elimination, the defeat of evil, and the triumph of good. The light plot was suitable for the audience that, in those times, still gathered around the puppet booth in the countryside around Turin. In that same countryside, in 1933, Guido Ceronetti, while still a child, saw a performance of Niemen's *Iena di San Giorgio*, which he used as a starting point for the composition of his darker rewriting.

The plot is much more complex than Niemen's. The butcher of San Giorgio, Barnaba Caccú, is famous throughout Piedmont for his sausages. However, the town is threatened by the "Iena di San Giorgio", a vicious criminal who kidnaps and kills young girls. Two young noblemen from the town, Count Femorino and Angiolina, find themselves involved in uncovering the identity of the *Iena*. Angiolina, betrothed to the Count, has a secret lover. She soon realises that he is the criminal, and, rejecting Count Femorino, she willingly marries the *Iena*, fascinated by his criminal genius.

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[4] A *canovaccio* (plot outline) featuring the characters of Arlecchino and Fasolino was found in the Fondo Nino Pozzo, (Veronese puppeteer, 1901-1983), now kept in the Biblioteca Civica di Verona; a script entitled *Luganegher de Venezia*, transcribed in 1930 and belonging to the Salici Family, is in the Tinin Mantegazza Fund; an anonymous manuscript entitled *Biagio Garnico* is kept in the Cristofori Fund of the Castello dei Burattini in Parma – Museo Giordano Ferrari.

Meanwhile, at Angiolina's house, her parents have invited Femorino to dinner: They eat sausages made by the famous butcher of San Giorgio. Femorino finds in his plate a ring still attached to a piece of finger. The diners don't come to suspect anything and go to the butcher only to give him back the ring. In the meantime, in his secret basement, Caccú, helped by his servant Crimea, has tied Angiolina to the table to transform her into sausage, but when he hears someone coming, he runs away. So, when Femorino arrives at the laboratory, he sees Angiolina tied up and Crimea next to her: Crimea is therefore identified as the *Iena.* In the meantime, Caccú has gone to the station disguised as a nun to run away, and he expects to have the whole army after him. No one, however, pays any attention to him. Finally, Caccú meets a judge who, not recognising him at all, tells him that the police have captured the *Iena* - Crimea. Caccú cannot bear the indignity of not being recognised as the great criminal he is. So, he confesses everything, even to King Vittorio Emanuele II, but no one believes him. He remains alone on the scene, shouting in vain "...la Iena...la Iena di San Giorgio...sono io...la Iena di San Giorgio...la Iena..." (Ceronetti 1944, 49; "...the Hyene...the Hyene of San Giorgio...it's me... the Hyene of San Giorgio...the Hyene...").

Ceronetti's reinterpretation turns around two characters: the protagonist Barnaba Caccú and the unusual character of Angiolina, a woman with bewildering behaviour. In his criminal perversion, Barnaba Caccú perceives himself as a heroic and great figure. Still, at the same time, he is the victim of a general indifference on the part of the inhabitants of the village. The recognition of his identity is, in fact, denied more than once - firstly, by the parish priest of San Giorgio, when he dreams about meeting the spirit of the young Berta Baducco, the last victim of the *Iena.* She reveals to him who killed her, but the parish priest tells her she should not spread uncomfortable rumours. Later, the judge at the station does not realise that the *Iena* is hiding under the nun's disguise. Finally, not even King Vittorio Emanuele II, who wanted to get rid of the problem of the *Iena* as soon as possible because it was stealing his space in the newspapers, believes his confession. Only his lover Angiolina recognises him, but without the desired effect: no astonishment, no shock.

Angiolina is contemptuous of any socially imposed convention: She is fascinated by the figure of the *Iena* and openly confesses that she is ready to get killed in his laboratory. As a free and subversive figure, furious in her lust, Angiolina deliberately refuses to marry Count Femorino, preferring to maintain her physical and moral independence. When she shouts in front of Count Femorino to be "una troia! [...] una latrina per la truppa! una baccante! un rifiuto di fogna!" (1944, 12; "a slut! [...] a troop's latrine! a maenad! a sewer waste!"), Angiolina exceeds all the limits of a string puppet character.

The unbridled lust, the sarcastic joke, the freedom of language, and the obscenity are all aspects consistent with the imagery of glove puppets, not with string puppets, and certainly not with a female character's mouth. Female figures are generally not as irreverent as their male companions in puppet shows. On the opposite, Angiolina shares with the *Iena* the same fascination with power and its imposition through pain (after the wedding, Angiolina is portrayed as Barnabas' wife-dominatrix). She already knew that the criminal was her secret admirer, and in her delirium of lust and rejection of social rules, she could not wait to end up in his arms or even under his knives.

The character of Barnaba Caccù has a similar sadomasochistic temperament. He would like to be recognised for the great criminal he is, to be chased by the army in a heroic escape, and he would prefer to be executed rather than live the destiny that seems reserved for him: anonymity, mediocrity, and oblivion.

> Il tragico celato nella marionetta, emblema della libertà negata all'uomo da chi ne tiene i fili, è dal macellaio-artista che non potrà mai pronunciare il suo *qualis artifex pereo*, messo sotto gli occhi di tutti, rivelato essenziale. (1994, v) [The tragedy concealed in the string puppet, emblem of the freedom denied to man by those who hold its strings, is by the butcher-artist, who will never be able to pronounce his *qualis artifex pereo*, placed before the eyes of all, revealed as essential.]

In Ceronetti's *Iena di San Giorgio*, the tragic human essence stands out in its lack of freedom, which is, first, aesthetic. The figure of the criminal is assimilated, for the perfection of his executions, to that of an artist ("the butcher-artist"). And yet, no one recognises Caccù's monstrous ability, him being the creator and artist of the meticulous butchery of human flesh. Barnaba Caccù would like to embody a larger, abnormal dimension, but instead, he is diminished, ignored, or considered insane. Relegated to the margins of society, it is because of this invisibility that Caccú is close to the artist's figure. In this sense, the use of puppets makes this concept perfectly concrete. Barnaba Caccú's string puppet (like those of the other characters) is a figure of just a few centimetres, specially constructed to be manoeuvred in the tiny proscenium of the Teatro dei Sensibili. The miniature depiction of the great murderer, the small flap of white cloth that acts as the butcher's apron, and the tiny knife that he holds around his waist are all elements that contribute to expressing his condition of invisibility, the constriction of his self-proclaimed great soul within a frame that shrinks him to the point of making him invisible.

The marionette dimension, in Ceronetti, also leads to another consideration. On the one hand, Barnaba Caccú embodies that tragic sense of lack of freedom of human nature; at the same time, however, the little puppet embodies those brutal, violent, and absolute traits that the author seems eventually to exalt rather than condemn. Barnaba Caccú is a strong, cruel, and derisive figure; he is an “artist”, as Ceronetti explicitly defines him in the preface. The “artist” is such that he is the creator of life and death: In a scene, Caccú violently kills a woman, not to make his sausages, but because she had dared to bother him; later, he helps a woman give birth, and with the newborn in his arms he says: “Barnaba Caccú dà morte. Barnaba Caccú dà vita. Caccú è l’Alfa, Caccú l’Omega” (1944, 21; “Barnaba Caccú gives death. Barnaba Caccú gives life. Caccú is the Alpha, Caccú the Omega”). An extreme existence, detached from the rules of ordinary life, finds legitimacy and space in the fictitious puppet theatre. The tiny characters, emanations of the author, can do anything: desire pain, indulge in lust, give life, die, and kill. The microcosm of wood and fabric, of infinitesimal beings, allows Ceronetti’s transgressive thought to become concrete.

3. If Comedy Degenerates into Tragedy: Death of a Puppet who Thought He Was Macbeth

Macbeth all’improvviso (“*Suddenly Macbeth*”) by Gigio Brunello, author and puppeteer from Veneto, and Gyula Molnár, director of Hungarian origin, is a 2001 production which, despite its recent date, has become a classic of Italian glove puppet theatre. The text is an original adaptation of Shakespeare’s well-known tragedy. It was the custom among Italian puppeteers, especially at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to bring Shakespeare’s texts into the puppet booth using typical regional characters (*maschere*). Brunello and Molnár refer to this custom but enrich it with a fundamental shift: *Macbeth all’improvviso*, a play with a marked metatheatrical[5] structure, is not a simple representation of Shakespeare’s lines recited by Arlecchino and his companions. Instead, the puppets decide spontaneously, and without the puppeteer’s knowledge, to try their hand at reciting the tragedy of *Macbeth*. Like Ceronetti’s, Brunello’s text is a classic script in form, with characters, lines, dialogues, and a story composed of a beginning, a development, and an end. The text is not a simple *canovaccio*, but a detailed script in which the words create all that happens in the performance.

“La tragedia prevista per oggi non si fa” (Brunello 2018, 35; “I’m not going to play the tragedy planned for today”). In this starting frame, the puppeteer opens the show with a shift, creating disorientation in the spectators. He apologizes to the audience: Having failed to finish the puppets and the scenography for the staging of *Macbeth* that evening, he will play an unpublished work by Goldoni, *L'emigrante geloso* ("*The jealous emigrant*", actually a fake, written on purpose by Brunello). The puppet booth's interior is empty;only the facade is decorated with a black and white reproduction, made by Brunello, of the famous painting by William Hogarth, *David Garrick as Richard III.* The stage design is spare, devoid of the painted backdrops, with no ornaments. The wooden walls are painted black, crossed only by a few guitar strings on which the puppets will hang during the show. Even props are missing, except for the sword (a real one, not in miniature) with which Macbeth assassinates King Duncan. From the beginning of Goldoni's fake comedy, the lack of scenic design and props generate complaints among the puppets:

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[5] See Di Fazio 2021.

> PANTALONE [...] Qui manca il divano. Di quinte non se ne parla... Dove mi nascondo? Me piccarò qua!
> *(Corre ad appendersi ad una corda di chitarra sul fondo)* ....
> ARLECCHINO Coremo subito da Pantalon! Da che parte si va in camera?
> BALANZONE Io, mi appendo qui e ci sto da papa... *(Si aggancia a una corda sulla parete)*
> *(Anche Arlecchino si appende accanto a Balanzone).*
> ARLECCHINO Così non può durare. Caro dotor: Questa è la fine della Commedia dell'Arte. (Brunello 2018, 38-41)
> [PANTALONE [...] There's no couch in here. Backstage, no way... Where shall I hide? I'll stick to this wall *(he goes to hang on a guitar string on the wall)* ....
> ARLECCHINO Let's run to Pantalon now! Which way to the room?
> BALANZONE Hanging myself here, I feel like a Pope... *(Balanzone hooks to a rope on the wall, Arlecchino hooks up next to him)*
> ARLECCHINO It cannot last like this. That's the end of the *Commedia dell'Arte.*]

Arlecchino pronounces his prologue immediately after the puppeteer's presentation and strongly complains about his decision: He undoubtedly wanted to perform *Macbeth* but agrees to play his role in the comedy. The plot is typical of Goldoni's comedies: Two young lovers, Rodolfo and Colombina, are hindered by the treacherous Federigo Rasponi. When Rodolfo inadvertently kills his father Pantalone, however, a first remarkable twist shifts the atmosphere of Goldoni's fake comedy towards unexpected Oedipal traits. The comedy proceeds smoothly until the moment of maximum *pathos* when the dying Pantalone asks the servant Arlecchino to lay him on the sofa so that he can see his son leave...but there is no sofa. Arlecchino loses his patience and refuses to continue playing his part in the comedy: He wants to play *Macbeth.* Pantalone tries unsuccessfully to dissuade him, and from the seventh scene of the First Act, Arlecchino manages to convince Brighella, Balanzone, the Generic (the headless puppet that the puppeteer uses to try out the new heads that are still lacking a costume), and finally also Pantalone to perform the tragedy without the puppeteer's knowledge. The staging of *Macbeth* begins in the Second Act: Arlecchino is Macbeth and Brighella Lady Macbeth, Pantalone plays Macduff and Balanzone Banquo, and the Generic takes care of the minor roles (the witch, a messenger, and a guardian). The lines of the puppets intersperse with lines from Shakespeare's text. Each puppet does not disguise but maintains its own costume and regional pronunciation - its identity: Brighella, for instance, plays Lady Macbeth with his deep, cavernous voice, giving the female figure a more disturbing and grotesque feature.

The Shakespearean tragedy is faithfully resumed, although concentrated on the highlights of the drama: the killing of King Duncan, Macduff's escape, Lady Macbeth's death, the march of the forest of Birnam towards the castle of Macbeth, and his killing by Macduff. The more the plot proceeds, the more *Macbeth all'improvviso*'s theatrical game is revealed. The puppets, who had begun their claim against the puppeteer by opting out of the canons of comedy, find themselves in an unknown situation they can no longer control. Among the increasingly grim events that characterise *Macbeth*'s plot, they fall into a tragedy that does not belong to them. In this way, the murder of King Duncan by Macbeth overlaps with the wounding of the puppeteer by Arlecchino: He picks up the sword and sinks it below the stage. While a severed hand appears on one side of the puppet booth, the puppeteer exclaims: "Proprio tu, Arlecchino!" (2018, 58; "You, Arlecchino!"). At the end of the show, the puppeteer comes out of the booth with one arm missing and his shirt bloodied.

Similarly, the killing of Macbeth by Macduff represents the double of the defeat of Arlecchino, the rebel, by Pantalone, the avenger of the puppeteer-king. In the moment of Arlecchino-Macbeth's death, the tragic mechanism of Shakespeare's play perfectly melds with the nature of puppets, which is exploited to create a tragic doubling: The story of Macbeth merges with that of Arlecchino. Shakespeare's images thus become concrete, visible, and, at the same time, tragicomic:

> MACDUFF Volgiti mostro d'inferno, guardami, qual è il tuo nome?
> VOCE DI MACBETH (da dietro la quinta) Fremeresti ad intenderlo.
> MACDUFF No, per me potresti avere il nome più spaventoso dell'orrido inferno.
> VOCE DI MACBETH Mi chiamo Macbeth.
> MACDUFF Ti sbagli. Tu sei solo un burattino uscito di senno. Torna in te Arlecchino...
> VOCE DI MACBETH Io mi chiamo Macbeth. Stammi lontano, la mia anima è già troppo tinta del sangue dei tuoi

MACDUFF Non parlo più, la mia voce è nella spada.
VOCE DI MACBETH Sprechi la fatica… prima dovrà muoversi la foresta di Birnan.
MACDUFF E io sono un albero di quella foresta, la mia testa è di noce massiccia e con me c'è un esercito in marcia di teste di noce, di faggio, di tiglio e di abete.
VOCE DI MACBETH Ma la mia vita è sotto l'impero di un altro incantesimo che non può essere distrutto da chi sia nato da femmina.
MACDUFF Io non nacqui da femmina… Ben lo sapeva il mio povero re. Fu lui a costruirmi e non conobbe per questo le doglie del parto.
VOCE DI MACBETH Maledetta lingua. Spegni in me la voglia di combattere.
MACDUFF Allora arrenditi e sarai trasformato in spettacolo. Ti porteremo in gabbia per le sagre con la scritta: Qui si mostra il tiranno.
VOCE DI MACBETH Non mi arrenderò per baciare la terra ai tuoi piedi. La luce del sole comincia a essermi odiosa e vorrei che in questo istante l'universo perisse con me. Venti soffiate. Fate stormir la campagna! Vieni, distruzione! Almeno moriremo col decoro delle nostre armi. Vieni oltre Macduff e sia maledetto chi si arrende!
(Macduff imbraccia la spada e va all'assalto oltre la quinta finché la lama non attraversa la parete della baracca. Silenzio). (2018, 67-8)
[MACDUFF Turn around you monster of hell, look at me, what is your name?
VOICE OF MACBETH *(off stage)* You'd be thrilled to hear it.
MACDUFF No, for me, you could have the scariest name in hell.
VOICE OF MACBETH My name's Macbeth.
MACDUFF You're wrong. You're just a puppet gone mad. Wake up, Arlecchino…
VOICE OF MACBETH My name's Macbeth. But get thee back. My soul is too much charged.
With blood of thine already
MACDUFF I have no words.
My voice is in my sword.
VOICE OF MACBETH You're wasting your effort… the Birnam forest will have to move first.
MACDUFF And I am a tree of that forest, my head is made of solid walnut tree and with me there is a marching army of walnut, beech, linden and spruce heads.
VOICE OF MACBETH I bear a charmed life, which must not yield. To one of woman born.
MACDUFF I was not born of a woman…My poor king knew it well. He built me, and knew not for this the pangs of childbirth.
VOICE OF MACBETH Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cowed my better part of man!
MACDUFF Then yield thee, coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o' th' time.

> We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
> Painted on a pole, and underwrit,
> "Here may you see the tyrant".
> VOICE OF MACBETH I will not yield,
> To kiss the ground before your feet. The sunlight is beginning to be hateful to me and I wish that in this instant the universe would perish with me. Winds blow. Let the countryside rustle! Come, destruction!
> Yet I will try the last. Before my body
> I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
> And damned be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"
> *(Macduff takes his sword and makes a lunge towards the backstage. The blade goes through the wall of the booth. Silence).*][6]

Arlecchino dies and does not miraculously reappear after the fight, as is generally the case in puppet shows. He is killed by another puppet made of wood from Birnam forest, who was not born of a woman but at the hands of his puppet-king. Thus, the puppets become the main characters of a drama that concerns them precisely because they are puppets. The tragedy is that of Shakespeare's and another perfectly mirroring it, concerning the puppets and their nature. They live their own tragedy resulting from the choice to perform *Macbeth*, the play that their creator, the puppeteer, had refused to stage. These dramaturgical mechanisms do not implicate mitigation of the tragedy through the comic schemes typical of puppets, but, on the contrary, they let a traditional comedy collapse into a somber modern tragedy. The puppets are not simply 'used' to stage Shakespeare in the puppet booth; they choose to play it:

> Per ottenere maggiore credibilità dovevano essere i burattini stessi a prendere l'iniziativa, in congiura contro l'ignaro burattinaio. All'inizio del primo atto Arlecchino confida a Brighella di essere stanco di dare testate alle quinte per far ridere il pubblico, vorrebbe confrontarsi con il teatro vero. Così lui e Brighella, programmati per un repertorio di gag ormai collaudato, abbandonano la farsa per passare al dramma, un genere a loro sconosciuto. (Brunello 2020)
> [The puppets themselves had to take the initiative to gain more credibility, plotting against the unsuspecting puppeteer. At the beginning of the first act, Arlecchino confides to Brighella that he is tired of banging his head against the puppet booth to make the audience laugh. He would like to measure against real theatre. So, he and Brighella, set up for tried and tested gag repertoire, abandon the farce to move on to tragedy, a genre unknown to them.]

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[6] Brunello interpoles the lines he wrote with some lines from Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* To translate *Macbeth*'s lines, I used parts of the original text consulted in the online cited version.

Of course, what appears to be a free choice of puppets is an invention of the author. By highlighting this apparent autonomy of the puppets, he conceals the authorial game behind the operation. It is a mechanism similar to the one in the prologue of Plautus' *Amphitryon*. Here, the author hides behind the words of the character Mercury and declares that he is creating a new genre:

> *Mercury* – Now first as to the favour I have come to ask, and then you shall hear the argument of our tragedy. What? Frowning because I said this was to be a tragedy? I am a god: I'll transform it. I'll convert this same play from tragedy to comedy, if you like, and never change a line. Do you wish me to do it, or not? But there! how stupid of me! As if I didn't know that you do wish it, when I'm a deity. I understand your feelings on the matter perfectly. I shall mix things up: let it be tragi-comedy. Of course, it would never do for me to make it comedy out and out, with kings and gods on the boards. How about it, then? Well, in view of the fact that there is a slave part in it, I shall do just as I said and make it tragi-comedy.

Plautus consciously invents a new genre and informs the public about it. He declares that he wants to follow the public's inclinations: If the audience turns its nose at tragedy, he can turn it into a show that mixes tragedy and comedy, making them cry and laugh. *Macbeth all'improvviso* is linked to the tragicomic genre but reverses its direction. Comedy is transformed into tragedy in a process through which what should be an elevation of the genre (according to the ancient canons that sanction the superiority of the tragic subject over the comic one) and appears instead as a degeneration, as an unraveling of the comedy's plot in increasingly baleful events. Irremediably, the puppets are dragged into a fall that they can no longer stop, into a completely unknown territory from which they cannot escape. "Questa è la fine della Commedia dell'Arte" ("This is the end of the *Commedia dell'Arte*"), said Arlecchino at the beginning.

4. If Who Gives Life Has a Rotten Womb: Polichinelle Succumbs to Death

If the two texts analysed so far have a classic dramatic structure, with dialogues between characters articulated in sequential lines, the last two cases have a different dramaturgical composition. The French writer and playwright, Gérard Lépinois, wrote *La Chpocalypse* in 1991, following a writing commission by the well-known French puppeteer Alain Recoing. Using the character of Polichinelle, the typical routines of its shows, and the characters that usually accompany him (the Dog, the Policeman, the Death…), Lépinois enhances Polichinelle's execrable traits: his perpetual hunger, his irrepressible libido, and his bent on killing.

Although the play was never performed, the style of the script suggests that Lépinois wrote it in close contact with the puppeteer, probably taking part in rehearsals and watching the puppeteer's improvisations. The text, in fact, has no lines, no dialogues, or dramatic characters; it is composed of a series of descriptions of what happens on the stage. At the same time, these descriptions are not mere indications or director's notes. The care with which the text is crafted and its concise and musical rhythm seem to bring the puppeteer's gesture to the page and materialise the puppet theatre in the reader's imagination. The structure of traditional Polichinelle shows, consisting of a validated series of routines, is transposed onto the page and used as a dramaturgical expression. The writing and the scenic process take action together. As a consequence, the figures and their movements take possession of the entire dramaturgy:

> La source de violence
> A)
> Dame Gigogne accroupie. Ample robe, mamelles multiples. Elle est en train de pondre.
> Un Gigogneau sort de sous sa robe. Il commence à battre sa mère impassible.
> Puis il s'endort.
> Gigogne se remet à pondre. Un second Gigogneau sort de sous sa robe. Il porte un chapeau de gendarme.
> Il aperçoit son frère endormi et préfère aller taper dessus.
> Quand le premier né est assommé, le Gigogneau-gendarme s'endort contre lui.
> Gigogne exulte d'avoir accompli son devoir.
> Elle appelle stridemment sa sœur. Puis sort. (Lépinois 1991, 1)
>
> [The source of violence
> A)
> Dame Gigogne crouching. Ample dress, multiple udders. She is lying.
> A Gigogneau emerges from under her dress. He begins to beat his impassive mother.
> Then he falls asleep.
> Gigogne starts to lay again. A second Gigogneau emerges from under her dress. He is wearing a gendarme hat.
> He sees his brother asleep and goes to hit him.
> When the firstborn is knocked out, the gendarme-Gigogneau falls asleep against him.
> Gigogne exults at having accomplished her duty.
> She shrilly calls her sister. Then she exits.]

The whole text consists of short paragraphs describing the actions performed by the puppets. Each new character appearing on the scene has to deal with the one who preceded, causing a conflict and a killing each time. The text is thus a reinterpretation of Polichinelle's adventures with Death, who, in this text, only appears in an allegorical way, under the guise of the gallows (her name is, in fact, Potence). Despite the show beginning with an image of birth (Dame Gigogne crouching), it immediately turns into an image of death, and, since Polichinelle enters the stage, the chain of fights and killings becomes very tight.

All the corpses end up in an unknown and disturbing pit at the foot of the puppet booth. The characters feel the presence of this pit because of the unbearable smell coming from it. Despite the stench, Polichinelle's insatiable hunger leads him to be attracted by "le fumet puant du monceau de viande" (1991, 4; "the stinking smell of the meat pile"). Every disturbing aspect of Polichinelle's character is captured and described explicitly on the page by Lépinois. The everlasting dialectic of love and hate between Polichinelle and Death materialises in crude moments of fights that turn into embracings or, viceversa, acts of sexual intercourse which become fatal. In the first duel, Polichinelle struggles against Potence and his noose until the movement turns into a "va-et-vient d'amour" ("back and forth of love"), where Polichinelle's stick becomes an obvious reference to the male sex, slipping into Potence's knot. As usual, their final encounter is fatal for Death:

> Polichinelle a désespérément faim, au point d'avoir envie de se jeter dans le vide.
> À ce moment, pour la première fois, Potence effleure de son nœud la tête de Polichinelle.
> Polichinelle sursaute, saisit le nœud en se retournant, tire sur la corde et fait tomber Potence.
> Puis il saute dessus et mord goulûment dans son bois.
> Quand il est rassasié, Potence agonise. Il l'achève à coups de batte, puis la pousse jusqu'au bord où elle tombe. (1991,5)
> [Polichinelle is desperately hungry, so much that he wants to throw himself into the void.
> At that moment, for the first time, Potence brushes against Polichinelle's head with her knot.
> Polichinelle jumps, grabs the knot as he turns around, pulls on the rope, and knocks down Potence.
> Then he jumps on her and bites greedily into its wood.
> When he is full, Potence is in agony. He beats her to death, then pushes her to the edge, where she falls.]

Later, the smell coming from Dame Gigogne attracts Polichinelle, so he heads towards her with his stick, but his wife appears from behind Gigogne, and they begin to fight. Polichinelle kills her and returns to Gigogne, but Joe the Clown emerges. They fight until Polichinelle throws Joe into the pit. At that moment, the Devil appears from under Gigogne's dress and tries to attack Polichinelle, but he too falls into the abyss. Only at that point does Polichinelle manage to dive into Dame Gigogne's dress, thus initiating a love-death struggle that oscillates between Polichinelle's suffocation under her skirt and the pleasure she experiences. It is in this way that Polichinelle dies.

Polichinelle's death is very unusual. Generally, in Polichinelle's shows, he survives every attempt made by the other characters to kill him, and he eliminates anyone who stands in his way or annoys him, including his son and his wife. He always wins thanks to his stick, even against Death. What does the death of Polichinelle entail in a play consisting of a sequence of births and killings? The disappearance of the great destroyer does not mean an interruption of the chain of violence and killing: The Executioner arrives on stage, throws Polichinelle's corpse into the pit, then is forced by Gigogne to throw himself into it. Dame Gigogne then gives birth to a crocodile, which she immediately throws into the abyss. The series of deaths is therefore no longer determined by the protagonist of the show; Death continues despite Polichinelle, ultimately revealing itself as the real protagonist of the play. The script ends, in fact, with an extremely terrible image. Dame Gigogne, now alone on the scene, offers the shocking vision of her womb:

> Puis, face au public, elle soulève d'un coup sa robe. Son ventre est un énorme trou pourri. Puis elle laisse retomber sa robe et va se jeter dans le vide. (1991,8)
> [Then, facing the audience, she suddenly lifts her dress. Her womb is a huge rotten hole. Then she lets her dress fall back down and goes to throw herself into the void.]

The character of the Mère Gigogne, normally a symbol of fertility and life, is here turned upside down into a viscerally disturbing monster whose womb is rotten and who, immediately after giving life, takes it away. In Lépinois's text, the typical routines of Polichinelle's show (fights, escapes, beats, and killings) reach a violent climax and are exploited in their rawest essence to draw on the page a mad carousel. There is no escape from cruelty. The one who gives life has a rotten womb, and who comes to life suddenly falls into the void.

5. If the Puppeteer is Spellbound by His Own Fantasies: a Multilayer Interior

Based on a short novel by the American author Dennis Cooper, *Jerk*[7] was staged in 2008 by Gisèle Vienne and interpreted by Jonathan Capdevielle. Gisèle Vienne, a French-Austrian director, visual artist, puppeteer, and choreographer, mixes different ways of figuration in her productions - dance, acting, performance, poetic texts, live music, mannequins, and puppets. Specifically, the co-presence of hyper-realistic puppets, or mannequins (sometimes also animated by mechanical devices), and performers (often, inversely, tending to immobility) gives multilayered significations and blurs the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate.

In its narrative format, the text of *Jerk* already uses the device of puppet theatre; the protagonist, who is also the internal narrator, asks his audience to suspend disbelief and give credit to his role as a puppeteer during the performance. Through it, he retraces some moments of his own history. This mechanism is preserved in *Jerk*'s adaptation for the stage:

> DAVID BROOKS Ladies and gentlemen, uh … My name is David Brooks. The story you're about to see is true, based on my own experiences as a drug-addicted, psychotic teen murderer in the early seventies.[8]

Dennis Cooper's short novel is actually based on a true story, that of the American serial killer Dean Corll, who, with the help of two teenagers, David Brooks and his lover Wayne Henley, killed more than twenty boys in Texas in the mid-1970s. The theatre script, adapted by Cooper himself for Vienne's performance, has a multilayered structure. David Brooks is about to tell his story using glove puppets. He has a particular audience in front of him, a class of university students in "Freudian Psychology Refracted through Post-Modern Example", accompanied by their professor. David Brooks tells them to read aloud two texts in a fanzine they have been given. The two narrative texts tell of the revolting criminal game that David Brooks playswith his partner Wayne, carried by Dean Corll's homicidal madness. Dean uses his basement to kill young teenagers with Wayne's help, amidst torture, mutilation, and sexual practices, while David films the whole thing. The killings continue until the death of Jamie, a boy with whom Wayne was in love. Blinded by rage, Wayne kills Dean. David then proposes to stop the killing spree. At first, Wayne seems to agree, but an encounter with another boy, Brad, prompts him to take Dean's place and kill Brad by torturing him. After this murder, David, in a panic attack, kills Wayne. He then calls the police and confesses everything.

Beyond the diegetic level of the story in the fanzine, David plays some scenes of torture, sex, and killing through the manipulation of the puppets. Before the first acted scene, he lets the audience hear the different voices he gives to his puppets. He manipulates them, giving each a voice while remaining entirely visible (without using a puppet booth). He also plays himself:

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[7] *Jerk* is the first of the stories in *Ugly Man* by Dennis Cooper (2009).

[8] All quotes are taken from the unpublished text of *Jerk*, which I received as a doc file from the author Dennis Cooper.

> David Brooks … Now, before I start, let me introduce you to the cast of characters. *(He holds up the puppet wearing the suit and panda mask)* This is Dean, the evil mastermind, and … *(DB now adopts the voice of that puppet's character, which is deep and authoritative, while he says the phrase 'he sounds like this')* … he sounds like this. Here's my partner in crime Wayne … *(DB holds up the other puppet of a teenage boy wearing a mask and adopts that character's voice, which is nasal and hyper)* … who has this voice. The boys we killed will all sound kind of the same because I can't do a lot of voices, so … *(DB lightly rests his foot on one of the puppets lying on the floor and rocks it gently back and forth as he adopts the boys' voices, which sound typically young and male)* … this is what they sound like. When they're dead, and Dean turns them into his puppets, he gives them … *(DB adopts a high pitched, cartoony ghost voice)* … a ghost voice like this. And the puppet of me, David, well, he sounds like me. *(DB smiles and speaks in his own real voice)* Hi, I'm the puppet of David. Understand? I hope so. Okay, here we go!

The performer's body thus appears as a *corps-castelet*[9], where different parts of his body are involved: the arms, each holding a glove puppet (those of Dean and Wayne), and the lap on which the victims' puppets lie. The practice of *corps-castelet* implies the direct participation of the manipulator in the scenic game. In this way, fiction becomes problematic, the visible manipulation interrupts any convention of puppet theatre, and the interaction of the performer with the puppet becomes central. The double status of the performer, external and internal to the fiction, makes his body a place (a "*castelet*") where several bodies and identities intersect. As Barberis points out, "le spectateur […] est confronté aux multiples processus de contamination, psychologique et mécanique, qui vont et viennent entre le manipulateur et ses créatures à l'intérieur d'un même corps" (Barberis 2013, 167; "the spectator […] faces the multiple processes of contamination, psychological, and mechanical, circulating between the manipulator and his creatures within the same body"). This mechanism is enriched with complexity when the performer, through Dean's puppet, plays a character called "Dean-as-corpse". Dissatisfied with killing boys he does not really know, Dean wishes he could take over their identities as well. So, once they are dead, he decides what identity to give them. He animates their corpses by turning them into simulacra of some television stars he loves:

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[9] The French expression *corps-castelet* refers to a technique of manipulation, mainly used with glove puppets. The manipulator is visible (usually, there is no use of the puppet booth) and uses different parts of his body to animate the puppet as if he was inhabited by it.

> DEAN-AS-CORPSE *(stifling a smirk, he picks up the puppet of the dead boy and waves it in the air at Wayne)* Hi, Wayne. It's me, Luke Halpin.

