Translating the Tragic:
Mimetic Transformation of Attic Tragedies on the Contemporary Stage

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Declaration

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Summary

The present study seeks to answer a fundamental series of questions related to the act of translation immanent to theatrical productions in general: which factors bring the real action into being during a performance? How feasible is it to regard (translated) textual materials as yardsticks while trying to make sense of the modern-day performances of Ancient Greek tragedies? What can be the “source” in a given translational act that is concerned with the translation of the concept of the “tragic” into the dynamics of the target culture? Is it still possible to talk of the so-called source text/s, when what is at stake is the actual translation of an ontological human condition? What kind of communication takes place between spectators and actors in contemporary performances of Attic tragedies?

Behind the articulation of these questions lies a hypothesis that deems translation as a form of actual production that comes into existence by way of actors’ (physical and verbal) mimetic interaction with the source dramaturgy, thereby echoing the director’s individual staging approach to the plays at hand. In other words, insofar as the survival of Ancient Greek tragedies on the contemporary stage is on the table, regarding translation as a mode of textual production falls short of doing justice to the actual mimetic transformation of the human suffering that is crucial to the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Within this context, such notions as mimesis, tragedy, the idea of the “tragic,” (source/target) dramaturgy, directing, and acting, not to mention physicality, come to the fore as decisive concepts while approaching the present-day performances of Attic tragedies in a translational framework. For mimesis can plausibly be taken up here as the key to considering the physicality of the performatory space of theatre in terms of translation—a corporeal realm which the majority of translation scholars refrain from probing into, even when they advocate the idea of embracing performance as translation and translation as performance. The current investigation delves into this terrain by taking the works of Theodoros Terzopoulos, Şahika Tekand and Tadashi Suzuki on Attic tragedy as case studies.

Comprised of three interrelated parts, the dissertation itself endeavours to construct a methodology in the first two chapters before incorporating it into the last ones that are dedicated to the theatrical praxes of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki. The adopted method of inquiry is simple: each chapter commences from the point where its individual subject(s) and problematics arise from. For that reason, after diagnosing the issues of the literature produced within the spheres of Translation Studies, Classics, and Theatre and Performance Studies vis-à-vis the reception of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage in the introduction, the first
chapter gets down to the nuts and bolts of mimesis by honing in on its archaic overtones and proceeds with the writings of Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle, where the mimetic terminology evolved into (re)presentation, (re)creation, world-making, imitation, and so on. Consecutively concentrating on mimesis qua imitation, mimesis qua mimesis, mimesis qua translation / translation qua mimesis, the chapter constitutes the basis for a discussion of the *modi operandi* of Denis Diderot and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing with an eye to their echoes in the *oeuvre* of Samuel Beckett in the twentieth century.

The second chapter dwells upon the idea of the “tragic” by zeroing in on the fragments of Heraclitus alongside Plato and Aristotle. Throughout, special emphasis is placed on the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry together with the sociological dynamics surrounding Ancient Greek tragedies and Roman tragedy. This, in turn, lays the groundwork for a confrontation with the German Post-Idealist transformation of the idea into a philosophical category. The fact that mimesis is a recurring thematic variant running almost parallel to the reception of (Attic) tragedy and *the* tragic allows for an expansion of the previous chapter’s meditations on the notion into this part, where translational journey of the “tragic” is monitored from antiquity to Beckett.

The remainder of the foray is allocated to the staging practices of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki. The remaining chapters begin by offering an account of the socio-cultural climes in which the Attis Theatre, Studio Players and Suzuki Company of Toga respectively emerged, and progress with thorough explorations of the particular acting methods of the directors. Thus, the Biodynamic Method of Terzopoulos, the Performative Staging and Acting Method of Tekand, and the Suzuki Method are canvassed in detail to divulge the manners in which the archaic and ancient conceptions of mimesis can shed notional light on the underlying aesthetics of the directors’ translation of Ancient Greek tragedies into the dynamics of the contemporary stage. To be able to lend an ear to the practical resonances of the theoretical points raised over the course of the inquiry, every chapter in this final section sequentially terminates with the analyses of Terzopoulos’ reworking(s) of Aeschylus’ *Persians* (2006) and *Prometheus Bound* (2010), Tekand’s reworking of Sophocles’ Theban plays as *Oedipus Trilogy* (2002/2004/2006), as well as with Suzuki’s reworking(s) of Euripides’ *Bacchae as Dionysus* (1998) and his *Elektra* (2010). These examinations, in return, pave the way for a conclusion whereby to recapitulate the findings of the dissertation.
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To my parents
Introduction

The Lie of the Land

Perhaps the most captivating characteristic of the art of theatre lies in its power to concretise each and every imaginary world on stage, albeit for a brief span of time. More than being solely the craft of make-believe, theatre suggests itself as one of the most efficient ways of world-making in the physicality of the here and now. Deriving that power first and foremost from its transformative nature, theatre can mesmerise and vitalise at once; it can simultaneously pacify and provoke a given community. This fact alone explains why during the course of history several plays at different times have been translated, promoted, performed, revived, and subsidised, or trimmed, censored, bowdlerised, banned, and burned. This fact alone, moreover, explains how such a distinguished form of art as theatre can so easily be the plaything of political entrepreneurs. This fact alone, furthermore, explains how the performative space of theatre is still one of the last remaining resorts in which other worlds can come to flourish in the digitalised, capitalised, globalised, (de)politicised, (de)stabilised, marginalised, terrorised, brutalised, and at the same time even more rationalised dynamics of the twenty-first century.

The tangibility of this space pleads for attention here, since it takes one straight to the heart of the foundational feature/s that differentiate theatre from other arts. As a unique art form whose practice can by no means do without an audience, theatre comes into being in the corporeality of the present. Its occasions may vary from one culture to another, depending (or not depending) on the theatrical practices established (or not established). Yet, it remains crystal clear that the art of theatre, in essence, is nothing but a transformative physical action that is of mimetic nature taking place in the concreteness of the theatrical space between spectators and performers. It is transformative on the part of the actor, because in any case it involves a transformation into a stage figure; it is transformative on behalf of the audience, because at any rate spectators’ encounter with the theatrical event brings about an emotional change, either from boredom into enthusiasm, or from engagement with to indifference towards the production. The inevitable transformation is undergone by both parties. A situation where there is an absence of such transformative experience immanent to theatrical occurrences simply does not exist. This holds true all the more for the performances of one of the most distinctive forms of theatre: tragedy, or to be more precise, Attic tragedy, in which the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides present the audience with such a stark picture exposing a fundamental dimension of the human experience that one can barely turn a blind eye to.
On the whole, therefore, the performative space of theatre can prove to be a goldmine for one who is eager to probe into the aesthetics that underlie the survival of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage from the perspectives supplied by Theatre Studies, Classics, and last but not least Translation Studies. What actually takes place in the physicality of this performative space in present-day performances of Ancient Greek tragedies can be taken up as a preliminary question that provides one with a sound point of departure for comprehending the correlation between mimetic action and the act of translation. It is crucial to take particular heed of the hints that this question drops vis-à-vis the contemporary performances of Attic tragedies: rather than being mere linguistic artefacts, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are (f)actual works of art that continue their existence by means of their actualisation on the contemporary stage as an outcome of mimetic actions that actually are acts of translation. Instead of deeming translation as a form of textual production, this point of commencement sets the stage for considering translation as a mode of actual production. Building upon this argument, a hypothesis can be articulated: as far as the survival of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage is concerned, the act of translation turns out to be a cumulative mimetic act that breathes life into the classical work in question through the parameters imposed by the respective dramaturgies of source and target theatre traditions. As such, the concept of dramaturgy, that is to say, the (visual and ideational) stagecraft of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, as well as the theatrical conventions of fifth-century BCE Athens, let alone the specific ways of interpreting the “tragic” on the contemporary stage, takes priority over the notion of language. Modern directors’ individual responses to Attic tragedies play the decisive part in this cumulative mimetic act of translation which the present study sets out to scrutinise.

At this point, it might help to cast an eye on the scholarly literature that is pertinent to the subject of inquiry. The current state of research in the area of Translation Studies regarding theatre translation furnishes a good opportunity for unfolding the nuances of the argument proposed above. As far back as 1980, Reba Gostand put forward a claim that expresses the concerns of the present dissertation: “every stage and feature of the dramatic production has and/or will involve processes of translation. Everything the audience sees or hears is a symbol of some reality being conveyed by the play” (1980: 2). The strength of the remark resides in the emphasis it places on the translational acts governed by the director’s approach to the (translated) work under question over the course of a given performance. Even so, Gostand’s use of the term “dramatic production” could be said to undermine her argument to a considerable extent due to the connotations that “theatrical” and “dramatic” have come to carry in the existing body of literature devoted to the study of translated plays; whereas “theatrical”
is associated with scripts composed for performance, “dramatic” tends to be used when referring to the texts produced for publication.¹

These implications direct the attention to the methodological path followed by the majority of (theatre) translation scholars in the last three decades. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to contend that the scholarly discourse on the art of theatre in Translation Studies, has lingered (and lingers), more or less, on the problem of determining the basic facets of translated texts, hence the ceaseless attempts at differentiating between theatre and drama translation. Mary Snell-Hornby’s observation is notable in this regard: “In traditional translation theory, the discussion on drama translation revolved round the question of the faithful ‘scholarly’ translation on the one hand, and the ‘actable’ or ‘performable’ stage text on the other” (2006: 86). Even here in this symptomatic instance of the terminology employed in the study of theatre translations, one can hardly speak of a common ground shared by scholars, since Snell-Hornby’s preference to use “stage translation” in that book, and even more assertively in a subsequent work (2007: 106-9), appears to be problematic to the degree that it disregards the vital function that stage directions acquire in theatrical productions.² Then again, the main trouble with respect to the study of translated plays does not consist in the lack of a taxonomy that can address the texts under scrutiny, for the literature produced on the topic³ amply legitimates the usage of “theatre translation.” No, the major difficulty lies in the conjectural characteristic of the criteria that are summoned when analysing play texts, the most notorious of them being “performability.” To quote Susan Bassnett, “attempts to define the ‘performability’ inherent in a text never go further than generalized discussion about the need for fluent speech rhythms in the target text. What this amounts to in practice is that each translator decides on an entirely ad hoc basis what constitutes a speakable text for performers” (1991: 102). That these words come from a scholar, who has spent a good deal of her scholarship searching for “ways through the labyrinth” (1985: 87-102)—but eventually ended up as “still trapped in the labyrinth” (1998: 90-108)—of theatrical translation,⁴ demonstrates the difficulty of dealing with translated play texts from the perspective of Translation Studies.

It is also important to detect a shift of attention from the everlasting debate on whether the translated text in question pertains to the domain of “drama” or “theatre,” and on whether the script in question is “performable” or not, to the focus on the agents involved in the course

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¹ Aaltonen (2000: 33-8) gives a concise account of the distinction between drama and theatre within the context of textual translation.
³ See, for instance, Zuber (1980); Zuber-Skerrit (1984); Upton (2000); Aaltonen (2000); Zattlin (2005); Curran (2008) and Baines et. al. (2011).
⁴ Espasa (2000: 49-62) offers a critical account of Bassnett’s writings on theatre translation in view of the other yardsticks (i.e. “speakability” and “readability”) evoked in the discussion of translated plays.
of moving translated play texts from page to stage, monitoring the phases that translations undergo in this process. As a result, theatre translators obtain the chance to have their say more explicitly on the subject, thereby becoming even more visible in the eyes of the public. That translating for the stage is a collaborative process, which involves not only translators but also dramaturges, actors, directors, and every single member participating in the creation of theatrical productions, is seen as irrefutable by most theatre translation scholars. These are all significant steps taken towards the construction of “a sociology of theatre translation,” enriched, for example, by the theoretical frameworks provided by the scholars who have contributed to the establishment of “a sociology of translation,” as the chapters in Wolf and Fukari (2007) illustrate. To exemplify: Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, as discussed in great detail in the context of the “making” of literary translations by Hélène Buzelin (2007: 135-69), can be of enormous help in terms of divulging the sociological factors affecting each and every stage of textual theatrical translations circulating in the hands of any and every agent who assume decisive parts in the “making” of theatre productions. From this vantage point, it can be deduced that the phenomenon of theatre translation stands closer than ever to the ever-growing concern that Translation Studies shows for the sociology of textual productions.

Theatre translation is certainly no longer a field anymore whose scholars can lament about being ignored by the discipline of Translation Studies. But does that relatively newly-founded concern show any concern for the art of theatre? Is there any indication of methodological interest towards the aesthetics that govern the actualisation of the action (re)presented on stage? Is there any sign of sensibility towards the concreteness of the performative space of theatre, where the real action takes place in the physicality of the hic et nunc? Is there, after all, any signal of sensitivity towards the pathos concretised by present-day performances of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage? The lack of a satisfactory answer to these questions is alarming in the sense that it points to the danger of deeming theatrical productions as simple objects of study where textual theatre translation plays a part. What seems to happen to literary translation as a consequence of the emergence of the sociology of translation is about to happen to theatre translation as well. Apparently, what counts as “scholarly” and “scientific” in Translation Studies within this context, turns out to be the endeavour of unveiling the mechanisms that ensure the circulation of artistic goods in an era of globalisation, concomitant with this is the almost total neglect of the aesthetics related to textual products of translation. The sincerity intrinsic to the art of theatre demands more than that. And

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5 Baines et. al., for example, devotes an entire section of the volume to a “conversation with practitioners” (2011: 173-211). Johnson (1996) also offers interviews with renowned theatre translators, certain of whom address the multiple “rewritings” of the “commissioned literals” over the course of mounting a theatrical production.
since it is Attic tragedies that manifest this sincerity with notable clarity, the way in which they survive on the contemporary stage becomes more of an issue to investigate the specific modes of concretising these works on the performative space of theatre through translation.

The dearth of a comprehensive treatment of the methodological underpinnings of the above-posed questions within the area of Translation Studies urges one to shift attention to the ways in which Classics treats the issue. A glance at the field indicates that the survival of Attic tragedies on the present-day stage falls under the wing of reception studies undertaken within the realm of Classics. Predictably enough, the reception of Ancient Greek tragedies, or any type of reception of classical antiquity for that matter, is of particular concern to the discipline so much so that the classicists take pains to centralise reception in the field by calling into question the previous approaches adopted in the organisation of the “companions” to antiquity where, as the editors of another “companion” Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray point out, “reception is kept in a separate section, usually at the end. This tends to artificially divide reception processes from analysis of the classical texts and contexts themselves and in particular to deny the dialogical relationships between reception and the analysis of the ancient contexts” (2008: 4). Reception thus comes to the fore of the discipline to such an extent that this branch of Classics asserts itself as a prevailing authority on the subject. And it does so by exercising great care in embracing as many intellectual perspectives as possible, whereby assembling a variety of disciplines together under the aegis of Classics. Zachary Dunbar puts forth the issue succinctly: “Based on the frequency and intensity of multiple approaches to Greek drama, multidisciplinarity is a condition of analysis and a criterion of research particularly suited to understanding why classical Greek drama happened in fifth-century BCE Athens, and why we are still concerned about it now in the modern era” (2010: 86, emphases in the original). The much favoured interdisciplinarity gives way to multidisciplinarity, or even transdisciplinarity here. The whys that Dunbar italicises also underscore the unique voice of Attic tragedies, which strikes one as powerfully as new each time that it is heard regardless of the two and a half thousand years, independent of linguistic barriers, irrespective of socio-cultural differences, that stand between the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, as well as Euripides and their receptors.

Much of what assures this extraordinary ongoing communication between Attic tragedies and their receivers is owed to translation activities of one kind or another. Whether in the form of textual production or in the mode of actual production, translational phenomena have shaped (and continue to shape) the way people receive Ancient Greek tragedies by

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6 This question has not been left unanswered. A relatively recent collection of essays gathered in Hall and Harrop (2010) demonstrates that performance reception of Attic tragedies now occupies one of the central positions in the field.
regenerating countless interpretations of them. As one might expect, classicists have been quite responsive to the fact that survival of Attic tragedies hinges on their existence both on page and on stage. The critical awareness shown by the classicists to this multilayered facet of the issue resounds itself in the way they formulate the problem. J. Michael Walton, for example, first takes direct aim at the reliability of the philologically-oriented approaches to the study of textual translations of Ancient Greek tragedies: “In Athens theatre was an art form akin to those of sculpture, painting, architecture and music. It was a synthesis of all the arts, statues that move, pictures that change, architecture that frames, music that highlights; amongst which poetry and rhetoric must take their place, but they must take that place alongside music, dance, acting and visual stagecraft” (2006: 4). And then, drawing on this essential feature of Attic tragedies, he puts the point at stake more bluntly in a later study: “because any act of theatrical transference, however ‘faithful’ to the original (whatever that may mean) consists less of recreating that original than of recreating it for an audience that is not the original” (2008: 263, emphases in the original). Walton’s observations are salient to the current study in that they underline the necessity of reflecting upon the act of translation in a wider sense that covers the scenic aspects of Attic tragedies as well.

Walton is not the only classicist who sets store by the performative dimension of Ancient Greek tragedies and refers to this too as translation. Hardwick, amongst others, passes an important opinion on the topic: “In discussing drama it is necessary in addition to work with two aspects of the translation process—the preparation of the text (which may concentrate on linguistic aspects with the expectation that it will be read ‘on the page’ or be prepared with staging in mind) and the actual staging (translation to the stage), which includes both the adaptations in the acting script and the semiotics of set, lighting, costume, movement, and acting styles” (2008: 342, emphasis in the original). The second stage of translation that Hardwick gestures towards calls attention to the particular modes of actualising translation in the physicality of the performative space of theatre. Still, this actualisation is contingent upon a reciprocal communication between the actors and spectators. Thence the necessity of the “recognition of a third dimension to the translation process—the construction of meaning added by the reader and/or spectator, partly in response to signals in the translation itself, partly brought by the reader/spectator as creative subject” (ibid.: 343). Hardwick’s views on the topic gain additional importance, since they show how such a “strict” discipline like Classics, which one might expect to be “introverted” and “conservative” does actually concern itself with translational practices from the lookout tower of the “stage.”

7 This is not a recent development though. The publication years of such volumes as Medea in Performance (2000) and Agamemnon in Performance (2005), both of which are dedicated entirely to the scenic journeys of these
The manner in which this triadic process is articulated happens to be representative in that it gives an idea of how the classicists approach the translational phenomena innate in modern-day performances of Ancient Greek tragedies. On the one hand, judging from most of the literature on the subject, it can be inferred that the suggestion of bidding farewell to the so-called sacred status of the source text and, by extension, of the source author, has been welcomed wholeheartedly by the classicists; on the other hand, no matter how cordial this welcome has been, it by no means comes to stand for the abandonment of comparative textual analyses in studying the scenic dimensions of the translations of Ancient Greek theatre. This is comprehensible because to do so would imply the self-termination of a discipline of whose primary object of study is the entire body of textual material produced in antiquity. For that very reason, the classicists’ approaches towards survival of Attic tragedies on contemporary stage are bound to be textually oriented, even if only to a small degree.

At this juncture, Classics seems to be on the same page with Translation Studies insofar as the role of textual translation in present-day performances of Attic tragedies is on the table. And none of the classicists who have written on the subject would argue against “a view of translation as performance and in performance that implies a dynamic process of (re)signification integrated within the overall event in its various phases of production—something which can hardly be assimilated to a more traditional text-based concept of theatre with its hierarchical system of roles” (Bigliazzi, et al. 2013: 2-3, emphases in the original). This view of translation is hardly revolutionary, though, as the existing scholarly work devoted to theatre translation within the terrain of Translation Studies would testify. All the same, what becomes quite surprising is the fact that this idea of “translation as performance and in performance” is still driven by a philological bias towards translational phenomena, abstaining itself thereof from scrutinising the real translational action taking place in the physicality of the performative space of theatre. The irony here abides in the ways in which the majority of the approaches to theatre translation remain, in the final analysis, to a considerable extent text-bound in Translation Studies, at a time when Translation Studies has come to be regarded even by classicists as a field that has “abolished the notion of the ‘sacred’ text which is venerable and thus untranslatable” (Ioannidou 2010: 210), and instead opted for a descriptive, target-oriented approach that considers textual translations as “facts of real life” (Toury 1995: 1). Still, it can be said that there is more at stake for Classics than a philological bias towards the inspection of translational practices in contemporary productions of Attic tragedies. By individual pieces during the course of history, indicates how Classics started to become solicitous for the performative aspect of Attic tragedies in the first half of the new millennium.