Thus, the performer Jonathan Capdevielle, while playing the character of David Brooks, animates Dean's puppet, which, by becoming Dean-as-corpse, animates the dead boy's puppet, who becomes for a moment a famous TV actor. This schizophrenic multiplication of personalities perfectly reflects two fundamental features of the play. On the one hand, it shows the wrecked mind of David Brooks, resulting from the violence he took part in, which condemned him to spend his life in prison, continuously reenacting those events; on the other hand, it demonstrates the manipulation of the puppets that allows David Brooks to try to overcome the trauma of assuming the role of the puppeteer, i.e., someone who handles the situation. The attempt, however, turns out to be a failure since he does not find stability. In the final scene, where David tells how he killed his lover Wayne, Capdevielle does not use puppets anymore but the technique of ventriloquism. The puppets are no longer present, but their voices, which the spectator can now recognise, resonate in the space around the figure of David Brooks/Jonathan Capdevielle. He stays motionless on the chair on which he has been sitting since the beginning, with his gaze lost in the void as he efforts in the "lip-skill" technique. Nevertheless, the puppet-characters that David had animated up to now are not destroyed; that vision is not blown up, and instead, "tout se passe donc comme s'il y avait eu acte de dévoration, ou d'intériorisation, des marionnettes" (Barberis 2013, 168; "everything happens as if there had been an act of devouring, or internalizing, of the puppets"). Through this introjection, the puppet figures now do before the audience what they do every day within David Brooks, i.e., animate his mind with all sorts of fantasies. As Sermon underlines, "David apparaît littéralement hanté par les voix de son histoire, incapable de se défaire des souvenirs qui peuplent son for intérieur, et qu'il échoue à contenir" (Sermon 2014, 127-128; "David appears literally haunted by the voices of his history, unable to get rid of the memories that populate his inner self, and which he fails to contain"). David Brooks' search for consistency is exceedingly introverted in the continual turning of those voices within him.

Dennis Cooper's intuition of employing the image of puppet theatre to tell a story about identity issues, mental illness, and power games thus finds a further degree of accuracy once transposed onto the stage. As complex as David Brooks' interior, Dennis Cooper's multifaceted text invests, in Gisèle Vienne's staging, the performer's body and identity. As a result, his inner self is unstable and susceptible to simultaneous changes, as immediate as a hand reaching into a puppet's body.

6. Writing Through Figures

All the plays analysed so far deal, although in different ways, with that primary need to encounter life and its opposite, appealing to the figurations that puppet theatre allows. Barnaba Caccù's desire for greatness remains unheard, rejected by a bourgeois society that prefers to blindfold rather than recognise the evil that inhabits it; his yearning eventually finds visibility in the limelight of a microcosmic chamber theatre in which madness and perversion become synonyms of unbridled freedom with which we end up sympathising. Arlecchino's desire to play a tragic role instead of continuing to bang his head against the wall is realised through a metatheatrical mechanism that is as perfect as it is lethal: The puppet, in revolt against his animator, actually becomes a tragic character and incurs the same fate of death. The routines of the Polichinelle's repertoire bring a macabre dance to the writing that affirms, at each *pas de deux*, how the mantle of the *memento mori* covers all reality. In *Jerk*, the schizophrenia generated by the technique of *corps-castelet* and exacerbated by the practice of ventriloquism determines a series of centrifugal forces acting on the performer, who simultaneously manipulates and preys on the fantasies that inhabit him internally. Each animation technique, therefore, not only conveys a text's theme, but is intrinsically linked to its dramaturgical mechanism, in a bond in which the figurative medium enhances, or simply makes possible, the occurrence of a text on the stage.

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Eleni Papazoglou*

The Dramaturgy of Vocatives: Dynamics of Communication in Sophoclean Thebes

Abstract

Vocative address is a crucial component of human communication: it acknowledges and bestows identity to the addressee and defines his/her relation to the addresser, providing, at the same time, an index to the latter's idea of his/her Self. Ancient Greek addresses relate either to body or social status: gender or age, familial or civic ties, private or public, personal or collective identities. Beginning with a categorization of addresses with reference to *OT*, analysis then focuses on the ferocious collision of father and son at the crossroad, which is conducted in speechless gestures (*OT* 800-13). The neglect/absence of addresses at the crossroad signposts the absence – the *non-anagnorisis* – of identities with clear and hierarchical social positions. Turning to *Antigone*, the essay then explores how vocative addresses reveal the protagonists' sense of their Self, the relation of their social identities to the identity provided by their body, and the conditions of their communication on stage. The use – or the absence – of vocatives is connected to the way that both Antigone and Kreon adopt and exhaust timeless and universal ideas, only to reduce themselves to arguments that derive from their particular bodily identities: Antigone will focus on the identity of one "of the same womb"; against Antigone, Kreon will summon his male identity, and against Haemon his identity as an elder. The play's *exodos* features a spectacular transformation of Kreon: cut off from any human communication, as his vocatives show, and lamenting with a dead body of a beloved young man in his hands, he appears to 'embody' on stage his female adversary: the absolute defeat of the/his Self.

Keywords: Sophocles; *Antigone*; *Oedipus Tyrannus*; dramaturgy; vocatives; body and identity

> L'inconscient n'est pas seulement langage:
> il est dramaturgie, c'est-à-dire
> parole mise en scène, action parlée
> (entre les extrêmes de la clameur et du silence).
> Starobinski 1967, xix

Introduction: Terms

First, the term "dramaturgy". Emancipated from its text-centred dimension

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to include the performative condition as a whole, dramaturgy in contemporary theatre refers to the "mutation" of the text into performance/spectacle ("la mutation d'un texte en spectacle": Dort 1986, 8) through the fusion of writing and directing. Dramaturgy "asks itself how, and according to what time sequence, the story materials are arranged in the text and on stage" (Pavis 1998, 125) and "it is understood in the context of the performance as a dynamic and durational whole" (Trencsényi 2015, vii).[1] Using/adapting pre-existing mythological and textual material, playwright-director of performances that are realized with specific actors in a specific space and time, and in front of a specific audience, the ancient tragedian is *Dramaturg* par excellence, and his plays can be seen as 'dramaturgies' on tragic themes and narratives – and need to be approached accordingly.

Let us turn now to vocative address. Addressing the other with a vocative is a crucial element in human communication: it acknowledges and bestows identity to the addressee, and at the same time it defines his/her relationship to the addresser.[2] This relationship, obviously, can concern gender and/or age, familial or civic ties, private or public, personal or collective identities. At the same time, through this relationship, the address signposts the addresser's own self-consciousness: for example, addressing somebody as a parent, we recognize ourselves as (their) children; greeting a Prime Minister, we are citizens; greeting a lover, we are lovers; greeting our teachers, we are students. And if in the everyday speech of Antiquity it sufficed, most of the times, to address someone by name or through an identity provided by the body (familial relation, gender, age), in the institutional *logos* of the *polis*, addressing a free man was specified according to three crucial social points of reference: the name of the father and/or civic identity and/or geographical origin. On the tragic stage, vocative addresses are usually 'elevated' but often 'low', poetic as well as realistic – at any rate 'various', even between the same characters. They are a fundamental constituent of dramaturgy, as they define on stage the stance and the voice, the action and the reaction of one character towards the other. In this way, vocatives in performance – or, indeed, their absence – shape and serve the dynamics of communication between them.

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[1] Dramaturgy covers a variety of practices: see Romanska 2015. Here, it is adopted in their lowest common denominator.

[2] For a research into the ancient Greek address in everyday speech, see Dickey 1996 (where also a review of the socio-linguistic theory of address, 3-16). Dickey focuses on Aristophanes and Menander and refers *in passim* to a series of publications that deal with address in poetry and tragedy, which I did not manage to consult myself: Wendel 1929 and the doctoral theses of Black 1985, Brunius-Nilsson 1955, Menge 1905, Weise 1965. Judging from Dickey's references, my approach is quite different.

Let us remember some crucial vocatives from *Oedipus Tyrannos*.[3] First, some interpersonal ones:

- Ὦ πάντα νωμῶν Τειρεσία (“O all-knowing Teiresias”, 300), *ὦναξ* (“O sovereign/king”, 304): Oedipus addresses Teiresias reverentially, acknowledging his mantic as well as civic identity. Insisting on an insulting second person singular, bereft of a vocative, Teiresias does exactly the opposite, and declares his distance from the world of the *polis*: he is slave to Loxias. Against an infuriatingly non-communicative Teiresias, Oedipus bursts: ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε (“O vilest of the vile”, 334): the intensity of the vocative is such, that it is quite possible that it was combined with an aggressive – yet suspended – gesture. A gesture of violence against an elderly man: the same as that against a silent elderly king once, the same as that against a ‘dyslectic’ elderly slave later (1152-3).
- Αἰτεῖς· ἃ δ’ αἰτεῖς, τἄμ’ ἐὰν θέλῃς ἔπη . . . ἀλκὴν λάβοις ἂν κἀνακούφισιν κακῶν (“You ask/seek; and for those you ask/seek, if you want to hear my words . . . you could receive help and relief from woes”, 216-17), Oedipus replies to the Thebans’ agony: he does not use a vocative, he simply addresses them anonymously (and in a singular second person, at that). This is an address that does not acknowledge/recognize them under some civic, gender or age identity. Oedipus seems, here, as if he wants to appropriate the voice of the god and lower the eyes of the Thebans onto his own person. A civic deficit marks the function of the Theban community, including its leader: it is not accidental that what manages to motivate these Kadmeians is not the declaration of their king but his curses (276).
- Ἄνδρες πολῖται (“Citizen men”, 513), Kreon addresses the Chorus: this is the first – and only – instance in the play that the Thebans are addressed as citizens. However, here, Kreon needs the witnessing of a regimented *polis*, to defend himself against the conspiratorial accusations of Oedipus. When the latter chooses to address the Thebans for the first time with a vocative, it will be in connection to their age at the ‘court scene’ (πρέσβεις: “old men”, 1111), in front of two equally elderly witnesses (γεραιέ: “old man”, 990; πρέσβυ: “old man”, 1121, 1147): Oedipus solves the ‘riddle’ of his identity surrounded by (and reconciled with) ‘father’ figures. In the *exodos*, all independent identities recede, under the weight of a personal relationship: φίλε/φίλοι (“dear friend”/“friends”, 1321, 1329, 1339, 1341) is/are the only

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[3] Quotations from the ancient text refer to Dain and Mazon 1958 (translations are mine).

collocutors/fellow humans that Oedipus – urgently and desperately – 'recognizes'.
- ὦ ταλαίπωροι ("O you miserables", 634): Iokaste addresses her quarrelling *philoi* with an emotional identification, as if they were kids caught at a fight. Faced with the agitated Oedipus, she will choose the immediacy of a vocative by name only twice ("Oedipus": 646, 739), preferring to support her *philos* with the status of an institutional address (ὦναξ: "O king", 697, 746, 770, 852). Γύναι ("woman"): with reference to her bodily identity Oedipus addresses, repeatedly, Iokaste in the scene of their tender, as well as shattering, confession to each other (700, 726, 755, 767, 800; cf. the bodily emphasis at ὦ φίλτατον γυναικὸς Ἰοκάστης κάρα, "Oh dearest head of Iokaste, my wife", 950). And at the same time: "I respect you much more than these ones", pointing at the Thebans (700, cf. 772-3). Oedipus and Iokaste speak as if none can hear them, cut off from mortals and gods. In their closed 'symbiotic' world, it is a relief that gods prove to be liars.

There are, also, vocative addresses that do not expect an answer: apostrophes to gods and other supernatural powers, those to the dead, and, finally, those to abstract concepts.

- Ὦ πλοῦτε καὶ τυραννὶ καὶ τέχνη τέχνης / ὑπερφέρουσα ("O wealth and power and skill / surpassing skill", 380-1), Oedipus raves in a famous apostrophe in front of Teiresias, trying to find political scenarios and attribute, thus, civic identities – to Self and Other.
- Ὦ κρατύνων, εἴπερ ὄρθ' ἀκούεις, / Ζεῦ ("O sovereign – if you rightly hear to this address– / Zeus", 903-4) the Thebans address – somewhat uncertain of their vocative – Zeus, having just witnessed in silence the 'symbiotic' dialogue between Oedipus and Iokaste. The Thebans take their distance from the until then κρατύνοντα ("sovereign", 14) Oedipus and address the god as citizens: Τὸ καλῶς δ' ἔχον / πόλει πάλαισμα μήποτε λῦ-/ σαι θεὸν αἰτοῦμαι ("I pray to the god to never put an end to the struggle that is upright to the city", 878-80). The Thebans appear to reorder themselves politically, as they emancipate themselves from their leader. Iokaste κάλει[4] τὸν ἤδη Λάϊον πάλαι νεκρόν ("she was calling the long dead Laius", 1245) before killing herself. Ὦ θεῶν ἁγνὸν σέβας ("O pure and honourable gods", 830), and ἰὼ δαῖμον ("Oh demon", 1311), Oedipus addresses the divine world, the first time terrified by the prospect of his polluted self, the second time devastated by his confirmed pollution.

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[4] So printed by Dain and Mazon following manuscripts. Other editors opt to correct the verb to καλεῖ (e.g. Finglass).

Lastly, there are three more crucial categories of vocative addresses, which, however, signpost an individual's painful isolation and a deep rupture in human communication: apostrophes to landscapes of nature or city; apostrophes to one's self, which usually occur at the crucial moments that the dramatic character laments his/her – in one way or another – tragic self; apostrophes, finally, in the death cries: vocatives that demand a response urgently (but in vain).

- Ἰὼ Κιθαιρών ("Oh Kithairon", 1391), ὦ τρεῖς κέλευθοι καὶ κεκρυμμένη νάπη ("O three roads and hidden valley", 1398), the mutilated Oedipus addresses the crucial *loci* of his life. Δύστανος ἐγώ ("miserable me", 1308), he can only address himself, adopting Iokaste's last vocative to him (δύστηνε: "miserable", 1071) – otherwise, merely a cry to himself: Οἴμοι, / οἴμοι μάλ' αὖθις ("Oh/alas me, oh/alas me again", 1316-17). [In absence of death cries in *OT*, let us refer to Klytaimnestra's Αἴγισθε, ποῦ ποτ' ὢν κυρείς; and ὦ τέκνον, τέκνον ("Aegisthus, where are you?" and "O child, child") in Sophocles' *Electra* (1408, 1410)].

If, therefore, vocatives mark human communication and self-consciousness, exploring their dramaturgy means to explore the terms and ways in which the tragic subject constructs him/herself and performs his/her (dramatic and theatrical) coexistence/communication with the Others – or, as is more often the case, the ways in which the tragic subject problematizes and, eventually, cancels off this coexistence/communication.

My examples so far come from the vocative addresses of the dramatic characters in *OT*, while in the main section of my paper I will focus on *Antigone*. Could we see in the dramaturgy of vocatives a particularly 'Theban' condition? "[A] place that makes problematic every inclusion and exclusion, every conjunction and disjunction, every relation between near and far, high and low, inside and outside, stranger and kin" (Zeitlin 1992, 134), Thebes is the city of a god who is addressed with many names, of which most prominent is "Bacchus", a name that fuses the identity of the god with that of his mortal worshipper: Πολυώνυμε . . . ὦ Βακχεῦ ("O Bacchus . . . of many names"), the Thebans address him in *Antigone* (1116-21).[5] In Thebes, addressing the other is never obvious: as a *topos* of problematic associations, Thebes distributes identities while confusing them. In Thebes it is difficult to discern foreigner from native, friend from enemy – and, of course: father from brother and son from lover. It is no accident that, in the Sophoclean Thebes, vocative addresses appear, in my opinion, problematic: delivered through a striking dynamic between *logos* and body, text and performance, words and spectacle, vocatives on the Theban stage conform to a particular – their own – dramaturgy.

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[5] Passages from the text appear according to Griffith 1999 (translations are mine).

Exploring the dramaturgy of vocatives in *Antigone*, as I will try to show, could provide us with new insights into the themes of the play and, more particularly, into the ways that the characters understand, embody, and perform the rupture between Self and Other – or the opposite: the utter collapse of the distance between them. Such a dynamic, however, is crucially connected to the episode that lies at the heart of the Labdacids' myth, where the motif of the vocative address, or rather, its absence/lack (it is the same) is paramount: the meeting of Oedipus and Laius at the crossroad, a meeting which is conducted in silence. This silence differentiates the Sophoclean confrontation from its Euripidean version, where the Herald addresses Oedipus as a *xenos*, demanding his yielding priority to the King (Oedipus, however, remains stubbornly mute, as he continues marching on, (re)traumatizing thus his feet: *Phoe.* 39-43). In a brief comment on the 'mise en scène' of the Sophoclean confrontation, Segal sees in the Herald's silence "the absence of a civilized greeting or address" and in Oedipus' silence his failure to "utter the humanizing word that might have saved Laius and himself" (Segal 1999, 222 and 243 respectively). Indeed, at Sophocles' crossroad, communication between two strangers, between an elder and a younger man, between a king and a common wayfarer, is spectacularly absent. If the strangers had addressed each other, they should have bestowed identities and relations, and, thus, inevitably, 'recognize' each other and position themselves in terms of a hierarchy. However, nothing similar occurs. Instead of vocatives, we have a clash of silent bodies.

Oedipus strikes δι' ὀργῆς (*OT* 807): *orgē* includes but does not exhaust itself in "anger/rage", as it denotes all sorts of impulsive behaviour and, at the same time, instinct and personal idiosyncrasy. The psychoanalytic "drive" (Fr. *pulsion* / Germ. *Trieb*), a force/motive that is deeply rooted in the body, lying before and beyond *logos*, would correspond better to the meaning of the word. Such an *orgē* defines also Iokaste's emotional state as she walks towards her suicide (*OT* 1241). In *Antigone*, the word is used to denote a variety of drives: Kreon's rage (280), Antigone's disastrous idiosyncrasy (875), but also the deep urge of the humans to co-exist in cities (355-6).

Vocative address as an instrument (or failure) of the relation between Self and Other, between body and consciousness, *orgē* and *logos*: these are the motifs I shall explore in *Antigone*. But first, we need to see in detail how such motifs are developed in Sophocles' silent, full of *orgē*, confrontation at the crossroad. Our discussion will deviate, for a while, from the theory and practice of dramaturgy, and resort to sociological, anthropological and psychoanalytical methodologies in order to explore an episode of the myth, which, moreover, is not enacted on stage, but only narrated. However, such an analysis, in my view, can shed an interesting light on the broader dynamics of communication in Sophoclean Thebes, which shall be useful to our interpretation of *Antigone*.

1. Ὦ τρεῖς κέλευθοι

The crossroad is thematized repeatedly in *OT* (τριπλαῖς ἁμαξιτοῖς, 730· σχιστὴ δ' ὁδὸς, 733· τριπλῆς κελεύθου, 800-801), in order to climax personified as a monstrous creature (Segal 1999, 222) or as an Erinys (Halliwell 1986, 190), in the most poignant apostrophe of the mutilated Oedipus: Ὦ τρεῖς κέλευθοι . . . καὶ στενωπὸς ἐν τριπλαῖς ὁδοῖς, / αἳ τοὐμὸν αἷμα τῶν ἐμῶν χειρῶν ἄπο / ἐπίετε πατρός ("O three roads . . . and narrow passage in the crossroad, you who drank from my own hands the blood that was mine and my father's" 1398-401).

Let us confront this painfully addressed crossroad. The absence of interpersonal vocatives is crucially linked to Oedipus' 'complex' relation to Self and Other – and we shall need to explore this non-communicative 'complex' thoroughly and from a variety of points of view.

First, its topography: Oedipus is advancing on foot (ὁδοιπορῶν, 801), leaving behind him the road towards which Laius on his chariot and his escorts are heading (see Rusten 1996). Coming from the opposite end, the King and his escorts attempt to "deviate" (806) Oedipus from his course πρὸς βίαν ("against his will" and/or "using force", 805): we should imagine the chariot not slowing down in front of the walking man, nor changing its course, but moving right against him. Oedipus does not withdraw (he could have done so moving slightly towards the third road), on the contrary, he lunges against the charioteer and stabs him (with his cane: the sceptre of a wayfarer, the sceptre of a crippled man), approaching the chariot instead of moving away from it – so that he positions himself at a throw's distance from the elderly king, who points at him with his goad. Παίω δι' ὀργῆς ("I strike impulsively/impetuously", 807), he will later remember, not without some pride and, at any rate, without the slightest qualm, κτείνω δὲ τοὺς ξύμπαντας ("and I kill them all to the last", 813). A violence – in many ways – 'asymmetrical': Οὐ μὴν ἴσην γ' ἔτεισεν ("he did not pay off equivalently", 810).

The crossroad in the Labdacids' myth and its impulsive clash has been approached in sociological, anthropological, and psychoanalytical terms.

The sociological approach reminds us that the meeting of two men on a road, according to ancient thought and etiquette, was socially charged and did not need any verbal negotiation: the inferior always steps aside, the superior always has priority. The attribution of priority signified the acceptance of social inferiority (Gregory 1995, 145). And if in democratic Athens the difference was not always clear, in the world of tragedy the age of a father figure, in conjunction with the institutional status of a king, should have been enough for the 'right of way' to be acknowledged and yielded to him.[6] What could have thwarted this recognition/hierarchy in the Sophoclean crossroad? What is the force that ignites Oedipus' *orgē*?

It has been argued, rightly, that his being "addressed as an illegitimate child" by the drunken Corinthian (μ[ε] . . . καλεῖ . . . πλαστὸς ὡς εἴην πατρί, 780) has formed in Oedipus' soul a lingering/unconscious anxiety about his social status – a sort of a class complex.[7] This complex is further incited by the fact that the elderly king attempts to hit Oedipus with a goad: a gesture suitable to an animal and, potentially, to a slave, but not to a free man. According to the Athenian etiquette, for the latter to safeguard his status, he had to protect his bodily integrity: he was (he had to be) untouchable by the Other.[8] One can, therefore, see Oedipus' impulsive reaction as a reaction with socio-psychological 'depth'.

But there is more to it. If, according to ancient etiquette, road priority concerned two walking men, on the tragic crossroad we have a confrontation between a wayfarer and a chariot. The roads are specified as ἁμαξιτοί (730): this means that they were lined with furrows, for the vehicles to be wheeled upon (Pikoulas 2003). And this, in turn, means that Laius' chariot could not have changed its course – it could only stop. Coming from the opposite end (ξυνηντίαζον, 804), the walking Oedipus seems, therefore, to demand (no less than) the chariot to stop for him to pass on. All these make his *orgē* even more irrational. And we should seek deeper 'complexes' to explain his irrationality. Let us turn to anthropology and then to psychoanalysis.

From an anthropological point of view, the crossroad, as a space which is liminal par excellence (a 'not here, nor there' point of intersection between streets of different directions), as a "chaotic" space, lies beyond the organized world of the humans and in crucial opposition to it (Johnston 1991, 217-18). Under the aegis of the chthonic Hekate, the goddess of the 'uncanny', crossroads were, simultaneously, spaces of magic, locations of pollution and cleansing, and meeting points of ghosts.[9] In her identity as a goddess-guide, Hekate supervises crossroads as *loci* of various forms of passages, symbolic and real. She shares their supervision with that paradigmatic god-guide, Hermes, the guide of travellers and souls; the god of initiation, persuasion, deceit; and – which is crucial to us – the god of the silence that occurs between men, coincidental but also 'hermetic'. Thus, as a *locus* of liminal and, as such, vague/obscure identities, the crossroad marks the quasi-ritual 'passage' of Oedipus to adulthood. But it also marks the perversion of this 'passage', due both to Laius' forbidding the movement of the "passerby" (παραστείχοντα, 808), and to Oedipus' stubborn claim of priority – movements that, instead of the mutual yielding of ages lead to the miasmatic parricide (Turner 1969 discussed in Rusten 1996, 108). However, if a successful rite of passage is, on the one hand, obligatory and, on the other, capable to produce safe identities, a perverted passage leads inevitably to a failed identity: it is precisely in this failed and perverted identity, that we should seek the anthropologically disturbed root of Oedipus' drive (and Self).[10]

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[6] According to Gregory (*ibid.*) Oedipus had not realized that the elderly man was a king, otherwise he wouldn't ask Iokaste if his escorts were many, as would befit an ἄνδρα ἀρχηγέτην ("monarch", 751). However, the question proves more easily the opposite: that Oedipus checks the picture he has already seen. Vellacott 1971, 116 and 119, more correctly, in my opinion, argues that the identity of the king would have been signposted by his escorts and the presence of the herald (as well as his clothes, I would add). These conditions suffice to make the spectator imagine the scene as a confrontation between king and wayfarer.

[7] According to Gregory 1995, 142-3, it is to this doubt/fear that we should attribute Oedipus' agitated line towards Teiresias Ποίοισι; μεῖνον· τίς δέ μ' ἐκφύει βροτῶν; ("Which/of what sort? Stay; who of all people is my begetter?", 437), but also the fact that Oedipus felt βαρυνθείς ("distressed", 781) by the words of the drunken man and ἄτιμος ("bereft of honour", 789) by the words of Apollo. Oedipus' social 'complex', Gregory continues, also seems to feed his impetuous quest to find out his identity at the end of the second episode (τοὐμὸν δ' ἐγώ, / κεἰ σμικρόν ἐστι, σπέρμ' ἰδεῖν βουλήσομαι: "even if it is totally unimportant/base, I want to see my origin", 1076-7). Kostas Valakas points out to me that the scarred body suits a slave, not a free man.

[8] Winkler 1990, 179, discussed in Gregory 1995, 145.

In psychoanalytic terms, on the other hand, the crossroad has been seen as a metonymy for the sexual epicentre of the female body, and the clash upon it as a 'complex' clash between a father and a son for the possession of the mother.[11] In Starobinski's vocabulary, this is a clash that lies beyond the "spoken action of the unconscious": instead of a *mise-en-scène* of words, we have here a *mise-en-scène* of silence.

Reconciling anthropology and psychoanalysis, Segal sees in the confrontation on the crossroad "a truly primal scene: father attacking son with the instrument used on beasts, son slaying father with the token of the hurt that the father caused to his libs" (Segal 1999, 222). And if the foot stands, in the ancient vocabulary, as a metonymy for the phallus (Henderson 1991, 129-30), then the solution to the equation becomes even more obviously psychoanalytical. And the same goes, of course, for Oedipus' *orgē*.

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[9] Johnston 1991 offers a comprehensive anthropology of the crossroad, with a review of the related bibliography. Johnston notes that crossroads have a special relation to parricide, as they are locations for the punishment of the polluting bodies of parricides: after their execution, as Plato instructs the officers of his city, the dead bodies of the parricides had to be transported to a crossroad and, there, their sculls had to be stoned, in order to cleanse the community, before the exposure of the corpses outside the borders of the city, according to custom (*Laws* 873b-c) (cf. also Halliwell 1986). If the audience were indeed familiar with all these, then the use of the crossroad motif in the play serves the most tragic of ironies.

[10] For the idea that perverted rites of passage, especially those of adulthood, produce 'selves' of psychonalytical complexity, see Papazoglou 2014, 377-402; 2020 and 2021.

[11] Abraham 2018 (1923), 83-5, cited in Rusten 1996, 108, who elaborates further on the idea.

To resume, on the crossroad we are in 'wild' nature, outside 'civilized' civic spaces (*astea*), outside the (literal as well as metaphorical) space that organizes and secures the concordant coexistence of human beings in *oikoi* and *poleis* – the space that organizes and secures their safe identities and their equally safe communication. The neglect/absence of vocative addresses on the crossroad signposts the absence – the non-*anagnorisis* – of identities with clear and hierarchical social positions/statuses, related to age and city, bodies and institutions. However, if the liminal *locus* of the crossroad tolerates (if not brings about) this absence, what happens when the Thebans, substituting the *orgē*/drive of violence with the *orgē*/drive of human communication (cf. ἀστυνόμους ὀργάς, *Ant.* 355-6), inhabit *oikoi* and *poleis*? When they are not (nor do they appear to be) *xenoi* between them? And at the same time: how do they address each other when they become – thanks to the theatre – spectacle? In other words: how does the dramaturgy of vocatives function in tragic Thebes?

We have reached the stage of *Antigone*.

2. Vocatives and Bodies in *Antigone*

If Ismene is 'correct' in terms of gender and politics, a strong indicator of her 'normality' is the dynamic variety, fullness and correctness of her vocative addresses: Ἀντιγόνη (11) she addresses her sister by name, not yet realizing what she is going to do, and then ὦ ταλαῖφρον ("O wretched", 39), σχετλία ("miserable", 47) and κασιγνήτη ("sister", 49, 544). Ὦναξ ("O King", 563), she addresses Kreon. Apostrophizing, finally, Haemon as ὦ φίλταθ' Αἷμον, ὥς σ' ἀτιμάζει πατήρ ("O dearest Haemon, how your father dishonours you", 572) she defines, in spectacular contrast to Antigone herself, her own *philia* with her sister's fiancé but, also, the latter's *philia* with his father.[12] However, Ismene is not exactly 'tragic'. Protagonists in the crucial, as well as problematic, addresses, dyslectic and dystopic in terms of communication, are Antigone and Kreon. Their vocatives (or their lack thereof) sustain, as we shall see, indexes of perverted communication and, at the same time, indexes of perverted identities.

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[12] For the attribution of the line, see Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, 174, with bibliography.

2.1. Antigone

Opening play, action and dialogue, Antigone addresses her sister with the famous Ὦ κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον Ἰσμήνης κάρα (1), an untranslatable phrase of a strikingly strained and 'asphyxiating' syntax, which denotes an equally 'asphyxiating' relation and relationship. Antigone recognizes Ismene on the basis of sameness – and she does so with a pleonastic vocative focused on the latter's body: "O you who have in common with me the womb that gave birth to both of us, Ismene's head/my dearest Ismene/my own Ismene". It has been claimed that this address indicates that Antigone embraces and kisses her sister's head (Dunn 2006): if indeed this was the way that Sophocles directed the scene, then the bodily gesture would signify – in performative terms too – their 'strangulating' identification and 'symbiotic' relation, as Antigone understands it and as it is attested in her vocative.

Antigone's vocative opens a brief *rhesis* which focuses on the poignant particularity of the two girls and their "wretched", "disastrous", "vile" and "dishonoured" family (3-5) but also the particularity of the misfortunes of their *philoi*: "Do you know our woes?" (2); "What is now this . . . declaration? Have you heard something or are you in total ignorance that misfortunes that befit enemies have fallen upon dear ones?" (7-10). Antigone's short and sharp *rhesis* is articulated in consecutive questions instead of statements, as would have been, perhaps, more expected – in terms of language and communication – in speeches that aim at informing the other. The linguistic agitation, which in performance must have been served by a vocal one too, 'incarnates' on stage the psychic turmoil of Antigone.[13] But it is, perhaps, more important to see that these are rhetorical questions of a Self that, in essence, expects no reply from the Other, a Self that feels no distance from the Other – that does not seek communication because it takes communion for granted: a superlative *philia*, typical of the Labdacids.[14]

The ὦ κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον Ἰσμήνης κάρα is Antigone's first vocative address to her sister – and the last one. From the moment that she understands that Ismene does not share her decision to bury their brother, from the moment that she understands the distance between them, she ceases to use any sort of vocative. Her reluctance to exercise the slightest persuasion on Ismene shows the same thing: Ἀλλ' ἴσθ' ὁποία σοι δοκεῖ ("But be whoever you decide/be as you think fit", 71). Antigone is *phile* to the dead (with an – almost incestuous – emphasis on the body: φίλη μετ' αὐτοῦ κείσομαι, φίλου μέτα, "beloved I will lay by his side, joined to a beloved", 73; cf. Winnington-Ingram 1980, 130; Johnson 1997, 392) – and, with equal emphasis, "hating" (cf. ἐχθαρῆι, 93) to the living. Antigone does not know how or does not want to communicate.[15]

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[13] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 128 and n. 41, speaks of a "torrent of negatives", which offer a "supreme example of characterization through style".

[14] On identification, see Loraux 1986, 172. On the "rhetoric of questions" on the tragic stage (without reference to this speech), see Mastronarde 1979, 6-18.

This is precisely what is attested in her total lack of vocatives to Kreon. Her addressing is colloquial and 'low', devoid of any recognition of the characters' relation to each other: she uses a 'plain' (and insulting) second person singular, refusing to recognize in him some institutional, civic, or familial, identity. If, however, a vocative does not only acknowledge the identity of the Other, but also defines the consciousness of the Self, what does the absence of vocative addresses signify for the way that Antigone constructs and understands her own identity? The question betrays the answer: fluidly, contradictorily, and very vulnerably.

Confronted with Kreon, Antigone starts suspending herself between the general and the specific, the universal and the idiosyncratic, the timeless and the topical, and the concomitant identities that these define. At first, she supports her act according to the timeless laws of the gods about the burial of the mortals: she summons values and arguments which do not refer to herself, but to everybody – in other words, she understands and shows herself as typical to the human condition. Equally typical – yet this time of the familial condition – is the way she understands herself when she replies, summoning a *gnomē* (which emphasizes again a bodily relation): Οὐδὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τοὺς ὁμοσπλάγχνους σέβειν ("There is nothing vile in showing respect for those of the same womb", 511). However, Kreon's pressure in this heated debate will force Antigone to various rhetorical corners: the dead Eteocles feels no animosity towards his brother, she contends; it was not a slave who died, but a brother, she answers back; in Hades, friends and foes are equated, she tries to evade.