See the sources mentioned in the third footnote.
covering almost every aspect possible vis-à-vis the reception of Ancient Greek tragedies throughout the history. Classics makes its presence felt as a dominant authority on the topic. This can be taken as the dividing line between the approaches of two disciplines as regards to translational phenomena in modern-day performances of Attic tragedies.

On that note, it is worth taking a closer look at the discourse surrounding what Hardwick calls the second stage of translation. Having acknowledged the pioneering role of Oliver Taplin, who has been an influential classicist in coming to terms with the scenic dimensions of Attic tragedies, Hardwick opts to use the term “performative slide” and continues by adding that, “this involves a stretching of the linguistic concepts of translation in a direction increasingly governed by the criteria of performability. It also involves a slide within the performance approach itself, often decided by the director” (2005: 207-8). Although the criteria of performability are left unspecified throughout Hardwick’s article, the textual and scenic evidence she presents indicate that “the concept of being ‘faithful to the source’ has acquired new meanings and applications” (ibid.: 216), all of which are liable to differ in line with the directors’ interpretation of the source text. So the significance of the remark passed by Taplin as early as 1978: “there is a further stage of translation intervening between author and audience. The audience, instead of being confronted with a printed text, is faced with a production which realizes—or should realize—the author’s work, a work which is not itself until it is put on stage” (178). From this viewpoint, the director and the actors become the actual translators actualising the action in the tangibility of the performative space of theatre. All the while, the prescriptive implications of the quote are hard to miss. Not for a moment does the scholar drop the idea of paying respect to the words of the author. In a similar fashion, Taplin is hesitant towards staging practices that are likely to “alter” the source play: “the invention and interpolation of stage business, that is of visual meaning, must be shunned, because this replaces the author’s meaning; and even when it does not positively contradict, it distracts and submerges and distorts” (ibid.: 179).

It would of course become possible to question the legitimacy of these arguments on the face of post-structural approaches that have since shaken the foundations of ideas belonging to “the original”, authorship, authority and more significantly to language. From such a standpoint, the source text may be deemed to have been sanctified rather than sacrificed and the “author’s meaning” or intention is more an invention than an intrinsic aspect to be excavated from the so-called original which had originated in an age where the concept of the original as it came to be understood today had not yet born. There is also the factual side of the issue which

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9 See, for instance, the theses pursued in Barthes (1977: 142-8) and Foucault (1977: 113-38).
renders the notion of the original quite problematic. As Paul Woodruff puts it, “the manuscripts we have were copied many hundreds of years after the plays were written, and they often disagree in cases in which we have more than one manuscript for the same text. Scribes erred in copying, mistaking one letter or word for another, sometimes transposing lines that began in similar ways” (2005: 493). There is nothing new under the sun here, for Classics is quite familiar with all these problematicas, and as the classicists’ increasing interest towards the reception of Ancient Greek tragedies on the contemporary stage indicates, the discipline is very flexible in allowing room for various methodologies from different fields.10

In this particular respect, Theatre Studies’ distinct contribution to debate on the subject is worthy of notice. Erika Fischer-Lichte, for one, by drawing an analogy between the Dionysian ritual of σπαραγμός—tearing apart—and staging a text, argues on solid grounds that “neither the original play text, nor any particular version of it, can serve as a yardstick for judging a performance of an ancient play” (2010: 40). That in her studies Fischer-Lichte again and again accentuates the dismemberment of Euripides’ Bacchae in modern performances of the piece comes as no surprise.11 For mounting a production of a given Attic tragedy is tantamount to the sacrificial situation that takes place in the Bacchae. At best, what remains from the text during the course of a performance is the head of Pentheus that is torn apart from his body by his own mother Agave in a bacchanalian rite of sparagmos in the feral and bare mountain of Cithaeron. Yet, even the head is not the same head anymore. As the performance itself turns into an autonomous event, Pentheus’ head becomes transformed into another head—a lion’s head perhaps, just like the one carried by the still Dionysus-possessed Agave back to Thebes taking it for being that of Pentheus.

Maybe it is not even a lion’s head. Maybe there remains nothing at all apart from the mere echo of the source dramaturgy. Problematising its function precisely from the vantage point of physicality, Fischer-Lichte contests that the text “does not form a part of the performance’s materiality. Rather, the particular materiality of the performance makes the text disappear” (2010: 34). Having refuted the relevance of textual-oriented approaches towards the study of the reception of Ancient Greek tragedies at a single stroke, the scholar hones in on the dynamics that give rise to the disappearance of the text throughout the performance. The stress

10 Hence the “Democratic Turn” that the discipline itself experienced recently, on which see Hardwick and Harrison (2013).
11 Cf. Fischer-Lichte (2005: 221-39); (2004: 329-60, esp. 332-44). Of the productions the scholar brings to the fore, Richard Schechner’s Dionysus in 69 appears to mark a turning point in modern performances of Attic tragedies. As such, the production itself acquires a pivotal role in terms of attracting the notice of the classicists towards the reception of Ancient Greek plays. As Edith Hall points out in the introduction to the anthology devoted entirely to Dionysus, “more Greek tragedy has been performed in the last thirty years than at any point in history since Greco-Roman antiquity” (2004: 2). For extensive critical readings of Dionysus in 69, see Froma I. Zeitlin’s contribution to the same volume (2004: 49-75), as well as Fischer-Lichte’s (2014b: ch.1).
is laid on the transformative physical action executed by the actors in the concreteness of the theatrical space between the audience and performers. “Actors do not create works of art out of their bodies,” writes Fischer-Lichte, “rather, they perform a process of embodiment which produces their particular individual corporeality, their phenomenal body. This process also allows them to bring forth their semiotic bodies, i.e. a dramatic figure. It is in this way that the body transforms itself, and creates itself anew” (ibid.: 33). Two forms of bodies—phenomenal and semiotic—confront the spectators, thereby unleashing a certain type of energy that triggers what the scholar elsewhere calls “the transformative power of performance” (2008). “When the spectators physically sense the energy emanating from an actor and circulating in the space among those present,” Fischer-Lichte goes on to say, “they sense it as a mental as well as a physical force. They sense it as a transformative, and as such vital force emanating from the actor, and simultaneously as their own vital force. This is what we usually call experiencing the actor’s presence” (2010: 33, emphases in the original). Consequently, performance itself proves to be an event in its own right where the corporeality of not only the actors but also of the audience acquires a decisive role for the mutual communication between the two parties to take place. Nevertheless, this communication does not merely entail the transmission of the interpretation of the source dramaturgy to the audience; at the same time, it includes the prospective effects that spectators might bring about on the actors over the course of the performance through their reactions to the theatrical occasion. These (em)bodied performances generate multiple receptions of Attic tragedies, turning the idea into “an active, creative and transformative process” (ibid.: 40).

Under these circumstances, the conventional conceptions of “drama” and “dramatic” most of which are inflicted with an understanding of theatre as literature, fall short of comprehending the aesthetics that lie beneath the afterlife of Ancient Greek tragedies on the contemporary stage. One simply needs a theoretical framework that can shed light on the nature of the physical action that takes place in the concreteness of the performative space of theatre in present-day performances of Attic tragedies. It is exactly at this point that Hans Thies-Lehmann’s notion of “postdramatic theatre” comes to the fore. Lehmann’s “postdramatic theatre” derives its verve from the critical stance that its writer adopts in terms of getting to the root of the problem: “The historical drifting apart of text and theatre demands an unprejudiced redefinition of their relationship. It proceeds from the reflection that theatre existed first: arising from ritual, taking up the form of mimesis through dance, and developing into a full-fledged behaviour and practice before the advent of writing” (2006a: 46). By tackling the issue from an historical perspective Lehmann reiterates a basic fact that is well-known to most people with some awareness of cultural history, yet rarely taken into proper account by the majority of the
scholars working outside of Theatre Studies: that theatre is a form of art where physicality precedes textuality.

That said, the significance of Lehmann’s observation lies in the way that he articulates the essential feature of this art form. *Mimesis through dance* is the crucial formulation. It vouches for the idea that theatre is an art form that comes into existence through a physical action that is of mimetic nature. That being so, it is imperative to handle this critical support with great care, because Lehmann repeatedly stresses that “postdramatic theatre” is essentially non-mimetic: “While for good reason no poetics of drama has ever abandoned the concept of action as the object of mimesis, the reality of the new theatre begins precisely with the fading away of this trinity of drama, imitation and action” (ibid.: 37). This is the crux of a carefully argued position. What Lehmann reacts against is the reduction of the notion of mimesis to mere mimicry, slavish copying, as well as plain imitation. There is, however, always more than meets the eye when it comes to mimesis. As Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf point out, “mimesis is a largely homogenous concept that undergoes continuous development in a historical space” (1995: 309). To this view, it can be added that the art of theatre provides the most fertile ground to monitor the phases of this permanent progress. The place that mimesis occupies in Lehmann’s framework of “postdramatic theatre” stands as a substantial proof of this incessant condition. Differentiating between “mimesis of pain” and “mimesis to pain”, Lehmann discloses one of the most fundamental features of postdramatic theatrical performances: “when the stage is becoming like life, when people really fall or really get hit on stage, the spectators start to fear for the players. The novelty resides in the fact that there is a transition from represented pain to pain experienced in representation” (2006: 166, emphases in the original). In other words, postdramatic performances become autonomous events where pathos is experienced by virtue of a theatrical language expressed in the corporeality of the here and now. As it is, this sort of experience foregrounds another aspect of postdramatic theatre: the fact that “the principle of exposition applied to body, gesture and voice also seizes the language material and attacks language’s function of representation. Instead of a linguistic re-presentation of facts, there is a ‘position’ of tones, words, sentences, sounds that are hardly controlled by a ‘meaning’ but instead by the scenic composition, by a visual, not text oriented dramaturgy” (Lehmann 2006a: 146, emphases in the original). Language per se thus yields to individual theatrical languages that directors generate over the course of performances, wherewith paving the way for yet another principle of postdramatic theatre, polyglossia, in which language in itself becomes deprived of its communicative function and turns out to be a mere exhibited object (ibid.: 147).
Much of what has been discussed so far provides one with the ammunition required to open fire on the legitimacy of textual, or as Patrice Pavis would say, “textocentric” (2003: 21) approaches towards the survival of Attic tragedies on the modern stage. In the words of Walton, “to survive at all over time a play needs plasticity. Its survival mechanism is to be able to change its shape and adapt to what any new generation requires of it” (2008: 264). This flexibility goes very much hand in hand with the contemporary comprehension of translational phenomena within Translation Studies. In this sense, André Lefevere’s conception of “rewriting” (1992) can be taken as an initial point of reference in poring over the staging practices of three contemporary directors, namely, Theodoros Terzopoulos, Şahika Tekand, and Tadashi Suzuki, whose work will constitute the case studies that are going to be explored in this study for reasons that will become clear in due course. All of these directors distinguish themselves in their individual ways of interpreting Ancient Greek tragedies by dint of the particular acting methods, and, by extrapolation, the staging strategies that they develop.

Commenting upon the position of mise-en-scène in contemporary performances, Pavis passes an important remark that appears to resonate with Lefevere’s notion of “rewriting:” “mise-en-scène is no longer conceived here as the transposition of a text from page to stage, but rather as a stage production in which an author (the director) has had complete authority and authorization to give form and meaning to the performance as a whole” (2003: 2, emphases in the original). Within this context, modern productions of Attic tragedies by Terzopoulos, Tekand, and Suzuki actually coerce one to conceptualise and contextualise them in a translational framework. Even a customary glance at the productions of these three directors indicates that mise-en-scène is not realised as taking liberties but is embedded in the nature of the performance.

Be that as it may, the conceptual bridge built between “rewriting” and “directing” seems to be problematic to the extent that “textual” adumbrations of the former is concerned. Notwithstanding the illuminating perspectives that Lefevere’s conception of “rewriting” offers to the study and practice of translation, it has to be conceded that the notion itself has been overly exploited by the scholarly research of Translation Studies. More often than not, invoking “rewriting” seems to have been an ultima ratio when dealing with such textual productions as “versions,” “adaptations,” and so on. This observation particularly holds true for the recent

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12 Concomitantly draws and builds on an earlier meditation on the problematics of theatre translation within the context of reception, as was put forward elsewhere, see (Dinçel 2013a: 21-59, esp. 44-7).
13 Being totally cognisant of the Japanese order of names, the study will regrettably cling to the prevalent Western order so as to elude inconsistencies as much as possible. This decision is also justified with the manner in which Suzuki’s works are presented in English: “The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki,” and not the other way around.
research undertaken in the territory of theatre translation.\textsuperscript{14} With that being said, considering translation as a mode of actual production that comes into being through the corporeality of the performative space of theatre compels one to rethink “rewriting” for the sake of another term that could be proposed as “reworking” so as to downplay the textual implications of the former. If this point raised here makes any sense, each contemporary production of Ancient Greek tragedies by Terzopoulos, Tekand, and Suzuki, can be perceived as a reworking of a reworking of a given Attic tragedy through the tangibility of the art of theatre.

That within the scope of contemporary theatrical practices reworking, as articulated here, operates on many planes widens the scope that Translation Studies supplies for the study of these performances. To make sense of the survival of Ancient Greek tragedies on stage, the discipline proffers conceptual tools that permit one to arrive at a certain theoretical stance. Trying to impose theory upon practice and over-interpreting\textsuperscript{15} the material at hand for the favour of adjusting it to a specific “critical theory” of one’s choice or fabricating without it having any substantial relation to that theory may lead one to adopt insignificant, forced, and irrelevant frameworks. Such an approach may leave both the theory in question and the object of analysis on slippery grounds. For the theoretical grounds to remain solid, it would be plausible to proceed from practice to theory, and attempt at reading both the theories that the focused discipline is founded on and the object of study in connection with each other. That means of artistic expression metamorphose and call for different approaches, obliges one to design novel ways of analysing the survival of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage through translation.

In this regard, one of the main tools that Translation Studies issues forth is the oft-quoted categorisation of Roman Jakobson. As is known, Jakobson offers three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: “the intralingual translation or rewording (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language), interlingual translation or translation proper (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language), and intersemiotic translation or transmutation (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems)” (2000: 114, emphases in the original). This classification, which sets out to conceptualise translational activities in general, reveals a picture where “translation proper” is suggested as having a so-called difference from the other two. Having said that, it is obligatory to bear in mind that any given classification relating to “translation” derives from the basis of

\textsuperscript{14} See Bigliazzi (2013: 77-96) as a telling example where the scholar investigates performativity mainly on the textual planes of the rewrites of William Shakespeare. Unsurprisingly enough, Bigliazzi gears her arguments towards a philological understanding of translation by making considerable use of comparative textual analyses and ultimately confining the aesthetics that govern the action in the performative space of theatre chiefly to the textual level.

\textsuperscript{15} In the precise sense that Umberto Eco uses the verb, see in particular the discussion he carries out with respect to the “certain” readings of sacred texts in (1992: 45-66, esp. 52-5).
the conception of “translation proper.” And it might be feasible to work on different categories taking “translation proper” as a landmark. With this in mind, Jakobson’s taxonomy can be set forth as a reference point since “intersemiotic translation,” as he puts it, appears particularly illuminating for looking at theatrical performances as translations.

But it is important to keep also in mind that Jakobson is mostly affiliated with the proponents of the linguistic-based approaches to the study and practice of translation. The accent that is being laid upon his classification here can cause one to raise the question: How viable is it to deploy the vocabulary of linguistics while challenging the linguistic-based approaches to translation? As crucial as it might seem, the clouds around this picture dissolve at once when one recognises the fact that linguistics and linguistic-based approaches operate in different dimensions. Linguistics is not prescriptive per se, and the notion of language is a very broad phenomenon within the realm of the said discipline. In Translation Studies, by contrast, linguistic-based approaches have, for the most part, an inclination towards a prescriptive modus operandi. There can of course be other ways of reading Jakobson, as Gideon Toury does:

It is obvious that this typology is afflicted with the traditional bias for linguistic translating, the notion of language appearing, at least as a possibility, in each one of its three categories. What is worse, however, is that – even to the extent that this preference is understandable, if not to say acceptable – such a typology is far from satisfactory. For one thing, it is readily applicable only to texts, that is, to semiotic entities which have surface, overt representations. For another, texts, and precisely verbal texts more than any other type, are not the representation of only one organizing principle, that which pertains to their basic, primary code, but also of one or more than one ‘secondary modelling systems’ (e.g. Lotman 1972), so that, when undergoing an act of translating, they have more than one semiotic border to cross. (1986: 1113, emphases in the original).

Whilst Toury’s critique of Jakobson is justified in terms of placing the emphasis on the textual aspect of the “notorious” classification of the latter, a minor detail is noteworthy. For Jakobson, the object of translation is any linguistic sign, the boundaries of which extend beyond the level of either verbal or textual. It is only natural to conceive any sign as a linguistic sign since no sign can be thought of outside language. The irony is that Jakobson has a broader sense of “translation” than any linguistic-oriented approach to translation would suffer: “For us, both as linguists and as ordinary word-users, the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into

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16 One cannot help but recall how Ludwig Wittgenstein articulates the point at stake: “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (2001: 68, emphasis in the original).
some further, alternative sign, especially a sign ‘in which it is more fully developed,’ as Peirce, the deepest inquirer into the essence of signs, insistently stated” (2000: 114). In Jakobson’s terms the meaning is to be found in the signifier not in the signified. As a corollary, when dwelling upon intersemiotic translation, the issue turns out to be taking the verbal sign and transforming it into a nonverbal sign (ibid.). Given that the art of theatre itself and contemporary performances in particular, are multimodal and embrace different varieties of sign, there seem to be many ways of pursuing intersemiotic translation within the practical field of theatre. Yet, the concept of equivalence still looms large, as it does in the majority of discussions on translation. As regards to this problematic Fischer-Lichte opines that,

Equivalence cannot be defined as identity of meaning, neither of the meaning that the text brings forth nor that of their elements or subtexts. Thus, a judgment of equivalence does not mean an existing relationship which can be perceived and stated by anybody, but rather is the result of a hermeneutic process in which the reading of script becomes related to the ‘reading’ of performance with reference to meanings that are brought forth by both. (1987: 211).

Fischer-Lichte’s comment is especially thought-provoking when dovetailed with the present-day performances of Attic tragedies, all of which are, in the most literal sense of the expression, open works of art. In such productions, or to use the words of Umberto Eco, “every performance makes the work an actuality, but is itself only complementary to all possible other performances of the work” (1984: 59). That being said, the distinguishing feature of Fischer-Lichte’s treatment of the problem of equivalence lies in the historical perspective that she offers. Consider, for a moment, this accurate observation in terms of locating the possible historical origins of intersemiotic translation within the scope of theatrical occasions: “The question of how it is possible to transform a drama into a performance was first raised in the eighteenth century. The concern at that time was restricted to whether, and to what extent, it is possible to transform the verbal signs of the dialogue into the gestural signs of acting” (1987: 200). The names that Fischer-Lichte conjure are, of course, Denis Diderot and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, both of whom have proven to be the dominant figures of any discussion of mimesis,17 as Gebauer and Wulf validate in their comprehensive account on the subject (1995: ch.14-15). Even though Fischer-Lichte does not build her arguments around the concept of mimesis, the

17 Not only in any discussion of mimesis, but also in any survey of the art of acting Diderot and Lessing come to the fore. Especially the former’s The Paradox of Acting is an invaluable work for tracing the roots of the contemporary theories of acting. For a detailed examination of Diderot’s “paradox” with respect to the craft of acting, see Karaboğa (2005: ch.1, esp. 24-43).
manner in which she handles the issue does display the correlation between semiotics and transformative physical actions that are of mimetic nature fashioning meanings in their own right over the course of performances by virtue of translation. Here again, there emerges a need to problematise the relationship between text and performance with Fischer-Lichte: “it is to miss the point to interpret the text, even the version used in the performance, and use this interpretation as a yardstick for judging the meanings generated by the performance. Theatre is neither a derivative art nor a philological institution” (2010: 35). To this opinion, one might find it tempting to add: neither is the act of translation governed by the director’s approach to the source dramaturgy an imitative art.

As was stated previously, the present investigation seeks to scrutinise the relationship between mimesis and translation within the compass of the contemporary productions of Ancient Greek tragedies by hashing over the staging approaches of Terzopoulos, Tekand, and Suzuki. The critical issues that have been addressed hitherto call for a methodology so as to be able to explore translation as mimesis and mimesis as translation. Once translation is understood as mimesis and vice-versa, it enables one to see how intertwined they are. This realisation can enrich one’s understanding of these concepts and of the ways in which they interrelate with each other in the actualisation of Attic tragedies in the performative space of theatre.

According to Arne Melberg, “mimesis is never a homogeneous term, and if its basic movement is towards similarity it is always open to the opposite” (1995: 3, emphases in the original). Melberg’s point is important in two respects: on one level, it explains why mimesis has undergone a series of transformations over the course of history by dint of its dynamic nature; but on another, through Melberg’s observation, it becomes possible to pinpoint one of the most distinctive façades of mimesis: verisimilitude. That all eras contain artworks that are mimetic in nature derives from mimesis’ intrinsic demand for similarity to truth, that is to say, the truth relating to the world and human condition at that given point. As was argued earlier, one of the lineaments of Attic tragedies lies in their precision to demonstrate the situation pertaining to the world and human conduct with remarkable simplicity via mimesis. That one has no chance to actually observe primary sources reflecting this form of mimesis, namely the performances of Attic tragedies that took place in fifth-century BCE Athens, compels one to take a close glance at the “sociology of Athenian tragedy” (Hall 1997: 93-126), doing so with the purpose of not only gaining insight into staging practices of Attic tragedies but also finding out the polis’ possible reaction to the theatrical events in the sense that Alain Badiou (2005a) would philosophise the term. This sociological and philosophical glimpse at the dynamics of
fifth-century BCE Athens maps out a trajectory within which the current exploration will move along.

Even if the truth of the world and the human condition does not change in essence, the ways of articulating it on stage do undergo a chain of changes, as the concept of tragedy undertakes a parallel journey as a consequence of the Roman transformation of Attic tragedies and, by logical inference, mimesis. As a matter of course, throughout history mimesis constantly translates itself in form and content to maintain similarity to truth. Staging practices of Ancient Greek tragedies thus metamorphose and there emerges a need to put on the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in different mimetic forms. Whence the variety of staging approaches to Ancient Greek tragedies. In methodological terms, therefore, the mimetic transformation of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage requires a thorough dramaturgic analysis of their productions, whereby to examine the actual “reworkings” of them in performance. While this approach lays the methodological stress upon the performative space of theatre, it also takes into consideration the modes in which the directors “rewrite” the source dramaturgy, albeit to a limited degree. Then again, as was already problematised in the preceding pages, deeming performances purely as “rewritings”, or regarding any type of (translated) textual material as the key touchstone, prevents one from making sense of the mimetic aesthetics that underlie the directors’ staging approaches to Attic tragedies. It can, however, be argued that, on two planes, the dramaturgic analysis to be presented in the chapters on Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki avoids following this problematic methodological path: in the first place, the dramaturgic analysis serves to lay bare the syntax of the stage, and in the second, this examination enables one to gaze into the semantics of the performative space of theatre, where the tragic action unfolds through the actors’ mimetic transformation—translation—of the source dramaturgy into the dynamics of the target dramaturgy. All in all, the dramaturgic analysis to be carried out in the present dissertation contends that “reworking” can be taken as a relevant methodological tool in grasping the mimetic transformation of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage from the perspective of Translation Studies, where the scholarly output of the discipline can only deal with the idea of “translation as performance and in performance” by sidestepping the mimetic aesthetics that govern the actualisation of the (tragic) action (re)presented in the performative space of theatre.

To elaborate further on the method to be followed in the present study, each chapter will commence from the point where its individual subject arises from. For that reason, the first chapter will get to the core of the problem by taking a closer look at the archaic conception of mimesis and proceed with the writings of Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle where the mimetic vocabulary flourished as (re)presentation, (re)creation, world-making, imitation, and so forth.
By regarding mimesis as an “ongoing thematic complex” (Gebauer and Wulf 1995: 309), this chapter will discuss respectively mimesis qua mimesis, mimesis qua imitation, mimesis qua translation / translation qua mimesis, so as to be able to provide the basis for a comprehensive foray into the approaches of Diderot and Lessing, both of whom can concurrently be of great assistance for understanding the historical origins of intersemiotic translation and the mimetic nature of the transformative physical action taking place in the performative space of theatre from antiquity to the modern theatre of Samuel Beckett.

The second chapter of the dissertation will dwell upon the idea of the “tragic” mostly in the company of Heraclitus, prior to the idea’s transmutation into a philosophical category by the German Post-Idealist thought. The discussion of mimesis will continue in this part as well, due to the fact that both Plato and Aristotle were mainly concerned with this form of theatre, whilst consolidating their individual positions in the “ancient quarrel” between philosophy and poetry. Zooming in on the sociological dynamics around Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the chapter will proceed by monitoring the translational journey of the “tragic” throughout history simultaneously with a view to confront the German transformation of the idea and with an eye to bring the methodological procedure of the previous part to term with the artistic praxis of Beckett.

The discussions related to mimesis, (intersemiotic) translation, Attic tragedies, and, by extension, to the idea of the “tragic” serve as the groundwork for the remaining chapters which will be devoted entirely to the mimetic staging aesthetics of Terzopoulos, Tekand, and Suzuki. The parts that will be concerned with these contemporary directors will proceed by providing an account of the socio-cultural climates in which Attis Theatre, Studio Players, and Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT) respectively emerged. And then continue by casting an eye on the particular acting methods of the directors in focus; that is to say, the Biodynamic Method of the first, the Performative Staging and Acting Method of the second, and The Suzuki Method of the third will be examined at great length in their relation to mimesis, with the purpose of revealing their individual staging approaches towards Attic tragedies on stage through analyses of Terzopoulos’ reworking(s) of Aeschylus’ Persians (2006) and Prometheus Bound (2010); Tekand’s reworking of Sophocles’ Theban plays as Oedipus Trilogy (2002/2004/2006), as well as with Suzuki’s reworking(s) of Euripides’ Bacchae as Dionysus (1998) and his Elektra (2010).

All aspects considered, the present dissertation aims to provide a way of looking at translational phenomena through the lenses of the particular manners of actualising modern performances of Attic tragedies. It, first and foremost, aspires to demonstrate that the act of translation can by no means be taken on the textual-philological level per se when it comes
down to the *actual* role it assumes in the physicality of the performative space of theatre. Rather than regarding translation as a form of textual production where a search for corresponding words of the source language in the target language, or even in a single language becomes, more or less, the main issue, the present dissertation is in favour of approaching translation as a mode of *actual* production that comes into being through the physicality of the actors in the concreteness of the performative space of theatre. In this approach, translation becomes re(trans)formed into a mode of physical action that is of mimetic nature reworked according to the individual directors’ responses to Attic tragedies. As such, the highly complex notion of mimesis comes into prominence as a thematic thread to divulge the specific ways in which the source dramaturgy of Ancient Greek tragedies is reworked on the contemporary stage. The search for correspondences between a language, or more than one language for that matter, gives way to the distinct ways of interpreting the source dramaturgy for the purpose of reawakening the force of the *pathos* epitomised in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in present-day performances of Attic tragedies.
PART I
Chapter 1

Mimetic Bases of Translation as Performance and Performance as Translation

Foundations of Mimesis

The vision of an empty archaeological site is a disquieting one. Behind the tranquillity of the place in the here and now, there lurks the simultaneous presence of the ethos and pathos of a legacy from the distant past. This presence inevitably haunts the present. Standing in awe of the distinctive features of the site through its ethos, one cannot help but get restless while staring at the pathos-ridden remains of a heritage. Whether such an empty archaeological site is located in the Mediterranean Basin, in Mesoamerica, or anywhere on earth does not really matter, for this simultaneous presence cuts across geographical borders and persistently embeds itself in the image—only to haunt the hic et nunc.

The (c)overt presence of mimesis in the critical discourse around art and aesthetics reflects this haunting vision. As far as one can tell from the extant literature, ever since the first conceptual accounts of the notion were formulated in the writings of Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle in antiquity, mimesis held—and continues to hold—the centre stage of discussions related to the study and practice of art. For good reason, of course. After all, being one of the fundamental faculties of humans, the rich stock of allusions within mimesis—ranging from imitation to representation and from impersonation to enactment—is extensive enough to dwell on the entire problematics of art and aesthetics within a philosophical framework. Even individual studies where the main focus has nothing to do with mimesis per se can barely steer clear of the questions that are likely to be posed by the notion. The artistic genres of, say, painting, photography, poetry, sculpture, architecture, cinema, novel, dance, and theatre all bear the traces of mimesis to such an extent that the concept proves to be a ghost whose presence haunts the discourse in the absence of its mention. Indeed, either in the form of world-making or physical reaction, either in the form of make-believe or image construction, mimesis pierces through discourse, and one way or another asserts itself as a forgotten aesthetic idea from the remote past. Whilst the ghost of mimesis goes undetected to the degree that the term is literally kept at bay from the chief concerns of the work, this perennial notion has the potential to turn the assertive pedestals of a scholarly piece upside-down, once it is brought into play in a manner that overlooks its archaic connotations.
Notwithstanding this potency, deeming mimesis as one of the most ill-starred terms that inhabits the terminology deployed to describe the basic tenets of artistic movements would not be a naïve supposition. In point of fact, the current situation of mimesis in the critical discourse surrounding art and aesthetics epitomises the aforesaid vision of an empty archaeological site. The colossal bibliography on mimesis rises like an ancient temple above the concept itself, and it elicits awe on behalf of anyone who ventures to investigate the interpretative journey of the notion in relation to the survival of Attic tragedies on the modern stage, whereas the uneasiness that one feels when groping for the very foundations of the term (not to mention the highly obscure origins of tragedy) in ruins is inescapable. Impressive as it might be, cracks on the columns of the edifice are hard to miss; through these fissures, it is possible to get a glimpse of the suffering that the concept endured during its long history. Soon after yielding to the temptation of the ethos and pathos of the mimetic legacy, one takes the plunge and starts to study the ruins more closely, with an eye to throwing light on the paradoxes of mimesis and their implications for the contemporary theatre praxis as (intersemiotic) translation, or to be more specific, qua the actual translation of the source dramaturgy into the dynamics of the target dramaturgy. It is imperative to highlight the additional significance that the notion of dramaturgy acquires in this approach: far from implying chiefly the textual features of dramatic and scenic composition, dramaturgy is conceived here as a conceptual tool, whereby to make philosophical and historical sense of the mimetic transformation of Ancient Greek tragedies on the modern stage.

Rather than marking a mode of retreat from tussling with the virtually uncontrollable literature on mimesis, narrowing down the topic as such is essentially a methodological push towards an attempt to re-treat the mimetic heritage from a transdisciplinary perspective. To be able to gain argumentative grounds on the subject, it would be plausible to start with a plain observation. That mimesis not only resists clear-cut definitions, but also defies any sort of linguistic translation, renders efforts in excavating a unified “theory” from those ruins null and void. Still, this suggestion does not detract from the enormous value of these mimetic remnants upon which Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle have construed mimesis as part and parcel of an aesthetic vocabulary that would eventually shape Western thinking on art over the course of history. Hence, scrutinising the archaic overtones of mimesis prior to the works of Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle is of utmost importance. Yet, this exploration implies neither a search for the origins of the notion, nor an appeal to the etymology of the word. In his comprehensive work on mimesis, Stephen Halliwell cautions against the vanity of such ambitious aspirations: “Although several scholars have been greatly exercised over the origins of the Greek concept of mimesis, the thinness of available evidence has doomed their undertakings to at best the
speculative, at worst the futile. The etymology of Greek mim- terms is irrecoverable with any confidence and therefore of no help (if etymology ever is, where the history of concepts is concerned); and we know very little about the early history of the word group to which the noun mimēsis, itself not attested before the fifth century, belongs” (2002: 17). Halliwell’s warning is significant in that it shows, in quite factual terms, how staking claims to the so-called roots of mimesis is bound to cause blind spots in methodology.

In lieu of seeking in vain for a holistic theory in these ruins, one might as well explore the area so as to arrive at a conception of mimesis, which, in turn, can form the backbone of a theoretical framework to tackle translation as performance and performance as translation in view of the staging practices of Theodoros Terzopoulos, Şahika Tekand, and Tadashi Suzuki. The emphasis on the modern theatre praxis is crucial. Along with drawing attention to the fact that practice precedes theory, it raises concerns over both the cogency and redundancy of forcing certain “theories” upon aesthetic praxis—recall the methodological troubles looming over the prospect of constructing a “sociology” of textual theatre translations, or witness the “absurd” burden that Samuel Beckett had to carry after Martin Esslin’s coinage of the term in 1961, or observe the endless pursuits of bringing “scientific” innovations to the realm of artistic practice in Arts and Humanities, albeit, as Theodor Adorno maintains, “in art, all scientific discoveries lose their literal character” (2002: 231). Especially the last point includes extra risks when dealing with mimesis, for as Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf hold, “the artificiality, precision, and immobility characteristic of conventional definitions in scientific thought are hostile to mimesis, which tends toward action and is bound to time’s passage and human productive activity” (1995: 2).

But there is another danger in summoning such terms as theory and science when trying to make sense of artistic praxis within the specific context of mimesis: that of failing to do justice to these terms in their entirety. Since “science” first and foremost evokes its “exact” meaning, the word “theory” ipso facto points to the weight it carries in the field of exact sciences, and juxtaposing these two uncritically would probably not be the best move that one could make in Arts and Humanities. Prioritising praxis over theory and building on Karl Popper’s celebrated notion of “falsifiability criterion” (1963: esp. ch.1), George Steiner underlines the issue at stake: “Two indispensable criteria must be satisfied by theory: verifiability or falsifiability by means of experiment and predictive application. There are in art and poetics no crucial experiments, no litmus-paper tests. There can be no verifiable or falsifiable deductions entailing predictable consequences in the very concrete sense in which a scientific theory carries predictive force.” (1991: 75). The virtue of Steiner’s remark lies in his reasonable insistence on preserving the distinction between arts—or instead, what passes for
“theory” in arts—and applied/exact sciences in order to avoid categorical errors. And in that respect, his reflexion might even induce one to cast serious doubts on the most (though by no means all) of the research that is currently being undertaken in Arts and Humanities, even if much has changed since the publication of Steiner’s work and the domain itself witnessed a good deal of scholarly movements that Thomas Kuhn would possibly regard as “paradigm shifts” (1970). Still, with all the stress it lays on the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice “in the very concrete sense,” Theatre Studies seems to be exempt from those kinds of suspicions, no matter how the “turns” that took place in the discipline in recent years blurred the distinctions between arts and exact sciences all the more. The ways in which the ever-shifting paradigms culminate in the ever-expanding boundaries of the discipline(s) go very much hand in hand with the *ethos* of the age of supersonic reproduction, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin (2007: 217-51). Even so, whether this expansion into territories that are categorically alien to Theatre Studies and vice versa can pave the way for a scientific revolution in the Kuhnian sense of the word, or will continue to save the day with neat “conceptual blending/s,”¹ most of which turn out to be of eclectic nature at the end of the day,² is an issue that remains to be seen.

Perhaps the dilemma between science and art, as well as its indication for the study and praxis of theatre, is best articulated by Jerzy Grotowski. As a response to Eugenio Barba’s question vis-à-vis the appropriateness of the name—“Theatre Laboratory”—of his institute due to its “scientific” associations, Grotowski gives a straightforward reply: “The word research should not bring to mind scientific research. Nothing could be further from what we are doing than science *sensu stricto,* and not only because of our lack of qualifications, but also because of our lack of interest in that kind of work” (1975: 27, emphasis in the original). Having thus

¹ Far from pointing Blair (2007a; 2007b: 125-32; 2009: 93-103) and Cook (2010; 2011: 246-68) as potential targets, this remark simply calls into question the discourse through which these (and related) scholars reverse engineer the relationship between theory and practice. There is certainly nothing wrong with investigating “what we can learn by applying CBT [conceptual blending theory] to staging, casting, and directing so as to guide and analyze directorial decision making” (Cook 2010: 21, brackets added), nor “applying the current cognitive neuroscience to acting” (Blair 2007a:41). Then again, approaching artistic praxis with such a clear set of theoretical agenda runs the risk of either reading into practice so as to be able to justify the theories at hand…

² …or ending up in eclecticism: “There is no reason I can see that the approach, concepts, and procedures I have outlined in this study cannot be applied to audiences for any group of performances in the past. This would include Roman spectators enjoying the plays of Plautus, celebrants at the masques of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, participants in the rioting that greeted *Ubu Roi,* spectators [sic] at a forum theatre production in Brazil put together by Augusto Boal, a ritual-like piece of hybrid theatre performed before Maori tribespeople and white New Zealanders, and sidewalk gawkers at last year’s Gay Pride March in New York City” (McConachie 2008: 207), to cite another example. It is startling to see how the overconfident tone of the initial sentence subsequently colonises the diverse history of theatre by straightjacketing it into a collection of concepts and procedures, all of which are affiliated with *one* particular approach. As could be surmised from the quotes, the approach in question is the cognitive (neuroscientific) method, which, more or less, stands for one of the most “cutting edge” research areas in Theatre Studies. And the issues raised here do not write off the cognitive neuroscientific contributions to the study (and practice) of theatre. What stands on thin ice, however, is the *language* wherewith these relatively promising contributions navigate through disciplinary borders.
cut the Gordian knot, Grotowski goes on to tease out his comprehension of research by first likening the manner through which they, in the laboratory, approach their profession to that of “the medieval wood carver who sought to recreate in his block of wood a form which already existed” (ibid.), and then by attributing a fundamental function to the other sense of the word, even though that “might seem a little irrational as it involves the idea of a penetration into human nature itself. In our age when all languages are confused as in the Tower of Babel, when all aesthetical genres intermingle, death threatens the theatre as film and television encroach upon its domain. This makes us examine the nature of theatre, how it differs from the other art forms, and what it is that makes it irreplaceable” (ibid.: 27-8). By siting human nature at the core of theatre right from the start, Grotowski accentuates the ontological connexion between the two. His take on research ignites a chain reaction of re-search for (para)theatrical scores that would yield to re-search for theatre of re-sources, that would give way to re-search for objective drama, that would finally give in to re-search for the (im)possibilities of Art as Vehicle. The impetus behind these investigative phases was obviously the intention to study the correlation between performers and spectators in its crudest form through encounters where the two parties have radically been re-defined as “doers” and “observers/witnesses” (Grotowski 1995: 115-35, esp. 131-4).