And finally: Οὔτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν (523). The line, famously difficult to translate, could be rendered as: "because of my biological origin, of the identity that my birth gives me, the identity of a sister, I am tied to them with bonds of love/familial relation and not hate". Antigone's final argument does not concern some divine, timeless, and universal mandate, but the particularity of her own situation; not some *nomos*, but the identity that derives from her γονήν: a biological identity. It is crucial to see that the ultimate line of defence of the/her Self is the/her body.

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[15] Pointing out that Antigone avoids using the first-person plural, Goldhill notes that "her general unwillingness to align herself linguistically with her sister – or anyone else – as a pair or as a group plays a role in the increasing isolation of Antigone through the play, and in the expression of her extreme commitment to self" (Goldhill 2012: 32). In the *kommos* with the Thebans, Antigone will show some signs of a willingness to communicate, which, nevertheless, will be quickly aborted (see below).

After her opening address to Ismene, the next vocative address of Antigone towards an Other comes up only with her last scene: ὦ γᾶς πατρίας πολῖται ("O citizens of [my] fatherland", 806). By addressing the Thebans of the Chorus, Antigone appears for the first time to open up (and to want to open up) her communicative horizon. However, as the vocatives used will show, this communication too will fail.

Let us follow closely her dialogue with the Chorus (806-943). This is an exchange with especially dynamic addresses, indexes of crucial communicative tensions.

The "sight" of Antigone (*τάδ' ὁρῶν*: "seeing these", 802; ὁρῶ . . . τήνδ' Ἀντιγόνην: "I see . . . Antigone", 804-5) drives the Thebans to tears. Taking her cue from their 'sight', and as if aiming at making them identity with her and share the lament for herself (Griffith on 806), Antigone stretches herself out to address, for the first time in the play, the male community of the *polis*: Ὁρᾶτ' ἔμ', ὦ γᾶς πατρίας πολῖται ("See me, O citizens of [my] fatherland", 806). Antigone can now see the Others and, at the same time, she asks to be "seen" by them: an 'Antigone-*spectacle*'.[16]

However, this 'meeting' will prove impossible. Confronted with the critical distance that the Chorus adopt when they stress her absolute difference from all humans, her absolute particularity (ἀλλ' αὐτόνομος ζῶσα μόνη δὴ / θνητῶν: "but by your own law, you are the only among mortals who goes to death while living", 821-2), Antigone turns inwards to an 'aside' reference to Niobe (823-33) – driving the Thebans to resort to a rather pointed consolation, not devoid of some praise: "But she was a god and was born of gods . . . it is a great thing to be heard/spoken of as someone who happened to share the lot of gods" (834-7). Incapable (now as always) to deal with the slightest distance from the Other, Antigone over-reacts, perceiving the distance as "scorn" (839) and *hybris* (840), before closing the circle of her communicative attempt with a vocative, which, however, functions as an exclamation which breaks bridges rather than as an address which tries to build them: Ὦ πόλις, ὦ πόλεως / πολυκτήμονες ἄνδρες ("O city, O affluent men of the city", 842-3). Instead, Antigone turns to the Theban nature to find her collocutors: ἰὼ Διρκαῖαι κρῆναι Θήβας τ' εὐ-/αρμάτου ἄλσος, ἔμπας / ξυμμάρτυρας ὔμμ' ἐπικτῶμαι ("Oh springs of Dirke and sacred grove of Thebes, city of beautiful chariots, it is you that I call as witnesses", 844-6). Antigone expected (or attempted) to make the Thebans identify with her in the lament over the Self – but, as her vocative addresses show, she fails: she ends up totally *aphilos*, outside any communication and community, dweller of no world, neither of the living nor of the dead (850-2).[17]

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[16] I stress here the communicative dimension of Antigone's request to be seen. Jouanna reads her as offering herself "en spectacle devant la cité entière pour protester contre le scandale ou pour faire scandale" (Jouanna 2007, 394).

The Theban elders decide, now, to approach her with fatherly tenderness, pointing out her θράσος ("audacity", 853) but, at the same time, absolving her from guilt: ὦ τέκνον . . . / πατρῷον δ' ἐκτίνεις τιν' ἆθλον ("O child . . . you are paying for some ordeal of your father", 855-6). Antigone responds to this tender vocative taking (as she did also in her earlier "See me") communicative courage from the Chorus' vocative and stance. She now remembers that she is a child of the cursed Labdacids. And she apostrophizes, not without some complaint, the miasmatic intercourse from which she was born (Ἰὼ ἆται . . . κοιμήματά τ' αὐτ-/τογέννητ' . . . οἵων ἐγώ . . . ἔφυν: "Oh disasters . . . and self-incestuous sexual unions . . . such of which . . . I was born", 863-6) and the brother who destroys her (Ἱὼ δυσπότμων / κασίγνητε γάμων κυρήσας, / θανὼν ἔτ' οὖσαν κατήναρές με: "Oh brother, you who won a disastrous marriage / and with your death you kill me still alive", 869-71). However, once again, the Chorus correct her: σὲ δ' αὐτόγνωτος ὤλεσ' ὀργά (875). This too is a line difficult to translate (possibly obscure by nature): "your self-conceived *orgē* destroys you". The verdict of the elders throws Antigone outside any attempt to or sense of communication: ἄκλαυτος, ἄφιλος, ἀνυμέναι-/ος ἁ ταλαίφρων ἄγομαι ("without being lamented, without friends, without a wedding song I am carried on, me the wretched one", 876-7). Antigone does not receive the *kommos* that she expected and claimed – nor the communication that such a *kommos* could signify.

Entering her speech, Antigone once again contracts herself and ceases to address the living – instead, she addresses the space of her death: Ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφὴς / οἴκησις αἰείφρουρος ("O tomb, O wedding chamber, O cave / [that you shall be my] dwelling forever", 891-92). This apostrophe to a 'dead' nature, empty of people, introduces an 'aside' *rhesis*,[18] a speech that does not seek to communicate but is delivered as a long pause in the developing rhythm of the performance ("the action freezes": Seale 1982, 24-9). She addresses her brother echoing her earlier address to Ismene: ὦ κασίγνητον κάρα ("O my brother's head/my dearest brother", 915). In between, she famously defends her action: "I would never have gone against the city, if it were for my husband or child. Because, if they died, I could beget others; but now, with my parents both dead, I cannot beget another brother". The *nomos* ("law", 908) Antigone now invokes is not of the gods, nor of the humans:[19] it is the mandate given to her by her biological origin – that is, by her body. The same as in her earlier "by my biological origin I am tied to them with bonds of love not hate".

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[17] Cf. Goldhill 2021, 32: "She is expressing the egô, who can form a 'we' neither with her family on earth nor with her family in Hades".

[18] See Knox 1964, 106: "she struggles with her own emotions in a self-absorbed passion which totally ignores the presence of those around her". That Antigone's rhetoric is well structured does not prove that her speech is addressed to the citizens, as Cropp 1997, among others, argues.

And we reach Antigone's final vocatives, just before she leaves stage (and life). They denote radically different addresses. At first: Ὦ γῆς Θήβης ἄστυ πατρῷον / καὶ θεοὶ προγενεῖς ("O fatherly city of the Theban land / and fatherly gods", 937-8). Here we have an 'extrovert'/political but at the same time pronouncedly 'introvert'/familial vocative: Antigone addresses the "fatherly city of the Theban land" (ἄστυ, as well as *γῆ*, refer to the geography/topography of the *polis*, not to its human community) and her "fatherly" gods (or simply ancestors: Griffith on 938). But, eventually, her communicative horizon opens up once again: Λεύσσετε, Θήβης οἱ κοιρανίδαι, / τὴν βασιλειδῶν μούνην λοιπήν, / οἷα πρὸς οἵων ἀνδρῶν πάσχω, / τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσασα ("Look, you affluent men of Thebes, / the only one of the royal family who is left, / what sort [of misfortunes] I suffer because of what sort of men", 940-3). "Look, you affluent men": Antigone's address now does not concern all Thebans, only the affluent aristocrats of the Chorus, the nobles that are faithful to the dynasty (Winnington-Ingram 1980, 138). And it is precisely as a member of the dynasty that she bids farewell to them, seeking to communicate with them – once again in vain. Her last address echoes the "See me, o citizens of [my] fatherly earth", with which she began her exchange with the Thebans: Antigone entered the stage as a spectacle, and as a spectacle she leaves it.

And it is important to see that she defines her offenders and opponents with reference to their gender: πρὸς οἵων ἀνδρῶν πάσχω ("by what sort of men I suffer", 942) – thus, with reference to their bodies.

Ἄνδρες ("Men", 162) is the first vocative address of Kreon to the Theban elders. As with Oedipus, it will take him the whole play before addressing them again, in the *exodos*.

2.2. Kreon

Having already proclaimed his decision to the citizens of Thebes, Kreon comes on stage to confront, as noted above, a particular and specific group of Thebans: a group of elderly counsellors who have always stayed faithful to the Labdacids, despite miasmatic crimes (165-9). The vocative "Men" is not strange to the ancient etiquette, but it is important, in my opinion, that

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[19] By strictly personalizing the concept of *nomos*, here, Antigone can be seen to rhetorically abuse the invocation of *nomoi* as normally applied (and as it has been applied so far in the play) in what Battezzato categorizes as "la retorica dei superlativi" (Battezzato 2008, 72-6).

Kreon does not recognize the social/civic status of his audience. A reference to a civic, geographical, or ancestral origin (for example, Θήβας πολῖται; ἄνδρες πόλεως; Θήβης ἄνακτες, cf. *Ant.* 988; ἄνδρες ἀστοί, cf. ὦ πάντες ἀστοί, *Ant.* 1183; ἄνδρες πολῖται, *OT* 513; Κάδμου πολῖται, *A. Sept.* 1) would have made this vocative address more political and institutional. Instead, Kreon chooses an identity which refers to the gender of his audience: this is a bodily identity which makes him the same with them, levelling their difference, related to age or other. Kreon speaks as man to men. In a sense, he is equally problematic to Antigone: he seeks communication with the 'same' – as she did.

Instead of the short, sharp, and breathless rhetorical questions of Antigone, however, Kreon appears to enjoy the spacious *peitho* of gnomic statements. And if she spoke in the name of a particular and specific family, he turns to the experiences of a timeless and universal city. "There is no way to understand someone's soul and spirit, if you don't see them behave in the political scene"; "the leader who is afraid to speak is wretched"; "he who puts friend above country is nothing"; "only on board of the ship of the fatherland, one can save himself and make *philoi*" (175-90). Kreon ascended to power thanks to his familial identity (ἀγχιστεῖα, 174) – despite of this (or rather because of this), he desires to uphold a political identity: to appear as the leader of all Thebans, a *philos* of Thebes not of the Labdacids. In his eyes, one feels, the decision to leave Polyneices unburied is politically – and familially – brave.

Through his gnomic plethora, Kreon seeks to de-personalize his decision and make it appear as politically 'correct', objectively 'obvious', devoid of idiosyncratic perspective: I think and act, he seems to claim, the way any correct leader would think and act.[20] However, the elders of the Chorus – politically defused – remain apathetic: παῖ Μενοικέως ("child of Menoikeus", 211), you are the king, you can legislate according to your desires (all the rest is words, they seem to insinuate). Choosing a vocative which focuses on Kreon's familial origin, the elders seem to refuse his distance from the *oikos*, and as such refuse to acknowledge his institutional identity – undermining, thus, also, the status he sought to find in timeless and universal human experience.

The Guard announces the burial of Polyneices, and the Chorus leader speculates about divine intervention, provoking the *orgē* (280) of Kreon, who chooses to land the act onto the political landscape of the mortals and the civic identities that it provides. He has taken notice of "the men of the city" that are seeking to overthrow him seduced by bribes (289-90): "there is no worse human convention than money, this is what can destroy the cities, this is what can annihilate the families, corrupt the virtuous and lead to wickedness and impiety" (295-301). Resorting, once again, to *gnomai*, Kreon tries to save the timeless and universal civic prestige of his person and of his act. However, it is obvious that the words of the Guard have "bitten" not only his ears but his soul too (Ἐν τοῖσιν ὠσὶν ἢ ‹πὶ τῇ ψυχῇ δάκνῃ; "Is it on your ears that you feel bitten, or on your soul?", 317) – or better: his soul is "bitten" as if it were a body.

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[20] For a socio-linguistic approach of paroimiology, see Hrisztova-Gotthardt and Varga 2014. On tragic paroimiology see van Emde Boas 2017, 41-7 with bibliography. On the paroimiology of Kreon and Antigone, more specifically, see Foley 1996, and Trapp's response to her (Trapp 1996). See also Budelmann 2000, 74-80. For a discussion of tragic paroimiology with reference to *Ajax*, see Lardinois 2006. Cuny 2007, in my opinion, merely collects and categorizes the data, but without interpreting them.

Faced by Antigone, Kreon resorts to an anonymous and insulting second person singular: σὲ δή ("You, then", 441). Faced with Kreon, as noted above, Antigone does not take the pain of the slightest vocative address, civic or familial. In the debate that follows, the two characters move around different positions, at times gnomic, at others personal, suspended between the two, remaining, however, each time one opposite the other: one pushes the other to achieve the 'final word'; one forces the other to rhetorical 'corners' – and, finally, to strained arguments.

It is now the turn of Antigone to use *gnomai*, depersonalizing her act: the unwritten laws of the gods. But, at the same time, she cannot but personalize this act painfully: "to one who, like me, lives in misfortune, death is a gain" (463-4). Kreon responds with, once again, a gnomic plethora: human stubbornness is punished, "it breaks like iron, when melted by fire and then cooled down"; "it breaks like a horse under yoke, like a slave to his master" (473-9). However, his political confidence, his ideological belief in his decision, seems to have disappeared: Ἦ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἀνήρ, αὕτη δ’ ἀνήρ ("Now, indeed, I am no longer man, *she* is man", 484). This man, who claimed a civic identity with such an insistence, is reduced to the identity that his gender gives him – which means: the identity that his body provides him with.

As the intensified language of the confrontation leads the two characters to the stichomythia, Kreon seems to regain somewhat his rhetorical powers while Antigone loses them. The former begins with rhetorical questions (commensurate to Antigone's questions in her opening speech): "Are you not ashamed to go against the Kadmeians?", "Wasn't Eteocles your brother?", "How is it possible to honour him when you don't respect him?", but he ends up with statements, renewing the point of view and the rhetoric of his own opening speech: "the one sieged the city, the other defended it"; "the good cannot be equalled to the evil"; "the enemy cannot become friend, even in death" (512-22).

On the other side, Antigone, as we saw earlier, contracts into strained claims, to end up with: "by my biological origin, I am tied to them with bonds of love not hate" (523). Kreon seems to respond to the bodily aspect of the argument, choosing to climax his rhetoric, reduced, once again, to the status of his gender: ἐμοῦ δὲ ζῶντος οὐκ ἄρξει γυνή ("while I am alive, a woman will not rule", 525). As with Antigone, so with Kreon, the ultimate line of defence for the/his Self is the/his body. However, Haemon will deprive him of this certainty too.

In his debate with his son and under the pressure of his arguments, Kreon will "open" and "unfold" to reveal himself as internally "empty" (note the physicality of οὗτοι διαπτυχθέντες ὤφθησαν κενοί, 709), bereft of the slightest conviction, while being pushed to civic, gender and age positions which are authoritarian. Ὦ παῖ ("O child", 639, 648): confusing familial and civic identities, Kreon demands from his son political discipline. The latter, respectfully addressing him as πάτερ ("father", 635, 683, 701), asks from Kreon political wisdom. Now, it is the turn of the young man to use *gnomai*: Ἀλλ' ἄνδρα . . . τὸ μανθάνειν αἰσχρὸν οὐδέν ("But to a man . . . there is nothing shameful to learn [from others]", 710-11), the trees back down to the currents in order not to break, the sailor who does not adjust to the weather is destroyed.

Incapable to counter Haemon's arguments, Kreon invokes once again the status that his body could give him – this time his age: Οἱ τηλικοίδε ("those of this/mine age") will obey the admonitions of ἀνδρὸς τηλικοῦδε; ("a man of this/his age?") (726-7). Kreon resorts to questions which he believes to be rhetorical – but they are not. "Look at my actions, not my age" (728-9), Haemon exhorts him: listen to me, he seems to say, despite my bodily identity; and then: the citizens have the same opinion too (733). "The city will define what I will do?" (734), Kreon retorts tyrannically. "You see that you now speak as a child?" (735), Haemon answers back, not without cheek, undermining his father's confidence on age/body. "Doesn't the city belong to its leader?" (738), Kreon resorts again to *gnomai*, under Haemon's pressure. "It is meaningless to govern an empty city" (739), Haemon replies gnomically too. And finally, Kreon: "This guy seems to be the ally of a woman" (740). "Yes, if you are a woman" (741), Haemon climaxes his cheekiness. With his gender identity undermined, Kreon bursts: Ὦ παγκάκιστε ("O wickest/vilest", 742), to regain some control the next moment: Ὦ μιαρὸν ἦθος καὶ γυναικὸς ὕστερον ("O vile temper, lesser than a woman!", 746), and again: γυναικὸς ὢν δούλευμα ("woman's lackey", 756).[21] Once again with this character, once again in this play, the Self's ultimate line of defence is the body.

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[21] Goldhill notes that, until 742, Kreon avoids addressing Haemon directly, and opts to "objectify" him through general remarks "as if he is talking to [him] through the chorus". Haemon's "growing sarcasm" at 741, however, goads Kreon's fury to a vehement personal insult: "no more theory" (Goldhill 2012, 61-2). The *agon* between Kreon and Haemon is typical of Sophoclean debates, which are characterized not only by their formalistic structure but, also, by their exhibiting "une crise à l'intérieur d'un

Ὦ γεραιὲ Τειρεσία ("O elderly Teiresias", 991, 1045): addressing him with reference to his age and not his institutional role as a Seer, Kreon chooses, as he did in his address to the Chorus, to address Teiresias in terms of biology, not politics or theology. This comes at a cost: *τέκνον* ("child", 1023), the Seer addresses him, depriving Kreon of any civic identity. The later breaks: Ὦ πρέσβυ, ὥστε τοξόται σκοποῦ / τοξεύετ᾽ ἀνδρὸς τοῦδε ("O old man, like archers you target this man and shoot him with arrows", 1033-4) – reduced to a traumatized body.

In the *exodos*, the themes that we pointed out so far dominate the stage registering interesting climaxes and spectacular transformations. The only identity that Kreon is left with is a desperately guilty 'I'. His vocatives are cries that do not expect any answer – that do not aim at communication. Apostrophes to deadly landscapes: Ἰὼ ἰὼ δυσκάθαρτος Ἅιδου λιμήν ("Oh oh, harbour of Hades, impossible to cleanse", 1284); to deadly actions: Ἰὼ φρενῶν δυσφρόνων ἁμαρτήματα ("Oh, blunders of erroneous minds", 1261); to the dead: *Ἰὼ παῖ* ("Oh, child", 1266, 1289, 1340), Φεῦ φεῦ μᾶτερ ἀθλία, φεῦ τέκνον ("Alas, you wretched mother, alas, you my child", 1300); and, above all, apostrophes to the Self: δείλαιος ἐγώ ("miserable me", 1310), ὦ μέλεος ("O wretched me", 1319-20) – cries to the Self: Οἴμοι ("Oh/Alas me!", 1271, 1275, 1294, 1317). Kreon, indeed, like Antigone, is destroyed by an αὐτόγνωτος ὀργή ("self-conceived drive", 875).

If, in the previous scenes, Kreon eagerly employed gnomic statements 'depersonalizing' himself, he now focuses emphatically on his painfully individuated and unique "I" (Ἐγὼ γάρ σ᾽, ἐγώ σ᾽ἔκανον, ὦ μέλεος, / ἐγώ, φάμ᾽ ἔτυμον, "It is I, I, who killed you, O ill-fortuned me, / I, this is the truth", 1319-20). This "I" is spectacularly cut off from any communication with the living. Only one vocative Kreon can address to the Thebans, and this is bereft of a recognition of social or personal relations: he addresses them simply as *spectators* of his deeds (ὦ κτανόντας τε καὶ / θανόντας βλέποντες ἐμφυλίους: "O beholders of kindred killers and killed ones", 1263-64).[22]

But Kreon's catalytic transformation concerns the mutation of the gender/bodily identity he so strongly defended, upon which he so urgently seized: lamenting gravely, Kreon laments like a woman (Tyrrell and Bennett 1998, 151). And it is important to see this mutation in the context of a broader dynamic which, as Butler puts it, "appears to destabilize gender throughout the play", as Kreon "in being spoken to, he is unmanned" against a "manly" Antigone (Butler 2000, 10). But it is not enough to understand this

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monde qui devrait être uni" (Jouanna 2007: 324-5).

[22] The vocative address to the Chorus appears to be addressed to the spectators of the performance too (Loraux 1986, 178).

feminization as a sign of his humiliation and degradation (Griffith 1999, 342); nor should we only *hear* in Kreon an echo of the paroxysmal female lament of Antigone (Honig 2013, 119) or *see* only an image of his *pathos* (Perodaskalakis 2012, 135). It is more important to *see* that, now, lamenting a dead young *philos* in his hands (1258), Kreon 'embodies' Antigone. And this in all levels of communication: like Antigone, he too cannot find another to share his lament, he laments alone; like her, he too addresses his dead – it is only with them that he can share some communion. And, finally, like her, he too calls us to confront him as a *spectacle*. This is a dramaturgical transformation par excellence: a transformation which only the performance can document – behind and beyond text/language.

Kreon ends up 'embodying' his opposing *ēthos*: the absolute defeat of the Self.

3. Instead of an *Epilogos*: Addressing Oedipus

Bereft of any other means of communication capable to arrest the culprit, Oedipus resorts to a curse: a fatal speech act, a magical address which is directed against the perpetrator but also those who address him (προσφωνεῖν, 238, 818). We could ask ourselves: if we wanted to address him (or curse him, it is the same), which is the vocative that Oedipus would respond to? Which vocative could make him turn, for him to see us and for us to see him? To which vocative would he 'answer', confirming his identity?

Before the *anagnorisis*, Oedipus declares with pride that all people address him by name (πᾶσι κλεινὸς Οἰδίπους καλούμενος, 8). *Kleinos* refers to his name "being heard", multiplied in the mouth of the humans. But, in essence, the address to him cannot have a patronymic or a civic or a geographical origin: both have been undermined by the insulting vocative of the drunken Corinthian (780). In other words, Oedipus must be addressed bereft of any relation to the Other.[23] Instead, his name is connected to the/his body, a source of knowledge but also ignorance, pride but also humiliation: he who can solve the riddle of the human feet – but does not know how his own feet were traumatized; he who was named after them – yet is ashamed of them.[24]

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[23] Cf. Segal 1999, 212: "his ambiguous naming from chance confuses linguistic, familial, and spatial codes all together".

[24] Revealing/confessing for the first time a 'deep' psychic trauma, Oedipus refers to his wounded feet as an ἀρχαῖον κακόν ("ancient/age old evil/pain", 1033) and a δεινόν γ' ὄνειδος ("terrible disgrace") which has stayed with him since his σπάργανα ("swaddling clothes/infancy", 1035), and he demands to learn, in a deeply agonized and urgent imperative, which of his two parents is responsible for this: Ὦ πρὸς θεῶν, πρὸς μητρὸς ἢ πατρός; φράσον ("O, in the name of gods, by [my] mother or by [my] father?

After the *anagnorisis*, Oedipus ends up nameless, δύστηνος (“Wretched/miserable”), as Iokaste addresses him for the last time (τοῦτο γάρ σ› ἔχω / μόνον προσειπεῖν: “this is the only [word] I have with which to address you”, 1071-2), as the Chorus address him in the *exodos* (1303) and as he addresses himself (1308). At the same time, he is an Oedipus who is more physical than ever: a body that is ‘cut off’ from his own voice (πᾶ μοι / φθογγὰ διαπωτᾶται φοράδην; “where is my voice carried away from me?”, 1309-10), this time not only because of the traumatized ἄρθρα (ankles) of his feet, but because of the traumatized ἄρθρα (sockets) of his eyes (1270);[25] a body which cannot rely anymore on the sceptre of a king (or a wayfarer or a cripple) – and seeks to “touch” the body of his girls (ψαύοιμι, 1465; ψαῦσαι, 1467), substituting with touch the void of the vision (χερσί τἂν θιγὼν / δοκοῖμ’ ἔχειν σφᾶς, ὥσπερ ἡνίκ’ ἔβλεπον: “If I could touch them with my hands, I would feel having them as when I was seeing”, 1469-70). On stage, Oedipus ‘embodies’ his name and now ‘sees’ and ‘recognizes’ the others through a contact which is ‘visibly’ bodily.[26] This is an Oedipus-spectacle, a ‘theatrical’ Oedipus par excellence: Ὦ δεινὸν ἰδεῖν πάθος ἀνθρώποις (“O terrible suffering for mortals to see”, 1297).

To conclude, Oedipus “crystallizes in purest form”, Zeitlin writes, “the city of Thebes itself. And by that same logic, Thebes is therefore the only possible place for his birth” (1992, 134). If the vocative address requires and, at the same time, provides the *anagnorisis* of the Self by the Other, sealing the communication between them, in Oedipus’ case his address is inevitably connected to his body, and it is to his body that it is exhausted. In the protagonists of *Antigone*, as I tried to show, a sort of bodily ‘autism’ is cultivated too, in one way or another, as a pivotal condition of *anagnorisis*, personal and political, which forbids communication. A condition which is ‘embodied’ on stage and becomes ‘visible’, thanks to a clear, as much as complex, dramaturgy of vocatives. A ‘Theban’ dramaturgy.[27]

Speak!”, 1037) (see Segal 1999, 211). These lines, from the exchange between the Korinthian and Oedipus, are not necessary to the economy of the dialogue and the advancement of the plot. Their function, therefore, serves to deepen character portrayal, as they interweave the bodily trauma with a psychic one, which concerns the Father and the Mother – a clearly psychoanalytical dynamic.

[25] On the equation of eye and phallus in this scene, see Devereux 1973.

[26] Cf. Valakas 2002, 84: “His plea for exile is more welcome to the Chorus than his asking to be touched by them (1409-18). It is only thanks to Antigone and Ismene, who come in support of Oedipus, embrace him and listen to him without speaking, that his unexpected and repeated wish for physical contact is fulfilled (1462-1523). Oedipus, deprived of his vision, is thus to discover even for a few moments a new bodily identity and stability on stage”.

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To Mary Yossi

Francesco Dall’Olio*

Athens, the Moon and You: Diana and the Female Appropriation of Marriage in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*[1]

Abstract

In the multi-layered set of elements that constitutes the imagery of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Diana, the ancient goddess of hunting, occupies a special place. She is the model for the characters of both Titania and Hippolyta; the frequent recurrence of moon-related imagery can be interpreted as a reprisal of important elements of her iconographic tradition; the plot of the play is built around narrative patterns derived from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in which the goddess is deeply involved. This article investigates the relationship between these structural and dramatic elements and the way the play stages the gender relationships. It suggests that the references to Diana mark the stages of a progressive ‘appropriation’ of marriage by the female characters. On the one hand, quotations and references to the goddess allow characters such as Hermia, Titania and Hippolyta to express their resistance to a male world that would repress them; on the other hand, the rewriting of the myth of Actaeon in the Bottom episode presents and exposes a ‘revision’ of marriage values aimed at integrating women’s experience into the relationship.

KEYWORDS: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; gender relationships; Diana; Greek Gods; Elizabethan ideology; marriage

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has become a staple among studies investigating the presence of ancient literature in Shakespeare’s theatrical corpus. The majority of these focus on the relationship of the play with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which has always been recognised as one of the play’s main sources.[2] Other studies have considered the influence

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[1] This article represents an expansion of a paper I presented at the ESRA Virtual Conference 2021. It is also part of my research activity within the PRIN 2017 Project “Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama”.

[2] Siler 2011 offers the most comprehensive exposition of this relationship; for a shorter but equally effective exposition, see Taylor 2004.

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of Seneca's *Phaedra* (cf. Holland 1994; Burrow 2013, 183-4), Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* (cf. Nuttall 2000, 50-1; Findlay 2015, 199-201), Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (cf. Carver 2007, 429-45),[3] not to mention medieval or Renaissance texts that draw on classical imagery, such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* (cf. Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 63-4; Findlay 2015, 200-4) and the mythological plays written for the Queen's entertainment by authors such as George Peele, George Gascoigne and John Lyly.[4] Scholars have emphasised the fundamental role played by classical imagery in the poetic world of the *Dream*, and highlighted how Shakespeare uses classical references and allusions either to suggest nuances in the portrayal of his characters, or to highlight and/or better define certain important themes in his play.

In this article, I intend to return to this line of research, with an analysis of how the mythological figure of Diana is used by Shakespeare and how references to her contribute to the interpretation of the play. Beyond the four times when she is explicitly mentioned, both the plot and imagery of the play are made up of a series of elements that are part of the literary and iconographic tradition relating to the goddess, from classical antiquity to literature contemporary to Shakespeare. She is the model for the characterisation of Titania and Hippolyta, and one of the comedy's central events, her encounter with Bottom, may be viewed as a rewriting of the myth of Diana and Actaeon. At two points in the play, Shakespeare's text seems to be explicitly modelled on passages from Seneca's *Phaedra*, a tragedy in which Diana plays a central role.[5] In addition, Diana was a central figure in the mythological plays mentioned above, not least because of her relevance as one of the main iconographic models for the representation of Queen Elizabeth I, an iconography that Shakespeare picks up in a passage that is traditionally interpreted as a direct homage to the sovereign (see below, at section 4).

This being so, it is surprising that there has never been a study that took up all these elements and tried to draw an overall picture of them, all the more so because the single elements of said picture have often been analysed within various studies regarding different aspects of the *Dream*. In the following pages, I will attempt to present at least a first solution to this problem, through a consideration of seven moments of the *Dream* (six specific passages and one entire episode) where there is a quotation, an allusion or a reprise of the character of Diana. This will not only provide an overall picture of the goddess' presence in the play, but will also highlight how the references to the figure of Diana serve to develop one of the central themes of the play, the gender relationships. In this, the article also fits within another strand of studies on the *Dream*. In the last thirty years, more and more voices have risen to question the view of the *Dream* as a "radically anti-feminist vision" (Campbell 2015, 8)[6] and have instead proposed to see within the play a kind of 'reform' of the marriage values of patriarchal society through the valorisation of the female experience.[7] In my opinion, the use of Diana in the comedy as will be shown by the analysis supports and confirms this interpretation of the *Dream*.[8]

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[3] All of these texts had already been translated into English: Ovid's poem by Arthur Golding (1567), Seneca's tragedy by John Studley (ca. 1566, then printed 1581, in Thomas Newton's edited collection of the entire corpus), Plutarch's *Life* by Thomas North (1579) and Apuleius' novel by William Adlington (1566). Given the prominence of these authors in Renaissance culture (and in the case of Ovid, his presence in grammar school curricula: cf. Mack 2005, 13), it is also highly plausible that Shakespeare was able to read Latin texts in their language.

[4] The relationship between the *Dream* and John Lyly's comedy *Gallathea* (1592) in particular has been much studied: see the bibliography in Hunt 2001, 448n3.

[5] The two passages in question are *MND* 2.195-244 (Helen pursuing Demetrius; cf. Sen. *Phae.* 233-41, 700-3, 710-12) and 4.1.112-13 (the dogs of Sparta; cf. Sen. *Phae.* 31-43): see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 162, 234.

1. *MND* 1.1.7-11

> HIPPOLYTA Four days will quickly steep themselves in night,
> Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
> And then the moon, like to a silver bow
> Now bent in heaven, shall behold the night
> Of our solemnities.[9]

Thus Hippolyta replies to Theseus' impatience for their wedding night. As acknowledged by Sukanta Chaudhuri, the image "associat[es] [the bow] with the moon, hence with the virgin moon-goddess Cynthia or Diana" (Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 121). The piece is an elegant and tender promise of love, and the mention of the goddess here might be seen as slightly jarring: why should a goddess traditionally recognised as a virgin be evoked as a guarantee of a loving relationship?

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[6] In that same page, Campbell cites the works of Louis Montrose, Laura Levine and S. N. Garner as examples of this view. I would add to the list James Calderwood (see Calderwood 1991, 423-4) and to some extent Nuttall 2000.

[7] Perhaps the most explicit example of this tendency is the aforementioned Campbell 2015; see Campbell 2015, 8 for other examples of this tendency such as Marilyn French, Burton Raffel and Dianne Hunter.

[8] To the best of my knowledge, such an analysis has rarely been proposed. The closest reference is Montrose 1983, whose interpretation, however, is fully within the 'feminist' reading mentioned above, and in any case only partially considers classical literature. Campbell says he wants to consider the allusions to Diana, but he limits himself to noting passages and reprisals already known (cf. Campbell 2015, 9-10), without venturing into an analysis of the literary tradition of which they are part.

[9] All quotations from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* refer to Shakespeare 2017.

In actual fact, Renaissance culture knew that Diana could also represent other aspects of femininity, including motherhood. In Vincenzo Cartari's mythology manual (translated into English in 1599 under the title *The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction*),[10] among the various incarnations of Diana are Lucina, invoked as a protector of childbirth (see Cartari 2004, 58-9), and Natura, whose body is represented as "tutto pieno e carico di poppe" ("completely covered with breasts", 65; translation mine). Another hypostasis of Diana as a 'maternal' deity was Cybele, a goddess whose literary and iconographic tradition included various texts known to Renaissance England and whose importance in terms of both imagery and plot for two other Shakespearean plays, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*, has been pointed out by Elizabeth Hart (see Hart 2003, 350-4). The mention of Diana in Hippolyta's speech, then, not only is not surprising in itself, but it also helps to give substance and depth to the Amazon's reminder to her impatient husband that love requires its own time to be enjoyed.

But there is also a second meaning, which reconnects this passage to the well-accepted interpretation of the relationship between Theseus and Hippolyta as heavily fractured by internal tensions. In Plutarch, Shakespeare could read that the marriage between Theseus and the Queen of the Amazons was the result of a war (see Nuttall 2000, 50; Taylor 2004, 49). The union between the two is then anything but peaceful, and Theseus himself shows awareness of this: "I wooed thee with my sword" (1.1.15). Nor is this the only problematic element. On the one hand, the ambiguous connotations of Theseus, a well-known ravisher of women (an aspect of his figure alluded to by Oberon later on, 2.1.77-80), have been noted by the scholars,[11] as well as the fact that those two characters are the parents of Hippolytus, the male protagonist of Seneca's *Phaedra* (see Nuttall 2000, 50-1). On the other, the Amazons were mythical creatures traditionally connected in Elizabethan culture not only with undisciplined femininity, but also with uncivilised lands (see Montrose 1983, 65-7): a factor that could be brought to bear in support of their desirability, as in Sir Walter Ralegh's *The Discoverie of Guiana* (1596), where the presentation of the land as 'virgin' served to exhort his peers to conquer it (see Montrose 1983, 76-7).

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[10] The influence of this text has been recognised in the works of Ben Jonson, George Chapman and Samuel Daniel, and has also been postulated for Shakespeare: see Hart 2003, 351, 368n18.

[11] For the ambiguity of Theseus' character with regard to the sexual question, see Holland 1994 and Nuttall 2000. To this must be added his ambiguity as a political figure, resulting both from his apparently contradictory behaviour towards the legal problem posed by Hermia and Aegeus (on which see Herman 2014), and from the ambiguity of Greece in the Elizabethan imagination as a place of great civilisation, but also of great decadence (see Findlay 2015).

Theseus' first words in the play reveal a disturbing closeness to Ralegh's mentality. In complaining about the moon slowing down the wedding time, the Duke of Athens compares her to a "stepdame or a dowager / Long withering out a young man's revenue" (1.1.5-6): a reference to the economic practice of the time whereby "a widow paid a jointure . . . out of her late husband's wealth, just blocking or reducing the income of his young heir" (Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 121). A. B. Taylor is right: his is an "earthy, practical" language (Taylor 2004, 50),[12] belonging to a conqueror who cannot wait to enjoy the fruit of his labours. Hippolyta's response is a peaceful but determined rebellion: Theseus may have conquered her, but the time and manner in which he will 'enjoy' his conquest are decisions that do not pertain to him. In a certain sense, Hippolyta is trying to bargain on the only ground on which she still has autonomy: referring back to Diana and her image as Queen of a world beyond the law of men is a way for her to recall her right not to be treated just as a new-conquered land to be plundered.

2. *MND* 1.83, 86-7, 89-90

The passage marks Theseus' final decision in the case of Hermia and Aegeus. We find here the first explicit mention of the goddess within the play:

> THESEUS Take time to pause, and by the next new moon,
> . . .
> Upon that day prepare either to die
> For disobedience to your father's will,
> . . .
> Or on Diana's altar to protest,
> For aye, austerity and single life.

The problem posed to Theseus is far from trivial. On the one hand, Aegeus appealed to an "ancient privilege" (1.1.41): a term "closely associated with the authority of the Ancient Constitution, the privilege of Parliament, habeas corpus and *Magna Carta*" (Herman 2014, 11). The insistence on law is also reminiscent of Plutarch's Theseus, who founded Athens on the assumption that the Athenians would not be ruled by the absolute power of a ruler, but by respect for the law (cf. Herman 2014, 7).[13] The Athenian elder (who bears the name of the Duke's mythical father)[14] is thus calling Theseus to respect his duties as a ruler. On the other hand, however, no one in Elizabethan England could be forced to marry against his or her will (cf. Herman 2014, 17): the right that Aegeus asks Theseus to sanction is therefore not only unjust, but also illegal (and Herman notes that "Shakespeare . . . casts Hermia's response in terms that recall . . . England's political system", Herman 2014, 11).

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[12] As Herman points out, in Elizabethan England a widow's rights were enshrined in law, and she could defend them if they were challenged (cf. Herman 2014, 9). That Hippolyta calls Theseus to order is yet another nuance of this dialogue, which paints a less than flattering portrait of the Duke of Athens.

[13] This makes the city and its constitution, in not a few political texts of the time,

Theseus is confronted with an impossible situation: whatever he decides to do, he will end up breaking a law; he must therefore seek a compromise. To put it mildly, he does not do a very good job: shutting Hermia up in a convent may save her life, but it will also mean imposing on her another fate she didn't choose, and it is questionable whether it would satisfy her father.[15] Nor does the Duke do much to hide his opinion of what kind of life it is: "to live a barren sister all your life, / Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon" (1.1.72-3). He is certainly pressuring Hermia to submit to her father, but the fact remains that this description could not be presented in more derogatory terms. Not only is there no reverence for the goddess in Theseus' words: his language carries forward the problematic image of woman's only value as a 'fruitful' land to be cultivated by a man, with almost no other worth or use. It is no coincidence that Hippolyta does not like this solution at all, something Theseus realises in the famous line "What cheer, my love?" (1.1.122), to which a gesture of annoyance or disapproval is matched in numerous performances (cf. Campbell 2015, 7; Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 80-2, 128).

3. *MND* 1.1.209-10, 213

The second direct mention of the goddess in the play occurs a few lines after:

> Lysander Tomorrow night, when Phoebe doth behold
> Her silver visage in the watery glass,
> . . .
> Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

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a fitting model for the relationship between the sovereign and the laws: see Herman 2014, 5-8.

[14] See Hodgdon 1986 on an interesting difference in the text of the play between the first *quarto* (printed in 1600) and the Folio, where Aegeus takes the place of Philostratus as 'master of revels' in 5.1.

[15] It should also be noted, as Chaudhuri does, that there were no convents or nuns in England after Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries (see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 125): what Theseus proposes to Hermia is another example of a life frowned upon by Elizabethan culture.

The name used here by Lysander is the epithet that the goddess shares with her brother Apollo: in the words of the young lover, it describes the perfect concord between him and Hermia, similar to the well-known harmonious relationship of the two divine siblings as representatives of the two major heavenly bodies, the sun and the moon.[16] Chaudhuri finds Lysander's juxtaposition of the virgin goddess with their elopement ironic (see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 135), but I do not think this is the case. The flight is a consequence of Hermia's rebellion against her father, and has as its destination the home of a female authority figure (an aunt of Lysander): it thus falls to all intents and purposes into the sequence of the various female rebellions against male authority in the play. Moreover, Aegeus, in presenting his case, had already accused Lysander of having "by moonlight, at her window sung" (1.1.30), and also "Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight" (3.1.45), as Peter Quince will remind us (one of the many details underlining the similarity between the two stories). In short, as the fruit of a woman's desire to decide on her own life, the clandestine relationship between Hermia and Lysander is fully entitled to the protection of the goddess.

And yet, Chaudhuri is not wrong: even if it is not the case identified by him, there is indeed irony in Lysander's choice to place their relationship under Diana's protection. As may be gleaned from a long literary tradition, in the myths concerning the figure of the goddess purity and violence go hand in hand. Not just that: the former is often the cause of the latter. In Seneca's *Phaedra*, it is precisely the purity of Hippolytus, a follower of Diana, that makes him attractive, triggering not only the dreadful passion of his stepmother, but even forcing the moon to stop and contemplate him, as described in a passage in the second Chorus of the play (*Phae.* 785-94).[17] In an opposite but similar case, the protagonist of John Lyly's play *Endymion* (1588, printed 1591) nurtures a passion for the nocturnal aster that takes on the features of a true, 'carnal' desire that ultimately leads Endymion to try and become similar to his beloved object (see Knoll 2014). The 'cult' of Queen Elizabeth also exalted her beauty and desirability, in a way that added to the social tensions of Renaissance England towards a woman in government (see Montrose 1983, 63-4). In other words, Lysander may be using the image of the moon as a guarantee of the purity of the relationship between him and Hermia, but behind that lies a potentially violent meaning.[18]

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[16] Their relationship is the first aspect of Diana presented by Cartari: see Cartari 2004, 55.

[17] In John Studley's translation, the generic mention of the moon in the Latin text was replaced with explicit mention of the goddess: "when from high Starbearing poale Diana downe did looke / On thee . . . / Shee could not weilde her weltring wayne . . . / thou didst cause hir busines, and madest her in a maze" (Seneca 1581, 66).

[18] In this sense, Lysander's use of Apollo and Diana's relationship as a model for

The ambiguity is further emphasised by two other details. In the next line, Hermia tells Helena that she and Lysander are to meet in the same place where the two girls "upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie / Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet" (1.1.215-16). A few lines earlier, Lysander recalled meeting Hermia in that very place (1.1.166-7). Put together, these two images evoke a third, that of a Lysander who 'intruded' into a peaceful, all-female space and thus fell in love with a girl: a recurring narrative pattern in the first three books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where, however, it ends in an attempted violence against the young woman (usually a follower of Diana).[19] By using its basic elements to recount, in retrospect, how Lysander and Hermia met, and combining it with the ambiguous image of the moon, Shakespeare thus casts a shadow over the relationship between the two young lovers, suggesting that it contains within it the same spectre of violence that we have seen at work in the relationship between Theseus and Hippolyta. And in fact, once they are in the woods, Lysander will make an attempt on Hermia, and her rejection will be the beginning of a "totally confused and progressive nightmare for all the young lovers" (Taylor 2004, 54), forced to confront the negative sides of their desires.

4. *MND* 2.1.155-64

The following passage is one of the most studied in the entire play:

> Oberon That very time I saw . . .
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth
> Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
> At a fair vestal, throned by the west,
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
> And the imperial votaress passed on
> In maiden meditation, fancy free.

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the one between him and Hermia may constitute an (unintentional?) self-censorship on his part, aimed at calming the fears of his beloved, who seems to harbour a subterranean distrust of men's faithfulness (see 1.1.173-6, 2.2.57, 65; cf. Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 133, 172).

[19] The first myth to begin the sequence, as John Heath notes, is that of Apollo and Daphne (cf. Heath 1991, 234), mentioned by Helena in the *Dream* as a tragic reversal of roles between herself and Demetrius: "Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase" (2.1.231). In doing so, the other pair of lovers is also drawn into the spectrum of male violence against the female universe.

Scholarship has long recognised in this passage an explicit homage to Elizabeth, through the re-proposition of a series of iconographic elements that refer to the best-known aspects of the 'cult' of her person, which in the years when Shakespeare wrote the *Dream* permeated English art and literature.[20] As the main mythological figure associated with the Queen,[21] Diana was a central figure in these texts. In *The Araignment of Parys* (1580), a play written by George Peele to be performed before Elizabeth, the famous myth of the judgement of Paris is rewritten to end with the intervention of the goddess, who takes the apple away from Venus and gives it to the only woman truly worthy of the prize, i.e. Elizabeth herself (cf. Montrose 1980). Eight years later, John Lyly's aforementioned play, *Endymion*, comes perhaps to represent the highest and most complete literary manifestation of this ideology, with its exaltation of the moon/Diana as a beneficent and 'inspiring' force (see Khomenko 2010). In this, Lyly's comedy would be followed by Sir Walter Ralegh's poem *Praisd be Dianas faire and harmless light* (printed in the 1593 anthology *The Phoenix Nest*), where the virgin moon goddess is exalted as the source of all virtue and true knowledge. Here the strong parallels Shakespeare's passage has with the literature of the time may clearly be seen.

But many critics have also noted that the homage is somewhat equivocal in tone. Oberon's description of the moon as "cold" and "watery" (2.1.156, 167) recalls Theseus' earlier and very unflattering description of consecrated virginity as a barren life. Nor does it help that the homage to Elizabeth is placed at the beginning of a tale explaining the birth of a flower that Oberon intends to use to humiliate his wife, a character Shakespeare has presented in a manner reminiscent of the goddess. 'Titania', i.e. 'daughter/daughter of a Titan', is in fact an epithet that Shakespeare takes from the *Metamorphoses*, where it is used for several female characters of divine progeny (cf. Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 52), including Diana at the moment when Actaeon stumbles upon her bathing ("ibi perluitur solita Tytania lympha", "while the progeny of Titans bathed at her usual spring", *Met.* 3.173; translation mine).[22] Titania also enters the *Dream* as the leader of a procession of fairies, intent on avoiding the company of her male counterpart,[23] and refuses to surrender to Oberon an Indian boy, the son of her "votaress" (2.1.123: the same term that defines the vestal), who for her is a pledge and reminder of their bond. The poetic description of female friendship that follows represents "a moment of female bonding" (Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 156), an expression of nostalgia for "a feminine world rich with all the mysteries of fertility, conception, pregnancy, and birth" (Calderwood 1991, 416), which recalls the well-known iconography of Diana at the head of a procession of only women. That the homage to Elizabeth thus opens a discourse dedicated to exposing Oberon's revenge against a character inspired by the goddess is indeed problematic.

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[20] For the connections between the Shakespearean passage, the official portraits of Elizabeth and the many entertainments organised by various nobles for the sovereign, see in particular Yates 1975, 112-19; Montrose 1980; Hunt 2001.

[21] Cf. Yates 1975, 76-80, for how Diana as goddess of the Moon and Nature is positioned within the broader recovery in Elizabethan ideology of the cultural tradition of the 'imperial theme', modified to suit Elizabeth.

[22] The quotation comes from Ovid 1984. The use of the Latin name can be seen as evidence that Shakespeare read Ovid in Latin, since the epithet is absent in Golding's translation (see Barkan 1980, 354).

[23] In this regard, the similarity noted by Harold Brooks between the dialogue be-

It is also undeniable that the Elizabethan 'cult' itself had ambiguous overtones due to its use as an instrument of political control. John N. King has noted that it is only from the 1580s onwards that the reference to Diana in the official portraits of the Queen shifts from emphasising Elizabeth's virginity as a temporary condition to be resolved in marriage to its exaltation as a demonstration of her virtuousness (see King 1990, 36-58). Elizabeth's 'tyrannical' attitude towards her ladies-in-waiting, who could only marry with her approval, is also well known (see Montrose 1983, 77-80): an attitude also traceable in the character of Diana, who punished the girls who did not respect their vow of chastity. There had also been those who tried to use the 'official' imagery of the Queen to invite her to marry or to propose themselves as suitors, as in the case of the various entertainments offered to Elizabeth by the Earl of Leicester between 1566 and 1575 (see Montrose 1980, 441-4). Put simply, the very imagery that in theory was supposed to pacify the realm under the adoration of the sovereign risked contributing to tensions, and not a few critics, including Montrose and Maurice Hunt, have recognised the presence of these in the *Dream* itself.[24]

Usually, however, these notations prefer to dwell on the 'masculine' aspect of the matter, on how Shakespeare's play, through Titania's ridicule through Bottom, would deploy a kind of revenge and compensation of men for having to obey a woman. Instead, I would tend to see in it a negative representation of the male (embodied by Oberon) as the oppressor and exploiter of a female universe that deserves quite different attention. Links with what we have seen so far in the play support this hypothesis: Titania's nostalgia for her all-female friendship with the Indian Queen recalls both the friendship of Helena and Hermia shattered by the arrival of men, and Hippolyta's

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tween Puck and the Fairy at the beginning of Act 2 and the one between Cupid and a Diana nymph in the second scene of Act 1 of John Lyly's *Gallathaea* is interesting (see Shakespeare 1979, 26).

[24] Maurice Hunt proposes to recognise in the *Dream* a political allegory in which Bottom represents the Duke of Anjou and Titania Elizabeth, who is mocked for refusing Leicester's court and instead favouring the Catholic suitor: see Hunt 2001.

defence against Theseus' 'exploitative' mentality, which Oberon seems to share. Titania and her rebellion come to be, from this point of view, a sort of 'hypostasis' of all these female rebellions, further emphasised by her representation as inspired by the figure of the virgin goddess. In turn, Oberon comes to be a sort of 'hypostasis' of male violence[25] that would like to invade and possess the female universe, and the very use of 'Elizabethan' imagery in such a derogatory tone qualifies him as such. In the words of Sir Walter Ralegh, in the aforementioned poem, Diana/Elizabeth is the only guarantee of true knowledge: "A knowledge pure it is her worth to know: / With Circes let them dwell that think not so" (16-17).[26] And, as Montrose points out, in *The Araignment of Parys* Peele already deprecated the character of Paris as an arrogant and ambitious man, destined to cause the ruin of Troy (see Montrose 1980, 436-8), to celebrate instead, through Diana, the virtues of Elizabeth. Seen against this light, Shakespeare's text can also be read as a subterranean criticism of Oberon, as someone who does not understand how one should really relate to the female universe.

5. Titania, Bottom and the Myth of Actaeon

Contrary to the other points of this article, this section does not deal with a specific passage; nevertheless, the two scenes comprising the encounter between Titania and Bottom (3.1.108-92, 4.1.1-44) constitute a pivotal moment for this analysis since, as Leonard Barkan pointed out, Shakespeare constructed this passage around a reprise of the myth of Diana and Actaeon in Ovid's version (*Met.* 3.138-259; cf. Barkan 1980, 342-3). Here too, the operation performed by the playwright is situated within his cultural context: the myth of Actaeon was among the most renowned in Elizabethan literature and art (see Barkan 1980, 332-4), and only a few years before Shakespeare's play, Edmund Spenser offered, in *The Faerie Queene*, no less than two different takes on the myth.[27]

The scene has also been one of the most widely discussed concerning the 'sexual politics' of the *Dream*; interestingly enough, the discussion of it has moved from an almost morbid insistence that the two should have sex[28] to an equally embarrassed denial that this is what happens. James Calderwood is perhaps the most explicit example of the latter critical stance: in his article, he goes to great lengths to propose another interpretation of the passage according to which what attracts Titania to Bottom is a more 'spiritual' desire for mortality and motherhood, unattainable for the ethereal Fairy Queen (cf. Calderwood 1991, 419-25). Other recent studies, such as those of A. B. Taylor and Robert Carver, reveal a different awkwardness: while they accept that Titania's attraction is sexual in nature, they seem to note only her more negative connotations, through her resemblance to characters such as the nymph Salmacis (the 'rapist' of Hermaphroditus in the fourth book of *Metamorphoses*: cf. Taylor 2004, 58-9) and the matron who mates with Lucius in the form of an ass in Apuleius (cf. Carver 2007, 437-42). I wonder whether we should not recognise here a side-effect of the 'feminist' analysis of the play that has long dominated the critical discourse around the *Dream*, offering an interpretation of what happens between the Queen and the donkey as a paradigmatic example of the humiliation of women for the pleasure of a male audience: an interpretation aided by the fact that technically what happens is the result of Oberon and Puck's double manipulation.

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[25] See below, at section 6, for a more in-depth consideration of the literary tradition on Oberon.

[26] I quote the text from Ralegh 1962, 10-11.

[27] Of particular interest is the second, in book 7, which represents another 'comic' rewriting of the story: see Quilligan 1987.

[28] Jan Kott famously stated that Titania "longs for animal love" (1964, 239).

I believe that although all these interpretations have valid points in their favour, they tend to ignore some important elements that suggest how the encounter between Titania and Bottom can be seen in a positive light without necessarily denying its ambiguities. Taylor, for instance, acknowledges that the character of Salmacis "could be seen *in bono* [sic] as a figure for an ideal marriage" (Taylor 2004, 60), and Barkan, in expounding the various and different interpretations of the myth of Actaeon in Renaissance culture, links Shakespeare's play to one of the positive ones (see below).[29] Calderwood points out that what actually happens is 'not' what Oberon has in mind, either because "his charm calls for Titania not to enjoy her new-found love" (Calderwood 1991, 420), or because Bottom is not portrayed as a character inclined to take advantage of the situation, or because if this were the plan, then we would be faced with the paradox that Oberon thinks that "the best way to teach a wife obedience is to encourage her to make a cuckold of him" (421). I would also add another detail. When Bottom wakes up, he uses the words of Paul to the Corinthians (1Cor. 2.9) to describe his experience: "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen . . . what my dream was" (4.1.209-11; see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 242). Chaudhuri recalls how in that letter Paul stresses how God chooses the poor and the 'foolish' over the rich and the wise to work his wonders (cf. Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 89-92). Although a parodic use of this reference is technically possible, yet I find it difficult that an author, in a still officially Christian culture, could have thus openly mocked the New Testament.

To sum up, it is my opinion that what happens between Titania and Bottom can be interpreted as a positive moment in the *Dream*, more specifically as the first time when a female character obtains control over her body and desires.[30] The encounter with Bottom allows Titania to satisfy, also 'through' sexual desire, her claim to a position, if not of power, at least of equality in sexual relations. Nor does this imply excluding the negative or ambiguous sides of the scene noted by previous studies: that Titania's treating of Bottom highlights characters of possessiveness and narcissism[31] is part of the description of the sexual relationship as a combination of violence and beauty in the *Dream*, and that the scene is the result of a male manipulation (even one that does not exactly achieve the desired effect) in itself is not enough to nullify its positive aspects.

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[29] For the negative interpretations, see Barkan 1980, 323-6.

The very use of the myth of Diana and Actaeon as a hypotext is, in this sense, revealing. In Ovid's poem, this myth, in marking the 'climax' of the tales of violence and rape against Diana's followers in the first three books, also constitutes a tragically ironic reversal of them: unlike the previous male ravishers, Actaeon penetrates the 'heavenly' feminine space without violent intentions, and the fate that befalls him is the result of a misreading of the situation by the goddess, defending herself against what she mistakenly perceives as an aggression (see Heath 1991, 241-2). The same opposition is repeated in Shakespeare's play. After so many examples of voluntary and violent invasion of female space by men, Bottom's represents a completely fortuitous case, and while previously women suffered from it, this time it positively resolves itself into an opportunity for the female character to exercise her freedom. For Shakespeare's text, Bottom's scene thus preserves the 'paradoxical' value of its literary counterpart. Even later (especially in 4.1.1-44), Bottom remains innocent of any attempt to take advantage of his situation (cf. Calderwood 1991, 424). In this, he recalls the other great model of his characterisation, the Lucius of Apuleius' novel (in turn modelled on Actaeon: see Barkan 1980, 352-3), who during his coupling with the matron maintains a rational approach to the situation, thus dissipating any morbid potential and highlighting the paradoxical co-presence, in the woman's attitude, of innocence and practicality that guarantees her eventual satisfaction (cf. Carver 2007, 439-41). The same thing happens in the Shakespearean scene, with the contrast between Bottom's practical attitude and Titania's authoritarian but at the same time comforting behaviour, which recalls that of the matron (cf. Carver 2007, 442) and which actually seems to give her pleasure – that of finally being the mistress of her kingdom (like the goddess on whom she is modelled).

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[30] So much so that Titania ends up echoing Oberon as she retires with her lover to a secluded place: "The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye" (3.1.189-91).

[31] Not to mention a sort of maternal instinct, which led to see it also as a displacement on to the lover of the attentions she initially paid to the Indian child: see Montrose 1983, 65.

The fusion of the two models, Ovid and Apuleius, is also recognisable in another respect. As Barkan points out, at the beginning of the play Bottom "is an Actaeon of the Apuleian . . . kind . . a boastful, inquisitive figure" (Barkan 1980, 354). As with Lucius, his metamorphosis is a 'punishment' for this attitude. However, in Apuleius' novel such metamorphosis is also a precondition for eventually meeting the goddess Isis and being saved, in a way that "prefigures the Renaissance understanding of the Actaeon story: that divine powers can find their basis in nature" (Barkan 1980, 353).[32] As an example of this reading, Barkan recalls Giordano Bruno's *Gli eroici furori*, published in England in 1585. In this text, Bruno interpreted the metamorphosis of Actaeon as a symbol of a mystical union between the lover and nature, which allows the former to become a god in his turn (see Barkan 1980, 342-6). Shakespeare, according to Barkan, takes up this reading through Apuleius: Bottom, through his encounter with Titania, "fulfils his deepest nature in asinine form" (Barkan 1980, 356) and becomes the protagonist of a sacred mystery that puts him in contact with nature (represented by Titania) and 'cures' him of his madness making him a sort of 'holy fool' (in full coherence with Paul's letter: see Barkan 1980, 358). And if we recall what has been said so far about the use of the myth of Diana to emphasise Oberon and Theseus' 'ignorance', this is an absolutely consistent interpretation: where the wise are rejected, the fool gets to love the goddess precisely because he is a fool, i.e. not conceited about his own knowledge.[33] And so, the relationship between Bottom and Titania becomes a true, symbolic and powerful scene of harmony, where the female universe, even within a delimited space, is free to express itself in all its aspects, positive and negative. Bottom becomes the means by which this universe can celebrate its own triumph, regaining the autonomy hitherto denied to it in the play and showing its essence as a beneficial power.

6. *MND* 4.1.70-3

Oberon Be as thou wast wont to be.
See as thou wast wont to see.
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower

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[32] It should be noted that the ending of Apuleius' novel is reported almost entirely by Cartari in his textbook, as he considers Isis as another manifestation of Diana: cf. Cartari 2004, 65-7.

[33] Cf. Barnaby 2015 on the social and political antithesis between nobles and artisans, and its connection to Paul's letter and its Renaissance interpretations.

Hath such force and blessed power.

With these words, Oberon frees Titania from the spell, cancelling the power of his first flower with that of another.[34] Given what we have said about Diana as a model for the representation of Hippolyta, the mention of the goddess in this context is highly significant: in a sense, Oberon is here restoring his wife to herself. There is also another connection, the one with the Theseus passage we saw in section 2, created by the recurrence of the name (of the three names used by Shakespeare to refer to the goddess, 'Diana' is the only one to be pronounced twice): in both cases, the mention of the goddess takes place in a context where a man decides the fate of a woman. However, the context and the language used are deeply changed. Then, Theseus, pursuing a masculine logic that the plot and imagery of the play denounce as fallacious, attempted to force Hermia to choose against her own will and desires, and had therefore described the chaste life in the service of the goddess as a sterile, empty life, devoid of all joy. Here, Oberon instead recognises that the power of the goddess' flower is "blessed": not only powerful, but beneficial, and he does so at the moment when, by his own admission, Titania is restored to herself. There is a newfound respect, in Oberon's words, for the figure of the goddess.[35]

It is undeniable that this is also the result of satisfaction at having obtained what he wanted all along, the Indian boy: now that the cause of the quarrel no longer exists, Oberon can afford to be magnanimous. It is perhaps a scandalous reality for us that, in the play, Oberon is always the character in control, even when he proves to be capricious, choleric and selfish. In this, Shakespeare is the heir to a literary tradition that started with the French romance *Huon de Bordeaux* (translated into English as early as 1515 by John Bourchier) and was later taken up by other Elizabethan plays where Oberon was portrayed as a veritable ruler of the elements (cf. Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 50-1); in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser even used him as an allegory for Henry VIII (2.10.75-6). It should therefore come as no surprise that Oberon is depicted as the holder of absolute power, the legitimacy of which is never questioned, even when his actions are morally questionable (like the Jupiter of myth, which Taylor points out is a model for the character: see Taylor 2004, 58). The decisions of this power can, however, be criticised, according to a pattern of thought well known to the political culture of Elizabethan England, and in fact, as this analysis shows, a line of criticism of

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[34] That the two flowers are two different plants is rightly reiterated by Campbell 2015, 11. On the possible identification with real plants see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 69-70.

[35] 'Newfound' when compared to the attitude he had previously shown: see section 4.

Oberon (and male power in general) is recognisable in the *Dream*.

Nor do I think it is at all coincidental that the Titania and Bottom scene is followed by the lovers' quarrel which the action of the play makes clear is another result of Oberon's interference. He sees Demetrius and Helena fall out in 2.1, after sending Puck to fetch the flower; by the time the latter has returned, he has already decided to intervene in the matter. In 3.2, he has barely managed to rejoice at the (supposed) success of his humiliation of Titania, when immediately Demetrius and Hermia enter the scene, revealing Puck's mistake. Oberon enchants Demetrius, but the arrival of Lysander and Helena prevents him from continuing: he is then forced to watch the whole long scene of their bickering, which 'he' has caused (not least because he uses the same flower with them that he uses with Titania: cf. 2.1.259). The result is that the scene of the somewhat genuine 'triumph' of Titania's femininity is followed by the failure of Oberon's masculinity, portrayed as the cause of the dissolution of every bond of human solidarity, be it the love of Lysander and Hermia or the friendship of the two girls.[36] The failure is all the more evident because, as different from the case of Titania, Oberon in this instance was really acting according to his original characterization in the romance tradition, as a just king, protector of lovers. In this sense, his failure echoes that of Theseus at the beginning of the play: just as the Duke of Athens, after winning a bride by force, misjudged Hermia's case by failing to interpret the law correctly, so now the fairy king, after toying with his Queen to humiliate her, is forced to realise that he failed to exercise his power properly.[37] The condemnation of oppressive male power, and its attempt to crush and repress the female universe, reaches its climax in that scene.

It is therefore significant that after Oberon decides, in addition to actually setting things right between the lovers, to free Titania from the spell (3.2.374-7): just as the 'desecration' of the goddess is accompanied by the collapse of human relationships, so their restoration and that of Titania go hand in hand. The quotation of Diana, in this context, underlines the changed aspect of the situation: the same Oberon who had despised the goddess now reverently invokes her power to get his Queen back. The succession of actions proves to be symbolic: male power, faced with the failure of its ability to rule by violence alone, now consents to welcome the 'mysterious' female nature into the relationship, without claiming to dominate it. Oberon's decision will be followed, in the human world, by Theseus' decision to unite the pairs of lovers, at the end of a long sequence dominated by the theme of "musical . . . discord" (4.1.117), where the Duke of Athens and his bride are shown hunting together. It is worth remembering that hunting is Diana's main activity, and that Hippolyta is an Amazon: to see her re-enter the scene now armed, riding alongside Theseus, proudly recalling other hunts with mythical heroes such as Hercules (4.1.111-7), is a visual signal that, like Titania, Hippolyta has been restored to her original identity.

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[36] Both bonds are evoked in this scene through the reprise of some important imagery we saw in section 3: first, Hermia evokes the bond between the two divine siblings in front of Demetrius to affirm her disbelief at Lysander's abandonment (3.2.51-5), then Helena laments the loss of the friendship with her (3.2.195-217). Both references have a touch of irony: Lysander has indeed abandoned Hermia, and Helena has been technically the first to break the friendship pact by telling Demetrius about the lovers' elopement.

[37] In my opinion, this parallelism has never been sufficiently emphasised by scholars, despite the fact that the characters of Oberon and Theseus, Titania and Hippolyta, have often been recognised as 'doubles' of each other.

Much has been debated about the reasons for Theseus' decision to help the lovers and I personally agree with those who argue that psychological or factual reasons do not really explain it (cf. Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 239). On a symbolic level, however, it can be read as a consequence of Oberon's failure: having ascertained through his fairy counterpart the fundamental inefficiency of a male-only power, Theseus decides to renounce the ancient law represented by Aegeus and establish a new one, in which the female world is no longer simply repressed in the name of male prevalence, but the two sexes are enabled to live harmoniously together. The subsequent dialogue of 5.1.1-27, underlines this new harmony even more: in that scene, the Duke, instead of simply repressing his bride's opinions about what happened, allows her to make him reconsider the matter from a different point of view.[38]

7. *MND* 5.1.373-4, 376-7

> PUCK And we fairies, that do run
> By the triple Hecate's team
> . . .
> Following darkness like a dream,
> Now are frolic.