On one level, Grotowski’s ceaseless inquiry into the nature of theatre appears to be an extreme case that refutes theatre, yet what he actually pursued via praxis was, in the words of Kris Salata, “the kind of theatre still worth doing: the one most true to its ontological and phenomenological self, therefore discoverable only through its own means, as an oral phenomenon and as an encounter” (2013: 41). This explains why Grotowski’s praxis is doomed to abide within the frame of theatre in the final analysis. But on another level, confronting theatre with its own resources is extreme in the sense that it demonstrates the extent to which one can go in order to keep aloof from mimesis. This reveals a certain paradox. Throughout his re-search for re-sources, Grotowski strictly stripped off theatre from all of its representational elements, but not for an instant renounced his momentous emphasis on physicality by constantly exploring the limits of the human body. Furthermore, throughout his research, Grotowski scrupulously strove to erase the line between spectators and performers, but not for a moment relinquished his vital stress on the coexistence of the two. In fact, this manner of reducing theatre to its bare essentials manifests mimesis in the raw. Harking back to Gebauer and Wulf

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3 This point was recognised by Susan Bennett as early as 1990 in her Theatre Audiences and has been retained in the subsequent editions of the book: “With the name of Grotowski attached to any project, the audience is provided with a particular set of theatrical expectations” (2013: 37-8, emphasis in the original). See also, Lisa Wolford’s general introduction to the Grotowski Sourcebook, where she responds to this issue and “finally concede[s]” that Bennett is right in her suggestion (1997: 16).
might be of help: “Mimesis originally denoted a physical action and developed first in oral cultures. It has an indicative character, with attention turning repeatedly to the gestural over the history of the concept. Even as purely linguistic mimesis, it remains an ‘indicative speaking.’ The pointing is perceived by the recipient such that he or she is called on to see certain things or procedures as something, in this reciprocity lies one component of mimesis, one that renders into a spectacle” (1995: 5, emphasis in the original). With Halliwell’s warning in mind, this remark can only be accepted with the proviso that in its very early stages in oral cultures, mimesis was a corporeal re-action to something, i.e. to the myths. Thence, in his endeavour to oust mimesis from theatre, Grotowski (reflexively) returns to an archaic notion of mimesis of whose hallmark is gestural/vocal physicality.

This is the decisive paradox of mimesis which finds a telling echo in Adorno’s view: “Even the rejection of mimesis, the deepest concern of the new matter-of-factness in art, is mimetic” (2005: 145). In the light of this comment, one can hardly speak of a non-mimetic work of art insofar as its (re)production hinges on what Beckett captures, with all of its pros and cons, as an “obligation to express” (1984a: 139). To that degree the paradox is destined to remain irresolvable. Nevertheless, by pressing firmly on this irresolvable feature of the paradox, it can be argued that the human body suggests itself as the ultimate medium to examine at once the ways through which this commitment to express is exercised and received. If this argument is granted, then one can take a step further to pinpoint the static trait of this highly dynamic notion: mimesis, in essence, is nothing but a form of corporeal re-action of an indicative nature, irrespective of the countless changes it has been through as an inevitable consequence of the innumerable books thrown at the concept by the critical discourse throughout history.

Nonetheless, immediately after mounting the argument, one is likely to be caught between a rock and a hard place: the statement that “any of the things human beings do or make could be a product of mimesis” (Woodruff 2015: 329) covers a broad spectrum in both historical and evolutionary terms by concurrently invoking miscellaneous oral-culture-bound conceptions of mimesis, thereby placing the original mimetic praxes beyond one’s reach. It is precisely at this juncture that the Ancient Greek notion of mimesis comes to the fore as a distinct socio-cultural phenomena, owing to the fact that it furnishes an occasion for taking a closer glance at

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4 Even Merlin Donald, who contends that “there is still a vestigial mimetic culture embedded within our modern culture, and a mimetic mind embedded within the overall architecture of the modern human mind” (1991: 162), admits that the evidence for his comprehensive discussion of the subject is “indirect.” That being said, Donald’s work is an indispensable source to underpin the mimetic bases that the current cognitive neuroscientific discourse tends to underestimate. McConachie (2008: ch.2) and Mancing (2006: 189-206) are some of the notable, yet still problematic exceptions; particularly the latter’s opinion that “a novel cannot be mimetic or perceptual; a play by definition is” (ibid.: 194), weakens his overall thesis on the dynamics of reception. For the mimetic and perceptual facets of the art of the novel, see the pertinent essays in Isomaa et al. (2012).
the most perceptible (con)texts surrounding the foundations of the term. Though the concept itself is peculiar not merely to the Ancient Greek culture, and it can also be thought in conjunction with non-Western cultural practices, as Taussig (1993) and Bose (1991) do with respect to the Cuna and Indian cultures respectively, approaching the notion within the confines of such binary oppositions as Western and non-Western might cause confusion, since both of these studies are marred by their authors’ broad understanding of the term, which impedes one from comprehending the idiosyncratic features of mimesis that are apparently inherent in these indigenous cultures. Studying the Ancient Greek concept of mimesis together with its archaic background thus becomes a methodological inevitability, if not a necessity, due to the wealth of contextual information it harbours.

Even though Halliwell’s reservations regarding the futility of searching for the origins of mimesis, especially through the etymology of the word, continue to remain valid, it is thanks to these earlier scholarly efforts that one does not really need to look for a needle in a haystack. Göran Sörbom, for example, takes the trouble and locates each and every occurrence of the “words belonging to the mimeisthai-group” (1966: 14) before Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle gave mimesis a philosophical twist. And as one would expect, all of these manifestations have been discussed at great lengths by the Classicists, so much so that one can scarcely add more to these, maybe apart from proffering a perspective from Theatre Studies.

Of particular interest are the choral performances of the Delian Maidens in the Homeric Hymn and Aeschylus’ fragmentary Edonians and Theoroi, for it is in these instances that mimesis arguably assumes full physicality. Gregory Nagy, for one, “highlight[s] the fact that the Delian Maidens in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo are described as masters of mimesis or ‘re-enactment’” (2011: 305), because of their matchless capacity to “θέλγουσι δὲ φῶλ’ ἀνθρώπων. πάντων δὲ ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλίαστιν μιμεῖσθ’ ἱσασιν’ φαίη δὲ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος φθέγγεις ὥστ’ οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρητθαι ἀνθρώπων. πάντων δὲ φθέγγεις ἀνθρώπων. φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλίαστιν μιμεῖσθ’ ἱσασιν’ φαίη δὲ κεν. Each single person would say that his own voice was their voice” (2013: 229-30, Nagy’s translation, emphasis and brackets in the original). Halliwell rightly points out that this passage “treats mimesis not as a mere clever trick or knack but as a type of artistic accomplishment—the mastery of different styles of (poetic) language, probably including different dialects, in a

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5 Sörbom cites nineteen instances: Aeschylus’ Theoroi 1.12 (Fr. 78a) and Edonians 5.10 (Fr. 57); Homeric Hymn to (the Delian) Apollo 156-164; Pindar’s Pythian Ode, XII, 18-21, Parthenia II, 16-20 and Fr. 107a; Herodotus 2.78, 2.86, 2.132, 2.169 and 3.37; Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis 573-578 and Ion 1429; Democritus Fr. 154; Aristophanes’ Clouds 559, Platus 290-291, Thesmophoriazusae 850, 146-172, as well as Wasps 1017-1020 (ibid.: 41).

performance that is both musical and choreographic” (2002: 18). This view of artistic achievement, resting on nothing short of the vocal/gestural corporeality on the part of the (probable) performer, reverberates further in Aeschylus’ *Edonians*: “ψαλμὸς δ᾿ ἡλάλαξεν ταυρόφθοροι δ᾿ ὑπομικόντα ποθεν ἐξ ἄφανος φοβεροὶ μῆμι, ἤχῳ τυπάνου δ’, ὥσθ’ ὑπογαῖοι βροντῆς, φέρεται βαρυταρβής; / the twang shrills; and unseen, unknown bull-voiced mimes in answer bellow fearfully, while the timbrel’s echo, like that of subterranean thunder, rolls along inspiring a mighty terror” (Smyth 1976: 399-400, emphases added). This fragment, which describes the chorus’ celebration of Dionysus’s arrival in Thrace through ecstatic music, has been widely studied, and in return, the ritualistic undertones of the context have been downscaled to a certain extent, most notably by Gerald Else (1958: 73-4). Be that as it may, what merits even more attention than the ritualistic suggestions of the fragment, and, by extension, the notion of mimesis, is the phrase “unseen, unknown bull-voiced mimes,” of whose (off)stage gestural/vocal reproduction would (presumably) pass as central for the dramaturgy of the piece (ibid.: 74; Halliwell 2002: 17-8; Taplin 1977: 366-74). *Theoroi* swiftly recapitulates these physical nuances in a pivotal fashion: “εἴδωλον εἶναι τοῦτ’ ἐμὴ μορφὴ πλέον τὸ Δαιδάλου μ[ἴ]ημα: φωνῆς δὲι μόνον. / this image could be more [like] my looks, this Daedalus reproduction; all it lacks is a voice” (1958: 78, Else’s translation and brackets, emphases added). Here, the chorus of satyrs is on its way towards the temple of Poseidon by carrying painted images of themselves, which they delight in. As it stands in Else’s translation, the fragment gives a clear idea of how the image that the satyrs so greatly admire is an exact reproduction—or copy, if you like—of the “mimetic work” of Daedalus, firing one of the earliest signal flares of visual correspondence thereof. But there is more to it. Taking heed of “μορφή,” Halliwell aptly recognises that the word “better suits a full body-shape than a purely facial figuration” (2002: 20). In any case, Else’s remark as regards the archaic overtones of *mimēsis / mimos / mimeisthai* still seems to hold true: “these terms originally denoted a *dramatic* or quasi-dramatic representation, and their extension to nondramatic forms like painting and sculpture must have been a secondary development” (1958: 78, emphasis in the original). This remark only serves to foreground the performative and receptive aspects of mimesis.

What has been sought hitherto can by no means be taken as a definitive account on the roots of mimesis, nor on the words emerged from the *mim*-root for that matter. By taking issue

with Eva Keuls’ reading of Herodotus 2.78 on the basis of her thesis that “an underlying notion of enactment is always present [in mimesis prior to Plato]” (1978: 11; 20, brackets added), Halliwell first contends that “the verb mimeisthai [t]here refers, and surely can only refer, to the reproduction or copying of appearance” (1998: 110), and goes on to call attention to “the possibility of over-interpreting pre-Platonic occurrences of mimesis terminology in order to make them conceptually richer than their contexts warrant, and in order to make a case for a more determinate evolution of the usage of the word-group than the evidence really permits us to discern. It is important to stress that excessive interpretation of this kind is particularly inappropriate where authors are concerned who, like Herodotus, evince no interest in, or concern for, theoretical nicety in the use of mimesis words” (ibid: 110-1). Restricting the discussion of the previous paragraph to the Homeric Hymn to (the Delian) Apollo and Aeschylus’ Edonians and Theoroi, as well as focussing mainly on the physicality of mimesis, was a simple yet necessary precaution against the perils of this possibility. To be sure, this does not come to mean that the rest of the occurrences of the words pertaining to the mim-root lack this corporeal facet; but the chances are that one can probably be drawn into the temptation of “excessive interpretation” in these remaining instances, all of which are packed with various senses of mimesis like impersonation, imitation, replication, representation, and so forth, to such a deceptive degree that the gist of gestural/vocal physicality can easily go unnoticed.  

What has been sought hitherto, however, can plausibly be taken as a concluding note of an argumentative observation aimed to underscore the (gestural/vocal) corporeality intrinsic to mimesis by lending a close ear to its archaic overtones that are literally buried in ruins. The methodological motor behind this observation was the result of an intention to start scrutinising mimesis from the point where it arises to the best possible extent. While this conception of mimesis stakes no claims to the so-called origins of the notion, it does re-claim the physicality immanent to the concept on the assumption that this reclaim has much to say on modern theatre praxis. But before this reclamation makes its way to the contemporary staging practice in general, as well as to the theatrical praxes of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki in particular, it has to pass multiple barriers of theoretical and philosophical discourse. And it is exactly at this point in history that one can catch a sight of how theory decisively seizes upon practice. Where Herodotus shows no concerns for theoretical detail apropos mimesis, Plato would have none of it. Neither Aristotle.

9 In that passage, Herodotus “reports the Egyptian custom of carrying round at banquets a miniature wooden effigy of a corpse as a memento morti, which he describes as ‘extremely realistic (memimêmenon) in both painting and carving’” (ibid.)
10 See, for instance, the relevant analyses in Sörbom (1966: 41-77).
Mimesis qua Mimesis

It is perhaps for the reason above that Xenophon’s writings still carry that innocent attitude towards the connotations of the words derived from the *mim*-root, and on that ground alone prove to be a passe-partout for gaining access to the whole problematics of mimesis without directly bearing the stamp of a specific theoretical and philosophical discourse. In the well-known banquet scene in *Anabasis VI*. 1.9, where various dances are performed, a Mysian comes with a light shield in each hand, “καὶ τοτὲ μὲν ὁς δόο ἀντιταταμένων μιμούμενος ὀρχεῖτο, τοτὲ δὲ ὃς πρὸς ἕνα ἐχρήτῳ ταῖς πέλταις, τοτὲ δὲ ἐδίνεῖτο καὶ ἔξεκυβίστα ἔχον τὰς πέλταις, ὡστε ὡςν καλὴν φαίνεσθαι. / and at one moment in his dance he would go through a pantomime as though two men were arrayed against him, again he would use his shields as though against one antagonist, and again he would whirl and throw somersaults while holding the shields in his hands, *so that the spectacle was a fine one*” (Brownson 1980: 438-9, emphases added). In harmony with his overall thesis that mimesis “originally” meant “to behave like a mime actor,” Göran Sörbom supplies an alternative to Carleton L. Brownson’s “technical” rendering of “μιμούμενος” by suggesting (somewhat verbosely) that the phrase can be read as “‘at one moment he danced, behaving in the manner of a mime actor, as if two men were arrayed against him’” (1966: 79). Then again, what matters more than the linguistic translation of “μιμούμενος” is the ways through which the movement itself gives rise to an autonomous spectacle that brims with physicality.

Mimesis makes another highly physical entry in *Symposium II*. 21-23. Here, Philippus the “γελωτοποιός” is at the centre stage with two children and takes great pains to “μιμούμενος τὴν τε τοῦ παιδός καὶ τὴν τῆς παιδὸς ὄρχησιν / mimic in detail the dancing of both the boy and the girl” (Todd 1997: 552-3). Even though all of the English equivalents (i.e. buffoon, jester, clown and fool) of the noun “γελωτοποιός” work perfectly fine within the Attic context, Stephen Halliwell’s choice of “laughter-maker” (2008: 32) immediately conveys the comic tones inscribed in the word. Contra Sörbom, who supposes that the boy and the girl belong to Philippus’ company (1966: 79), in II. 1-4 Xenophon lays it bare that there are three children in total and with the man from Syracuse, they altogether form a professional troupe. This detail

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12 Sörbom, on the other hand, prefers to render it as “a professional entertainer” (1966: 79); an option that Halliwell also resorts to when elaborating upon the semantics of the word (2008: 40).

13 ἔρχεται αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ κόμοιν Σωρακόπους τις ἄνθρωπος, ἔχον τα ἀυλητρίδα ἀγαθὴν καὶ ὄρχηστρίδα τῶν τὰ θαύματα δυναμένων ποιεῖν, καὶ παῖδα πάνω γε ὕφασιν καὶ πάνω καλὸς κυθαρίζοντα καὶ ὄρχησμενον. / there entered
accounts for the latent performative tension between Philippus and the Syracusans who are, as Halliwell notes, “not part of the symposium proper” (2008: 154). Being a “proper” member of the symposium, Philippus thus endeavours to arouse laughter on behalf of his audience and makes “ἀνταπέδειξεν δὲ τι κινοὶ τοῦ σώματος ἄσπαν τῆς φύσεως γελοιότερον” ὅτι δ´ ἥ παίς εἰς τοῦποθεθὲν καμπτομένη τροχοῦς ἐμιμεῖτο, ἐκείνος ταῦτα εἰς τὸ ἐμπροσθὲν ἐπικύπτων μιμεῖσθαι τροχοῦς ἐπειράτο. / a burlesque out of the performance by rendering every part of his body that was in motion more grotesque than it naturally was; and whereas the girl had bent backward until she resembled a hoop, he tried to do the same by bending forward” (Todd 1997: 552-3, emphases added). Again, as in the case of Anabasis, the quoted excerpt depicts an autonomous performance but this time with an obvious slant towards tampering with the “natural” postures for the laughter to be “made.” Philippus certainly imitates both of the children’s acrobatics in the passage, yet he does so in his own way in order to do performative justice to the demands of his role as a “γελωτοποιός” in the symposium.

If these two passages from Anabasis and Symposium unveil the kinetics of mimesis, then Socrates’ famous conversation with the painter Parrhasius and the sculptor Cleiton vis-à-vis the mimetic potentials of their respective arts, as recounted in Xenophon’s Memorabilia III. 10.1-8, offers an insight into the dramaturgy of the notion. Xenophon sets the scene in such a way that the basic premise of the dialogue with Parrhasius—“γραφική ἐστιν εἰκασία τῶν ὄρωμένων / painting is a representation of the things seen” (Marchant 1997: 230-1, emphasis added)—reaches a climax with one of the most fundamental questions of the passage—“τὸ πιθανότατον καὶ ἥδιστον καὶ τυχικότατον καὶ ποθεινότατον καὶ ἐρασμώτατον ἀπομιμεῖσθε τῆς ψυχῆς ἔθος; ἢ οὐδὲ μιμητὸν ἐστὶ τούτο; / do you also reproduce the character of the soul, the character that is in the highest degree captivating, delightful, friendly, fascinating, lovable? Or is it impossible to imitate that? (ibid.: 232-3, emphasis added)—only to be resolved with a stress on the probability that the entire features of a character can be “καὶ διὰ τοῦ προσώπου καὶ διὰ τῶν σχημάτων καὶ ἐκπέφτων καὶ κινομένων ἀνθρώπων διαφαίνει. / reflected in the face and in the attitudes of the body whether still or in motion” (ibid., emphasis added). And Parrhasius surrenders. Edgar Cardew Marchant’s (un)certainty as regards to how to cope with the subtext of the dialogue finds an explanation in Halliwell’s opinion: “the difficulty of translating the mimesis language of this passage lies precisely in the fact that Socrates is shown attempting to stretch its sense and its scope” (1998: 112). The more the expressive limits of mimesis are pushed, the more the context surrounding the term becomes more of an issue in linguistic

a man from Syracuse to give them an evening’s merriment. He had with him a fine flute-girl, a dancing-girl—one of those skilled in acrobatic tricks,—and a very handsome boy, who was expert at playing the cither and at dancing” (Todd 1997: 542-3).
translation. Just as melting reproduction and imitation in the same semantic pot is characteristic of the dominant translational approaches to mimesis, conflation of representation with appearances is symptomatic of the translation strategies that (one way or another) end up with trimming down the nuances of the mimetic context. By accentuating to Xenophon’s “detailed vocabulary” and favouring “imaging/modelling of the visible world” instead of “representation of the things seen,” Halliwell passes a weighty remark in that regard: “Socrates’ intransitive use of the verb *diaphainein* (to show through) at 3.10.5, of the link between outer bodily signs (including the face) and ‘inner’ *ēthos*, is extremely interesting. Character ‘shows through’; it is a sort of emergent property. This metaphorical transparency is first applied to the phenomenology, the direct experience, of character in general, and then turned by Socrates into a justification for ascribing to figural art the capacity (which Parrhasius had originally doubted) to depict or express character in its visual medium” (2002: 123). The real weight of Halliwell’s remark resides in his engagement with the conceptual frame around mimesis, where world-making suggests itself as one of the many facets of the notion, let alone the intersemiotic hints that the context drops.

The problem, therefore, extends beyond the boundaries of the linguistic translation of mimesis and the words emerge from the *mim*-root. The point at stake is the context around the usages of mimesis. Socrates’ dialogue with Cleiton proceeds along the same dramaturgical lines. The preliminary question—“ὦ δὲ μάλιστα ψυχαγωγῇ διά τῆς ὑπερβούς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τὸ ἐν φαίνεσθαι, πῶς τοῦτο ἑνεργάζῃ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις; / how do you produce in them [your figures] that illusion of life which is their most alluring charm to the beholder?” (Marchant 1997: 234-5, brackets and emphasis added)—is hammered out until Cleiton finally yields to Socrates’ conclusion: Δεὶ ἄρα, ἔφη, τὸν ἀνθριαντοποιόν τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔργα τῷ εἴδει προσεικάζειν. / It follows, then, that *the sculptor must represent in his figures the activities of the soul*” (ibid.: 236-7, emphasis added). Over the course of the conversation, Socrates draws heavily on the mimesis nomenclature without overtly uttering it so as to make his point, and throughout his translation of the passage, Marchant appeals to such options as “faithful, accurate and exact” (ibid., passim) to render the crux of the dialogue, in which the connection between life and art surfaces even more than the previous one. As Halliwell maintains, “the adjective *zōtikon* identifies the simulation of ‘life’ that a viewer may experience ‘in’ an image, the sense of what might be termed its vividly ‘worldlike’ properties, while the verb *energazesthai*, literally ‘to work into,’ contrasting marks the artifactuality, the concretely ‘manufactured’ status, of the image” (2002: 123). On that note, Marchant’s choices stand to reason, albeit they inevitably associate mimesis with an imitation of life, where the context
itself simultaneously gestures towards the palpability of the work of art and the ensuing communication between its recipients.

At this point, it is imperative to underline that these considerations on Marchant’s (in)decision as to how to handle the mimesis terminology do not aim to pass value judgments on his translation, or on any type of linguistic translation concerned with mimesis for that matter. They simply serve to demonstrate what happens on a textual level when mimesis starts to get out of hand and becomes a vigorous component of a larger dramaturgical structure, where the recurrent problematics of art and aesthetics are addressed in a current fashion. This edifice poses serious challenges to the bulk of the contemporary critical discourse that is notorious for wheeling out ancient questions without necessarily bothering itself with the ways in which these issues were tackled in antiquity. After all, it is not a rocket science to unearth the mimetic bases of, say, the semiotic, cognitive and performative “turns” in Art and Humanities by just peering into the issues that Xenophon had already raised especially in *Memorabilia* III. 10.1-8. That being said, it would, at the same time, be sound to refrain from taking Xenophon’s writings too philosophically, even if they shed ample light on the dramaturgy of mimesis to which Plato would respond in his dialogues.

The fact that mimesis was conceptually a loaded term before the fifth-century, as well as the fact that Plato was ready to exploit it in his canon more than anyone else in the history of intellectual thought bring forth an immediate dichotomy: on the one hand, occurrences of mimesis and its cognates in virtually every Platonic dialogue render it infeasible to identify a cohesive “dogma” of mimesis in Plato; and on the other, this lack of a coherent usage does not overrule the central position that mimesis occupies in Plato’s thinking. Above all, moreover, there is a “verdict” on mimesis that cannot be undone regardless of the mimetic nature of the Platonic dialogues themselves. Methodological complications aside, Plato’s resort to numerous senses of mimesis through the course of developing his major arguments shows that the all-embracing character of the notion, in effect, constitutes the building stone/s of a counter philosophy that Plato strove to banish from his system of thought, and, by interpolation, from his ideal state. And at this stage, contextualisation-cum-dialectics appears to be the most reliable cure to endure the methodological complications that might arise from the diversity of Plato’s mimesis terminology, which, in turn, triggers Aristotle’s deceptively narrow employment of the mimesis language.

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14 As has been noted by Havelock (1963: 212-3, fn. 17), Sörbom (1966: 81), Halliwell (2002: 124; 2008: 140), and Puchner (2010: 24).

15 For the scope of Plato’s mimesis language, see, amongst others, McKeon (1936: 3-16); Sörbom (1966: 99-175), Janaway (1995: ch.5-6), and Melberg (1995: ch.1). See also, Halliwell (1998: 121) for an extremely helpful categorisation of Plato’s mimesis vocabulary.
Halliwell’s view provides one with a firm starting point to delve into the lineaments of Plato’s intricate response to mimesis, where metaphysical correspondence turns out to be the main philosophical motor. “We are told,” he writes, “on Aristotle’s testimony, that certain Pythagoreans conceived of the relation between the sensible world of men and objects, and the hidden, ultimate, metaphysical world of numbers, as one of mimesis,” and goes on to state that “there is no doubt that Plato was to interpret the relation in question as one between inferior and superior, the false and the true” (1998: 115). That Halliwell lays particular emphasis on Timaeus, in which Plato gives an elaborate account of the creation of the world by the Demiurge via Timaeus’ description of “the visible world as being as like as possible to the eternal ‘in the mimesis of unchanging nature’: the world is a mimêma of a model, and all the transient shapes and properties which come into being in the stuff of the world are themselves ‘mimêmata of eternal objects’” (ibid.: 117), reinforces the argumentative bases of this claim to a considerable extent. It is striking to observe how Plato gives a philosophical twist to one of the most defining characteristics of mimesis by transforming its association with world-making into that of world-creating. Additionally, and maybe more importantly, prior to the far-reaching conclusion that “τούτων δὲ ύπαρχόντων αὐτὸ πάσα ἀνάγκη τὸν κόσμον εἰκόνα τινὸς εἶναι / since these things are so, it follows by unquestionable necessity that this world is an image of something”\(^\text{16}\) at 29b, Timaeus’ interchangeable uses of “δημιουργός” and “ποιητής,” that is to say, “craftsman” and “maker,” indicates that Plato deems the Demiurge at once as an artisan and an artist,\(^\text{17}\) although the ambiguous nature of the passage blurs the already blurred line between the two in antiquity\(^\text{18}\) to a certain degree. Plainly put: for Plato, the world, and, by “unquestionable necessity,” nature itself is the mimetic creation of the Demiurge, who is the craftsman par excellence, yet whose identity is “ἀδύνατον λέγειν / impossible to tell” (28c).

Bearing in mind that both artisanship and artistry encompass a wide array of activities within the specific context of antiquity, it becomes possible to divulge one of the most Platonic constants that manifests itself in Laws VII. Halliwell, for one, lays special stress on the Athenian’s imaginary reply at 817b, where he ponders on the prospect of an encounter between the legislators of the ideal polis and a professional troupe of travelling tragic actors: “Honored visitors,” says the Athenian in Halliwell’s translation, “we ourselves aspire to be poets/makers


\(^{17}\) But compare and contrast Christopher Janaway’s objection to the remark that Plato’s Demiurge is an artist (1995: 158-9) with Halliwell (1998: 118-9, fn. 19), where he regards it as the “divine poet.”

\(^{18}\) The line gets blurred even more once one recalls the broad range that the notion of techne covers in antiquity. For a detailed view, see Halliwell (1998: ch.2, esp. 43-5).

* My translation.
[poiētai] of the finest and best tragedy; our whole state/constitution [politeia] is constructed as a representation [mimēsis] of the finest and best life—which is what we count as the truest tragedy [tragōidian tēn aλēthestatēn]. So you and we turn out to be poets using the same materials, and we are your rivals and competitors in producing the finest drama” (2002: 106, brackets and emphasis in the original). The Athenian’s answer is revealing in that it locates the poet/maker alliance at the heart of the ways through which the “well-governed” polis function, and in the rivalry between the lawgivers and the wandering tragic actors, he allows the legislators a constant margin of victory on the condition that they put mimesis into practice so as to bring into being the paradigm of the superlative life: “the truest tragedy.” By that margin, Plato acknowledges the conceptual and philosophical benefits that he can derive from mimesis in terms of building an ethical bridge between the ways of this world and those of that world, which lies, in essence, beyond perception.

The examples of Timaeus and Laws VII make it clear that Plato was not done with mimesis at all after laying “the greatest charge” against it in Republic X. 605c-d, which is generally taken to be Plato’s last word on mimesis and reiterated by a myriad of scholars in a perfunctory fashion, perhaps most clumsily in Theatre Studies, where both mimesis qua representation and mimesis qua imitation have the most derogatory allusions. It first appears that Hans Thies-Lehmann is right in pronouncing recently that “Plato’s rage against (more than his critique of) tragedy already aimed for the whole. He viewed it as base poiesis, merely the result of artisanal ‘doing’ and not real activity in the higher, intellectual sense: tragedy stands far removed from the truth of ideas; it is just the mimesis of mimesis” (2016: 24). But it is, in actual fact, the (presumed) nemesis of tragedy-cum-mimesis who gives the strongest blow to Lehmann’s theoretical premises by elevating mimesis-cum-tragedy to a “higher” sphere of ideas, whose projection onto the perceivable world can be found most tangibly in the practical field of theatre. Moving carefully along the same line, it can be contended that theatre, on the conceptual layer of the Platonic thought at least, assumes full range of philosophical and ethical responsibilities while projecting the core values of this “higher” realm of ideas onto the sensible world.

Yet, supposing that assigning such crucial philosophical and ethical responsibilities to theatre could lift the ban on mimesis in the Platonic system of thought would be an all too easy solution to a highly complex problem. There might be room for “φιλοποιηταὶ / lovers of poetry” in the Republic, as long as they are “μὴ ποητικοὶ / not practitioners of poetry” (607d) and capable of proffering a defence of it only in prose.* Here, it is vital to observe that the

* Unless indicated otherwise, all English translations of the Republic are mine.
poet/maker alliance now operates even more decisively on the level of praxis and the entire practitioners of mimesis are strictly banned from the *polis* because of its power to “λωβάσθαι / corrupt...βέλτιστοι ἡμῶν ἀκροώμενοι ὦ όμηρος ἢ ἄλλοι τινός τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν μιμουμένου τινά τῶν ἦρώων ἐν πένθει / even the best of us when we hear Homer or some other tragedian making a mimesis of one of the grieving heroes” (605c-d, aposiopesis added). Following the argumentative thread of “the greatest charge” against mimesis, it can further be contested that Plato fires his sharpest arrows of criticism to the *embodiment* of theatre, if not overtly to the art of theatre. The distinction is pivotal. What assumes full range of ethical and philosophical responsibilities on the conceptual level of the Platonic thought cannot be put into practice due to the fact that what theatre offers on the practical plane, has the capacity to corrupt not only “the best of us,” but at the same time the whole notion of *polis*, which is, in the words of Halliwell, “a large-scale paradigm for the mind, ‘the city in the soul’” (2002: 49). And that, in a nutshell, is the taproot of Plato’s full-scale campaign against theatricality, which surfaces most palpably in praxis.

Plato’s mistrust in the embodiment of theatre is firmly established by a variety of counter arguments, ranging from the “side effects” of behavioural imitation to the “falsified” character of visual representation, all of which have been interspersed throughout the *Republic* and “the greatest charge” amounts to the culmination of these aptly wrought additional accusations against mimesis.\(^19\) However harsh it might be, the ethical grounds of “the greatest charge” are hard to shake, and “the chief accusation” itself strikes a raw nerve with respect to the craft of acting. In that regard, recalling Socrates’ severe question in *Ion* 535b enables one to notice the governing (f)actor behind “the greatest charge” argument: “When you recite epic poetry well and you have the most stunning effect on your spectators, either when you sing of Odysseus—how he leapt into the doorway, his identity now obvious to the suitors, and he poured out arrows at his feet—or when you sing of Achilles charging at Hector, or when you sing a pitiful episode about Andromache or Hecuba or Priam, *are you at that time in your right mind, or do you get beside yourself? [τότε πότερον ἐμφαρόν εἶ ἢ ἐξω σαυτοῦ γίγνῃ]” (Plato 1997: 942-3, brackets and emphasis added). And Ion, the rhapsodist, admits honestly that he is carried away when he hits home the emotions of his audience during his performances. This, in fact, is the crux of “the chief accusation” against mimesis: doomed to fail in its ethical quest of providing a concrete image of the model, whose origin lies beyond perception, theatre-cum-mimesis, even at its best, puts into action nothing, illustrates nothing, apart from the “corrupted” version of that model. And that model, in any performative case, will always be embodied by

\(^{19}\) See Halliwell (2011a: 241-66) for an extensive account on Plato’s treatment of mimesis in the *Republic.*
a *hypocrite* in the strictest sense of the word. Plato, in a certain sense, appears to ask from the actor do the impossible by placing an ethical burden on its shoulders: the actor has to be nothing, absolutely nothing, so as to be able to avoid any potential emotional corruption that might be caused on the souls of the masses. And soul, for Plato, as he makes it explicit in *Phaedrus* 245c, is “ἀρχὴ κινῆσας / the beginning of all motion” in the world, where the ideal form of the Demiurge shines through nature. Any corruption of the soul, therefore, would impair the origin of the pure form. For that reason alone, mimesis-cum-theatre, with all its gravitation towards praxis, is *bound to* remain in exile, in spite of the whole set of ethical and philosophical responsibilities it assumes on the conceptual level of the Platonic thought. As such, Plato’s response to mimesis reaches a deadlock, to the extent that the ideal form of the craftsman par excellence is *imposed* upon the soul, which “περιφρονησασα / having lost its wings…κατοικισθε̱σα, σῶμα γῆινον / settles down in an earthly soma” (246c, aposiopesis added) and begins to move *itself* in this worldly body as an envoy of the Demiurge.

The dialectic between Plato and Aristotle seems to start exactly at this juncture, where the latter’s conception of “πρῶτον κινοῦν ἁκίνητον / prime (first) unmoved mover” that is most thoroughly elaborated in his *Metaphysics* and *Physics* comes into play as a counter argument against the former’s notion of motion.20 In her keen reading of Aristotle’s (meta)physics, Helen S. Lang takes particular heed of the root proposition of *Physics* VII that “motion in things must be eternal” and after weighing the pros and cons of her exegesis that “if motion in things is to be eternal, it must be shown first that some motion must be capable of being continuously and secondly what this motion is. This motion, he concludes, must be circular locomotion. But this motion is not fully explained until we reach its first cause, namely a first unmoved mover” (2007: 211), acknowledges the difficulty of identifying the prime mover (ibid.: 213) in *Corpus Aristotelicum*. Despite the problem of identification, the red flag that Lang raises compels one to differentiate between a “truly” prime unmoved mover that the Aristotle indisputably sites outside the perceivable world as the unique cause of motion, and an unmoved mover in the cosmos as the ensuing continuance of the first unmoved move. The difference is minute and it underwrites Aristotle’s definition of nature: “φύσεως ἀρχῆς τίνος καὶ αἰτίας τοῦ κινεῖσθαι καὶ ἠρεμεῖν ἐν ὧ ὑπάρχει πρῶτος / nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily” (*Physics* II, 192b22-23, emphasis added).21 This

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*Unless indicated otherwise, all English translations of *Phaedrus* are mine.

20 Aristotle’s discussion of the (prime/first) unmoved mover is exhaustive and the multitudinous references to the notion makes it infeasible to list all of them. But the most defining occurrences are in *Metaphysics* IV, 1012b31; XII, 1072a-1075a12-15 and in *Physics* II, 198b1; VIII, 260a15-18.

formulation does more than disclosing that nature is the cosmic equivalent of the “true” prime unmoved mover. Instead, the notional power of the definition resides in the stress it places on stillness innate to nature, which, in turn, proves to be the dynamic driving force behind what Lang would consider as the “intrinsic principle” (2007: 49, emphasis in the original) of nature. One might as well regard stillness as the “intrinsic principle of motion in nature” thanks to the fact that it is stillness that sets nature into motion in Aristotle’s (meta)physics in the first place.

Obviously referring to the “true” prime unmoved mover, Theodor Adorno unfolds the nuances of the issue: “The unmoved mover is, fundamentally, nothing other than pure form existing in itself, which, as it were, draws everything up towards it. Although itself immobile, it is like a magnet of pure actuality, or pure energy, pulling up everything which is merely potential towards it and, in this way, realizing itself to an ever-increasing degree” (2001: 59). Adorno’s remark is noteworthy in the sense that it underscores how the concept of form is always already embedded into the “true” prime unmoved mover, of whose telos is nothing short of actualisation and praxis. As the unmoved mover in cosmos, nature embodies pure form in a fashion devoid of any external imposition, so much so that the correlation between the two holds the key to Aristotle’s comprehension of art, and, by extension, his grasp of mimesis that is succinctly encapsulated in the dictum of “art imitates nature” (Physics II, 194a21; 199a15); a maxim which has been transmogrified into an aesthetic cause célèbre that would preoccupy intellectuals from Middle Ages to Renaissance, from Renaissance to Enlightenment, and from Enlightenment to successive -isms.

At the outset, it is important to keep in mind that Aristotle arrives at his alignment of form with nature only after ensuring the supremacy of the latter above all as a substance and a subject. And the incorporation of art into discussion ensues: “διόσπερ γὰρ τέχνη λέγεται τὸ κατὰ τέχνην καὶ τὸ τεχνικὸν, οὕτω καὶ φύσις τὸ κατὰ φύσιν [λέγεται] καὶ τὸ φυσικὸν / the word ‘nature’ is applied to what is according to nature and the natural in the same way as ‘art’ is applied to what is artistic or a work of art” (Physics II, 193a31-33). Form, without a doubt, bestows upon things an artistic, or better, artisanal quality by moving them in tune with their intrinsic principle of motion. Drawing on Aristotle’s usage of two separate, yet tightly knit conceptions of nature, that is, “nature” and “things that are by nature,” Lang brings forward the notion of matter, and having pointed out that “in natural things, matter is never neutral to form, and form never needs to impress itself or be impressed (by another) upon matter,” she adds an extra layer to the topic: “Nature may be constructively contrasted with art. Matter has no innate


22 See also, Meteorology 381b6.
impulse toward artistic form and so an artist must impose such form on it; if the process is interrupted, the work remains incomplete. But in nature, form, once in contact with matter, immediately causes the matter to be moved, and the matter is moved immediately because it is oriented toward form” (2007: 53, emphasis in the original). Probably because her main interest lies in studying the order of nature in Aristotle’s physics, Lang’s view sheds light merely on the first portion of the Aristotle’s dictum where he contemplates on the bond between form and matter during the course of art’s mimesis of nature in Physics II, 194a21. It can, however, be argued that the contrast ratio between art and nature depends on the manner through which Aristotle deploys mimesis in the second portion of his axiom: “δόλως δὲ ἢ τέχνη τὰ μὲν ἐπιτελεῖ ἄ ἢ φύσις ἄδοναταὶ ἀπεργᾶσθαι, τὰ δὲ μιμεῖται. / and generally art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, and partly imitates her” (Physics II, 199a15, emphasis added).

A close glance at Aristotle’s formulation reveals that there exists a poietic strain between art and nature, between the auxiliary and the primary. Within this strain Aristotle strains mimesis qua mimesis to such an extent that it can consummate what mimesis qua imitation can partially fulfil. Hence the cardinal importance that Aristotle attaches to art.

It is worth handling this argument with great care, as it stands on the tightrope between the notions of poiesis and techne, both of which are indispensable to mimesis and both of which have been prowling around the ongoing discussion. Whilst Aristotle gives no straight definition of mimesis in the Poetics, or anywhere else for that matter, he again and again identifies it with praxis when delineating what he takes to be the most supreme form of techne: tragedy.23 As a matter of fact, the treatise abounds with such assertions as “tragedy is a mimesis of a praxis,” “the muthos (plot) is a mimesis of praxis” and “tragedy is mimesis not of persons but of praxis and life.”24 Here, invoking the poet/maker alliance, as well as recalling that “poet” and “maker” were used synonymously in antiquity might be of help, since Aristotle conflates the two in order to drive home one of his essential points in 1451b27-29: “τὸν ποιητὴν μᾶλλον τὸν μύθων εἶναι δεῖ ποιητὴν ἢ τὸν μέτρον, ὅσο ποιητῆς κατὰ τὴν μίμησιν ἑστιν, μιμεῖται δὲ τὰς πρᾶξεις. / the poet [then] should be more a maker of plots than of verses, in so far as he is a poet by virtue of mimesis, and his mimesis is of actions” (Halliwell 1995: 60-1, brackets added).25 As it is, Aristotle not only combines the respective semantic forces of poiesis and mimesis with techne, but also builds a bridge between (meta)physical mimesis and artistic mimesis.