This is the last mention of the goddess in the play, and it is, in a way, the darkest. On the one hand, the chosen name, 'Hecate', evokes her 'black' aspect as ruler of the terrors of the night:[39] in Cartari's manual, Hecate is a representation of the moon that governs the elements and their changes (cf. Cartari 2004, 61; cf. the moon as "governess of floods" at *MND* 2.1.103), and also the deity who guards the crossroads of the highways (see Cartari 2004, 62). On the other, the passage recalls contemporary treatises on demonology, where Diana often recurred not only as the leader of a specific kind of spirits, the 'wandering' one, (see Shakespeare 1858, 383), but was also frequently quoted as the leader of the witches' gatherings (cf. Serafini 2015, 171-5). In a word, Diana here is the goddess of darkness and what is hidden there: a presence appropriate to Puck's description of the night as a world where wolves howl and graves open.

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[38] Cf. Campbell 2015, 12-3 on Theseus' change and the positive interpretation of Theseus' behaviour in the last scene. My analysis, on this point, also owes much to Calderwood, and his interpretation of the events in the forest as the manifestation of Theseus' anxieties about his ability to 'handle' Hippolyta. Contrary to him, however, I do not see what happens between Oberon and Titania as a simple punishment of the woman to calm Theseus' anxieties; as for the scene of the lovers' quarrel as a manifestation of Theseus' anxieties about his abilities as ruler, that is my interpretation.

It may seem strange that this aspect of the goddess is invoked in the last scene of the play, at the conclusion of the wedding feast (see Chaudhuri's perplexity in Shakespeare 2017, 273), but a closer look reveals the presence of some very interesting thematic connections with the rest of the play. The adjective "triple", of Ovidian origin,[40] recalls the three names by which the goddess is called in the *Dream*, each linked to a different aspect of the love relationship: 'Phoebe' for the naive passion of the young, 'Diana' for the sexual maturity that contains the possibility of love, 'Hecate' for the mystery of the nuptial night. The play also opened under the image of Diana, whom Hippolyta evoked as the promise of the fulfilment of a love (see section 1): this night has now finally arrived, and rightly so, Diana presides over it in her most mysterious aspect. If we then count how throughout the play the sexual relationship has been described as containing a component of violence, that the name that most embodies Diana's 'dark' side is reserved for the highest degree of the amorous 'ladder' is consistent with the thematic course of the play.

But there is also another aspect. Along this analysis, we have seen how references to Diana serve to condemn a rigidly oppressive male mentality and to emphasise the 'sacred' nature of the female universe. The evocation of Hecate as Queen of a world of supernatural beings[41] is part of this logic: the name once again emphasises the 'sacredness' of the goddess (to which fairies are intrinsically linked) and of the female universe she represents. And if, as we have seen in section 4, the action of the play in its second half, after

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[39] It is also the aspect that is most specifically linked to Renaissance culture, because although the two goddesses were already in some way connected in Greek religion (see Marquandt 1981), it was only in Late Antiquity and later in the Middle Ages that they were identified in the same figure: see Serafini 2015, 165-6.

[40] It recurs twice in Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses*, both in book 7: see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 274.

[41] Fairies themselves had demonic connotations in English folklore: see Nuttall 2000, 53-4.

3.2, can be viewed as a progressive abandonment and renunciation (even if only partial) of their attitude of repression on the part of the men, then the evocation of the goddess can also be read as a 'victory' of the female universe, in a night where every single female character in the play gets what she wanted.[42] The final evocation of the goddess in her victorious and sovereign aspect of the night of love thus completes the process of 'appropriation' of the relationship by the female characters that has been going on since the beginning of the play.

Conclusion

Another Shakespearean comedy of those years, *The Comedy of Errors* ends with a maternal female character reuniting a shattered and divided patriarchal family (cf. Hart 2003, 356). That play was set in Ephesus, the city of Diana-as-Cybele, and the seat of the Christian community to which Paul addresses a letter where he intervenes on matters of marriage, admonishing wives to submit to their husbands' authority, and these in turn to "love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church" (Eph. 5.21).[43] In view of what we have seen (and also counting the traditional interpretation of the play as written for performance at a wedding),[44] Paul's words may be thought to resonate with the *Dream* even more than they do with *Errors*, since, as we have seen, the former play at times stages a proper process of 'delivery' and 'validation' of femininity against a male power represented as legitimate but potentially tyrannical.

In this process, the virgin goddess of hunting does indeed play a fundamental role in the imagery of the play. From the initial reference to Hippolyta to the evocation of Puck, the quotations, allusions and references to Diana mark the stages of a path that starts with the female characters defending themselves against repressive male violence (see sections 1-4) and ends with them achieving a new, more satisfying position in the relationship (see sections 5-7). In the first four passages, Diana recurs as an embodiment of the female, whose disrespect highlights how questionable the attitude of male characters as Theseus, Oberon and even Lysander is. By contrast, in the following scene with Bottom, the depiction of the weaver as a 'fool' allows him to penetrate Titania's bower and be loved by her: this comical reversal of the myth of Actaeon permits the Queen of the fairy world (who is modelled after the goddess) to show the true colours of a harmonious relationship, which contrasts with Oberon's failure to solve the problems of the lovers. The last two passages then mark the acknowledgment by the men of the power of the female and the now open possibility for women to take part in the relationship without being oppressed – with the last mention of Hecate even putting the relationship itself under the protection of a female deity.

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[42] On this aspect of the *Dream* as a "wish fulfilment . . . of its female characters" (Campbell 2015, 8), see Hopkins 2003.

[43] I quote the text from the Geneva Bible (1595).

[44] On this tradition, and the possible identifications of the wedding the play may have been written for, see Chaudhuri in Shakespeare 2017, 283-6. It would be interesting to ask why Shakespeare chose Diana as the main mythological figure for a wedding play, instead of either Juno or Venus, two classical goddesses traditionally more connected to matters of love and marriage (although Juno may be another model for Titania's: cf. Taylor 2004, 58).

Shakespeare's use of Diana's imagery thus contributes to uphold the current critical interpretation of the *Dream* as proposing and endorsing a process of harmonization and 'reconciliation' of the two sexes in the marital relationship, mainly through a re-evaluation of the female experience. Not just that: it also once again reveals how carefully and how skilfully he read his ancient texts, and reused them to replenish and substance its own work, to give depth to what remains, to this day, one of the most fascinating and intriguing amongst his comedies.

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Loretta Innocenti*

Stephen Orgel, *Wit's Treasury: Renaissance England and the Classics*[1]

Abstract

Stephen Orgel's book examines how during the Renaissance the English culture tried to mould a new literary and artistic language into becoming "classical", in the sense of civilized, elegant, and refined. The model for artistic advancement was found in ancient Latin and Greek texts, which were revived and translated into vernacular. So were some continental authors as well, especially Petrarch, whose sonnets were imitated and transformed. By adapting, and revising, the classics, English poets and dramatists were able to leave behind their native medieval tradition, through renewing rhythms and prosody, introducing new genres, and discovering unprecedented themes. Besides the influence of ancient authors on literature and the arts, classical thought also modified manners and morals, resulting in an unstable but constant relationship between Christian doctrine and Humanistic secular principles.

The original common thread in the text is provided by Orgel's considerable expertise in the history of the book, which enriches his analysis of new Renaissance printing methods, illustrations, as well as of the importance of different publications, not only for literature but even more so for the relationship between theatrical productions and printed drama.

Keywords: Renaissance England; classics; literature; history of the book; theatre

Reading a book by Stephen Orgel is always an intellectual pleasure. His clear, intelligent, and acute writing leads the reader through the reconstruction of a past literary and cultural tradition, by showing how seemingly small events can have a remarkable meaning when compared with, or set in relation to, a larger panorama. Writing a review of a book by Stephen Orgel is quite a different thing: his essays deserve to be analysed and commented upon one by one, as they all are consistent and enlightening. *Wit's Treasury*, his latest volume, is no exception. It consists of seven chapters plus a "Coda", held together by the theme indicated by the subtitle: "Renaissance England and the Classics". This is indeed a major subject when we generally think of the Renaissance as a rebirth of ancient authors, but it is even more crucial for

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English history in particular. To use the term "Renaissance", instead of the more recent and anonymous "early modern", means to recognize the debt England owed to continental culture, past and contemporary. It also means to enlarge the scope of an historical analysis to contemplate the many links, influences, relations, in a word, the cultural *interaction* that made Europe a vast field of exchange, in a period when all countries were divided by religious wars and political struggles.

The sixteenth century saw an enormous rise of English power; with the advent of the Tudor dynasty national medieval traditions started to wane giving way to a more liberal, courtly way of living, whose models were to be found abroad, in the Italian *signorie* and at the French court. Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries England could profit from the concurrence of momentous changes in European civilization, which took a while to be known and widely accepted, but in the end proved to be the germ of modernity: the discovery of the New World, new hypotheses on the structure of the universe, the invention of a new printing method, as well as the religious Reformation. If in the long term all these factors would be decisive for a future world picture, the English felt at the time that they were not enough to claim a position of excellence in Europe; something was still missing. The English Renaissance thus looked for a cultural canon, for models to confront, emulate, and maybe to surpass. It was felt necessary to look back at the past, where there were authors and texts whose authority had not yet been questioned. These were the ancient giants supporting modern dwarfs on their shoulders, but this metaphor, which had been used since the Middle Ages, could turn out to be ambiguous: the moderns are seen as dwarfs, smaller in size than the ancients, but their higher position can help them see better and farther. Thus, the acknowledgement of past authority contained in itself also the awareness of some new values which belonged to modern times: slowly the meaning of invention would start to change from the rhetorical *inventio*, namely finding the topics to be dealt with, to the new connotations attached to the notion of "originality", the discovery of something which did not exist before, at least in that form.

The Renaissance in England came rather later in comparison to what had taken place on the continent – especially in Italy and France – from the fourteenth century on; and yet, just through this fresh approach to rediscovering a past that did not belong to it, English culture was able to acquire complexity and an unprecedented prominence. In all this, the national past, vernacular and medieval, was perceived as demotic and uncouth: and, doubtless, impossible to be exported abroad. Refinement, elegance, and universality were qualities attributed to ancient Greek and Latin texts, as well as to Italian and French authors universally recognized as models. In other words, as "classics".

At the very end of his volume, in the "Coda", Stephen Orgel poses the fundamental question: "What is a classic?", and shows how uncertain and relative, though apparently clear, the definition is. This last short chapter goes back to the origin of the term, to its first uses, and recalls the debates around it in more recent times, from T.S. Eliot to Italo Calvino. The notion of classic has to do with quality (of the first class, "classy"), but also with chronology (perfect, mature, advanced, devoid of the roughness of the primitive); in any case, it is always associated with the establishment of a canon, i.e. the list of the most influential texts in a national or universal tradition: those one would save for future generations in the event of catastrophe. David Lodge, in a highly amusing scene in his novel *Changing Places*, has his characters – all scholars of English literature – play a game called "Humiliations": one by one they have to confess the title of the most important book they have *not* read. The winner is a professor who reveals to an appalled audience of colleagues he has never read *Hamlet*: he gets the top score, but predictably loses his job. Even in the satirical tone of the story, there is a well recognizable truth: *Hamlet* is undoubtedly part of the English (or even the world's) dramatic or literary canon, and it is taken for granted that it is on top of the whole list.

Interestingly canons are not permanent – *pace* Harold Bloom –, they change according to different places or times, even if some authors have a longer lasting life. Many of those accepted as canonical in the Renaissance are still essential at present, but many others are now merely names, except for specialists.

This relativity, this impermanence of the literary panorama, as well as of the notions of source and of model, are central in Stephen Orgel's volume and therefore, I think, he turns to the definition of a classic at the end of his work: in the previous essays different issues are dealt with, all connected and slowly uncovering a network of relations and of transformations in the English literature of the time. As a matter of fact, there is no need to precisely define a notion such as that of classic, which is so widely used that everyone can imagine what it means, even tentatively; thus, there is no need to delimit the field of study from the beginning. I really appreciate the arrangement Orgel chose for his volume, as all chapters focus on different topics, but they are so interrelated as to build up a complex puzzle, maybe impossible to complete, as all historical pictures are.

The first of these topics is language. In England, as all over Europe, Latin was still the *lingua franca*, known by educated people and read far more than Greek. The "question of language" had in any case already been debated in Italy for two centuries and the Italian or, better, Tuscan vernacular was no longer in doubt as a suitable medium for literature. In contrast, the English vernacular was limited to the insular situation of the country and not spoken elsewhere, as Florio made clear in his *First Fruites*: “a language that wyl do you good in England, but passe Dover, it is worth nothing” (Florio 1578, xxvii, f. 50).

And here the classics come to the fore. To become a refined language in order to be considered elegant and fit for poetry and drama, English had to look at Latin, doing what had already been done on the continent: considering the ancients as *auctoritates* both for the perfection of their style, and for their wisdom, which was felt as a continuous cultural flow. Orgel convincingly shows that Humanism came to England late “and even then, much classical scholarship was devoted to biblical exegesis and theology, rather than to the revival of what we think of as the classics” (1): a statement seemingly contradictory with the common view that Humanism meant desacralization of culture. Yet a few decades after Erasmus and More secularization was achieved, moving from the Bible to profane literature, still translating the ancients and imitating them, but also trying to become the “new ancients”, to be “classics”. Models were sought in Greek and Latin authors, but not in a servile way. The first chapter of *Wit’s Treasury*, entitled “Classicizing England”, examines from the beginning the basic issues of originality and of the ambiguous relation between devotion to the ancients and new paths for artistic expression. Original poets, such as Marlowe and Sidney, owed much to their classical education but moved away from the models they chose: the sonnet sequence of *Astrophel and Stella* established a new ‘classical-sounding’ model, renewing Petrarch’s lyric in a way none of the continental poets would do. Two interesting assumptions in Orgel’s initial discussion underlie, like a watermark, the whole volume: the idea that the imitation of the ancients was never neutral and resulted in transformation and domestication and, even more important, that imitation gave way to a style designed to be classical, both wanting to sound like the classics and wanting to be considered classic in their place. This classical ‘effect’ is analysed through the formal revisitations of ancient poetry, and the efforts to recreate the sound and the rhythm of Latin quantitative verse. Many pages are thus devoted to prosody, which is the main topic of two whole chapters: “The Uses of Prosody”, centred on Ovid, and “The Sound of Classical”. Though this subject may seem demanding and specialized in a world like ours, which is too often satisfied with easy and superficial critical assessments, this is not the case. Orgel examines the difficult task of adapting English to the rhythm of syllabic verse, both in the translations of classical texts and in new lyrics. This long and elaborate discourse on the different experiments in prosody is probably, in my opinion, the most remarkable part of the whole volume. It provides a clear picture of the slow itineraries followed by different meters till they either established themselves as ‘traditional’ or disappeared into oblivion. Blank verse, which is now considered the most ‘English’ of all meters, was used in the 1530s by Surrey in his translation of two books of *Aeneid*, where it was supposed to imitate Virgilian hexameter. Looking back over its history Orgel shows that blank verse met with some resistance, being felt as "strange", and "was reinvented several times before it became a norm" (6). Some observations made about English prosody from a diachronic point of view are remarkable: many examples show not only the long coexistence of fourteeners with iambic pentameters, both used to translate Virgil and Ovid, but also the relevance of rhyme. Ultimately both rhymed couplets and blank verse were felt as "classic", but the latter became the proper and almost universal means for dramatic poetry. The use of either meter is especially meaningful in Marlowe, who introduced blank verse into the English dramatic tradition but almost always adopted couplets for what he conceived as epic, thus following Aristotle in acknowledging a sort of higher status to narrative heroic poems and echoing in that form the common elegiac couplets of ancient verse. His choice of writing *Hero and Leander* in pentameter couplets shows that he considered his composition as an *epyllion*, a little epic; and, on the other hand, Milton's use of blank verse in *Paradise Lost*, according to Orgel, was not influenced by Surrey's translation of Virgil, as has recently been claimed, but is in a way justified by the fact that it "was originally conceived as a drama" (4). Formal structures are thus shown as tightly connected to authorial generic intentions and to the cultural circulation of the time.

In Renaissance England, translations both from the classics and from foreign texts (mainly Italian) meant the creation of an active 'globalization'. Confronting ancient or foreign cultures led to the updating of ideas and of linguistic and rhetorical instruments. Poetry and prose coming from ancient traditions enlarged the sense of the past from the perception of national history to a wider, almost universal, and continuous dimension of excellence and wisdom. This past knowledge was not taken at face value, as a model to be naively followed and imitated. Though generally praising its greatness and the notion of permanence and coherence of the classics, some texts presented harmful and dangerous ideas. Orgel traces in Marlowe's translation of *Amores* the design "of a poetic career consciously modelled on Ovid, an anti-Virgilian, and anti-Spenserian, model" (23). Besides the importance of his poetical innovation, Marlowe also provides evidence of himself as a daring poet, of the difficult issue of eroticism and sex, and of the secular adaptation of a transgressive, mythical world.

Orgel is in any case right when he wonders whether the accusations of homosexuality against Marlowe, which have conditioned the reading of his poems and of the account of his murder, were after all our anachronistic projection. Moralistic views most often belong to the reader. An example of this is how modern scholarship finds it difficult to see the finale of *Hero and Leander* as an ironic way of transforming a story into a fragment and a tragedy into a baffling fulfilment of love. Orgel summarizes the meaning of the poem in an illuminating sentence: "The most subversive of Marlowe's subjects is how you get away with pleasure, and omitting the conclusion, the punishment of the lovers' – and the readers' – enjoyment is a neat way of cheating the moralists" (27). To confirm this, I would add that the very last lines of the epyllion seem to underline a conscious and ironic removal of the "dark" ending of the myth: the Sun's chariot "with his flaring beams mock'd ugly Night / Till she, o'ercome with anguish, shame, and rage, / Dang'd down to hell her loathsome carriage" (331-333).

Unlike Golding's puritan and moralizing version of Ovid, Marlowe's was a 'subversive' way of introducing an erotic Ovidian world view into English, adapting his sources, and modelling his poetry on a classic authority: which is an example – probably the best – of how reading the classics, either in the original or in translation, always meant transforming them. This can sound like a truism, especially since modern literary theory has discovered – or invented – the notions of intertextuality, hypertextuality, and cultural appropriation. Even perfectly copying a text word by word creates a different work: a situation which Borges paradoxically described in his story about Pierre Menard who wanted to rewrite *Don Quixote*. Anyway, the important concept at stake when thinking of the Renaissance is not the similarity or the difference between the ancients and the moderns, but the transformation of the idea of plagiarism itself. In the last chapter of the volume, entitled "Looking backward" and focused on the translations of Homer, Orgel in fact looks forward, to the eighteenth century when the term "the classics" was actually established, but classical erudition started to be opposed to the values of contemporary England. Bacon's and Browne's arguments in favour of the present became successful, and the debate about plagiarism revealed that in a few generations the notion of past wisdom had changed and could be felt as an enemy to modern empirical and scientific thought. Different times gave different answers, and in the Victorian age, when new English versions of Homer were published, they were the objects of theoretical debate, but "ancients" had begun to mean "archaic", and introducing them to a modern audience, or even to the "unlearned", had become an archaeological operation. Or an editorial one, in modern commercial terms.

The circulation of the classics during the Renaissance was mainly due to translations and to imitation, but in practical terms the wide dissemination of philosophical and literary culture was possible thanks to the new printing methods. *Wit's Treasury* deals with the materiality of printed books, not just to underline the social and historical importance of such novelty, but to highlight the role each publication had on the literary stage. Stephen Orgel, both as a scholar and as a book collector, has always been interested in the history of the book, but here, in this volume, this is a *fil rouge* linking together the different topics. The influence of the classics on English authors is discussed according to the dates of their publication in the vernacular, which proves that some translations are not likely to have been known in the Elizabethan age, unlike what is commonly taken for granted. The success and the survival of some editions also explain more than the mere importance of the book market, as they are evidence of their cultural function – and sometimes their political function, as is the case with Caesar's and other historical and military texts. This draws anew the map of sources and of relationships.

The attention to the printed pages of a book adds a lot to the understanding of all the issues I have described so far: the problem of prosody is enriched if not transformed by the comparison between pronunciation and early modern spelling, the quotation of marginalia (to which Orgel devoted another volume, *The Reader in the Book*, some years ago) reveals traces of a past reading activity, which is both exegesis and appropriation.

Three chapters in *Wit's Treasury* particularly stress the importance of printed volumes, and they are respectively centred on images, typography, and the staging of written plays. In the essay "What Classical Looks Like", which is the longest in the volume and beautifully illustrated, the 'effect' of ancient 'perfect' style is traced in the Renaissance visual and plastic arts. The presumed absence of colour in architecture and sculpture, the mathematical proportions and rationality in buildings, the revival of ancient gods and myths: all these factors point towards idealization, rather than knowledge or study, of the past. Rebirth always means revision. Here again, Orgel's considerable expertise is priceless in analysing not only Renaissance iconography but also pictures as objects to be gathered in order to recover and preserve the classics. Remarkable collections, particularly the Arundel marbles but also Prince Henry's collection of paintings, played a central role in English Renaissance culture, as purchasing and owning works of important artists as well as commissioning portraits showed both connoisseurship and power. At the same time, the visual arts had a memorializing quality, and helped educate the nation in its tastes; lastly, collecting served to draw England closer to the continent, in direct contact with artists and aristocrats of other countries. With Inigo Jones, art was "classical" at second hand, through the imitation of Italian art which in its turn imitated the classics. Elements in Italian theatrical designs, in Roman monuments, and in Michelangelo's sculpture are cleverly identified in Jones's works. He was a pivotal figure, combining classical allusions with originality, giving us a picture of what was felt as "classic" in his times. And still is, if we are to accept Orgel's statement that "the meaningful re-creation of the past requires the semiotics of the present. Anachronism is essential to the very notion of historical relevance itself, which assumes that the past speaks to, and is in some way a version of, the present" (99).

The transition from manuscripts to printed books posed some technical and graphic problems, all very well discussed in *Wit's Treasury*. What is notable is that even their solution had somehow to do with the above-mentioned subject: the allusion to the classics in the visual arts. Title pages of precious books started being decorative – again something imported from the continent – and showing ancient and modern elements fused together. Images representing triumphal arches are to be found in some editions framing the titles, and the letterings have the appearance of ancient inscriptions. Those illustrations were often unrelated to the text, so that plates could be re-used for other books. Orgel provides reproductions of at least two instances: the 1559 title page of Cunningham's *The Cosmographical Glasse*, identical to the 1605 edition of Sidney's *Arcadia*, and an earlier edition of Sidney's book, published in 1593, whose title page was used again for Spenser's works in 1611. Plates were expensive, and images were sought, to make volumes rich and elegant. I would add, by giving one more example, also meaningful, as with emblem books where the visual element was essential; the re-use of plates was common, but Quarles in his well-known book *Emblems* (1635) did something more. He re-printed the images of a continental popular work, *Pia Desideria*, published in Latin in Antwerp some years before (1624) by Hermann Hugo. This Flemish author was a Jesuit priest and his spiritual and moral emblem book was definitely catholic, but Quarles transformed it into an English protestant text: an instance of a remarkable overturning of what might seem to be just an editorial operation.

Types also were influenced by continental 'classical elegance' and the names defining new characters are telling: roman and italic. These were first used by English printers for books in Latin or in foreign languages, while black letter was associated with national tradition, so that even when roman became the most popular type for English texts Chaucer would still be printed in black letter for at least two more centuries.

Such a dense and profound analysis of the classics in English (printed) culture, as the one provided by Orgel's book, could not pass over theatre and drama, so that another interesting chapter deals with "Staging the Classical". Here the author has, as it were, to support his passion for, and knowledge of, material books with his exceptional scholarship in theatre studies. First of all, because he is well aware that theatre and stage performances are quite different from the written drama, which can be – and too often is – studied in its literary textuality. Again, this is a kind of truism, but it is even more so when examining the Renaissance theatrical tradition. In this case, scholars have to do with irretrievable performances or with vague descriptions made by spectators or other playwrights; at the same time, not all dramatic texts have survived, and those we have are unstable, as new philology knows well. There is no need here to go over the difficulty in reconstructing the 'authoritative' form of a text, and especially of a play destined to be performed. Orgel never falls into the trap of considering drama as literature, and, still focusing on the classics, offers a history of English theatre which always considers both staging and printing plays, highlighting the relevance of publication as a somewhat dangerous practice and of censorship, which affected the stage and the page differently.

The most interesting feature of the whole chapter devoted to the theatre is the stress on the problematic indebtedness to the classical past, which is never absolute, since the relationship with sources and analogues always presents new elements and takes a clear direction towards a unique native experience.

"We would do well to reconsider our categories" (133), and to do so Orgel questions what we usually think of as separate genres or different social classes of spectators which, to him, present more similarities than is generally assumed. A comparison between two plays – the formal *Gorboduc* and *Cambises*, which tended to meet the popular taste for low comedy – proves they had much in common and that, surprisingly, it was the latter which was to be supplanted by the Renaissance canonical playwrights especially after Marlowe coined a new language for the stage, the blank verse soon to become "classical".

The main distinction in Tudor England was between small audiences consisting of a powerful elite or of educated people, and the mass who could only speak English, and being more or less unable to understand learned allusions, loved dumbshows, comic actions and dialogues, and spectacular shows. For a cultural elite, the classics, and especially Latin plays, could either be revived in their original form (as happened at the Universities) or imitated, or even just alluded to, in their locations and characters.

The chapter starts from the history of the earliest secular play in English, *Fulgens and Lucrece*, showing that English drama was classicized from the very beginning, since the ancient Roman setting was probably designed to give prestige to a topical political message. The source on which the play is based is a Humanist dialogue on the theme of nobility written in Latin in the first half of fifteenth century by a Florentine jurist and later translated into English. Orgel interestingly underlines that this play "survives only because it was printed" (123), and that the small number of printed plays, as well as the even smaller number of surviving copies, should make us cautious about generalizing definitions. He infers therefore that readers had a remarkable function in enjoying drama; in some cases, as for *Fulgens and Lucrece*, the audience "would have consisted entirely of readers" (124), and in other cases, reading and watching performances might be simultaneous but separate activities. Examples of this can be found in all Elizabethan plays, which could please at different levels both educated and unlearned spectators. Classical allusions could probably be recognized only by a part of the public. In a way, things have not much changed, if nowadays only critical footnotes can highlight the presence of some ancient authors or some classical quotations in, say Shakespeare, Jonson, or Webster. The Elizabethan dramatists refigured classical history and myth by "realizing and humanizing the ancients through finding the right language for them, inventing a classical English" (136). If this is particularly true for Shakespeare, Jonson was praised for a similar quality: the reform of the language of the stage he achieved by making English classical.

At the end of the period considered in *Wit's Treasury* English vernacular would surely have acquired the prestige and the literary excellence sought by Renaissance scholars. Philosophers and writers would go on for another two centuries trying to standardize the spelling and debating about the rightness of a poetic diction and of following rules. But when, at the end of the seventeenth century, England had experienced both a political revolution and a subsequent restoration, the comparison was no longer uniquely made with ancient Rome, but with those countries which were preserving the memory of classical canons and norms, France in particular. At this point in history, what before was subjection and the feeling of missing perfection had become pride and confidence in one's own linguistic and cultural means.

In 1668 John Dryden published his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* "to vindicate the honour of our English Writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them" (Dryden 1921, "To the reader", 4). The four voices in the dialogue introduce different points of view on (neo)classical rules; yet it is not only a matter of ancients and moderns. What emerges from their debate is the superiority of English drama over the French, to be found in some interrelated qualities: variety, imitation of nature, and the response of the audience. Regularity and perfection, so highly esteemed by the French authors, are in fact boring for an English audience, as their result is the beauty "of a Statue, but not of a Man" (Dryden 1921, 32); to imitate nature means to represent humour and passions, and a great variety of plot and characters, even if this results in "irregular" plays; drama in verse is tedious because of the monotonous cadences. Though still admired and respected, at this point the classical standards of the ancients seem to be surpassed by new dramatic needs, first of all the consideration of the audience and of the pleasure plays must provide for the spectators.

The use of popular taste as a standard of value accounts for the sceptical attitude English culture has always had toward foreign authority and imposed rules. If this would become more evident in later history with a greater emphasis on pragmatism, traces of it were already present in the Renaissance reading of the classics, as discussed in Orgel's book on several occasions. Even in Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*, English love poems were criticized as inferior to Petrarch's, since they cannot persuade the beloved of the truth of the lover's passion, which means that to him the success of poetry is "dependent entirely on its effect on the listener or reader" (3). The popularity of plays as well as of printed books is another proof of the importance attached to the taste of the people; the classics could be the models used to teach ancient wisdom, but they had to be domesticated.

English Renaissance culture bloomed between admiration and emancipation, and between reading, translating or refiguring what was foreign, and inventing something that would become distinctively one's own.

In *Wit's Treasury* Orgel leads his reader over this narrow divide, never cutting clear borderlines but exquisitely showing the complexity of creating a cultural identity and of becoming "classics".

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Cristina Consiglio*

Tana Wojczuk, *Lady Romeo. The Radical and Revolutionary Life of Charlotte Cushman, America's First Celebrity*[1]

Abstract

This review of Tana Wojczuk's *Lady Romeo. The Radical and Revolutionary Life of Charlotte Cushman, America's First Celebrity* highlights how the book makes Cushman's art and work more visible and accessible to American and European audiences. Wojczuk's detailed study of Cushman's life complements her work and career as an actress, thus shedding new light on Cushman's role in shaping nineteenth-century American theatre and culture.

KEYWORDS: American theatre; Shakespeare; Charlotte Cushman

In the nineteenth century, American theatre was the primary means of entertainment. Literacy rates were not high, but working-class people understood and loved Shakespeare. The 'gallery gods' in the cheap seats near the ceiling would throw food at the actors and the wealthier people below them if they did not feel that Shakespeare's work was good enough. *Lady Romeo. The Radical and Revolutionary Life of Charlotte Cushman, America's First Celebrity* tells a story of American theatre that parallels the development of American culture in general. Cushman herself seemed to embody a kind of artistic declaration of independence at a time when the United States was anxious about its cultural standing in the world. Cushman, a massively talented and intelligent actress, changed the audience's understanding of the text through the accurate and timely delivery of her lines. Actors were not just vessels for the playwright; they were critics themselves, and Cushman helped shape Americans' understanding of female ambition with Lady Macbeth, masculinity with Romeo, and even prostitution with Nancy Sykes from Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist.*

She tended to keep her work and personal life separate, but she never hesitated to speak out when she felt it was her duty to do so.

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The only work comparable to Wojczuk's book is *When Romeo Was a Woman* by Lisa Merrill,[2] a professor in the Department of Performance Studies at Hofstra University. Merrill's work was published in 1999, a little more than twenty years before this new biography. Instead of starting from Cushman's infancy, as Wojczuk does, the text begins with Cushman's first voyage to England and an unpublished diary full of private thoughts that the actress documented during her transatlantic journey. Merrill moves backward and forward through Cushman's life, focusing on the imagery of 'crossing', her cross-gender performances, the transition between private and public venues, and the thin line between convention and the social acceptance of her image. Lisa Merrill draws from the hundreds of letters written by Cushman to the women in her life, which allow her to paint a portrait of Cushman beyond the late-twentieth-century speculation about the nature of nineteenth-century lesbian desire.

Merrill's work is included in *Lady Romeo*'s bibliography, and we can most likely suppose Wojczuk[3] took inspiration from it. It is certain that Wojczuk's debut in 2020 — with this vivid and more complete biography of Charlotte Cushman — helps provide a more accurate portrait of actress Charlotte Cushman (1816–1876) and illustrate the reasons why she captivated audiences while breaking nineteenth-century America's strict gender rules. Born to a middle-class family in Boston, Charlotte dropped out of school at thirteen and worked in her mother's boarding house after her father abandoned the family. After a series of disastrous performances in her brief singing career, Cushman leapt at the opportunity to play Lady Macbeth in 1836; the role launched her to fame at a time when unescorted women were not allowed in theatre audiences. In the 1840s, Cushman earned acclaim for her performances in London as Romeo alongside her younger sister, Susan, as Juliet, and she made a successful U.S. tour in which she played both male and female characters, including Cardinal Wolsey in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and the prostitute Nancy from Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. After falling in love with the writer Matilda Hays, Cushman moved to Rome — where the two lived openly as a couple — and established a network of female artists before succumbing to breast cancer. Wojczuk enriches her portrait with lively theatre gossip and detailed discussions of nineteenth-century class, social, and gender codes. This enthralling narrative restores Cushman to her rightful place in the spotlight.

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The book is rich in sensory detail, with Wojczuk's evocative and impressive narrative fluency. The author keeps track of her subject's networks and scoured her journals and letters for mentions of the people, places, and events she was writing about. The travelogues of Dickens and many others offered a wealth of information, but Wojczuk tried not to rely too much on secondary sources.