24 Cf. The Poetics 1449b24; 1449b36; 1450a16; 1450b3 and 1452a2 for Aristotle’s association of mimesis with praxis.
Nonetheless, in stark contrast to its solid abutments, the bridge itself hangs on a thread. Calling the aesthetic and historical reception of Aristotle’s tenet of “art imitates nature” into question, Halliwell opines that “mimesis in the mimetic arts is a matter of representational content (poetry’s representation of ‘action(s) and life’), whereas nature is not the intentional object or content of human artistry in the formula of the Physics” (2002: 352, emphasis in the original). Notwithstanding the robust grounds upon which Halliwell builds his opinion, his view appears to underestimate the (meta)physical implications of the embodiment of theatre that is possibly best fathomed by Philip Lacoue-Labarthe, who muses on the issue along Aristotelian lines: “Theatrical mimesis, in other words, provides the model for general mimesis. Art, since it substitutes for nature, since it replaces it and carries out the poietic process that constitutes its essence, always produces a theater, a representation. That is to say, another presentation or the presentation of something other, which was not yet there, given or present” (1989: 257, emphases in the original). Furthermore, one can dovetail Lacoue-Labarthe’s stance with that of Martin Heidegger, who seeks an answer as to what constitutes the essence of things in nature in Aristotelian terms. Heidegger places maximum weight on a basis, the basis, which “is ἀρχὴ and has a double meaning: that from which something emerges, and that which governs over what emerges in this way. The body is ἀρχὴ κινήσεως. What an ἀρχὴ κινήσεως in this manner is, is φύσις, the primordial mode of emergence” (1967: 83). Read one after the other, Lacoue-Labarthe and Heidegger comprise the metaphysical basis for a notional appreciation of the sine qua non of theatre: its (f)actuality. Without being discouraged by Aristotle’s alleged lack of emphasis on the embodiment of theatre, and concomitantly turning to Halliwell himself with this metaphysical basis in mind for the sake of dialectics, is of primary significance for a firm grasp of Aristotelian mimesis that proves to be meta-physical in the most literal sense of the word: a notion that nods to something beyond nature, that is to say, the true prime unmoved mover, which can be re-cognised only through nature, that is, the unmoved mover, which comes into being through body, which, in turn, finds its performative voice in the distinctive physical techne of the actor delivered in total devotion to the notion of prepon that “πιθανοὶ δὲ τὸ πρῶτον / makes the fact appear credible” (Freese 1926: 378-9, emphasis added), as he would put it in Rhetoric III. 7, 1408a4. So Halliwell on the Poetics: “Aristotle describes the components of the ‘complex’ plot as the most psychagogically powerful means at tragedy’s disposal. But near the end of chapter 6 he also applies the cognate adjective, ψυχαγωγικός, to the possible impact of visual presentation (opsis) in the tragic theatre. When making that last point, he separates the

26 And such notable scholars as McKeon (1936: 17-8), Sörbom (1966: 179-180) and Husain (2002: ch.2, esp. 18-26), all of whom demarcate a sharp line between “general” and “aesthetic” senses of mimesis with good reason.

organization of this aspect of tragic performance from the art of the poet himself” (2011b: 226).28

The thread thus turns into an argumentative one. Certainly not against Halliwell; but rather against the advocates of a discourse that stems from what he deems as “narrow verdicts” (ibid.: fn. 42) on “Aristotle’s much maligned attitude to theatrical performance of drama” (2001: fn. 47). As a telling case, one can lend an ear to Martin Puchner, who recognises the Aristotle’s stress on prattontes, “which is derived from the word praxis and thus suggests the execution of a real action, in contrast to deceitful make-believe. Aristotle’s decision to use praxis and prattontes to denote an action presented by a dramatic text on the stage is meant to defend the theater from the accusation that it features hypocrites who feign emotions. And once Aristotle has constructed a nonhypocritical agent-actor, he can proceed to save the visuality of the theater, what he calls opsis” (2002: 23). Having built his argument on how Aristotle “evades Plato’s standard term for actor, namely, hypocrite” (ibid.); having, moreover, appropriately quoted the Aristotle on opsis,29 Puchner draws his conclusion: “In the last analysis, then, Aristotle may save actors by associating them with nondeceitful action, but eventually it is action, and not the actors, that stands at the center of tragedy” (ibid.: 24). Be that as it may, clues in the Poetics seem to belie Puchner, for Aristotle in no way stops short of granting the poet with the qualities of the actor. Commenting on the context through which Aristotle underlines this point in 1455a29-30, Halliwell holds that “his suggestions bring the poet into line both with the actor and the rhetorician, and the injunction that the poet should visualize his dramatic events as vividly as possible (as if he were: a traditional formulation), even to the point of acting them out with gestures, loses its superficial peculiarity once we take account of the tradition of the poet-producer tradition in the Athenian theatre (and also recall the standard practice of reciting poetry aloud)” (1998: 89). Apparently, in a manner analogous to his complaints on Aristotle’s evasion of Plato’s hypocrite, Puchner himself “evades” a meticulous reading of the Poetics in order to make deductions vis-à-vis the two philosophers’ subsequent approaches to the actor. That Puchner drops his ideational anchors at the two thinkers’ vexed treatments of diegesis30 — narrative mode—comes as no surprise, for doing so allows him to

28 Halliwell is not the only classicist who recognised this aspect of opsis in the Poetics. The essays in Harrison and Liapis (2013) demonstrate that opsis itself proves to be a vigorous tool to construct the performance histories of Ancient Greek and Roman Drama. See, in particular, the introduction (1-42), as well as the relevant articles on opsis in the volume.
29 Compare and contrast The Poetics 1449b30-32, “ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττοντες ποιοῦνται τῆς μίμησις, πρὸς τὸν μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἄν ἐν ἰδιότους τραγῳδίας ὁ τῆς ὀψεως κόσμος [since the characters/actors produce mimesis, it follows that in the first place tragedy will consist of visual spectacle]” (quoted in Puchner 2002: 23) with “since the actors render the mimesis, some part of tragedy will, in the first place, necessarily be the arrangement of spectacle” (Halliwell 1995: 49).
30 But see Kirby (1991: 113-28; esp. 114-7), for an account that casts narratological light on the issue.
find the almost perfect path whereby to put Plato and Aristotle on a collision course: “when Aristotle talks about narrative he often uses alternative terms such as ἀπαγγελία, or apaggelia, which means ‘report’ or ‘story.’ This change in terminology is strategic because it is geared toward circumventing Plato’s categorical opposition between diegesis and mimesis, just as the term prattontes was geared toward circumventing the deceptive make-believe of the hypocrites” (2002: 24). Even so, Puchner sidesteps the crux of the point at stake again by “circumventing” what Plato considers to be the most pure diegesis in Republic III 394c: “ποιήσεώς τε καὶ μυθολογίας ἢ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἔστιν, ἢ δὲ σὺ λέγεις, τραγῳδία τε καὶ κομῳδία, ἢ δὲ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ—εὐρος δ’ ἂν αὐτήν μάλιστα που ἐν διθυράμβοις / [there is] one sort of poetry and muthos-telling that operates entirely through mimesis, as you said, tragedy and comedy; and another that employs the ‘report or story’ of the poet/maker; you find this mostly in the dithyramb.” Here, the linguistic translation deliberately tolerates the verbosity resulting from the insertion of “report or story”—a necessary insertion that is meant to foreground Puchner’s main point that sets great store by Plato’s conception of pure diegesis: the dithyramb. Puchner’s circumvention of the dithyramb gives rise to much more severe consequences than the ones incurring from his evasion of a duteous reading of the Poetics, since Plato makes crucial use of the exact “alternative term/s” that Puchner is so critical of. In addition to that, there is hardly a change in terminology when it comes to Plato’s articulation of pure diegesis, the dithyramb; the bedrock of Attic tragedies31 that not only rocks the foundations of Puchner’s otherwise invaluable thesis, but also coerces one to think thrice, so to speak, about Plato’s convoluted response to mimesis qua mimesis before pitting him against Aristotle to be able to develop major arguments on “modern drama and modern theatre” (2002: 24).

Nevertheless, this critique does by no means devalue Puchner’s comparison of the two philosophers; on the contrary: it sets contextual circumstances, under which one can revalue his point of view: “Aristotle’s largest concession to Plato is the claim that drama should be able to do without acting altogether and content itself with being read (ἀναγινώσκειν) (1462a), and Aristotle probably envisions here a silent reading” (ibid.: 23). Puchner puts his finger on a sore spot in the Poetics. The actor is bound to play the supplementary part within the dramaturgical design of the treatise and this indeed is the most troubling aspect of the Poetics, regardless of the abovementioned ebbs and flows in Aristotle’s attitude towards the performer. All the same, it can be said that whilst Puchner is right in stating that Aristotle privileges reading over acting, a thorough meditation on the Poetics once again impugns his assumptions regarding the mode

31 See esp. The Poetics 1449a10-11.
of reading in question, since in both 1450b18-19 and 1453b3-6 the Aristotle unequivocally “envisions” reading poetry aloud so that “τὸν ἄκοιντα τὰ πράγματα γινόμενα καὶ φρίττειν καὶ ἔλεεῖν / the person who hears the events that occur experiences horror and pity” (Halliwell 1995: 73, emphases added). Even though reading poetry aloud alone can barely solve the problems in Aristotle’s ambivalent approach towards the actor, it does bring the physicality of the act of recitation to light. The point is vital. It appears that even when dividing the line between acting and reading in order to relegate the actor to the peripheries of his dramaturgical scheme, Aristotle harks back—whether knowingly or not—to an archaic notion of mimesis and—whether willingly or not—transforms it into an essential component of his framework, which, in turn, allows the actor to hold that line in the Poetics. This surfaces most perceptibly in his remark in 1449a10-11 with respect to the birth of tragedy “ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν ὀπίθυραμβον / from the leaders of dithyramb” (ibid.: 40-1, emphases added). And those leading the dithyramb are nobody but close relatives of such “masters of mimesis” as the Delian Maidens, and the leaders of the choruses in Aeschylus’ Edonians and Theoroi.

Comparing and contrasting Plato with Aristotle, and vice versa, as well as taking sides with or against the other so as to throw ancient light on modern craft of acting bears little fruit. Neither of the two philosophers is as pure as the driven snow, as far as their behaviour towards the actor is concerned. Neither hypocrite, nor prattontes have the relative innocence of Xenophon’s Mysian or “γελωτοποίος.” Yet, neither of the two is bereft of conceptual strength that has much to offer for the debates around the actor within the context of the contemporary theatre praxes. That mimesis is the fountainhead behind this notional power is a mixed blessing, a double-edged sword, so to speak, that cuts both ways. The ethical grounds of “the greatest charge” that Plato lays against mimesis are so solid—and Aristotle’s consequent defence of mimesis is so profound—that after a certain point, one cannot help but choose sides either to abase the notion as imitation/realism, or to promote the concept as a prerequisite for representation. Both Plato and Aristotle confer upon mimesis such a potent conceptual and theoretical discourse that the common ground, where the actor—the master of mimesis stands, is lost.

Or so it seems. Although trying to dig out a “theory” of acting from Plato and Aristotle is a farfetched enterprise, it is in their notional accounts of mimesis that the actor arguably still holds the ground—that common ground—when the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice turns it into a discursive battlefield. Far from being an attempt to reconcile Plato and Aristotle on mimesis, this stress on common ground brings dialectics to the fore as a mode of thinking to comprehend the ways in which these two philosophers constitute the building stones of the dramaturgy of the notion. Now, by simply going back to “ἀρχὴ κινήσεως,” that is, the
beginning of all motion, it becomes possible to reap the benefits of the dialectical hints that have been dropped so far. Recalling Lang in that regard helps to flesh these hints out: “they agree that ‘everything moved must be moved by another’; but for Plato this proposition implies a first mover that must be self-moving as an identity of mover and moved, whereas for Aristotle it implies an unmoved first mover” (2007: 58, emphases in the original). Being the primary instrument of the actor, the body, or rather, the mimetic body, plays the dialectical role here. As was indicated previously, for Plato soul is the legate of the Demiurge; it settles itself down in a cosmic soma and imposes the pure form of the craftsman par excellence onto the mimetic body only to tame it. This extrinsic source of motion explains Plato’s resistance to praxis, i.e. embodiment of theatre. Aristotle, in turn, locates the beginning of all motion in nature, or to be more precise, in the mimetic body that goes hand in hand with the intrinsic principle of motion in nature: stillness, by way of which art, that is, the (f)actuality of theatre, builds upon nature via mimesis. And as regards to the “corruption” of the soul, the Aristotle purges Plato’s charges against mimesis by conjoining the performative-cum-ethical forces of the notion with katharsis; probably the most complex term in his entire philosophy that leads even such a versed scholar in antiquity as Halliwell “to remain (almost) silent” (2002: 206) about.

The dialectic between Plato and Aristotle seems to lend itself to conceptual translation exactly at this juncture, where the dramaturgy of mimesis eventually takes its notional shape. Following the current dialectical strand, one might as well translate the argumentative tension between Plato and Aristotle into the logos of the notional dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis. After all, the manners through which both of the philosophers’ individual takes on mimesis prove to be no less than complementary to each other. The tension thus turns into an advantage: within the conceptual dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis, Plato’s Demiurge comes to be the authoritarian director, demanding from the actor to square the circle—a taxing archaic task that cannot be performed without Aristotle’s intrinsic principle of motion, namely, stillness, which enables the actor to surpass even the impossible. And this, in a word, is the dramaturgical legacy of mimesis qua mimesis, handed down from generation to generation, that has been generated and regenerated: mainly mimesis qua imitatio(n).

Mimesis qua Imitatio(n)

There is in every act of transmission a part of choice and a portion of tradition. Concepts and ideas travel in time and space (mostly but not exclusively) according to what different schools of thought select as their various aspects and appropriate them as notional vehicles, either to buttress or override the established conventions. In this regard, the heavy shadows of the
Academy and the Lyceum on the circulation of mimesis in the Hellenistic Period is never arbitrary. The resultant discourse emanating from the respective schools of Plato and Aristotle opens up incalculable avenues of mimesis to trail in a way that it becomes virtually infeasible for one to know even where to start. Be that as it may, what appears to be an ordeal at the beginning might turn out to be not so punishing, once one shifts the focus from mimesis to the dramaturgical legacy of the notion with a special emphasis on the role of the actor. Then again, this methodological manoeuvre too does not resolve the issue in toto; it merely permits for a temporary respite from Plato, of whose complicated response to mimesis comes to a standstill as a result of the ethical demands that he places on the actor.

The case of Aristotle is somewhat different. Considering that the *Poetics* is a treatise written “in prose” by a “lover of poetry” in view of the theatrical praxes of fifth-century BCE Athens obliges one to take the text in its strictest sense: as a philosophical defence of poetry against the “verdicts” on mimesis. Penned qua defence, the *Poetics* ranks tragedy above all and subsumes such performers of antiquity as rhapsodists, dancers, actors, rhetoricians and so on under poetry. Seen in this light, Aristotle’s hesitant behaviour towards the actor is comprehensible. The point that needs to be put forward, however, is the undeniable fact that the dramaturgical framework of the *Poetics* allows room—even more spacious room than Aristotle would admit—for the actor. While the physical-cum-performative tone that the archaic conception of mimesis could still acquire within the structure of the *Poetics* provides one with every reason to make and defend this point, the same cannot be said for the works produced in the Hellenistic Era, in which the rhetorician parts ways with its performative companions and supersedes the actor, who has already been a troubling, yet tolerable figure for the Aristotle, and who, in turn, has made considerable use of the craft of acting in his meditations on the art of rhetoric. Reflecting on the receptive dynamics of the *Poetics* in the Hellenistic Period, Stephen Halliwell passes an acute remark: “In contrast to Aristotle, for whom rhetoric is one component element within tragedy and epic, and for whom the poetic production of emotion is not a matter of manipulating an audience but of constructing a literary artefact with certain objectively emotive properties, the Hellenistic age saw the establishment of a thoroughly rhetorical view of poetry, or even, for some, of language in general” (1998: 289, emphases added). Halliwell’s point is important in that it shows at once where Aristotle’s priorities lie and how the Hellenistic Era picks up one specific feature of the *Poetics* and transforms it into a totally new literary apparatus, which would deny access for the actor to that undeniable, spacious room in the discourse related to the study and practice of theatre. “Such a

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32 Cf., most obviously, *Rhetoric* III. I., 1404a-1404b, where Aristotle identifies the act of delivery with the ability to act.
Halliwell goes on to add, “has a tendency to drive a wedge between style and content, and to emphasise the former at the expense of the latter. One consequence of this is a concern with discrete linguistic effects rather than coherent structures; another is a penchant for compositional formulae and rules” (ibid.).

It is most probable for this prescriptive bent for poetic composition to take a visible toll on mimesis when the concept embarks on its interpretative journey and starts to move from one language to another via translation. The fact that Latin was the first port of call in this translational voyage, not to mention the fact that there is a direct proportion between the Roman imitatio and the etymological-cum-semantic impact that it has upon one’s immediate encounter with mimesis, illustrates the degree to which a translation project can reach. Martin Heidegger recognises in more than many respects the perils inherent in this process: “Beneath the seemingly literal and thus faithful translation there is concealed, rather, a translation, of Greek experience into a different way of thinking. Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation” (2001: 23, emphases in the original). There is a good deal of truth in these words: what is at stake in this expedition is not a simple linguistic transfer of ideas and concepts from Greek to Latin; instead, the ways in which this translation movement gradually goes underground throughout history to inscribe itself into the very definitions of the terms themselves become more of an issue. In this sense, the transmutation of mimesis into imitation does not constitute an exception. Cicero, for one, in De oratore 2.34 poses a definitional question: “Qui actor imitanda, quam orator suscipienda veritate iucundior? / What actor gives keener pleasure by his imitation of real life than your orator affords in his conduct of some real case?” (Sutton and Rackham 1967: 222-3).

A full set of complexities about mimesis is hereby clarified in a manner that separates the wheat from the chaff, as has been aptly noticed by Elaine Fantham: “For Cicero the stage actor merely imitated reality, whereas the orator engaged with it: the actor was only the performer of a role created by another (the poet) outside himself, but the orator was both originator of his own role and responsible for it” (2002: 363). These distinctly Roman lines that Fantham sketches out would eventually forge the rails of a train of thought that goes all the way through modern drama and resonate with what the majority of the practitioners and theoreticians of theatre

33 Following Heidegger’s reading of “ἀλήθεια” as “unconcealedness” against the backdrop of the Roman veritas: “In the essence of truth as un-concealedness there holds sway some sort of conflict with concealedness and concealment” (1992a: 14).

nowadays strive for: to be able to engage with reality at all costs, whatever that might mean anymore. To that extent, all makers of theatre are some sort of orators, if not *rhetors*\(^{35}\) in pursuit of finding discursive, if not performative, means to de-/re-contextualise mimesis qua imitation, if not mimesis qua mimesis.

But one cannot grasp this train of thought without taking cognisance of its locomotive: translation. Cicero outlines its mechanics most famously in *De optimo genere oratorum* 5.14, when referring to his translations of Attic *rhetors* as prescriptions for prospective orators: “nec *converti ut interpres, sed ut orator*, sententiiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, verbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis. In quibus *non verbum pro verbo* necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi / *I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator*, keeping the same ideas and the forms, or as one might say, the ‘figures’ of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language*” (Hubbell 1976: 364-5, emphases added).\(^{36}\) Cicero’s declamation forms a counterpoint to Heidegger’s vehement critique; Romans themselves do acknowledge the sheer fact that they were looking at the Greek achievement before them as a model that could be first experienced by dint of *imitatio*\(^{37}\) and then re-experienced through textual practices like *conversio* and *translatio*, both of which bear the stamp of *inventio*. It is no wonder that Horace, to take another well-known example, sites invention at the heart of these praxes, while fleshing out the bare bones of dramatic composition in *Ars Poetica* 128-135: “Difficile est proprie communia dicere; tuque rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus, quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus. publica materies privati iuris erit, si non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres, nee desilies imitator in artum unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex. / It is hard to treat in your own way what is common: and you are doing better in spinning into acts a song of Troy than if, for the first time, you were giving the world a theme unknown and unsung. In ground open to all you will win private rights, if you do not linger along the easy and open pathway, if you do not *seek to render word for word as a slavish translator, and if in your*

\(^{35}\) Cf., the previous discussion centred on *The Poetics* 1455a29-30.