Tana Wojczuk has always been passionate about Shakespeare, as she reveals in a long and interesting interview with the *North American Review*, and her 'obsession' with Shakespeare led to her discovery of Charlotte Cushman. It can be considered a 'discovery' because even though the actress was America's first celebrity, her impact on the craft has gone uncredited since her death. Wojczuk first encountered Cushman while researching another book about American Shakespeare. She was captivated by her success while playing men's roles and by the fact that she lived openly with female partners. Her fame forces us to reconsider nineteenth-century America and its culture. Like Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Cushman was a woman who transformed herself into a man (onstage at least) and was able to live courageously and fearlessly in public at a time when women could not even go to college.

When Cushman was born in Boston in 1816, America had no artistic culture to speak of. In Europe, it was thought of as a backwater, "it was still seen as a land without culture, or as one European traveler put it, a 'nation of campers'" (10). A series of events cleared the way for her life on the stage — a path she eagerly took — by rejecting marriage, creating a life of adventure, and playing the role of the hero, in and out of the theatre, as she traveled to New Orleans, New York City, London, and eventually back in order to build a successful career.

Just as Cushman was making her stage debut, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, and others in the Transcendental Club were meeting to discuss why there were so few American geniuses.

Along with many others, including Walt Whitman and Alcott's daughter Louisa May, they saw this genius in Cushman. She wasn't appreciated in America until she got the European stamp of approval when she played Romeo with her sister as Juliet in England. Her story demonstrates that Americans and Europeans recognized gender in performances during the nineteenth century even though the Civil War and the rise of Victorian morality tightened gender norms. Audiences loved Shakespeare as they loved this powerful, ambitious woman. It is worth remembering that American culture was shaped not by educated elites but by the working classes, who made up a large part of the audiences; they loved Shakespeare, and in this powerful, ambitious woman they had a figure they could identify with and look up to.

Reading *Lady Romeo* feels more novelistic than we are used to in historical biographies, thanks to its artful nonfiction prose, and the book seems perfect for the stage or the screen. The book is shaped into a cinematic structure to convey Cushman's life in terms of an exciting adventure story.

Wojczuk reveals moments that felt made for Hollywood, like her unlikely triumph in London and Henry James narrowly missing Cushman perform as a child (166-7).

The *Prologue* of the book begins at the end, describing a night in New York City in November 1874 when thousands of fans crowded excitedly into every available space in Booth's Theatre to see Charlotte Cushman's farewell performance. She decided to bookend her career by performing the same role she had made her debut forty years earlier, Lady Macbeth. It was the first acting role offered to her, which was surprising because it was a major role. It was intimidating, too, as we read in chapter three, "in part because it was so closely associated with the legendary British actress Sarah Siddons . . . first cast in the role in 1785, a little more than fifty years earlier" (36).

The author starts to tell Cushman's biography in the first chapter, offering a well-defined view of America as a relatively young country that could not compete artistically with the likes of England and France. However, it was starting to find its voice through writers like Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The 'first disaster', which is also the title of the first chapter, was the sudden disappearance of her father, who left his family with no visible means of support. Charlotte thus had to leave school and work full time for her mother, who used the little money she had left to open a boarding house. The chapter ends with one of the most significant events in Cushman's youth: the announcement that William Charles Macready would be performing Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* at the Tremont Theatre in Boston. In Chapter Two, Wojczuk describes the birth of Cushman's passion for theatre, the initial phase of her career as a professional opera singer, and her first travels outside of New England together with the singing coach James Maeder and his wife. Chapter Three opens with the description of Cushman's arrival in the port of New Orleans and her debut in *The Marriage of Figaro*, soon followed by the sad failure of her voice. She had worked for three years with Maeder to achieve the clear, elastic tone of an opera singer, and it was suddenly gone. A few months later in 1836, the theatre owner Charles Caldwell unexpectedly lost his wife, who was a talented actress, and asked if Charlotte would act in her role. She agreed, even though it was the role of Lady Macbeth. It was the first act of Cushman's career as an actress, and she was greeted enthusiastically by the press: "She made the people understand the character that Shakespeare drew. She was never stilted, nor mock-heroic, nor monotonous, but so fiercely, so vividly natural that the spectators were afraid of her as they would have been of a pantheress let loose. It was impossible New Orleans should long retain such a woman" (41). In Chapter Four, Wojczuk presents Cushman's arrival in New York and the beginning of her experience at Park Theatre, often compared to London's Royal Theatre on Drury Lane. Her New York debut as Lady Macbeth to Thomas Hamblin's Macbeth drew spontaneous applause, and soon after, she was declared "the star of the Bowery". A few days later, by a stroke of bad luck, the Bowery Theatre caught fire and burned to the ground, and at the age of twenty, Cushman had to prepare to start over for the third time in her young life.

Chapter Five opens with a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson about "Genius". It is worth remembering that Emerson was Cushman's pastor in Boston. This chapter focuses on Cushman's stay in Albany, where the theatres drew large crowds of many races, made up of the merchants who brought goods to and from the largest port on the Eastern Seaboard, and Charlotte performed almost nightly in starring roles at the Pearl Street Theatre, including Lady Macbeth alongside the legendary Junius Brutus Booth. The tragic occurrence of Cushman's little brother's death in April 1837 gives Wojczuk the opportunity to describe how concerned Charlotte was with matters involving her own family and the wrong decisions made for her sister Susan by their mother.

Chapter Six follows Cushman's return to New York and her contract at the National Theatre, where she performed her popular Meg Merrilies, disappearing into her character and gaining an overwhelmingly positive critical response: "The Meg Merrilies of Miss Cushman seems to abstract and embody in itself — in a perfect individual reality — all we have seen or known or had presented to us in the stage or closet — of wild women — crazed prophetess — strange in attire — sore distraught in spirit — and borne above the common flight of her sex by something demoniac and supernatural" (64). In Chapter Seven, there is a description of Cushman's study of the seemingly degrading role of Nancy in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, which involved reading and rereading the play and even venturing into the New York inner-city slum known as Five Points. "Once again, Charlotte had taken a supporting role and made it into theatrical gold. Tickets sold out and critics raved" (77). Chapter Eight is set in 1844, when, on William Macready's advice, Cushman was preparing to go to London but then decided to postpone her departure after meeting Rosalie Sully, with whom she fell in love. Rosalie was the daughter of a painter from whom Cushman had commissioned her own portrait and an aspiring painter herself. Rose's love gave Charlotte confidence, encouraging her to attempt the most difficult role in Shakespeare's canon:

Hamlet. The only woman to have played the role was Sarah Siddons in 1776, but no American actress had done it successfully before Cushman's debut on May 13, 1844: "Hamlet is a young man, and Charlotte's smooth woman's face made her a better fit for the role than a male actor of similar experience" (82). At the end of 1844, she finally made her way to England, where she performed in London and Liverpool, as described in Chapter Nine. While Cushman was in England, she did not receive any correspondence from Rose, as the latter's father had forbidden her from having any further relationship with Charlotte. Cushman received criticism from her mother, too, and a final goodbye letter from Rose. Still torn by the loss, she decided to throw herself into her work and prepare for her next big role: Romeo. She wrote a letter to invite her sister Susan to join her in London to play Juliet on her side.

Chapter Ten provides the book with its title and describes all the controversy around Cushman's choice to play that role before the British audience appreciated her clear enunciation of Shakespeare's lines, lack of a strong American accent, and ability to handle a sword on the stage. This chapter details her performance of Romeo through her walking and speaking like a man, the sense of freedom she instilled in the character, the choice of making her chivalric Romeo collapse weeping in the final scene, and even the way she once stopped her performance when a joker in the audience faked a sneeze during a love scene. Her Romeo proved famous, in Wojczuk's view, because the character was Italian, passionate, and young, running counter to the tight-laced American and British cultures of the nineteenth century.

Romeo offered Cushman the opportunity to portray different versions of masculinity. For example, during a fight with Tybalt, she knocks the sword, and it flies toward the audience, scaring everybody. Then at the end, on seeing that Juliet, played by her sister, is dead, she cradles her and weeps over her. This expression of emotion was moving to both men and women; many audiences admire a man able to express such deep, passionate feelings.

Chapter Eleven is set in 1848 when Cushman celebrated her fourth year away from America, succeeding where Forrest and many others had failed: She had become the first American celebrity. She then planned her return to America: "Charlotte understood her value as an American star—and she made sure others knew it" (117) when she returned in 1849. In fact, she was recognized everywhere she went, her name and reputation travelling ahead of her, thanks to the way railways and newspapers were expanding far across the country, from New York to Chicago to St. Louis. It is worth mentioning, from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, that Walt Whitman reprinted in Brooklyn about Charlotte leaving her hotel in men's clothes (125-6). Whitman was delighted: Her cross-dressing was not a stunt but an expression of her true self, an extension of her habit of surrounding herself with a rich "entourage of female friends: ambitious, unorthodox artists like herself who longed for more freedom than they could find in America or in England" (126).

Chapter Twelve is devoted to Cushman's new dream: living in Rome with Matilda Hays — a writer and English translator for George Sand — and supporting more women artists by offering them a place to stay in Rome, giving gifts, and writing letters on their behalf to her powerful connections. Wojczuk here describes how her house was full of artists of all kinds and how Cushman met Emma Stebbins, the last love of her life. Chapter Thirteen then shifts to the stormy affairs Cushman lived as a mature adult.

Chapter Fourteen describes the interconnections between Cushman's later years and the preparation for the Civil Wars. Cushman stayed in Washington and met President Lincoln before the tragic occurrence of his murder by John Wilkes Booth on April 25, 1865. Chapter Fifteen portrays Cushman in her sixties, and Chapter Sixteen describes the end of Cushman's life and career. Wojczuk concludes thus: "In mourning Charlotte Cushman, America also mourned its youth, forever obscured behind the fog of war . . . Since she was a girl, she had been confident of her larger purpose, and when she failed, she drove herself forward anyway, creating a life of daring adventure" (174).

While the whole book is a brilliant transcription of Cushman's biography, the epilogue renders more explicitly the bitter note perceptible throughout the narration. The epilogue begins with "But even as…", the adversative conjunction immediately suggesting the silence and the oblivion into which Cushman's name and career had fallen soon after her death. The book shows us why Charlotte Cushman deserves to appear in the American spotlight once again. However, it could have explored more thoroughly why Cushman was consigned to obscurity. Wojczuk explains that the American people started to look for pastimes away from the theatre; Shakespeare fell out of fashion, and Cushman's incredible talent as an influential performer was left out. As a result, her legacy was erased by the same inspiration that kickstarted her success and fame: her queerness.

Given Wojczuk's interest in the interconnections between theatre and culture, many readers, especially those interested in American theatre and female performances, will find *Lady Romeo* rewarding. Although it is largely discursive, the book offers pleasing insights to the public and is a useful point of departure for academic readers seeking to develop more profound research interests. Wojczuk successfully reinvigorates this significant nineteenth-century artist and provides a lively biography of a woman who made the stage her home.

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Nicola Pasqualicchio*

Ashley E. Lucas, *Prison Theatre and the Global Crisis of Incarceration*[1]

Abstract

The review presents a notable study on prison theatre, *Prison Theatre and the Global Crisis of Incarceration* by Ashley E. Lucas, published in 2021, appreciating its methodological approach to the topic and analysing the most significant aspects of the case studies it contains. After a reflection on the global crisis of prison systems, the review focuses in particular on the effects highlighted by the experiences of prison theatre that the book analyses, concerning socialization, self-awareness, rehabilitation, and also the acquisition of specific professional skills. The review underlines the importance of prison theatre not only as an effective response to the risks of oppression or even elimination of the personal dignity of the inmates, but also as a response to the global crisis of theatre, increasingly evident and threatening where it loses its original role as a humanizing art.

Keywords: crisis of incarceration; prison theatre; social theatre

Does a global crisis exist in the prison system? If the prerequisites for a prison system 'not in a crisis' are the respect for the dignity and the mental and physical health of each individual, regardless of the guilt they have been recognised as being responsible for, and the effectiveness of detention, both in terms of the downsizing of crime in society and of the rehabilitation of those serving a prison sentence, one might be inclined to think that at least Western democracies, based on the legal and ethical principles established by the Enlightenment culture, could be untouched or only partially concerned by such a crisis. On the contrary, this would be an almost exclusive prerogative of political systems that have remained partially or completely unrelated to that ideological and ethical development.

However, we must take note of the partial or complete and in any case increasingly evident failure of the pursuit of those instances of human necessities, such as respect, rehabilitation and reintegration, even in democratic states. It is a crisis that, according to a lucid analysis by Francesco Palazzo, is articulated on three levels: the humanitarian level, caused above all by the

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overcrowded facilities and aggravated "by the forced and degrading idleness, by the cancellation of any but rare effort of empowerment, by the brutalization caused by the lack of affection" (2017, 5, translation mine); that of efficiency, as shown by "high rates of recidivism produced by imprisonment, with the truly paradoxical consequence . . . that incarceration is produced to prevent crimes that the prison itself generates" (6, translation mine); and finally, the ideological level linked to the 'guilty conscience' of the rationalist and scientific paradigm, under which the hidden vindictive component of the penal system did not cease to mandate.

In Palazzo's view, in reality, the current prison system actually does something that is worse than revenge, by turning imprisonment into an 'ontological' exclusion of the inmates, a sort of denial of their existence: "a symbolic yet convincing representation of the fact that evil can be 'eradicated' so that it no longer pertains to the physiology of individual and social human life" (7, translation mine).

This is the perspective from which we can start to understand why and how the practice of theatre in prison, which despite many difficulties has become more widespread worldwide, is a tool that can prove invaluable on the road to restoring to inmates their human dignity and at least partially interrupt their isolation both from other inmates as well as from the outer world, starting from their own families.

In her recent volume *Prison Theatre and the Global Crisis of Incarceration*, Ashley E. Lucas offers a series of efficient examples regarding past and current experiences in various countries of the world. Ashley speaks of it on the base of a double professional competence: she is a university professor in theatre and also a theatrical operator in prison, starting as a performer in her own one-woman-show in some prisons and following as the director of the Prison Creative Arts Project at the University of Michigan. But neither this book nor all the valuable research work in penal institutes that the author conducted and continues to carry out would exist without the attentive and dramatic personal involvement of Lucas in this subject: the incarceration of her father when she was fifteen and the following twenty-five years of detention of her parent in American prisons. Lucas's will to keep her relationship with her imprisoned father strong and alive is at the basis of her knowledge of prison and interest towards the human conditions of the inmates that precedes her studies on the topic and also, naturally, surpasses them.

Although this biographical story is often quoted in the book and fuels the empathy of the reader towards these topics, it does not affect the objectivity of the research, which took place in prisons in various parts of the world by studying the prison legislation of these countries, consulting archives, interviewing inmates (where it was allowed) and theatrical operators and seeing shows. But the long imprisonment of Lucas's father certainly influenced her research in a positive way, at least in two aspects. At a practical level, it generally produced a greater and more immediate openness of the inmates towards the researcher. At a cognitive approach level, it allowed the author to have a profound awareness, firstly reached through her human experience and then confirmed through her scientific approach, of the factors that mostly contribute to the dehumanization of the inmates: the identification, that the prison justice system creates and maintains, of the person with his/her committed crime ("Many people hear the word *prisoner* and think *crime*. I hear the word and think *father*", 18); and the tendency to cancel people serving their sentence in a prison from the sight and considerations of free individuals. This awareness, that Lucas acquired in a premature way thanks to her biographical story, normally takes those who work in prisons a long and progressive time to develop.

In this regard, see the testimony of Maud Clark, a current operator in Australian prisons, cofounder and co-director of the Australian female prison company Somebody's Daughter Theatre:

> When I first went into prison as a drama student . . . I only knew what I had been trained to believe about prisons and prisoners . . . I believed the myth that prisoners were *different* to me, that somehow, they were *different* from 'normal' women and that this belief defined me as not being one of 'those' women. Not being one of 'those' women gave me power and protection. Believing prisoners were different meant I was safe and that what happened in the prison world was OK . . . When I realised I was no different it meant I or anyone I knew could be a prisoner, it forced me to confront the brutality and inhumanity that is the life of a woman prisoner. (101)

Among the 'rehabilitation' activities many prisons offer to their inmates, theatre, according to Lucas, is by far the most efficient in returning margins of dignity, self-esteem, contrast to resignation and availability to socialize. The social and collaborative nature of theatre itself makes it a tool with strong transformative potential within the prison community. In her studies the author identifies four fundamental objectives of transformation that theatre in prison can put into place: community building, professionalization, social change and hope. To each of these objectives, and the appropriate methods in order to reach them, Lucas dedicates a chapter of her book based on concrete examples of performance activities conducted in different prisons. Such division does not imply that each one of these goals should be pursued separately from the others, which are actually often strongly tied together; but it shows how one of them could be prevalent, according to the different prison situations and the methods used by the operators.

Prison theatre programs in which community building is the primary goal understandably privilege the elaboration process of the show over the final result. Regardless of the quality of the final performance, the success of such projects depends on the quality of the human relationship that it manages to develop. Lucas shows us two examples of reaching such achievement: the OHOM (Open Hearts Open Minds) programme, activated in the Two Rivers Correctional Facility in Oregon, and the SBB (Shakespeare Behind Bars) programme which started in some Kentucky prisons and then expanded to other correctional facilities in Michigan. In the first case, in particular, also thanks to the not so restrictive measures applied to this activity by the management of the prison of Oregon, "the greatest payoff of this work lies not in the production itself but in the human connections formed among the cast in rehearsals and shared with families, friends, guests, and prison staff during the receptions after each performance" (32). The repeated opportunities of meeting for rehearsals and even more the effort put into a kind of activity which depended heavily on the generosity and willingness of the group create a solidarity among inmates which is normally absent inside a prison, and they also develop a sense of belonging to a 'family' that does not disappear even after being released from prison. The theatre activity also revitalizes the relationship between inmates and family members, to whom they can finally show a part of them that does not fully coincide with their crime and their imprisonment.

Stepping out of isolation is possible if situations in which inmates can find the courage to open up to others and show their vulnerability are created: in the SBB activity, the circle in which they sit to analyse the text becomes a valuable moment of self-exposure, of their stories and affections: the founder and director of this programme, Curt L. Tofteland, describes it as "Shakespeare giving language to the feelings we all have" (45); and he considers it so fundamental to have made him reluctant, in the first years of work, to finalize it as a conclusive representation for the fear that this objective could limit the inmates' pursuit of their own profound truth through the dramatic text.

There are, however, experiences of theatre in prison that have solid consequences in terms of professionalization. In this case as well, Lucas chooses to exemplify through two projects that demonstrate the acquiring of high competencies by the groups of inmates, both on a technical level (from the design of the lights to the realization of props or puppets) and on an administrative level. The first example concerns the William Head Institution, in British Columbia (Canada), the place of the forming of an excellent professional theatre company entirely managed by inmates: William Head on Stage (WHoS). The author describes their show for puppets and actors in person, *Fractured Fables*, as "one of the best performances I have seen in my life – in or out of prison" (82): the technical-visual part of the show was perfectly realized and counted a series of fantastic metamorphoses able to surprise the public. The troupe, which counted twenty-seven inmates, had them busy for weeks prior to the representation, for six days a week: also taking into consideration the time dedicated, the work aimed to achieve a result of a professional nature and quality.

Such result is exemplary of the efficiency of a well-articulated and organized structure completely within the prison, which decides and controls even the temporary hiring of theatre professionals coming from outside; and that, just like a normal theatrical company, "has an annual production schedule and has to set its own pace for fundraising, planning, rehearsing, advertising and performances" (105).

The other strongly professionalizing experience the author writes about is called Prison Performing Arts (PPA), activated in a Missouri prison, which has an administrative team outside the prison that is paid regularly. Among the shows produced by the PPA, Lucas reserves a particular place for *Hip Hop Hamlet*, a very funny and intelligent modernization of Shakespeare's masterpiece in the language of hip hop. In this case the acquiring of professional skills refers not only to the stage activities (setting techniques or acting), but also, preliminarily, to dramaturgy and playwriting. Under the guide of Elizabeth Charlebois, a university professor and scholar of Shakespeare, the group of inmates analysed the text and its dramatic subdivisions, paraphrased it in their own language, adapted it to current social and mediatic situations and finally applied the form of rhyming couplets of hip hop poetry to it: "This process required the men to practice the serious literary skills of close reading and script analysis and then to radically shift gears and become translators, playwrights and poets" (93-4).

The very understandable critique that is implied in these two projects and that Lucas's analysis underlines concerns the waste of talent and ability (in the artistic field, but not only) that isolation and inactivity of the inmates generally entail. It is not only a loss for the inmates, but for the whole of society, which is condemned not to enjoy such talents that prison tends to leave unexpressed or invisible. Talents that, once out of prison, ex-inmates could use to enter these fields professionally.

The volume dedicates a smaller space, but not secondary, to the other two strategies that prison theatre allows to create: the one addressed towards social change and the one open to the dimension of hope. As for the former, it concerns those prison theatre projects that directly approach topics with the precise intention of affecting current situations in order to better them. The most interesting examples of this orientation, according to the author, come from South Africa. Here the experiences of prison theatre rise from a long and rich extra-prison tradition of social protest theatre, especially in the field of fighting Apartheid. As far as theatre in prison, which penitentiaries have allowed only since the Nineties, the topic that mostly stimulated the inmates has been HIV/AIDS, which have had particularly tragic effects in this region of the world, with a very strong incidence of the illness inside prisons. For example, the Prison Theatre Project of the female prison of Westville, through shows created in groups about epidemics, produces in participants a greater awareness regarding the illness and its identification as a mark of shame which would induce the inmates to not speak about it and avoid the cure. It has also brought improvement in the sanitary management on behalf of the prison structure. This prison experience, directed by Miranda Young-Jahangeer since 1999 and based on the pedagogical methods of liberation of Paulo Freire and on the theatre of the oppressed by Augusto Boal, had given very significant results to the inmates in terms of awareness of the triple oppression of which they are victims (gender, racial and of class), distancing them from the passive acceptance of such oppression and stimulating a reaction that, passing from individual self-esteem to group cohesion, "enabled the women to mobilize and organise themselves using drama as a form of activism" (Young-Jahangeer 2017, 145).

As for the 'principle of hope' that prison theatre can activate, it certainly is not the kind of hope interpreted as a sort of passive waiting; it is rather what Martin Luther King defined "as a force shared by community, rather than as a kind of optimism about one person's desires. As such, hope cannot be an easy or passive state of being" (129). The active and collective dimension of prison theatre certainly works in favour of the pursuit of hope intended as the force of change. In this sense, even the desire to impose a happy ending to a tragedy can be read as an effort to fight rather than an attempt at self-consolation: Lucas explains this referencing a show created by the program 'Teatro na Prisão' in the female penitentiary of Talavera Bruce, in Rio de Janeiro. It concerns a free adaptation, partially created on improvisation during rehearsals by the inmates themselves, of *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare. The most drastic change from the original precisely concerned the ending, in which unanimously the actresses decided to keep the protagonists alive: instead of killing himself, Romeo gets drunk so that, when Juliet awakes, she finds him indecorously inebriated, but alive. This variation cannot be interpreted as a superficial consolatory gesture or an escape from the tragic dimension, if we consider that this overturned ending was wanted by a group of people who daily live alongside the tragedy of suicide, as the real fate of some of their companions or as a daily temptation for many of them. The happy ending, for them, on the contrary, was a courageous choice, declining to give into resignation: an affirmation of their will to live, not letting the violence of the prison system overcome them, like the youngsters of the tragedy who let the hate between their families overcome them. Lucas concludes by saying that not only for the inmates of Talavera Bruce "*Romeo and Juliet* became a roadmap to hope", but, more in general, "unexpected happy endings in prison shine like beacons of resistance" (141).

To her own discussion, Lucas decided to add an extensive appendix consisting of four analyses, carried out by some different scholars and theatrical operators, on other significant experiences of prison theatre. Selina Busby gives an account of the Children's Play Project, activated in some prisons in the United Kingdom, and aimed, through the preparation of a show for imprisoned fathers' children, at strengthening the relationship of the participants with their children and their families, mitigating the sense of failure as father figures that almost inevitably takes over the inmates.

Stephanie Gaskill describes the realization, in a Lousiana prison commonly known as 'Angola', of a passion play entitled *The Life of Jesus Christ*, the intent of which, regardless of the faith of the interpreters (men and women, among which were also Muslims and Buddhists), was to focus on redemption and forgiveness. One can imagine the strong and emotional meaning that the scene of the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalen must have had for the public in such context, in particular when Jesus pronounces the sentence: "If anyone of you is without sin, then let them be the first to throw a stone at her"; and also the moment in which Jesus, after hugging the sinner, bids her farewell by saying: "Go, and sin no more".

The Citizen Theatre, which operates in the Scottish prison of Barlinnie, counts several ambitious and engaging productions, which definitively fall under the category that Lucas defines "strategy for professionalization". In fact, Neil Packham and Elly Goodman speak of very high numbers of prisoners who for months "worked alongside industry professionals in set design, playwriting, set construction, acting, song writing, producing live music, rigging and operating lightning, sound engineering and stage management" (190). But even more meaningful, in this chapter, are the testimonies of inmates whose theatrical experience has had a key role in fulfilling a complete rehabilitation.

The work done by the women's theatre group Clean Break, arising in the English prison of Askham Grange in Yorkshire, is presented by Caoimhe McAvinchey, in the final chapter of the volume, as an exemplary activity of culture-making. The theatrical work of this group, active since 1979, is aimed at deconstructing the image of the imprisoned woman, produced by a patriarchal culture which reaffirms and disseminates the stereotypes through press, cinema and television. To the prejudices that normally are applied to all inmates, in the case of women there are others, which are expressed in language through "a limited repertoire of sexualized or monstrous tropes" (203), rendering the prison experience of women even more humiliating and accentuating the sense of disapproval of society. The dramaturgies created by Clean Break have had an important role over the years in prison, but also outside, in building a new epistemological framework for understanding female crime, the complexity of the path that induces women to commit a crime and the role that the ideological imbalance of the patriarchal system plays in all of this: because "a lack of representation about the nuanced, complex, and hidden experience of these women is an epistemic injustice, when an individual or a group of people are wronged in their capacity as 'knowers'" (208).

The final impression obtained by reading this book is twofold. On one hand, we have the confirmation of a prison system that, in its entirety, presents in an accentuated way all three 'levels of crisis' discussed in the beginning, to which the book adds demonstrative cases of incomprehensible arbitrariness and contradiction in the exercise of power and insufficient attention to the resources that a penitentiary institution can put in place in order to return dignity and self-esteem to the inmates, enhance the human and professional resources, and favour the maintenance or the recovery of relationships with families. On the other hand, we have the clear demonstration that these very objectives can be reached when a theatrical activity manages to enter a prison in a positive and long-lasting manner, just like all the cases analysed in the book. The success of such initiative obviously depends on the intersection of two variables: the willingness of the penitentiary institutions to welcome, and above all to facilitate, the work of theatre operators in prison; and the preparation, the tenacity, and the relational capability of the latter. One could object that a third variable has been forgotten here, which indeed might seem to be the most important: the willingness of prisoners to a constructive and continuous participation in these activities, which should not be taken for granted. But Lucas's stories and those that the other authors tell us throughout the book repeatedly confirm that, where the first two conditions are present, the inmates join the theatrical activities (albeit, for many, with initial hesitation and resistance) with increasing enthusiasm and dedication, making great human gains. They soon realize that they are not dealing with a merely recreational or moralistically re-educational activity, but with something that fully involves them as human beings, and proves necessary for their lives.

We have highlighted this last point to introduce a final reflection to which this reading leads us. The idea of crisis of the prison system is stated right from the very title and underlies the entire work. Nevertheless, what never emerges is something that refers to the crisis of theatre. The fact that theatre is currently undergoing a global crisis is there for all to see. Never before, both in terms of entertainment and art, has theatre suffered so much the competition with cinema and television, and especially the web and its infinite offer of entertainment and culture. Young generations feel less and less motivated to attend theatres; to most of them it appears as a surpassed language, and the problem is certainly not solved by the research that takes place in the context of experimental theatre, condemned to address a very limited elite. This is perhaps an irreversible crisis, destined to see the traditional idea of theatre decline as form of entertainment and as artistic expression; but not to see the decline of theatre *tout court*, which remains and will remain a non-replaceable practice especially where its necessity is revealed: in the encounter with social discomfort, isolation, exclusion, disability and fragility, that it faces as a means of care, transformation and humanization with all its potential.

Understanding the prison theatre with a purely instrumental value with respect to purposes that are not truly theatrical would be, especially nowadays, a serious mistake. In places such as prisons, the theatre rediscovers its own civil and human necessity, which it is at risk of losing in a normal consumer circuit of show business and art. This does not lead to giving up the aesthetic component of theatre, but to bringing it back from the sphere of uninterested 'contemplation' to that of a lively and conscious participation, both of the actors and the spectators. The 'beauty' of theatre will then consist in the demonstration, through appropriate expressive measures, of its urgency and its necessity, its nature of human and humanizing art. This is what an important English prison theatre company, the Sinergy Theatre Project, has defined in these terms: "strong, simple, beautiful aesthetics . . . Humanising is what our work is about" (from the company's website, quoted in Iacobone 2020, 206).

This is why, consistently, in Lucas's book the crisis of theatre is not mentioned: because the theatre that is spoken of here is anything but in crisis.

Translation by Tracey Sinclair

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Raffaella Di Tizio*

A Journey to the Border Between Theatre and Literature: *Theateradaptionen. Interkulturelle Transformationen moderner Bühnentexte*, edited by Olaf Müller and Elena Polledri, Heidelberg, 2021*

Abstract

This article examines the essays collected in the volume *Theateradaptionen. Interkulturelle Transformationen moderner Bühnentexte* (*Theatre Adaptations. Intercultural Transformations of Modern Theatrical Texts*),[1] edited in 2021 for the Universitätsverlag Winter of Heidelberg by Olaf Müller and Elena Polledri, creating a dialogue between them and some hermeneutical proposals by Italian theatre studies. *Theateradaptionen* offers a multi-voice analysis of examples of influences and adaptations of theatrical texts between Germany and Italy and the connections between translations and the world of the stage. While based on the point of view of literary studies (particularly of Romance philology and German studies), the book investigates the border between literature and theatre. It is, therefore, particularly interesting to examine what has been said by scholars who have walked the opposite path: looking at literature from a theatrical perspective.

Keywords: theatre adaptation; translation for theatre; cultural exchanges; theatre and literature; Italy and Germany; Giorgio Strehler; Claudio Meldolesi; Ferdinando Taviani

On the front cover of *Theateradaptionen. Interkulturelle Transformationen moderner Bühnentexte* (Theatre adaptations. Intercultural Transformations of Modern Theatrical Texts), edited in 2021 for the Universitätsverlag Winter of Heidelberg by Olaf Müller and Elena Polledri, there is a photograph of Milva and Giorgio Strehler on stage. Next to them, we see the poster of *Io, Bertolt Brecht* ("*I, Bertolt Brecht*"), which is the anthology of poems and songs produced in 1966 by the director and founder of *Piccolo Teatro* in Milan, with Paolo Grassi, whose role was central in the post-war period for the Italian

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[1] Translations mine.

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reception of the German author. However, Strehler is only one of the many protagonists of this book, which provides a multi-voice analysis of the influences and adaptations of theatrical texts between Germany and Italy and the connections between translations and the world of the stage.

The introduction explains that the starting point for *Theateradaptionen* was a conference held in 2015 at the University of Mainz, Germany, in collaboration with the *Staatstheater* and the *Zentrum für Interkulturelle Studien*. The conference aimed to reflect "on processes of intermedial translation from the German and Italian perspectives" ("über intermediale Übersetzungsprozesse aus der deutsch-italienischen Perspektive zu reflektieren"), to create a dialogue between different disciplines on the intersection between literary and translation studies, and the —not always convergent— practices of translators, theatres, and publishers.

The perspective is that of literary studies (indeed, the two experts who promoted and edited the book are an Italianist from the Institute of Romance Philology at the Philipps University in Marburg – Müller – and a Germanist from the University of Udine – Polledri). However, as detailed in the first few pages, their interest is also programmatically addressed here to the concrete world of theatre operators to initiate a discourse that will continue in subsequent investigations on the theme of translation for the theatre. Therefore, it will be useful to observe whether and how much the point of view of the stage practices (i.e. not only with regard to the translators involved) is taken into account, in order to create a dialogue between the thematic insights presented here and the perspectives assumed over the last few decades by the most advanced Italian theatre studies. This comparison is useful because it is not facilitated by the language of *Theateradaptionen*, which was written in German and specifically addressed to a German-speaking audience.

The essays collected by Müller and Polledri are diverse in their specific interests. However, they recall each other for the questions they pose about the modalities and motivations of translation. They are divided into four thematic sections: (i) "German theatre in Italy, Italian theatre in Germany"; (ii) "Adapting and transforming the classics"; (iii) "Italian poets in German-speaking theatre"; and (iv) "German authors on the Italian stage".[2] It is not possible here to fully examine all perspectives interwoven into *Theateradaptionen*, where each article examines a different facet of the problems (and opportunities) linked to the transmission of texts between cultures, in connection with theatre and its practices. However, a few key points will be discussed, such as reflecting on the 'betrayal' constituted by the various nineteenth-century theatrical translations of Goethe's *Werther*. Polledri compares these to the opinion of Foscolo, who considered the text suitable only for reading (like his *Ortis*). Goethe's *Werther* had actually been written by weaving feelings more than actions throughout the text —while the comedies that were derived from it could only be based on newly invented actions, moving irremediably away from the original ("Von Verter bis Pulcinella. Goethes *Werther* auf dem italienischen Theater", 103-17, here 103-4). Although from the author's point of view there were good reasons to complain, as Polledri wrote, the "productive reception" ("produktive Rezeption") of *Werther* belongs to the history of theatre: In Italy, it gradually became comedy, farce, puppet shows, and finally drama for music, and ended up celebrating values —i.e., those of the family and bourgeois order— that clearly contrasted with the romantic individualism of the novel (cf. 117). These were rewritings rather than adaptations, new versions created on the wave of the success of an English theatrical abridgment by Frederick Reynolds in 1786 (although the first dramatisation of *Werther* was in France in 1775) and built up through the introduction into the text of other logics, to ensure the stage functionality of the drama and to gain the attention of the audience. Simone Sografi, who was a successful playwright and admirer of Goldoni, Molière, and Diderot, added servants, poisons, and pathetic scenes of repentance and redemption to his Italian *Verter*, effectively transforming it into a comedy of sentimentality and intrigue.

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[2] (i) Deutschsprachiges Theater in Italien, Italienisches Theater in Deutschland; (ii) ‚Klassiker' adaptieren und transformieren; (iii) Italienische Dichter im deutschsprachigen Theater; (iv) Deutschsprachige Autoren auf der Italienischen Bühne.

If we look at it from the perspective of the text, the story of the theatrical *Werther* is that of complete 'betrayal'. "Wo bleibt Goethe?" ("What remains of Goethe?", ibid.), wrote Elena Polledri in the conclusion, underlining that theatrical adaptations say more about the taste of the audience of the time than about the work source. It is a correct observation, which implicitly invites us to bear in mind that theatres have their own precise production and survival strategies, from which their own artistic laws derive. This was especially true in a time well before the modern dynamics of state subsidies, when the stage was a risky business for the companies. However, theatres —at least when they are "alive"— always speak their own language: a specific medium that cannot but produce interference when in contact with literature. Claudio Meldolesi, who was one of the main re-founders of Italian theatre studies in the 1980s, dedicated an essay to the reception of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century theatre (1979). At that time, the Great Actors reshaped the characters on the basis of theatrical plausibility and of their interpretative strategies: it was a peculiar kind of "translation", which was indeed later seen from the outside as a "betrayal"—on the principle that the actor should be a more or less faithful "mediator" between the text and the audience. However, from the theatre's point of view, this perspective reverses into the opposite: why not consider Shakespeare as the "mediator" for actors of a newly found independence in acting, providing them with his dramaturgy a useful tool to achieve an individualistic and effective art form that responded to the taste of the time? In the same way, the theatrical *Werther* was effective for his time, saving, in the end, the protagonist from suicide, as other eighteenth- and nineteenth- century adaptations would save Romeo and Juliet from death (cf. Meldolesi 2013, 93). These represent plot twists that surprised the literati at the time and still make us smile today; but are we right?

As mentioned above, the contributors to *Theateradaptionen* are scholars of German and Italian literature and language, and translators working in the field of theatre. It is therefore normal that the main point of interest – even if there is no lack of openings and problematic views – is the text as a value in itself: this is observed in the complexity of its possible translations, and the stagings are also described as translations, even if *sui generis*. As we started to clarify, the panorama changes a lot if we take on the point of view of the scene. However, we could try to overcome this persistent dichotomy in the way we reason about theatrical matters by listening to what the theatre historian Ferdinando Taviani innovatively proposed in the 1990s: why not look at texts — not only plays — as part of a "literary space of theatre" ("spazio letterario del teatro"), observing the fluid boundaries between "everything that pours from literature into the world of performances and that flows from performances into literature"? ("tutto ciò che dalla letteratura si riversa nel mondo degli spettacoli e dagli spettacoli confluisce nella letteratura", 2010,[3] 18-19).

This is precisely what is offered by an essay at the centre of *Theateradaptionen*: a long reasoning by Henning Hufnagel on the aesthetics of "disguise" ("travestimento") in the poetics of Edoardo Sanguineti ("Wirrwarr um Weimar. Zu Edoardo Sanguinetis Ästhetik des ‚Travestimento', ihren Wurzeln in Performances Cathy Berberians und ihren textuellen Effekten in Sanguinetis *Faust*-Übertragung", 119-57). Starting from an analysis of a poem written in 1971 (during the six months in which Sanguineti lived with his family in Berlin) that condenses echoes of a performance by Cathy Berberian, Hufnagel invites us to consider how a theatrical event can be the basis of a particular line of literary research and how the suggestions gathered on that occasion can become the thread around which to develop precise poetics of translation over the years. This approach is anything but obvious. If we take the passage from text to stage for granted, to the point of considering —as Strehler did, when echoing the words of the French Director Jacques Copeau and the Italian critic Silvio d'Amico— the former as a musical score and the latter as its execution, the attempt to trace the opposite path from stage to book is still quite uncommon. In Italy, as early as the 1930s, a Germanist involved in theatrical practices, Alberto Spaini, tried to defend this point of view. It was a time when the debate on the relationship between text and stage was particularly intense, given the innovative impulses brought about by the new art of directing — which used text in performances as one material among others, claiming, for its own scenic creations, the dignity of autonomous works of art. In his history of German theatre, which was published in 1933 and updated in 1937 (*Il teatro tedesco. Dai tempi di Hauptmann al dramma socialnazionale*. Milan: Treves), Spaini described how the expressionist dramaturgy owed a debt of origin to the inventions of Max Reinhardt and emphasised that some poetic creations would have been unthinkable had it not been for this director's ability to construct "a theatrical technique capable of any miracle" ("una tecnica teatrale capace di qualsiasi miracolo", 1937, 288-9). Almost a century has passed, and such a perspective, which invites us to be attentive to the exchanges and mutual conditioning between stage and drama, continues to be a minority one.[4]

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[3] The book cited here is an extended edition of Taviani 1995.

How often do we manage to consider theatre — and even a single performance — as a central part of the culture from which values and perspectives derive? Thanks to Hufnagel's essay on Sanguineti, who was influenced by the interpretative "disguises" of a theatrical evening held by Berberian in Berlin, another important aspect about the life of theatre can be verified: that his effectiveness, pervasiveness, and diffusion do not coincide with statistical parameters; in other words, numbers are not sufficient to define the impact of the scenic practice.[5]

However, diagrams are very useful for visualising the presence of specific dramaturgies on a country's stage. Here, for example, Diana Di Maria and Imke Momann used them to observe the diffusion in Germany from 1990 to 2013 of many more texts than those considered canonical, by Luigi Pirandello, Dario Fo (with Franca Rame), and Eduardo De Filippo ("‚Wann gab es sie eigentlich nicht, diese Krise des Theaters?' Eine Bestandsaufnahme zeitgenössischer italienischer Dramatik auf deutschsprachigen Bühnen im

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[4] This is also unusual in theatre studies, despite the example in Italy of Claudio Meldolesi's complex analyses of the "theatre hidden [or, if you like, 'translated'] in novels" ("teatro nascosto nel romanzo", 2001, 56).

[5] On this point, too, the obligatory reference is Ferdinando Taviani, who on several occasions expressed the need for a different consideration of the "weight" of theatrical events, recalling that the capacity to echo — that is to produce culture — of a theatrical phenomenon does not necessarily coincide with the number of spectators it reaches, just as the importance and quality of a restaurant cannot be judged by counting the number of seats. An evening or a meeting can have profound and concrete consequences on people's lives, in artistic poetics, and in the subsequent building of relationships and creative paths, consequences that would appear invisible if merely the point of view of statistics as a parameter is adopted.

Zeitraum 1990/91 bis 2012/13", 27-55). In this way, other authors who were known, or lesser known, emerged, and the analysis also reveals that everything is – and could not be otherwise – connected to the material reality of the theatre and that translations arise in connection with specific events (festivals, performances); in short, they always depend on the activities of theatres, publishers, contexts, and even the initiative of individuals (e.g. Sabine Heymann, to whom we owe a great part of the translations into German of the most recent Italian dramaturgy, as is recounted here). Thus, looking at one of the most translated and performed Italian playwrights in Germany, Fausto Paravidino, the authors note how the success and spread of his dramatic texts were linked to a set of circumstances that were not always easy to trace and which can only be understood by recalling biographies. The promotion of Fausto Paravidino arose, for example, from the interest in his work that was shown by the influential critic Franco Quadri (who allowed Paravidino's texts to be published for the first time), by the prizes he won, and by his decisive collaboration with the Teatro Stabile in Bolzano, which was in a position and tradition of continuous exchanges with the German scene. To these factors, we can add the correspondence of his style with a growing public interest in deconstructed texts and, as can be read here, even a certain fortune. Less convincing is the reasoning around the absence of translations based on the work of directors such as Romeo Castellucci, who was cited as one of "the best-known representatives of the new Italian theatre abroad" ("zählt zu den bekanntesten zeitgenössischen Repräsentanten des neuen italienischen Theaters im Ausland"). Why should questions of translation arise about his performances, which are ensemble compositions linked to the collective of actors involved, and in which the word has a non-central role? Perhaps we still (or again) struggle to recognise the art value of theatre in itself, even in the wake of certain modes of analysis of contemporary theatre (thinking here of the hermeneutic proposal – of great pervasiveness, despite the open contradiction with the cognitive basis of theatre studies – of Erika Fischer-Lichte's *Ästhetik des Performativen*, 2004, which aimed to unhinge the very idea of *opus* (work), replacing it with "event", with respect to performances). Indeed, if we consider the overall sense and complexity of the language of a play and not only the text, it goes without saying that it can be translated by others, just as Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* can be "translated" by another artist.

A merit of the essay is to focus on the importance for theatrical translations of personal initiative, whether by translators, editors, or theatre performers. This also stresses the importance of structural conditions for the concrete possibilities of cultural exchange. This last topic is highlighted by the first contribution in *Theateradaptionen*, a comparison between German and Italian theatrical institutions and dramaturgical traditions by Luigi Reitani, a well-known Germanist who recently passed away, and who was a specialist on Hölderlin, and director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Berlin for five years. The point of view here is exclusively that of literature, and it is effective in showing something decisive in terms of the differences between the dramaturgies of the two countries: the cultural weight acknowledged for the theatre for centuries in Germany — and not in Italy — which also means for German authors today "eine konkrete Möglichkeit, ein breites Publikum zu erreichen und Geld zu verdienen" ("a concrete chance to reach a wide audience and to earn money"). Italian theatre would be less appealing to authors and less suitable in terms of providing a breeding ground for translations, not least because the system of public theatres that lasted for so long in Germany was adopted much later in Italy, and not as pervasively. It should be remembered, however, that in Italy many sorts of "theatre" exist, which, alongside the official system, include stable groups who create their own productions, actor-narrators, and myriads of self-built theatrical houses. However, here we are examining the theatre on the basis of the reproducibility of texts on stage and looking for systematic reasons of functionality — or not — of the passage between cultures.

This viewpoint also brings to the surface a common thought about theatrical history that we still struggle to overcome, the one whereby the *Commedia dell'Arte* is described as the work of actors who are only interested in "showing off" their virtuosity, as street art made up of improvisation, and far removed from literature. Nevertheless, the actors were often cultured and authors of poetry, and the companies chose to call themselves by names that echoed those of the well-respected literary academies — such as the *Gelosi*, or the *Accesi* — and their repertoire did not only include masks, but also pastorals and other texts from the recognised canon. If anything, it was their versatility as interpreters of different types of theatre that had gained them commercial success.[6] Taviani has repeatedly argued that also the emphasis on improvisation should be greatly reduced: on the one hand, as has been said, it was not the only specialisation of "professional actors" ("comici di professione"), who "often wrote and performed erudite comedies" ("spesso scrivevano e recitavano commedie erudite", 2015, 273); on the other hand, as theatre historian Roberto Ciancarelli recalled in a recent review, there was much more room for improvised creation in the repeated staging of "pre-packaged" texts than in the compositions of *canovacci* that had been long studied and worked upon by the actors of the *Commedia dell'Arte*.[7]

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[6] These are issues that Ferdinando Taviani has explored in several studies: a synthesis of the characteristics of the *Commedia dell'Arte* can be found in Taviani (2015), but see also the posthumous Taviani (2021), which contains a bibliography of his contributions on the subject, among which Taviani and Schino (1982) has a central place.

How can we proceed to prevent the history of literature from becoming the history of a process of colonisation when it encounters the theatrical terrain? Reitani had a point here, as his view closely resembled the normal way of imagining the *compagnie dell'Arte* from abroad (and indeed it was the freezing of such a style that the Italian companies in France tended to conform to in the eighteenth century to meet the expectations of audiences and to find success; cf. Meldolesi 1988). This represents an idea that has been made canonical by the twentieth-century reinventions of "directorial" theatre, imagining a popular, improvised, non-literary *Commedia dell'Arte*, which was at the basis of many creations by directors such as Mejerchol'd and Copeau. However, it is precisely these persistent misunderstandings that confirm the need for the dialogue between disciplines that *Theateradaptionen* itself calls for, and which it is hoped can continue on an equal footing, without remaining closed off within the fences of old established "certainties".

The strength of *Theateradaptionen* lies in an aspect that elsewhere often brings weakness: its structure is made up of separate and divergent essays. The reality it describes — that of cultural exchanges in terms of the theatre — has many different facets, and the answers to the questions posed by Müller and Polledri in the Introduction (e.g., Who decides to translate a text? When and why? With what difficulties?) cannot lead to systematic results. Thus, the different voices and perspectives offered by the authors help to break the illusion of a simple and univocal path and gain an idea of the complexity of the reality of theatre, even when seen through the lens of text translations.

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[7] Ciancarelli explains that this is the reversal of a typical cliché in looking at theatre: by analysing the "modes of production of actors of *Commedia dell'Arte*, Taviani gives an account of procedures and rules for action that provide for the materials used by the actors to be rigorously fixed, and for any variation or invention to be controlled and contained before being destined to be ignited in the fire of the action. Contrary to what is taken for granted, he thus shows that it is in the theatre that is linked to the repetition of texts, to the "premeditated", that evening after evening, in the sequence of repetitions, new inventions, inevitable adaptations and extemporary variations are produced and multiplied ("modi di produzione degli spettacoli dei comici, Taviani dà conto infatti di procedure, di regole d'azione che prevedono che i materiali impiegati dagli attori siano rigorosamente fissati e che qualsiasi variazione, qualsiasi invenzione sia arginata e contenuta prima d'essere destinata ad accendersi nel fuoco dell'azione. Può dimostrare così, al contrario di quanto considerato scontato, come è invece nel teatro legato alla ripetizione dei testi, al 'premeditato', che sera dopo sera, nella sequenza delle repliche, si producano e si moltiplichino nuove invenzioni, inevitabili adattamenti, estemporanee variazioni", Ciancarelli 2022, 12. We quote here, by permission of the author, the original version of the text, published unfortunately with some editorial oversight).

The following examples (in no particular order) demonstrate how *Theateradaptionen* makes history of subtle transitions and mutual influences, trying to focus on the heterogeneous elements that condition the reception of a work. Michael Rössner ("Die Crux des Erfolges. Zu Übersetzungs- und Aufführungsschwierigkeiten Luigi Pirandellos im deutschen Sprachraum von den *Sechs Personen* zu den *Riesen vom Berge*", 171-84) observed the parabola of Pirandello's theatrical success in Germany from the time of his first tours and Reinhardt's productions; he recalled the importance of German culture for the development of the Sicilian writer and the themes of his dramas, and showed how the reception of a theatrical work is linked to the translatability – or not – of the cultural contexts from which it originated. Francesca Tucci ("‚Von den lateinischen Trauerspielen welche unter dem Namen des Seneca bekannt sind'. Lessings Auseinandersetzung mit Seneca", 69-80), recalled the contributions from translations to the enrichment of the cultural landscape of the 18th century and highlighted the importance for Lessing of Seneca's works, which were so distant from the literary trends of the time, but also for that reason were effective for planning the construction of a new national theatre. In the field of theatre practice, Sabine Heymann, already mentioned here as a translator of dramaturgy from Italian into German, wrote "‚Konzept' und ‚Wort'". Luca Ronconis Methode der ‚Zweigleisigkeit' bei der Inszenierung von übersetzten Texten" (245-52); she focused on the work of Luca Ronconi, a director of texts that were considered unrepresentable. Sabine Heymann tells of his ability to turn the untranslatable components of theatre literature into a fertile ground for the possibilities of the stage by giving value to the ambiguity of the translated word, which would be the opposite, she explains, of how a translator would usually act in the effort to "normalise" a text with respect to the culture of the new, foreign audience. This represented a form of theatre that in Germany garnered both praise and criticism: this essay, the last in *Theateradaptionen*, ends with German critic Peter Ideen's opinion that Ronconi was inferior to Strehler in bringing splendour to the *Piccolo Teatro*. However, is it the task of theatre workers to provide lustre for an institution? Shouldn't institutions rather exist to support the ever-evolving needs of theatre practices?

Strehler's poetics is at the centre of two other contributions, one by Flavia Foradini, a translator who has long collaborated with the *Piccolo Teatro* ("Strehler und Brecht im Dialog. Adaptionen Giorgio Strehlers für das Theater", 234-44) and the other by Marco Castellari, a Germanist at the University of Milan ("Dal libro alla scena. Paolo Grassi, Giorgio Strehler und die deutschsprachige Dramatik im Italien der 1940er-50er Jahre", 225-34). This is an idea of the direction that is well known in Italy and linked to the faithful staging of the text; however, examined more closely, as is done here, it shows how faithfulness also means knowing how to change a text, how to bring it closer to the present audience and time, without twisting it. This is what happened for the *Opera da tre soldi* ("*The Threepenny Opera*") presented in 1956 with the approval and contribution of Brecht, who wrote a new ending for the occasion. These are useful openings that can serve to move ideas: if on the one hand, *Theateradaptionen* here and there expresses the difficulty of tracing the fortunes of texts and translations in a theatre that today only occasionally makes itself representative of an author's script, on the other hand, we encounter overviews capable of also including in their gaze performances that are not centred on a single text but are born from creative confrontation with the entire production and cultural world of an author. This was done, for example, by Peter Goßens' essay on Pasolini's theatre in Germany, where Pasolini proves to be extremely present, despite the ever-decreasing attention to the direct staging of his theatrical texts ("Pier Paolo Pasolinis Theater in Deutschland", 201-17). Indeed, why should we not include in the reflection about translations, as it is done here, the miscellaneous performance that Milo Rau dedicated to Pasolini in 2016 and pay attention also to those theatrical creations that put Pasolini at the centre as an object, as a theme, as well as the ones that referred to him as an author?[8]

Certainly, this complicates matters if we aim to trace translated plays. However, if addressed to dramaturgy, the questions posed by translation studies lead to an inevitable interconnection with the complex material reality of theatre and with the multiplicity of its modes of production. Also, it will not be possible to determine in advance what is negligible: It needs to be remembered that even a performance by a lesser-known author than the one referred to, or even the work of an unknown group operating on the periphery of "official" theatre, can have a deeper impact than a lot of museum theatre — which is what theatre is reduced to when its sole purpose is to display classical works of the present and the past as exhibits.

Something should still be said about Strehler: He is often described as the father of directing in Italy, but this is an optical illusion. His theatrical "revolution", as Castellari defined it, would for Italy have meant "the birth of a true directing theatre, linked to a political commitment" ("Strehlers Theaterrevolution, die für Italien nicht weniger als die Geburt eines echten Regietheaters, verbunden mit einem sozialpolitischen Engagement, bedeutete", 229). It should, however, be made clear that this was also a form of normalisation with respect to more radical tendencies, which could not be placed within the boundaries (also considering the inevitable political compromise) necessary for the life of a permanent repertory theatre. Theatrical direction had also been practiced before the Second World War, and until the 1950s, it remained a plural trend. Although the "critical direction" (i.e., a way of directing that starts from the text to give it a possible interpretation) was later predominant, at the beginning it was only one of the many different possibilities for the Italian theatre.[9] For this reason, Castellari's invitation to observe Strehler's work on German dramaturgy before and after his well-known Brechtian path is of particular interest. This is a thesis that agrees with the one advanced on the theatrical front by Meldolesi that assumed that the success of the mature Strehler somehow obscured the earlier, more experimental phase of his theatrical commitment (1987). This is indeed a period that is generally omitted from memories and analyses, while if it was taken into due consideration, it could provide new perspectives and a better understanding of a director who was central to the Italian scene and of a complex and rich season of national theatre history.

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[8] This theme is explored in depth in Taviani (1978). However, even the founding fathers of directing did not necessarily make use of a single text, using texts as part of the materials for new and complex creations. See, for example, the descriptions of Mejerchol'd's work in Ripellino (1965) or the overall view of the theatrical revolution of the twentieth century by Schino (2003).

These case studies in *Theateradaptionen* on the exchange between Italian and German theatre literature and the world of the stage also include the following: an essay on the role of theatre magazines in the dissemination of foreign dramaturgy in post-war Italy (Gabriella Catalano, "Das Theater entdecken. Deutschsprachige Werke in den italienischen Theaterzeitschriften der zweiten Nachkriegszeit", 69-80); a study of Schiller's adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Henry* in his *Maid of Orleans* (Ulrich Port, "Marienfromme Militanz. Eine Shakespeare-Adaption (*King Henry VI, Part 1*) in Schillers *Jungfrau von Orleans*", 81-101); an examination of a new German translation of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters* (Dietrich Scholler, "Goldonis *Servitore di due padroni* in neuer Übersetzung"); and an analysis on the translation and staging of Primo Levi's *The Versifier* (Marco Menicacci, "Die Dichtung am Theater. Übersetzung und Inszenierung von Primo Levis *Il Versificatore*"). These all provide images of a wide and jagged landscape that reveals itself rich in points of interest. It is to be wished that this journey will continue and further strengthen the dialogue between disciplines and perspectives.

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[9] The reference study on the subject is Meldolesi (1984), rich in data and information as it is in still innovative hermeneutical proposals.

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Mark Brown[*]

From Oedipus to a Voyeuristic Photographer: a Showcase of the Breadth of Czech Theatre

Abstract

This article reviews the January 2022 iteration of the HI PerformanCZ series of themed showcases of Czech theatre. The showcases are created for international guests and hosted at regular intervals by the Arts and Theatre Institute of the Czech Republic. Comprised of a day of contemporary experimental theatre in the city of Brno and a series of stagings of classical plays at the National Theatre and other playhouses in Prague, the showcase offered guests an intensive programme of many of the most important productions to have emerged in the Czech Republic in recent years.

KEYWORDS: HI PerformanCZ; Arts and Theatre Institute; Czech Theatre; Centre for Experimental Theatre; National Theatre

There can be few organisations in Europe that are currently more engaged in promoting the theatrical arts in their country to the wider continent, if not the world, than the Arts and Theatre Institute of the Czech Republic. The Institute holds regular showcases of Czech theatre – each with a particular theme – to which they invite guests from various disciplines within the dramatic arts (including theatre directors and, as in my case, theatre critics). Going under the title of HI PerformanCZ Visitors' Programme, the most recent showcase – of classical and contemporary text-based Czech theatre – was held in Prague (with a daytrip to Brno) in late January 2022.

Since 2016, the Czech government has asked that its country be called "Czechia". However, it was notable that the English language programme for the January 2022 showcase carried the logo of the "Ministry of Culture, Czech Republic" – an official recognition, perhaps, that it will be some time before the world says "Czechia" as readily as it says "Slovakia" or "Slovenia".

Whatever you choose to call the country, respect is due to the excellent, knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff of the Czech Arts and Theatre Institute for their always superb organisation and curation of the HI PerformanCZ programmes. Respect also to the Ministry of Culture for its continuing sup-

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port for such an innovative and important programme.

Day one of the January programme took the international guests to Brno, which is the country's second largest city after the capital, Prague. Here we found ourselves in what must, surely, be the ultimate post-Stalinist theatre space. A member of the Czech Centre for Experimental Theatre (Centrum Experimentálního Divadla - CED) which is based in Brno, the Terén production platform presented a performance piece in the grey, concrete monolith of a disused, Communist-era shopping mall (which was empty, awaiting demolition, having been replaced by an identikit, late-capitalist mall immediately adjacent to it). There, entirely appropriately, Terén (which is described as "a dramaturgical and production platform without a permanent ensemble or venue") presented a decidedly postmodern work titled *PYL Reality Surfing*.

Ironically, given the showcase's theme of text-based theatre, this piece is a work of physical and object theatre in which we are invited to imbue seemingly random objects (such as oranges or sponges) with the same significance within the performance space as human bodies. Just how we are supposed to do this when, by the company's own admission, the piece requires that we "forget rational logic and surf into a new reality" is anyone's guess.

The hour-long show (which is credited in its writing, directing, choreography, dramaturgy and stage design to an entity called "PYL") has the virtue of experimentation. Sad to say, however, its virtues end there. Its self-proclaimed irrationality is not moored to any emotionally, psychologically or intellectually engaging surrealist concept, or, indeed, to a compelling visual aesthetic. Rather, it carries the mark of so much of the live art and contemporary performance practice that we find in conservatoires (in the UK, at least) these days. Considering itself to be, somehow, path-breaking and unique (and barely aware of its debt to Dadaism and the other pioneers of the early avant-garde), it is characterised by the naïve and (usually unintentionally) arrogant belief that everything it does is imbued with unaccountable and undeniable significance.

Perhaps this is where young performance artists have to begin. If the current enforcers of cultural Russophobia will allow me to hold two entirely reasonable ideas in my head simultaneously (namely, total opposition to Vladimir Putin and his outrageous war in Ukraine and resistance to a blanket cultural ban on all things Russian, which wipes out radical oppositionist artists as well as compliant toadies of the Putin regime) please permit me to suggest that the great Russian company AKHE (who describe their work as "Russian engineering theatre") might be a model for young performance-makers such as PYL/Terén. The secret of the success of AKHE works such as *White Cabin* and *Mr Carmen* is that — far from assuming that every image is inherently as valid as any other (an idea that makes for artistic laziness) — their work achieves its visual beauty and emotional, psychological and intellectual resonance through what is palpably a long artistic process of adding and removing (a performative editing, if you will) that is every bit as conscious (and, indeed, conscientious) as the writing process of a great modernist playwright such as Samuel Beckett or Caryl Churchill.

When the Terén show was over we walked through the often pretty city centre of Brno to the headquarters of the CED. That in itself was a rewardingly postmodern experience. The architectural juxtaposition between a disused shopping mall from the final years of the Communist state and CED's offices in a beautiful, Habsburg-era theatre building on Zelný trh Square bordered on the surreal. Indeed the visit to the gorgeous building that houses CED HQ and two of its three production companies (Divadlo Husa na Provázku and Terén) was a highlight of the trip to Brno.

Which is not to overlook the strengths of *Silent Tarzan*, a biographical play, of sorts, by Divadlo Husa na Provázku (Goose on a String). Written by Simona Petrů and Petr Jan Kryštof, the piece seeks to capture something of the life and work of the famous (or infamous) photographer Miroslav Tichý. The subject of the drama was a reclusive figure who lived in the Czech town of Kyjov, where he constructed rudimentary cameras out of objects he had to hand, such cardboard tubes and tin cans (see fig. 1). His artistic output — which is characterised by a roughness inherent in the makeshift nature of his cameras — is dominated by pictures of women, most of which he took surreptitiously. Tichý is viewed, variously, as a neglected artistic genius or an odious pervert (the truth, inevitably, lies somewhere in-between).

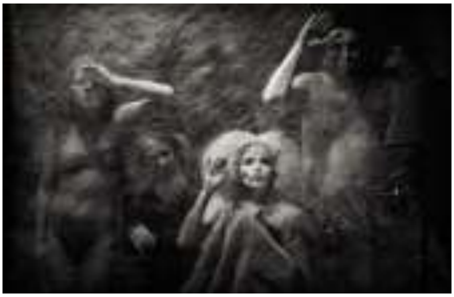

Fig. 1 *Silent Tarzan*

Petrů and Kryštof's play seems to be interested, first-and-foremost, in evoking something of the atmosphere in and around Tichý's home. The photographer was considered suspect, not only by the authorities of the Czechoslovakian Communist state, but by many (if not most) of the people in his hometown. Some of the young women he photographed noticed him shooting them and struck poses for him (perhaps in the belief that he was a madman playing with toy cameras he had made out of garbage). Director Anna Petrželková has created a production that succeeds in creating an atmosphere that straddles the seediness that many people have ascribed to Tichý and a more romanticised (perhaps self-romanticised) sense of his life. Impressionistic (not least in a bleak visual aesthetic that is redolent of Tichý's pictures), rather than profound, it is, nevertheless, an interesting window onto the world of one of the strangest figures in modern Czech culture.

Finally, in the Brno leg of the showcase, was a production by the HaDivadlo company (which has its own theatre building — a remarkable former cinema in the Alfa Palace building) which, alongside Divadlo Husa na Provázku and Terén, makes up the trio of CED's constituent companies. Titled *Perception*, the piece explores the idea of non-growth (an important eco-economic concept) in relation to the character of an actor who decides to remain at home being "unproductive". A friend and fellow actor comes to visit him, concerned about his emotional and mental wellbeing, only to find him lucid and perfectly capable of articulating and defending his choice.

Inspired by Jean-Philipp Toussaint's novel *The Bathroom*, and drawing upon other inspirational texts, the play is — by the company's own assertion — "a staged introspective essay". As such, it seems like the opposite of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, of which the great English theatre critic Kenneth Tynan wrote: "It arrives at the custom-house, as it were, with no luggage, no passport and nothing to declare: yet it gets through as might a pilgrim from Mars". *Perception*, by contrast, doesn't convince one of its enigmatic brilliance (indeed, it isn't entirely clear that it wants to do so). That said, there is something brave and interesting in the piece's carefully constructed ruminations.

The remaining three days of the showcase were spent in Prague, including a production of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* at the National Theatre (see fig. 2). At this juncture, it is worth considering, briefly, the totemic nature of the Czech National Theatre. Created in the second half of the 19th century, the construction of the building — which is almost as glorious in its interior as in its ornate and imposing façade — was (and still is) considered an important statement of the Czech National Revival. The building would also become a location of the assertion of the centrality of the Czech language to the national identity of the Czech people. In discussion with leading figures in the Czech theatre today, it is clear that a certain ambivalence towards the institution has developed among artists in live drama. Whilst the beauty of the building is beyond question, there is concern that many audience members attend productions at the National primarily to be inside the playhouse, rather than to engage with the work on stage (much as atheists and agnostics might visit a great place of worship for reasons that are rooted in architectural and/or historical interests, as opposed to faith).

Having been part of audiences in the National Theatre — the auditorium of which is unquestionably stunning — I have to confess to a certain sympathy with the ambivalence expressed by some Czech theatre artists.

In addition to its grandeur, the auditorium has a certain cavernous quality. Unlike some great playhouses, which manage, paradoxically, to be large, yet intimate, the Czech National Theatre feels like a place where actors really have to work to generate atmosphere.

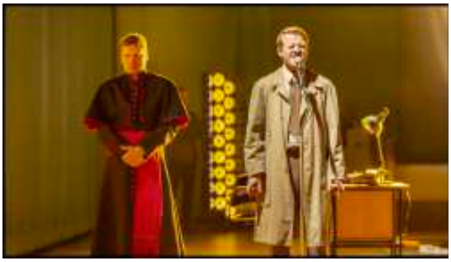

Fig. 2 *Oedipus Rex*

That certainly seemed to be the case with the staging of *Oedipus Rex*. Performed in modern dress and presented as a kind of detective thriller, director Jan Frič's production is a solid, but rarely exciting, rendering of the Ancient Greek classic. Indeed, the most interesting aspect of the piece is its casting of Oedipus (who has famously, and unwittingly, killed his father and married his mother) as a senior Catholic clergyman. Following our viewing of the production, interesting conversations were held with, among others, Czech and Polish colleagues about Frič's somewhat satirical commentary on the Roman Catholic Church. In the end, it was generally agreed that this interpretation caused no real controversy in the Czech Republic due to the prevalence of secularism within the national culture. Equally, Polish colleagues agreed that to present Oedipus as the Pope or a Catholic bishop in Poland today would be to invite the wrath of the powerful Catholic Church and its associated politicians.