\(^{37}\) Cf. *De optimo genere oratorum* 3.8: “Eos imitemur, si possimus; si minus, illos potius qui incorrupta sanitate sunt, quod est proprium Atticorum, quam eos quorum vitiosa abundantia est / let us imitate those whose purity is untainted – which is characteristic of the Attic writers – rather than those whose opulent style is full of faults” (ibid.: 360-1). It is also worth mentioning the subtle echo of the Hellenistic imperative behind the Roman *imitatio*, as was underlined by D. A. Russell: “The Hellenistic period which followed, with its blend of changing ideas and archaic forms, gave quite a new perspective to the use of models and tradition. It turned it into a matter not so much of continuity as of revival: *mimēsis* became μίμησις τῶν ἄρχων, ‘imitation of the ancients’, no longer simply of one’s predecessors” (1979: 2).
copying you do not leap into the narrow well” (Fairclough 1942: 460-1, emphases added).38

The fact that at this part of his poem Horace reiterates Aristotle’s stress on inventiveness39 explains why scholarly stress has been laid on these lines in general, and the first one in particular. Representing the classicists’ side, C. O. Brink states that “this verse has been described as one of the hardest in Latin literature. It is certainly the most frequently discussed of the Ars and no agreement has been reached on its meaning or function in this passage” (1971: 204); whereas on behalf of Translation Studies, Douglas Robinson suggests that “the ‘common ground’ is Greek and the ‘private rights’ are Roman. Horace is calling upon Roman writers not only to establish their originality vis-à-vis the original text (and thus deviate strikingly from the definition of translator that we have inherited from the two millennia of translation theory since) but to appropriate Greek culture for imperial Rome” (1997: 51). A vision from Theatre Studies vindicates these readings: irrespective of the advances in playwriting, on a large scale, dramatists are still endeavouring to spin their fabulae into acts.

At this point, it is essential to register that the common ground under scrutiny is nothing but the line that the actor could manage to hold in the discursive field, where the theoretical battle over practice has been fought on the level of texts and texts alone. The translation of the actor from master of mimesis into master of imitation, in essence, signifies the decisive victory of theory over praxis, and, by implication, Plato over Aristotle. Recognising Plato’s reproach of mimesis underneath Cicero’s attitude towards actors, Dorota Dutsch underscores how the Platonic critique of imitation could be employed to displace the order in Aristotle’s thinking: “In contrast to Aristotle, who presents delivery as the invention of actors later adopted by public speakers, Cicero imagines a reverse evolution of delivery: it must have been the orators who invented gesture, as they are the “agents of truth” (actores veritatis) while the actors (histriones) are mere “imitators” of truth” (2013: 422). Keeping in mind that Dutsch’s study forcefully tackles Romans in their entirety by drawing most notably on Quintilian, as well as on relevant scholia, enables one to form a firm opinion about the “different way of thinking” that consolidates mimesis into imiatio(n), just like the discursive means that consolidate muthos into fabula, techne into ars, prepon into decorum, all of which would become filters—the


39 Cf. The Poetics 1453b23-26: “τοὺς μὲν οὖν παραλημμένους μίθους λύον ὁ λόγος ἐστιν, λέγω δὲ οὖν τὴν Κλυταιμήστραν ἀποθανοῦσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀρέστου καὶ τὴν Ἐριφύλην ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀλκμέωνος, αὐτοῖς δὲ εἰρίσεις δὲ καὶ τοὺς παραδεδομένους χρήσθαι καλῶς. / Now, one cannot break up the transmitted stories (I mean, e.g., Clytemnestra’s death at Orestes’ hands and Eriphyle’s at Alcmene’s), but the poet should be inventive as well as making good use of traditional stories” (Halliwell 1995: 74-5). See also, the preceding remarks on The Poetics 1451b27-29.
filters—through which the Greek experience would be venerated as a great aesthetic accomplishment during the course of history.

It can, with good reason, be argued that behind Romans’ designation of the actor as a mere imitator of reality, there lies more than meets the Platonic eye. Actually, their formulation provides a seamless lens whereby to see how theatre was becoming what it is more or less today: (pure) entertainment to the utter realistic extent. As Marianne McDonald and J. Michael Walton maintain in their account of the changing performative paradigms in antiquity, “realism did come to the classical theatre, but to the theatre of the Roman arena, where criminals might be publicly tortured or executed. In the theatres of imperial Rome, differently armed gladiators fought to the death; men and women, many for their faith or for minor misdemeanours, sometimes under the guise of a contrived dramatic situation, were tortured and killed in all manner of hideous ways. It was all theatre, the real theatre of life and death, albeit decorated with the trappings of an artificial entertainment” (2007: 8). Hence, in their instructions, Roman writers might concurrently bind the actor to orator, but they would never ever deem the former worthy of the prestige of the latter, not simply because in the Roman society “to be an actor involved a reduction in one’s citizen rights” (Marshall 2006: 87), but also in the paratheatrics of the arena, actors could scantly compete with their new performative companions in real terms, aside from being immaculate imitators—if their presence in the arena, or on the stage for that matter, has not already violated the rules of decorum, of course.

Indeed, decorum itself, which is by and large allied with Horace, can plausibly be taken as a token of an effort to measure the strength of drama against theatre. The eminent lines (179-184) of Ars Poetica might illustrate the point well: “Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur. segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae ipse sibi tradit spectator: non tamen intus digna geri promes in scaenam, multaque tolles ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens. / Either an event is acted on the stage, or the action is narrated. Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ears than by what is brought before the trusty eyes, and what the spectator can see for himself. Yet you will not bring upon the stage what should be performed behind the scenes, and you will keep much from our eyes, which an actor's ready tongue will narrate anon in our presence” (Fairclough 1942: 464-7, emphases added). Given the (autonomous) significance of these lines for the history of Western drama, it can be deduced that Horace has been quite successful in his attempt to suppress theatre, no matter how the dramatic praxis of Seneca with all its aesthetics of cruelty will sustain to undermine the doctrine of decorum by putting the terror and violence of the arena

40 Who, unlike Horace, was operating with an apparent philosophical agenda in mind, on which see Budzowska (2012: 114-7).
into textual practice, and will continue to raise important questions about whether his tragedies have seen the light of the performative day in antiquity or not. In the absence of concrete evidence, A. J. Boyle’s stance appears to be the most conclusive on this controversy: “It is not known and may never be known whether Seneca’s tragedies were performed on stage or otherwise during their author’s lifetime. But it is certainly the case that they were and are performable” (1997: 11). Recalling that this Senecan performability reflects the realities of the Roman stage to a considerable degree\textsuperscript{41} demonstrates that Horace was writing with total awareness of praxis, which, in turn, finds an echo in the law of decorum with “the more vivid metaphor of ‘stirring the mind’” (1971: 245), as Brink puts it. Here, as in the case of Cicero, one can detect how Horace’s “different way of thinking” alters the axis of Aristotelian opsis, where the Aristotle’s (un)fortunate separation of the stage-design from the work of the poet would still let the actor permeate through discussion and hold the line in the discursive field, thanks to the archaic notes that mimesis qua mimesis could sound within the dramaturgical framework of the Poetics and balance out this division by aligning the poet with the actor.\textsuperscript{42}

Yet, in the grand scheme of things, the translation of the actor from master of mimesis into master of imitation not just regularises this split, but at the same time portends the transformation of the discursive field into an arena, in which the language deployed to safeguard drama against the actualities of the Roman stage too has its share of paratheatricality. In fact, by virtue of his “vivid metaphors” Horace depicts an overall image, where the emblematic lines (155-156) of Epistle 2.1,

\begin{quote}
Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis
intulit agresti Latio.
\end{quote}

[Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium] (Fairclough 1942: 408-9)

may turn out to be the canvas of Ars Poetica 285-291:

\begin{quote}
Nil intemptatum nostri liquere poetae,
nee minimum meruere decus vestigia Graeca
ausi deserere et celebrare domestica facta,
vel qui praetextas vel qui docuere togatas.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{41} For the parallels between the Senecan aesthetics and the actualities of Roman stage, see Hopkins (1983: ch.1).
\textsuperscript{42} Cf. the earlier analysis on opsis and the actor, in addition to Brink, whose commentary clarifies the issue from the Horatian font: “Ar. is not talking about the sense of vision but about the stage-setting” (ibid.).
As it is, Horace gives a picture of the socio-cultural dynamics that underlie the Roman translation movement that perpetuated mimesis *qua* imitatio(n). One of the most arresting aspects of the picture resides in the key position that imitation holds *in absentia*. What is more, in a field no less competitive than the arena, Horace exposes the main tenets of Roman theories of translation into view by embedding *imitatio* in *translatio*, each of which, as literary practices, thrust mimesis—the captive—further into the domain of literature. Whilst this synthesis might pave the way for a conception of translation *qua* imitation and vice versa, it would be better to abstain from finding quick equivalents between the two arts in a philological context, since, as Rita Copeland cautions, “the imitative aim of ‘making different,’ of re-creation, rests on an ideal of familial continuity with a real or (in the case of Greek sources) naturalized past; the aim of inventive difference in the replicative project of translation, however, emerges from a disturbing political agenda in which forcibly substituting Rome for Greece is a condition of acknowledging the foundational status of Greek eloquence for *Latinitas*” (1991: 31). Copeland’s caveat casts light on Horace’s pictorial field, where poets could easily swap their roles with the gladiators of the arena and trample on the now-subjugated common ground, though with reverence to their captives. And this reverence, in the words of the scholar, “was simply a corollary of the desire to displace that culture, and eliminate its hegemonic hold, through contestation and hence difference” (ibid.: 30).

It is possible, or even necessary, to tease out Copeland’s prognosis, as she seems to be content with identifying Romans’ desire to excel the Greek canon only to the extent that their translational activities are concerned. Although Copeland is correct to assert that for Romans “translation offered a perfect platform for contesting the pre-eminence of Greek culture” (ibid.), and there is a consensus that “translation is a specific type of imitation” (McElduff 2013: 159), and the two can barely be melted in the same linguistic pot, what is generally overlooked (in
the writings of scholars affiliated mainly but not exclusively with Translation Studies\footnote{Typical is Robinson (1997: 50-2), where he, after complaining about how Cicero and Horace are “almost always quoted out of context”, cites the latter and restates that “this imaginative retelling [AP 134-135], often referred to in the history of literary and translation theory as ‘free imitation’, can be thought of as translation, but only in the broadest possible terms” (51, brackets added).} is the culmination of imitation into translation, making both praxes the corollaries of desire thereof. Even if mimesis \textit{qua} mimesis has long faded from the discursive scene and can surface solely \textit{qua} imitation, say, of reality, of models, of ancients, of traditions under the auspices of art’s overall imitation of nature, the immediacy of desire in all of these processes, in that respect, resets the stage for a potential comeback of an archaic (and all the more violent) conception of mimesis that can by no means be suppressed, yet that can by no means be fulfilled. Desire, in other words, proves to be the binding force of a triple relationship amongst imitation, translation and mimesis \textit{qua} mimesis. Perhaps no other than René Girard best conceptualised desire in similar triangular terms, and it is precisely at this point that his notion of “mimetic desire” strikes the right methodological chord within the Greco-Roman setting. Having postulated that “the great novelists reveal the imitative nature of desire” (1965: 14), he broaches a “generative hypothesis” that is likely to transcend the realm of literature. “Desiring mimesis precedes the appearance of its object and survives,” writes Girard, “the disappearance of every object,” and continues: “the object always comes to the foreground and mimesis is hidden behind it, even in the eyes of the desiring subjects. The convergence of desire defines the object. It is truly impossible to fix the origin of and responsibility for the rivalry, whose inexhaustible source is mimesis” (1978: 91). Taking Girard’s identification of mimesis as the source of rivalry to heart, an attempt can be made to visualise the nuances of this overarching comprehension of mimesis with an eye to uncloak the actual mimetic dynamics at work within the Greco-Roman context:
It would be plausible to begin unpacking the connotations of the diagram above in conversation with Girard himself so as to crystallise the point where he transfixes the notional problem: “The indifference and mistrust with which our contemporaries regard imitation is based on their conception of it, that ultimately has its source in Plato. But already in Plato the problematic of imitation is severely curtailed. When Plato speaks of imitation, he does so in a manner that anticipates the whole of Western thought” (1987: 8). Girard’s diagnosis gains additional importance when it is thought in relation to the philosophical twists that Plato and Aristotle gave to mimesis qua mimesis by locating it, either in the pure form of the Demiurge, or of the “true” prime unmoved mover, beyond perception. The fact that Girard persists that mimesis is “undecidable” and “there must be a mechanism of self-regulation somewhere and it must be mimetic, too. Through that mechanism, cultural forms can appear and stabilize to such an extent that philosophers can make mimesis safe for philosophy” (1978: 204) accounts for Plato’s and Aristotle’s competition over “pure mimesis.” Both Plato and Aristotle were too busy with sewing mimesis up for philosophy per se that the physical-cum-performative aspect occupying the kernel of mimesis qua mimesis could scarcely attract their attention. And when it did come to their notice most ostensibly in the figure of the actor, their response was suspicious (or in the case of Plato, it was worse than that). Interestingly, moreover, long before Plato and Aristotle laid a conceptual and philosophical burden on the shoulders of the actor, the exact rivalrous mimetic behaviour that Girard highlights could evince itself in a performative-cum-physical fashion almost without any philosophical burden in the writings of Xenophon—rethink the encounter between Philippus and the Syracusans, who are about to steal his role in the symposium. It is here that the historiography of Theatre Studies misses the train of thought and shrinks mimesis into imitation by starting the discussion of the concept directly from Plato and Aristotle. If this physical dimension of mimesis escapes the scholarly attention, it is probably because Xenophon lacks the philosophical charm of Plato and Aristotle.

Which brings into focus the second point on which Girard insists: “Our point of departure is the object; we cannot stress this enough even though no one understands it, apparently. Yet it must be understood that we are not philosophizing” (1987: 16). This is why Romans can come into play only after ironing out that mimesis qua mimesis, namely, the “undecidable” was a site of philosophical rivalry between Plato and Aristotle. From this

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44 And contrast it with the philosophical confrontation between the lawmakers of the ideal polis and a group of wandering tragic actors in Plato’s Laws VII, 817b, as was discussed in the previous section.

45 Though it would be pointless to list all the publications dealing with historiographies of theatre, it is worth mentioning two monumental studies at the expense of stating the obvious. While Carlson (1984, passim; esp. ch.1) confines mimesis to imitation from a Western perspective, the references to mimesis in Zarrilli et al (2010, passim) demonstrate the results of this tendency in attempts to propose an all-inclusive historiography of theatre, to which mimesis qua mimesis has much to offer.
contention Romans inherited two notions of mimesis: imitation of reality and imitation of models, none of which carry the philosophical weight that mimesis *qua* mimesis acquired in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. This point is crucial, since it takes one straight to the core of mimesis *qua* imitatio(n), as was “vividly” captured by Horace in *Ars Poetica* 317-318: “respicere exemplar vitae morumque iubebo doctum imitatorem et vivas bine ducere voces. / I would advise one who has learned the imitative art to look to life and manners for a model, and draw from thence living words” (Fairclough 1942: 476-7, emphases added). As it stands in these lines, Horace displays Romans’ “different way of thinking” *in action* that manifests itself in the conceptual, yet *non*-philosophical translation of mimesis *qua* mimesis into mimesis *qua* imitatio(n). The allusions of this extremely effective dual-translation are not difficult to paraphrase. On the one hand, *in view* of the Greek accomplishment before them, Roman poets first desire to master the “imitative art” by “having left no style untried” until they esteem themselves mature enough to “dare to leave the footsteps” of their exempla, and then look to “Roman life and manners” not only to discover models, but more importantly to undersign them. Hence the Senecan model, where his great ekphrases derive their dramatic strength from the brutal violence of the arena—*the* performative space that mirrors “Roman life and manners” in the most realistic way imaginable. And on the other, problematic aspects notwithstanding, diminishing mimesis *qua* mimesis into imitation of reality and of models suggests a remarkably pragmatic approach to translation in that it provided Romans with an access route to tackle mimesis in hard-and-fast terms, thereby detouring the comparatively tedious way of “philosophizing,” as Girard would have it. Furthermore—and this is the pinnacle of the issue at stake—Romans’ understanding of the “undecidable” *qua* imitation of models and of reality gives rise to a notion of translation that is first and foremost driven by a desire to overrule: already “severely curtailed” mimesis *qua* mimesis behind mimesis *qua* imitatio(n) thus disappears (again) and Roman poets “sing of deeds at home;” whereas the Greeks, as Brink reminds, “are now externi” (1971: 319).

No wonder why this highly pragmatic translation has a certain appeal for the modern mind, which Girard is so sceptical about. “Rather than the exhausted word *imitation,*” he says, “I chose to employ the Greek word mimesis, without, however, adopting a Platonic theory of mimetic rivalry, which does not exist in any case. The only advantage of the Greek word is that it makes the conflictual aspect of mimesis conceivable, even if it never reveals its cause. That

46 Which is not to imply that Seneca’s tragedies are devoid of philosophical power; quite the reverse: his mind was too occupied with his Stoic concerns that he, subsequently, took mimesis to be an “imitation of nature” (*Epistle* 90.23) in broad terms and bent it towards “all art is an imitation of nature” (*Epistle* 65.3). The Stoic slant in such notions of mimesis is nicely pointed out by Halliwell in a passing note: “the Stoics consider their own wisdom a mimêma of nature” (2002: 353, fn. 19).
cause, we repeat, is rivalry provoked by an object, the acquisitive mimesis which must always be our point of departure” (1987: 18, emphasis in the original). Girard’s viewpoint takes on a new significance in the sense that it sets an angle wherewith to monitor the methodological and argumentative distance covered so far in this journey to the ruins of mimesis in search of the actor, starting from the pre-Platonic occurrences of mimesis terminology, to its development into an autonomous performative notion in Xenophon, as well as to its transformation into a theoretical-cum-philosophical vehicle in Plato and Aristotle, and finally to its translation into Roman imitatio(n). Apart from marking the limits of Girard’s influential grasp of mimesis, the differentials between his perspective, and the course and purpose of this excursion gesture towards two lines of critique. Given Girard’s reluctance to philosophise, the first line, that is to say, his refusal of a Platonic theory of mimetic rivalry, need not to be pressed too hard. Suffice it to say that Girard’s rejection of this point can be traced back to his terminus a quo, which is acquisitive mimesis “rather than the” exhaustive mimesis qua mimesis. This leads to the second line of critique, in which Romans’ transfiguration of mimesis into imitation asserts itself as a translational coup d’état with a magnetic effect so much so that it can lure even someone with a keen sense of scent for conflict like Girard to its conceptual-cum-definitional trap. Mimesis qua imitatio(n) proves to be a translational tour de force exactly at this juncture, where Girard astutely hints at the difference between imitation and mimesis, where he gets as close as one could get to the “conflictual aspect of mimesis” while still turning a blind eye to the desirous rivalry innate to the (not necessarily linguistic) translational phenomena.47

Having said that, drawing the (fault)lines in Girard’s standpoint as such does not refute his “generative hypothesis.” On the contrary: by underpinning the already solid basis of his thesis, it takes due precautions against prospective methodological shifts in the tectonics of the dramaturgy of mimesis, which is the ultimate goal of the present journey. In point of fact, the real scope of Girard’s “generative hypothesis” begins to emerge once one takes it in the most literal sense so as to be able to discern how a stream of “conflictual” translations of mimesis qua imitatio into imitatio qua imitation sets the thesis itself into methodological motion with the help of an ancient theory, namely, translatio studii et imperii, which holds that “both knowledge and imperial control of the world tend to move in a westerly direction” (Robinson

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47 Girard’s neglect of the translational conflicts of mimesis reverberates itself in the writings devoted to the concept in general, and to his notion of “mimetic desire” in particular. The chapters in Gebauer and Wulf (1995: ch.18-20), where the scholars handle Girard, can be pardoned to the degree that they restrict their valuable previous analysis of imitatio to imitatio Christi, but without actually taking into consideration of the Roman imitatio (ch.6-7). Potolsky (2006: 145-50) follows Girard almost verbatim, which, in turn, makes his earlier remarks on (the Roman) imitatio (ch.3, esp. 54-9) oblivious to the socio-cultural rivalry that brought forth imitatio(n) in the first place.
As a matter of (historical) fact, Roman poets deputise for the Greek models, *imitatio* becomes imitation in its own right, and succeeding poets ranging from Joachim du Bellay to Ben Jonson “sing of” Vergil, Ovid and Juvenal at their individual homes in their respective languages with their immanent desires to (re)write classical antiquity *de novo*; whereas the act of translation “hidden behind” simultaneously turns into an avenue of artistic and theoretical rivalry, substituting mimesis *qua* mimesis consequently. As soon as the thesis is activated along these methodological lines, the specifics of this argument can be projected onto history of mimesis *qua* imitation as follows:

![Diagram showing the relationship between translation, imitation, Roman poets, and Successors]

The projection above hammers the final nail in the coffin of the master of imitation and passes again the discursive sentence on the master of mimesis. Doomed to loom in exile, the actor as the master of mimesis would hardly gain access again to its undeniable, spacious room in the discourse on the study and praxis of theatre. And even if the right is granted, it would not be without the Roman regulation, which seals the fate of the actor as the master of imitation—a (de)limitation that is distinctly modern. Romans’ translation of the actor from master of mimesis into master of imitation has been as swift as thought; so swift that the actor cannot be rethought otherwise than being one of the many ancillary components in the parateatrics of the arena. Polishing off the ambiguities around the *ars* of the actor, Romans wiped off the last physical line of defence in the discursive battlefield in such a manner that the master of mimesis could scarcely fence off, which, as a consequence, branched off the concept into imitation of reality and of models under the *non*-philosophical aegis of art’s imitation of nature. “In ground open to all” Romans won the “private rights” and set the discursive pace for mimesis *qua* imitatio(n) by fettering the “captive” to the realm of literature for good.