Also at the National Theatre was *Marysha*, a staging of one of the best known naturalistic plays in the Czech national canon (see fig. 3). Directed by Jan Mikulášek, the play — an 1894 drama by brothers Vilém Mrštík and Alois Mrštík — is based upon a true story. It tells the tale of the young woman of the title who is married against her will to an older man, thereby sending her desolate young lover, Francek, to war. The oppressive contract in which

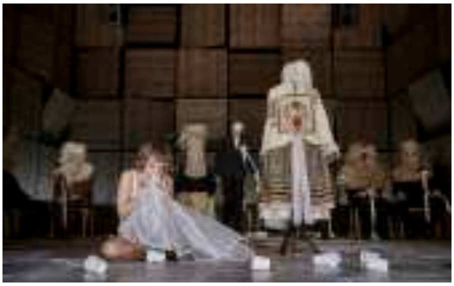

Fig. 3 *Marysha*

Marysha finds herself is the logical corollary of an all-encompassing material and moral corruption within her rural community.

Mikulášek's staging is strong in both its sense of dramatic rhythm and its acting (including a powerful and virtuosic performance in the title role by Pavla Beretová). Both of these elements belong in the realm of Edward Albee-style hyper-realism, rather than the promised naturalism. The distinct theatricality of the production is underlined by its juxtaposition of minimalist set design, modern dress and comic-grotesque rural imagery.

Marysha was rejected by the National Theatre on numerous occasions over the years, due to its disreputable subject matter. However, it forced its way into the repertoire due to its increasing prominence within Czech popular culture (including a film by Josef Rovenský in 1935). This production is the National Theatre's 11th. It is a fascinating play to have become established as a popular classic. It is, perhaps, testament to a scepticism of national self-romanticisation that so many Czechs are drawn towards a tale of a traditional, rural community that is so mired in corruption and violence. The play's success, despite moral objections, is reminiscent of the path to prominence taken by Henrik Ibsen's 1879 classic of *A Doll's House.*

Indeed, the guests of the HI PerformanCZ were reminded of the continued international profile of Ibsen's great play when they were invited to see a performance of *Nora (A Doll's House)* — an adaptation of the Norwegian bard's famous drama — at the Pod Palmovkou Theatre in Prague (see fig. 4). The production is set on a bare, seemingly wooden-floored stage, with a bean bag and an ugly, transparent tower filled with high-heeled shoes and liquor (as might have been owned by Imelda Marcos). It is costumed as if for the 1970s.

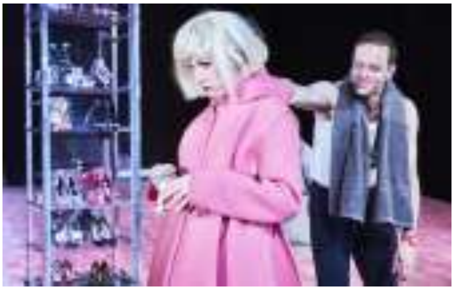

Fig. 4 *Nora (A Doll's House).*

Directed by Jan Nebeský, the piece combines a largely faithful interpretation of the text with cabaret and a melodramatic, often histrionic, performance style. Acclaimed Czech actor Tereza Dočkalová plays the role of Nora Helmer — the blonde-wigged Barbie doll of her financially successful husband, Torvald — with a remarkable, desperate energy that won her the Czech theatre Thálie Prize for Best Performance. It is, perhaps, more surprising that

Nebeský won the 2016/2017 prize from the Divadelní Noviny online theatre newspaper. Not only does the cartoonish grotesquerie (which sometimes borders on commedia dell'arte) of the production grate against the nuances of the play, but the decision to ultimately leave Nora in an emotional limbo, unable to stay with Torvald or to leave him, is nothing short of disastrous.

Much has been written in the almost century-and-a-half since *A Doll's House* premiered in Copenhagen about the immense impact of Nora slamming the door as she leaves her husband and children, and of the sound of that slamming door reverberating around Europe. It would be naïve to believe that so many gains have been made in the cause of women's liberation that this final scene has now lost its significance. Whatever director Nebeský's reasoning, his placing Nora in a position of eternal indecisiveness robs the character of her agency and the drama of its great, resonating power.

The final production in the showcase was *The Woodcutters*, a stage adaptation of Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard's 1984 novel, at the charming Divadlo Na zábradlí theatre, in central Prague, close to the great Vlatva River (see fig. 5). Before entering the auditorium to watch the play, we were shown the small booth in which the young Václav Havel worked as a theatre technician — to this day the little compartment is dedicated to the great dissident writer, president of post-Communist Czechoslovakia and, subsequently, first president of the newly established Czech Republic.

Directed by Jan Mikulášek (who is also director of the production of *Marysha* at the National Theatre), this staging of *The Woodcutters* is characterised by a tremendous attention to detail, all the better for the drama to collapse into satirical chaos. In the play a party of detestable, pretentious, pseudo-intellectual, bourgeois "art lovers" await the mutually validating arrival of a big name actor from the National Theatre. When he finally arrives — much more than fashionably late — enough alcohol has been consumed, and enough frustration amassed, that all bourgeois niceties are poised to explode, creating a tableau of general degeneracy that is reminiscent of Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Harold Pinter's *No Man's Land* (both

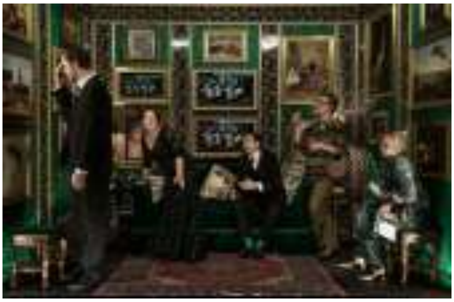

Fig. 5 *The Woodcutters*

plays in which, like *The Woodcutters*, alcohol is a character in its own right) Although this challenging ensemble piece is universally well-acted, the star of the show is Marek Cpin's extraordinary set. Claustrophobically cramped, almost garishly opulent and head-spinning in the sheer number of paintings on the walls, the stage design — which becomes remarkably versatile and utilitarian towards the end of the play — is a wonder to behold. Ingeniously the paintings depicted in a number of the picture frames change from time-to-time. For an extended moment, we are amused to see that the most prominent picture on the walls is, not a copy of Pieter Brueghel the Younger's *The Wood Cutters*, but, rather, his image of Bacchanalian excess *The Outdoor Wedding Dance*. Not for one moment, of course, do the assembled literati at the fast-degenerating party realise that they, collectively, are the very image of the younger Brueghel's drunken Flemish peasants.

A beautifully executed, fabulously designed and tightly acted production of a modern European classic was as good a way as any to end what was a very interesting, diverse and superbly organised showcase — for which particular thanks and gratitude are due to Martina Pecková Černá (the inestimable Head of the International Cooperation Department of the Arts and Theatre Institute) and her wonderfully organised and ever-helpful colleague at the Department, Radka Lím Labendz (who looked after the group of international theatre professionals — a job akin to herding cats — with tremendous grace). As with previous HI PerformanCZ programmes, the January 2022 showcase left its international guests in no doubt as to the continued rude health of the Czech theatre sector.

Sorin Dan Boldea*

The Actor-Author: its Presence and Absence in the Romanian Theatre

Abstract

This article tackles a debate in Romanian theatre about the term actor-author. While some theatre-makers and scholars use this concept, there is not enough research in the field to articulate a praxis discourse. The following article aims to contribute to the definition of actor-author and provide a brief history of the type of work practitioners employ when identifying as an actor-author. By conducting interviews and leading discussions with actors, the role of the actor-author within creative groups and the techniques and positions when working on an artistic project are brought into question. Furthermore, the present study is also concerned with the tools used by actor-authors to create performances while examining whether particular methodologies set this type of artist apart from other creators in the field. In conclusion, this research aims to bring some light on the definition of actor-author and clarify the positions of this type of practitioner in the Romanian theatre context.

Keywords: theatre; performance; actor-author; authorship; dramaturgy; actor-director relationship

This research is concerned with understanding a new term encountered in the theatre world, especially in European theatre, namely actor-author. There are discussions about this new type of theatre-makers and its duality, however, there is little research aiming to explain what it means to be an actor-author and the duties of such an artist.

The following work is based on small-scale qualitative research conducted to enquire into the use of the term actor-author by practitioners in the Romanian theatre context. Structured interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires were used on a total of thirty randomly selected artists between twenty and thirty-five years old. Researchers chose questionnaires and interviews with open and closed questions to obtain an in-depth perspective on the personal insights of the interviewees. Using a narrative interpretation, researchers provide testimonies and narrative analysis. While using a traditional approach and literature review, there is also a practice-as-research component as this study was conducted by a researcher who identifies

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as a writer, actor, and actor-author - roles that support the theme of this study and its genuine motivation. For more significant comprehension of the phenomenon and to assess the implications of using the term actor-author, a specific quantification was used; more precisely, all the information has been interpreted for a better understanding, which will be covered in depth throughout the article.

Before defining actor-author, a look into the meaning of playwright, or dramatist, is necessary. Some suggest that there is no clear distinction between the term 'dramaturg(e)' and 'dramatist'. The *OED* defines 'dramaturge' as a "composer of a drama; a play-wright", defining dramaturgy as "dramatic composition; the dramatic art" (n. 1), or alternatively, as "dramatic or theatrical acting" (n. 2). *The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre* is clearer, discussing the work of a dramaturg as a "literary editor", predominantly working for a permanent theatre company, whose primary responsibility is to select plays for production, work with authors, revise and adapt texts, and write reviews or notes. For example, the National Theatre in London appointed Kenneth Tynan, a British critic and playwright, to such a position in 1963, giving him the title "Literary Administrator". However, the Romanian dictionary defines dramaturg (playwriter) as an "author of plays". Patrice Pavis, professor of drama at Kent University, defines playwright as an "author of dramas" (2012, 120), pointing out that the preferred denotation today for a playwright is the dramatic author.

Two authors laid the foundation for today's concept of drama: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Bertolt Brecht. Since Lessing, German theatre has focused on dramaturgy, playwrighting, and the strategic positions, or rather the different functions of the playwright in theatre. Two of the most prominent German playwrights of the twentieth century, Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller, partly identified themselves with the term playwright. In Germany's major theatres, the playwright reads and writes new plays, takes an advisory role in repertory selection and ruminates about the social goals of the theatre, though not exclusively. This is what John Rouse (1989) called the "Literary Conscience" of theatre. In the Brechtian model, playwrights have a primary responsibility as researcher and philologist. Their role includes devising, researching, and contextualising the text; they are also responsible for translating, rewriting, or restructuring texts. Since ancient times the playwright has often been part of a large creative team, including the director, the set designer, the choreographer and the actors, beside being the driving force behind the artistic act. A landmark in theatre history is Lessing's appointment as a playwright at the Hamburg Theatre in 1767; he was effectively the world's first dramaturg. Although he served as playwright in Hamburg for only two years, from 1767 to 1769, his experimental work inspired generations and brought immediate reform in Germany and later in Eastern Europe. Lessing's dramatic works include *Miss Sara Sampson*, a drama of bourgeois family life, and *Nathan the Wise*, a philosophical drama "with express atheistic tendencies, . . . a denial of the dogmatism of all religions, a plea for humanity, tolerance, and generosity" (Drîmba 2007, 128). This reform, this shift in the theatrical paradigm, did not immediately take hold in European spaces. Still, it did spread afterwards in the late nineteenth century, primarily through playwrights such as Harley Granville Barker and William Archer. Thus the twentieth century saw the first official appointments of literary managers or playwrights at theatres in England (Lessing 1935).

Iulia Popovici suggests that today's playwrights no longer look like the classical playwright, due to the fact that modern playwrights collaborate as active members of the creative team. Offering the perspective that modern playwrights directly shape the trajectory of the artistic product, Popovici explains that "playwriting is no longer seen as necessarily a literary activity, but also a kinaesthetic, scenographic and musical one". She continues that "in the 21st century, the performance script is increasingly an unstable entity, a deliberately open-ended structure, tangential to the audience's reaction, and not a blueprint for performance" (2015, 26). Most of the time, several working methods that have appeared relatively recently, in addition to those already popularised, are being addressed, such as devised theatre, known in Romanian as 'collective creation' and as 'collaborative practices'. All these working methods are based on the desire to question the existing hierarchies of power in theatre, and most artists in the 1960s and 1970s resorted to alternative auctorial forms. Alison Oddey observes that "devised theatre is concerned with the collective creation of art (not the single version of the playwright) and it is here that the emphasis has shifted from the writer to the creative artist" (1994, 4).

In her analysis of the foundations of the modern drama, Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu affirmed that:

> after the wave and the vogue of happenings and collective creation, of document-theatre, of narrative theatre, which populated the landscape of the 70s, textless theatre, pure performance, seduced several directors. Dramatic writing was being overshadowed by stage writing. Interest in theatre text was challenged by modernity, which was essentially absorbed in a cult of the image. The artisans of this desacralisation, of this devaluation of the play, picked up, provocatively, Antoine Vitez's formula: 'I believe one can make theatre out of anything.' Epigones understood his act of faith as the need to adjust the text to fit the show's pattern. Therefore, the text is functional in the show, but it no longer directs it; it no longer informs it. The stage is no longer serving the text, but instead, the text adapts to the theatre devices. (1995, 13)

Therefore, we can perceive a distancing of artists from the old theatrical forms and a new approach to the creative process.

Devised theatre can be defined as "a countercultural practice practised by iconoclastic practitioners acting against traditional forms and theatrical conventions" (Mermikides and Smart 2010, 4). As mentioned, this type of practice pursues the notion of displacing authority in theatre, but not exclusively. Here, playwrights are no longer in their classical position as the creator of text; playwrights become general authors, equal to the other team members. Playwrights are no longer playwrights - they are creators among other creators. Most of the time, they take on the tasks of the set designer, choreographer, or director, fluidly moving between the three roles; in devised theatre, nothing is set in stone.

Furthermore, Michael Zelenak, in one of his articles, "Why We Don't Need Directors: A Dramaturgical/Historical Manifesto" (2003, 105), underlines the importance of collective dramaturgy and explains the necessity of creating theatre with artists who play multiple roles, referring to the fluidity of roles in contemporary theatre and elaborating a new description of the contemporary actor, which he defines as an artist who performs the duties of actor, playwright and dramaturg altogether. Thus, discussions around the complexity and necessity of the actor-author in different cultural spaces, observe the term's definition as an artist who covers more than the duty of an actor in modern theatre.

New categories of playwrights have emerged - such as the actor-author, the director-author, or the choreographer-author - from these observed changes in their duties, ways of working, and perspectives of thinking and making theatre. An actor often constructs the text within a team and contributes direct ideas, concepts, or new images. This type of actor-author usually works from the actor's perspective who constructs the text to benefit the author in the artistic act. The director-author is also a widespread practice in European countries, one that has been flourishing since the 1920s and 1930s. In Romania, it arrived much later.

An excellent example of this is Gianina Cărbunariu:

> The reason why Gianina Cărbunariu says that she chose to write the script for her plays is due to two factors. On the one hand, the extremely precarious budget of the production, and on the other hand, much more importantly, the feeling of urgency that she and her colleagues felt to talk about the here and now. . . (Popovici 2015, 60)

Creation becomes collective and playwrights are integrated and absorbed into the heart of it; the actors, the set designers, the choreographers, and the directors are their equals. The position of the playwrights and their way of working has changed. Playwrights have become the children of the theatre and were nurtured and cared for by the vast family of the universal theatre.

In this approach, actors are no longer mere actors in performance and begin playing a very significant role in the process. Their contribution is reflected in the dramatic material that they provide throughout rehearsals.

As discussed above, creative thought - the thought that makes you want to tell a story - is essential, first and foremost, when devising a dramatic text. According to George Banu, when you write, "you write not just from yourself, but from your ego fertilized in the powers of the stage" (2007, 10). First, you have to give the stage something, and it will provide you with everything in return; it is important to believe in a close, reciprocal reality between the stage (the workspace) and the playwright (the artist). Secondly, the structure you choose - the plot, the type of ending, the character typologies, the changes is important in your work as a playwright. Most of the time these days, this process doesn't happen at home, at the playwright's table. Instead, we can observe different working practices based on a collective script, both in the more expansive European space and in Romania, in which the playwright is absent.

In contrast, others have an omnipresent playwright active in the team; good examples include Milo Rau's *La Reprise – History/ies of Theatre (I)*[1] or Cristian Ban's performance *MaMe.*[2] Both performances were collectively created, except that in the first case, we have a text written by the director and the rest of the team. Hence, the director is also a writer, and in the second example, the director is just a coordinator.

Both examples include dramaturgical thinking (Romanska 2014), which can be done by anyone, not only by the playwright but also by a team of actors; together, they can fulfill the function of the playwright. Jean-Marc Adolphe refers to dramaturgical thinking as something that can be facilitated in different ways and by different collaborators. However, in his writing, he avoids discussing the playwright as having a specialised role. Instead, Adolphe considers dramaturgical thinking as necessary in collective productions, describing it as a shared dramaturgy that belongs to the creative group (1998, 27). The texts written jointly by troupes of actors who currently practice *Commedia dell'Arte*[3] skillfully exhibit this today; the actors also create their characters according to the chosen theme and subject of the performance.

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[1] *La Reprise – History/ies of Theatre (I)*, Théâtre National Wallonie - Bruxelles, Milo Rau. Cast: Kristien de Proost, Suzy Cocco, Sébastien Foucault, Fabian Leenders, Sabri Saad El hamus, Adil Laboudi; first performance: 2018.

[2] *MaMe*, Dramatic Theatre Fani Tardini- Galați, Cristian Ban. Cast: Svetlana Friptu, Radu Horghidan, Ana Maria Ciucanu, Ionuț Moldoveanu, Elena Anghel, Ștefan Forir, Oana Mogoș, Răzvan Clopoțel; first performance: 2020.

[3] In the Romanian theatre faculties, most of the acting students practice *Commedia dell'Arte* during their studies, and they acquire the ability to write a dramatic text and enhance their dramaturgical thinking.

In the case of actors who use this kind of dramaturgical thinking, the text is often based on a common goal set by the troupe. Texts are created through different forms and procedures, such as brainstorming or self-dictation. They are then collected and collated by the troupe members to finally construct a unified text.

In the case of playwrights who work on stage directly with the actors, they become observers and often draw inspiration from the world of each actor. Playwrights often understand the text's main idea from the first meeting. However, even though they know the direction and aim of the text, they do not know its development. Successful playwrights are open playwrights, open to changes and proposals. They do not write the text alone, but together with the common body of the team; playwrights gather texts, then coordinate and arrange them by choosing the structure.

So, whatever the process of devising a dramatic text - whether it is coordinated and thought out by a single person, the playwright, or a team of actors (artists) - the essential element of this process is dramaturgical thinking. Moreover, we should not forget that "the dramatic text is represented as a hypothesis whose addressee is not the reader but the spectator" (2013, 111). Theatre is action, it is change and reaction.

Observing these recent changes that have taken place, including the way theatre is made today, the fluidisation of roles in theatre is brought to the foreground. As a result, we can discuss a new evolutionary cycle in the universal, especially European, theatre while breaking boundaries that concern the position of artists in the working team.

In the words of the authors Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, "dramaturgical thinking and practice are developing very quickly, overtaking research and publication" (2008, 14). We can therefore notice the interest of practitioners towards dramaturgy and towards this sort of thinking. It is evident that more and more actors started to develop this dramaturgical thinking style in European theatre schools and started to write dramatic texts, which they then performed or staged with other actors. It is likely that many actors also write, but the question that arises when they publish or perform their texts is: from what perspective do they do it?

More and more actors began to write and perform their dramatic texts, especially at the end of the last millennium, a good example being Spalding Gray (1941-2004), an American actor known for the autobiographical monologues he wrote and performed between 1980 and 1990. Also, here we can talk about actors in the Hollywood sphere who started this practice, such as Chazz Palminteri (b. 1952), who wrote and starred in his autobiographical one-man show called *A Bronx Tale*[4] on Broadway or many more.

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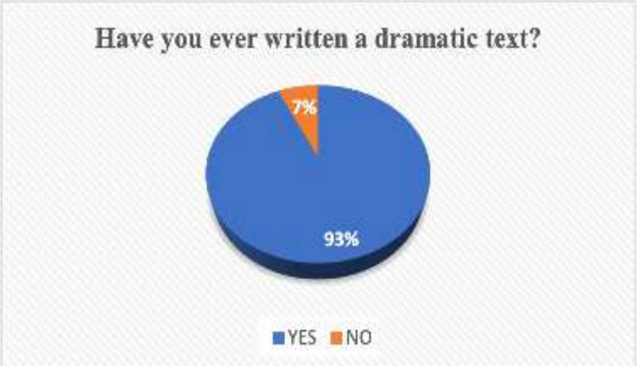
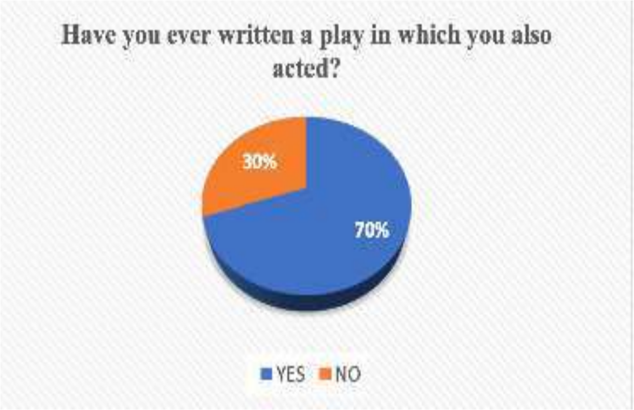
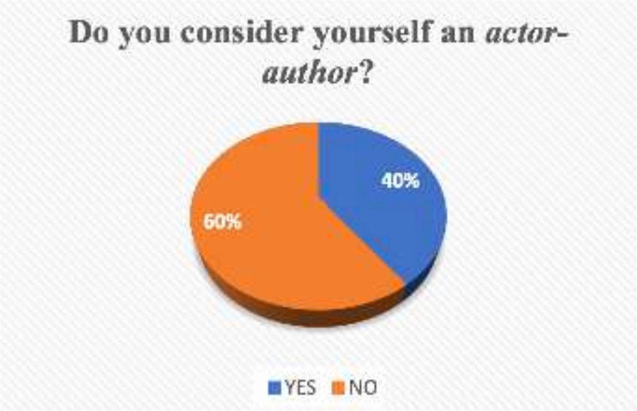
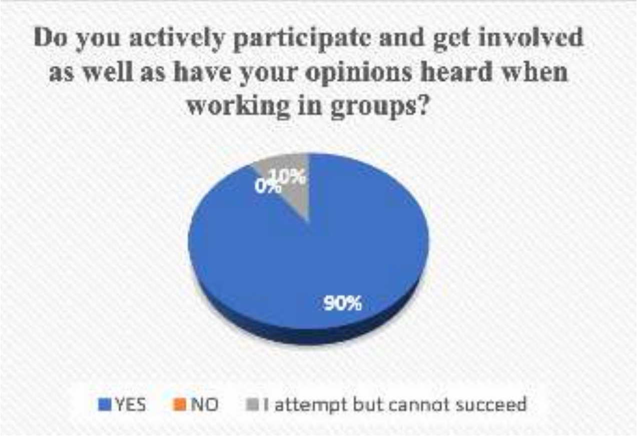
[4] Broadway production, co-directed by Robert De Niro, premiered in 2016.

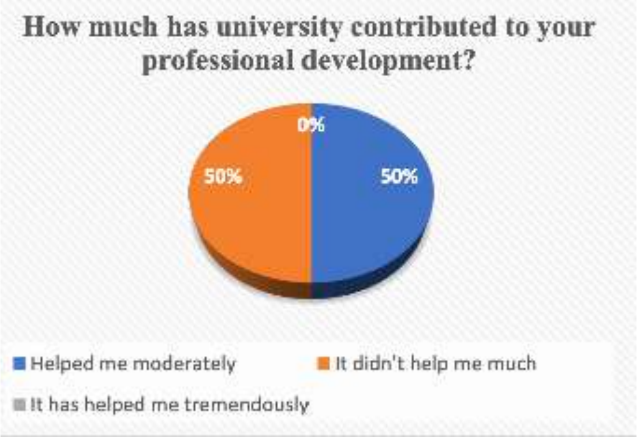
For a better comprehension of this phenomenon, we can focus further on the questionnaires and interviews conducted to better understand the practitioners' perspective. We can observe their responses to a few of the queries we addressed in the following graphics.

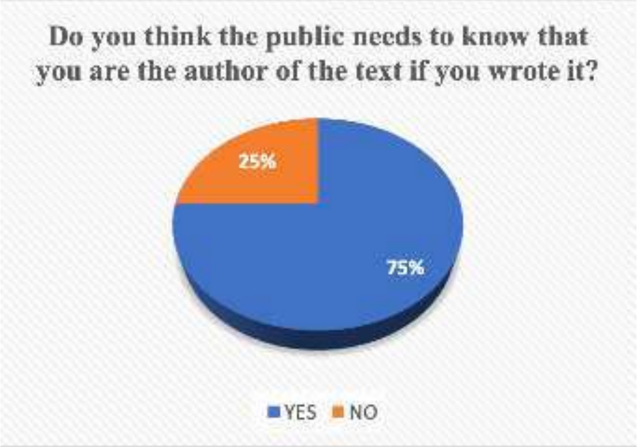


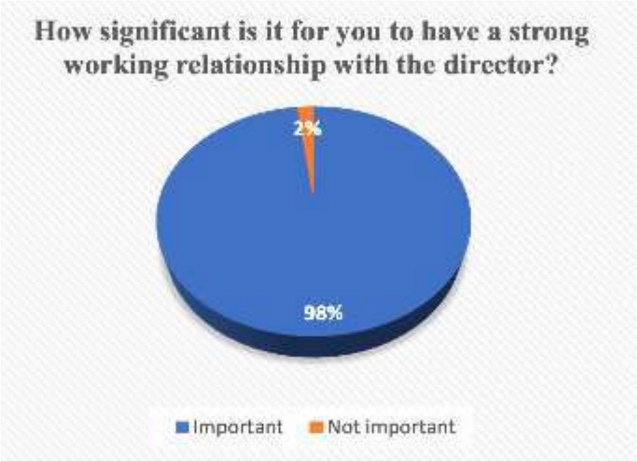


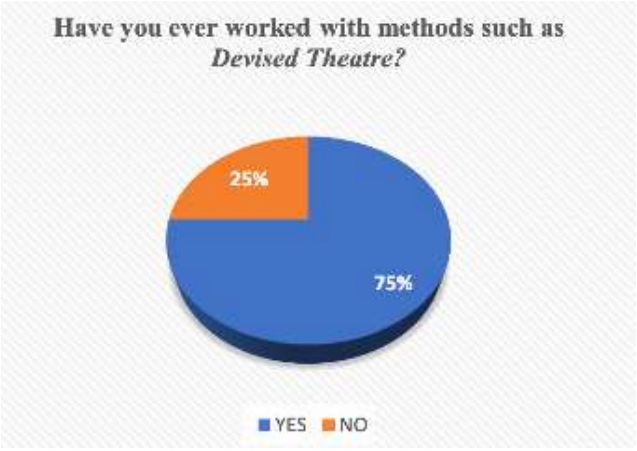

Do you consider yourself an *actor-author*?
40%
60%
YES
NO


Do you actively participate and get involved as well as have your opinions heard when working in groups?
0%
10%
90%
YES
NO
I attempt but cannot succeed


How much has university contributed to your professional development?
0%
50%
50%
Helped me moderately
It didn't help me much
It has helped me tremendously


Do you think the public needs to know that you are the author of the text if you wrote it?
25%
75%
YES
NO


How significant is it for you to have a strong working relationship with the director?
2%
98%
Important
Not important


Have you ever worked with methods such as *Devised Theatre?*
25%
75%
YES
NO

It is important to note that most of the interviewed artists write dramatic texts and some of them also act in the texts they write. The statistics show that a high proportion of the subjects - even if they do not consider themselves actor-authors or do not resonate with this term - feel the need to acknowledge that they have authored the dramatic text whether they do so in a collaborative or non-collaborative project.

Although *Commedia dell'Arte* is practiced in Romanian drama schools, dramatisation is studied in acting classes and students are encouraged to learn what dramaturgical thinking consists of, but half of them said that the university did not significantly help them grow and develop their artistic careers. Nevertheless, it can be remarked that most of them have worked at least once with a devised theatre or a collaborative practices method, which tells us more about the relevance of teamwork and the importance of overcoming boundaries of authority and dominance in theatre.

For most of them, the presence of the director is essential. As Mihailovici Nikolai Gorceakov stated, "the director is first and foremost an organiser. Organiser of one's thoughts, dreams, organiser of one's fellow troupe members". (2016, 137). Most of them said that the actor-director relationship is necessary for this kind of work, even if the actor is also the author of the play. One of the participants stated: "Most of the time, the cooperation with the director also exists during the writing process of the text and when working on stage, as I often act in my texts. Whenever possible, I like the texts I write to be performed in accordance with what I have intended, and for that, I need endless discussions with the director and the other actors".

Furthermore, the participants were asked in their own words to define the actor-author term; below are a few selections from their responses:

- The person who reaches the point of performing their writing, or an actor who reaches the point of writing for others.
- Someone who has the ability to organise their ideas in writing with the purpose of putting them on stage.
- An individual who works as an actor but also writes dramatic texts. The two do not necessarily have to intersect.
- An artist who is able to act in the performance they write. I think it is a much more personal experience since you're also writing the text, and you're also an actor - an even more self-contained process as a creator.
- An actor who proposes, an actor who knows how to coherently express himself and sees everything from a dramaturgical and directorial perspective. An actor who doesn't limit himself to acting.
- It depends on how you look at the term. Acting helps me a lot in the writing process. Most of the time, I write texts from the perspective of the actor who uses dramatic thinking and wants to write texts for himself as an actor or for other actors. Besides, I have noticed that

> those who have graduated in Directing for theatre understand the meaning of structure well in writing a text, and those who have studied acting stand out with the thread of dialogue and complexity of characters. The actor-author term is not a term I necessarily identify with anymore, but that may be because I abandoned the idea of being an actress because of the pandemic. I used to be flattered by my double specialisation; now, I present myself as a dramaturg only.

It can be noticed that actor-authors, or actors who write dramatic texts, differentiate their practice and methodology. They often write from an actor's perspective and needs, starting by analysing what an actor would need on stage. Throughout the interviews I conducted, it became clear they want to write their own texts as dramaturgs, and they want these texts to come from their experiences so that they can be reenacted on stage from the actor's perspective. Therefore, dramatic thinking, the need to write a dramatic text, and the actor's position fuse together to create a middle ground. On the one hand, we can say that actor-authors desire truly personal texts that speak to them first and foremost. On the other hand, actor-authors have the freedom to give themselves stage actions to create dramatic situations favorable to the play they propose for the text they write.

Hence, most actor-authors, whether they identify with this term or not, have a common practice: they approach their texts from the actor's perspective who wants to perform their dramaturgy, and they rely heavily on the realities and dynamics of the group in which they work or create. Most of them are not just actors who write; they are artists whose status is faded when they enter the creative group, and they work side by side with the rest of the team, committed to a common goal. Even if they have been writing text and performing, they are open to collaborating in any way in the artistic creation. However, a majority of these artists have used new working methods such as *devised theatre*, but not exclusively as we have previously observed, and have a predisposition towards working collaboratively, on stage, or in creative groups; devised theatre is "the theatre of the *actor-creator*", as Lisa Kathleen Jackson emphasises (2006, 15).

Therefore, we can define the actor-author through the prism of their duality and their working methodology. This type of artist encompasses dramaturgical thinking, combining dramaturgical and theatrical roles.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is a change in how actors think, and there is a fusion of the roles they have in Romanian theatre. In the Romanian theatrical practice, we observe these particular artists, th*e* actor-authors, who work according to their methodology and are active in the creative group. Although these artists do not often consider themselves actor-authors or actor-dramaturgs, they fulfill the functions of both positions most of the time — if not always. We can see the importance of dramaturgical thinking, which is put into practice by the actor-authors. It is considered important that all practitioners embrace the art of dramaturgical thinking and understand its benefits from a multilateral perspective, and practice using new tools to thoroughly explore their art. Even if this is promoted in Romanian schools, most of the graduates are not completely satisfied with the methods they use in their classes and point out that more attention needs to be paid to dramaturgical thinking. To help artists prepare for the reality of today's theatres, this type of learning needs to be embraced from school to training.

The study is worth extending further, and we intend to do so by following the principles of quantitative research design, such as using tables, charts, graphs and other non-numerical forms, thus facilitating the understanding of the data that has been collected. All this for a better understanding of the perspective of the subjects and to conduct a more in-depth investigation of the topic.

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