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48 See also, Copeland (1991, passim; esp. ch.5) and Greenblatt (2010: 7-12).
The fact that these shackles are likely to evolve into a chain of thought that can proffer further insight into the dramaturgy of mimesis is the translational success of Romans. Precisely because Romans did—and in a certain sense, still do—continue to exercise theoretical influence over both on the historiographies of Theatre and Translation Studies, even after they themselves have been wiped off by the subsequent generations of poets, secures their position within the conceptual dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis. Bearing in mind the part that Horace plays in historiographical accounts of Western drama “open to all,” he can be singled out amongst Romans as the dramatist within the notional dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis. That Horace determines the historical direction of playwriting without bothering himself with trying his hand at writing drama might seem to be one of the great ironies of Western theatre, yet it is here that he gives a brilliant example of integrating practice into theory, or vice versa. Penned qua poem, *Ars Poetica* rises to the rank of the *Poetics* in a vein that is true to Horace’s poetical praxis as a satirist, if not as a theoretician of drama. No, the real irony is that with such a compelling conceptual basis at its disposal, classical antiquity, all in all, falls short of producing a substantial theory of acting. At the end of the first leg of the long journey to the ruins, one feels pity for the master of imitation, who was sent to glory in the arena, and presses on with the ongoing search for the master of mimesis in exile.

**Mimesis qua Translation / Translation qua Mimesis**

The haunting presence of a legacy from the distant past incises disquieting visions into its empty archaeological site. Having taken a stroll down heritage lane, thereby having become ever more alert to the deceptive tranquillity of the place in the here and now, one cannot help but stride out for want of a comfort zone to devour the food for thought, which is the well-deserved reward of wandering through the site. Whether such a comfort zone is located in the buffet prepared by (pseudo)scientific methods, in the feast table offered by grandiose theories, or in the dining hall proffered by “cutting edge” methods of scholarship does not really matter, for the ethos of contemporary critical discourse cuts across pragmatic borders and persistently adds seasonal zests to the pathos of the reward—only to consume it tout de suite.

The intellectual consumption of mimesis in academia reflects this disturbing situation. As far as one can gauge from the current literature, the moment that mimesis is seen through the lens of (theatrical) imitation/representation (of reality), it can readily be tucked into critical discourse to be used as an assertive springboard to leap over centuries of counter-argumentative mimetic legacy for the purposes of reaching modernity, where mimesis qua imitation causes eyebrows to raise. Martin Puchner once more serves as a captivating case. Having concurrently
recognised that “the theater depends on the artistry of live human performers on stage” and that it “remains tied to human performers, no matter how estranged their acting might be” (2002: 5); having, therefore, appropriately taken the actor as his principal focal point, he states that “the actor’s impersonation remains nonetheless fundamentally stuck in an unmediated type of mimesis that keeps the work of art from achieving complex internal structures, distanced reflectivity, and formal constructedness” (ibid.). Still, as could be recalled from the previous engagement with Puchner, the move he sets out to make from this initial assertion is intended to settle the dialectical tension between Plato and Aristotle in discursive court once and for all in favour of the former, so as to get right down to the problematic of modern drama. The fact that Puchner reduces the actor’s task to impersonation alone makes his wager on mimesis vulnerable to the re-claims of the gestural/vocal corporeality intrinsic to the archaic conception of mimesis, the “unmediated type of mimesis” that is “fundamentally stuck in” ruins. The irresolvable paradox of mimesis is the unfeasibility of speaking of non-mimetic works of art inasmuch as their (re)production relies on a commitment to express; drawing, moreover, on the punchline of the present inquiry into the fundamentals of theatre, it can plausibly be argued that an artwork’s capacity to attain “complex internal structures, distanced reflectivity and formal constructedness” hinges on its (intersemiotic) translation from the source medium into the dynamics of reception. This, in turn, depends on an understanding of mimesis as a form of joint corporeal re-action given concomitantly by the actors and recipients to the piece at hand in the hic et nunc. If this argument too is granted, then one can take yet another step to inject yet another comprehension of mimesis qua translation / translation qua mimesis into the dramaturgy of the notion. Although it is viable to make great methodological headway with this contention, doing so instantly would stand for falling into the same trap that mimesis lays for Puchner, or anyone else for that matter, since this argument looks toward the modern stage as much as it looks back at the ruins.

This is why the overall image that Horace depicts by dint of his vibrant metaphors appears larger than itself and furnishes an occasion to see the bigger picture that begins to speak for the correlation between translation and mimesis thanks to the much celebrated axiom of the ancient poet, ut pictura poesis. By rendering a similitude that goes back to Simonides, who, as Stephen Halliwell notes, “near the end of the sixth century B.C. famously described poetry as ‘speaking painting’ or ‘painting with a voice’ (zōîgraphia phtheggomenē / lalousa), painting as ‘silent poetry’ (2002: 118), into the formulation of ut pictura poesis in Ars Poetica 361, Horace shows Roman pragmatics of translation at work once again and puts the entire mimetic tradition in a conceptual nutshell under the rubric of art’s imitation of nature. Even so, such subsequent periods and movements as Renaissance and Neoclassicism have been quick to press this
conceptual translation into service as an aesthetic credo in order to close the ranks between painting and poetry. Christopher Braider, for one, gives a rational explanation of this Renaissance haste when taking a leaf from Horace’s books: “Beyond whatever Horace may or may not have intended, there was what the Renaissance desired from his text: the authority for a universal theory of poetry and art” (2006: 170, emphasis in the original). Aside from providing corroborating evidence to the cogency of the specifics of the preceding argument, Braider’s view shines light on the slightly eclipsed ways in which efforts to close the ranks between poetry and painting simultaneously opens up a space for history of translation to flourish via *ut pictura poesis*. Reflecting on the issue from the perspective of Neoclassicism, T. R. Steiner notes that “as theorizing on Neoclassical poetry abounds with variations on the topic *ut pictura poesis* and the painting-poetry analogy, so statements on translation strongly rely on the analogy of painting and translation and on describing the translator’s art in terms of the painter’s” (1975: 35). Amongst the accounts of translation, ranging from those of Abraham Cowley to those of Alexander Fraser Tytler, to which T. R. Steiner dedicates his somehow neglected study, one particular figure comes to the fore: John Dryden; a name, whose reflections on the subject are the *sine qua non* of virtually every anthology on the history of translation. After affirming that “Dryden’s view of translation as a mimetic activity analogous to painting never changes” (ibid.: 36), and supporting this point with one of Dryden’s well-known aphorisms—“translation is a kind of drawing after the life”—from his preface to *Sylvae* (1685), T. R. Steiner gets to the heart of the matter: “Like the good portraitist, the translator is to study his [sic] subject not himself; only by proper attention to the author who ‘sits to him’ can he capture the individuating characteristics of the classic he seeks to interpret” (ibid.). As it is, Simonides’ similitude ripens into verisimilitude with Dryden following the centuries of conceptual translation *ut pictura poesis*.

Nevertheless, the importance of Dryden for the dramaturgy of mimesis (let alone his significance for the history of dramatic theory) lies somewhere else. Dryden’s incorporation of the *ut pictura poesis* nomenclature into the everlasting debates over “word-for-word” and “sense-for-sense” approaches to translation that dominated each and every writing on the subject from, say, Quintilian to Saint Jerome, and from Saint Jerome to Etienne Dolet, is a

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49 Probably because T. R. Steiner focusses on one particular period (1650-1800) in the history of translation and limits the remit of his scrutiny to English translation theory alone, this work drops beneath the radar of translation scholars. Then again, T. R. Steiner’s study is one of the few works produced within the realm of Translation Studies that historicises the rapport between mimesis and translation (ibid.: ch.3), even if with an unsurprising philological bias.

50 See, for instance, the persistence presence of Dryden in Chesterman (1989); Schulte and Biguenet (1992); Lefevere (1992b) and Robinson (2002).

51 See the relevant writings of these figures in Robinson (2002).
sign of his times. This allows him to design a triadic model of translation with an eye to remedy the defects of these said methods; or instead, the “two extremes” (2002: 173, 174), as Dryden repeatedly puts it in his preface to Ovid’s *Epistles* (1680) and in his dedication of Virgil’s *Aeneis* (1697) under the auspices of his “master Horace.” Comprised of “metaphrase”, namely, “word by word, and line by line” (ibid.: 173) translation; “paraphrase,” that is to say, “translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his [sic] words are not so strictly followed as his sense” (ibid.), and “imitation,” described as a process, “where the translator (if now he [sic] has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original to run division on the groundwork, as he pleases” (ibid.), Dryden’s tripartite model is conceived in the spirit of prescriptivism, which is the hallmark of the early translation theories. That being said, the critical merit of the model subsists in the manner through which Dryden revises the relationship between imitation and translation in the most modernist sense of the word. As could easily be inferred from the model, Dryden’s search for a middle ground between the “two extremes” of translational phenomena ends up with a permanent ban on imitation *qua* translation—a proscription that is as powerful as Plato’s verdict on mimesis *qua* imitation. Indeed, favouring “paraphrase” over “metaphrase” and “imitation,” Dryden does not even consider “imitators” as translators. “I take imitation of an author,” he holds, “to be an endeavour of a later poet to write like one who has written before him [sic], on the same subject; that is not to translate his words, or to be confined to his sense, but only to set him as a pattern, and to write, as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age, and in our country” (ibid.). Reading the fine print of Dryden’s approach to translation by thinking him through with his contemporary Ben Jonson, George Steiner, after suggesting that the former’s deployment of imitation “seems to aim at Jonson and at what he found to be Jonson’s particular renderings of Horace” (1977: 255), makes a vital observation: “for Jonson creative ingestion is the very path of letters, from Homer to Virgil and Statius, from Archilochus to Horace and himself. It is Dryden, who is so deeply and successfully implicated in the same descent through appropriation, who gives the word a negative twist” (ibid.). Though George Steiner’s point is echoed by various scholars of translation, it is he, who, in the final analysis, actually stands in the breach for Dryden against the shortcomings of the historiography of the discipline, where his entire career as a dramatist, translator, theatre critic, and historiographer royal is reduced to “these three heads” of metaphrase, paraphrase and translation (Dinçel 2012b: 68).

52 Cf., for example, the references to Dryden in Kelly (1979: 155); Munday (2001: 24-5); Bassnett (2004: 64-5) and Zarandona (2006: 312).
Just as George Steiner succours Dryden from the drawbacks of the historiography of Translation Studies, Dryden comes to the rescue of the modern opponents of mimesis *qua* imitation by blocking the argumentative roads of a translational methodology headed for the contemporary stage. After Dryden, it is pointless to push an understanding of translation *qua* imitation, since any attempt to do so would collide head-on with innumerable rejections of such a connexion between the two praxes. But Dryden’s *via media* too would be surpassed over the course of history. Friedrich Schleiermacher, to take one influential example, would first discredit the two terms in 1813 by stating that “neither approach can satisfy one who has been pierced through with the beauty of the original, who would extend the sphere of its influence to those who speak his language, and who conceives translation in the stricter sense. Given their deviation from this stricter sense, paraphrase and imitation cannot be explored more fully here; they are only here to mark off the boundaries of our true investigation” (2002: 229).

Subsequently, he would bequeath his renowned method, which gives precedence to “reader-to-author” approach over “author-to-reader” approach, to Translation Studies. Within the domain of the discipline, these two terms would be recast as “domestication” and “foreignization” most prominently by Lawrence Venuti (1995; 1998) with the aid of Antoine Berman’s explorations of the “experience of the foreign” (1992)—a title that is inspired by Friedrich Hölderlin’s translational praxis, which has been brought to the attention of translation scholars largely through Walter Benjamin’s seminal “The Task of the Translator” (2007: 69-82). Notwithstanding the fact that all of these approaches can reasonably be brought together under the aegis of André Lefevere’s notion of “rewriting” (1992a) to revive translation *qua* imitation, this would not go beyond a partial resurrection that is likely to fizzle out, once one evokes the preliminary concerns raised over the scholarly exploitation of this methodology in Translation Studies as an *ultima ratio* when siting textual productions like “versions” and “adaptations” in a translational frame. Nonetheless, as was argued in the introductory chapter of this study, the problems of “rewriting” can consistently be worked through with the adoption of “reworking.”

Yet, to conceptualise “reworking” in a translational context first and foremost begs the question of how translation *qua* imitation comes to an impasse most explicitly with Dryden. On one level, his rupture of translation from imitation is a fair warning vis-à-vis the risks ahead on the (toll)way to “rewriting” at the expense of a temporary resuscitation of translation *qua* imitation. But on another level, Dryden’s rift sketches the trajectory of thinking about mimesis up until his time in which the notion is esteemed as a poetic process, mostly due to the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*. Be that as it may, the methodological possibilities of mimesis *qua* mimesis begin to appear exactly at the juncture that Dryden brings imitation *qua* translation to an end, because this point has the potential to lend itself to become an end in itself precisely at the
moment that one is ready, willing, and able to leave discursive prejudices behind and deem mimesis as a poietic process, i.e. as a form of physical re-action to the work at hand. In a similar register, this intellectual readiness might prompt one to relinquish textual biases over translation and regard the phenomenon itself as a mode of actual production, i.e. as a poietic process, whereby to (re)work the work—if not the text—in a corporeal vein that it can speak to the receiving audience. It is here that the current chain of thought reverts back to its point of origin to release the master of mimesis from its Roman shackles. With the injection of mimesis qua translation / translation qua mimesis into the backbone of the dramaturgy of the notion, the actor, now endowed with the survival skills of the translator against the allegations of servility, unoriginality, and so on, can ride the accusatory storm of mimesis qua imitation.

Whilst this transfusion recuperates the wounds of the actor by summoning its part as the master of mimesis, the proposed treatment does not heal the scars that Roman transformation of the actor into master of imitation inflicted upon its craft. As a matter of fact, any serious discussion on acting must come to terms with this mimetic bifurcation one way or another. And probably the reason why modern theories of acting owe too much to Denis Diderot lies in his grasp of this problem by completely renovating the actor’s role as the master of imitation in view of the staging practices of the Enlightenment, where his own works as a dramatist have seldom been coups de théâtre.53 Surprisingly, however, the genuine coup de théâtre occurs when Diderot delivers the coup de grâce on the idea of coup de théâtre itself. On that note, the complementary essays—respectively entitled “Conversations on The Natural Son” and “Discourse on Dramatic Poetry”—to his The Natural Son (1757) and The Father of the Family (1758) gains the higher ground for the historiography of Theatre Studies in which the tendency to take The Paradox of the Actor (composed between 1770-1777)54 as Diderot’s last word on the art of theatre, and, by extension, on the craft of acting, is still in discursive currency.55

Then again, much of what Diderot would pursue in this latter treatise has been laid out more clearly in these former programmatic contemplations; and maybe, most articulately in the “Conversations:” “To associate mime closely with dramatic action. To alter the stage; and to substitute tableaux for coups de théâtre, a new source of invention for the poet and of study of the actor. For what use is it if the poet imagines tableaux and the actor remains faithful to his

53 George Steiner, for instance, expresses this disproportion in Diderot’s oeuvre rather harshly: “Diderot,” he thinks, “was a third-rate playwright, but his place in dramatic history is of high interest” (1996a: 38-9).
54 And published posthumously in 1830. For the obscure composition-cum-publication adventure of the text, see Gebauer and Wulf (1995: 174-5) and Ley (1999: 91-2).
symmetrical positioning and his stilted acting style?” (1994: 72). As was accurately and frequently pointed out by scholars of theatre, Diderot’s theatrical reform is tantamount to this scenographic amelioration contingent upon realism. According to Frederick Burwick, “the introduction of tableaux and mime are intended to replace the symmetrical placing of the actors on stage and the declamatory manner of delivery. The tableaux are not intended to be static tableaux vivant in which the actors pose without moving as if in a painting; they are to move with more lively animation than was usual in Comédie française [sic]” (1991: 55). Even though Burwick does not mention this, Diderot’s scenographic reform package is indebted to Horace’s *ut pictura poesis* more than it is obliged to the stipulations of the Roman satirist turned into theoretician of drama. The special heed that Diderot takes of the scenic allusions of *ut pictura poesis* can be said to mark a poietic epoch for the maxim itself after Dryden, because, as David Marshall duly notes, “theatre offered a model for – and a literalization of – the ideals of *ut pictura poesis* since it embodied literary texts in a visual medium” (2005: 698, emphasis in the original). It is this point that needs to be accentuated to comprehend the actual novelty that Diderot would bring to the craft of acting two decades later. Obviously at this phase of his thinking on theatre, Diderot was reluctant to renounce the asymmetrical relationship between the poets and the actors, regardless of the fact that he was ready to grant autonomy to the latter, provided that they remain within the imaginary boundaries of the former.

These remarks set the scene for an enquiry into *The Paradox of the Actor*, which Diderot conceived after discovering his modèle idéal in David Garrick and transforming him into “a great social actor,” who, in Diderot’s view, “must have a great deal of judgment. He must have in himself an unmoved and disinterested onlooker. He must have, consequently, penetration and no sensibility, the art of mimicking [imitating] everything” (1883: 7, brackets added). But, as Philip Lacoue-Labarthe makes it evident in his far-reaching analysis of the *Paradox*, “this statement itself is just a conclusion. It draws the consequences from two propositions that appeared in the course of the exposition” (1989: 254). The two propositions that Lacoue-Labarthe calls attention to are, of course, related to Diderot’s stance on the most prevailing philosophical constants in the debates on mimesis: the (un)easy link between art and nature. For Diderot it might be “Nature who bestows personal gifts” in the first place, yet in the

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56 See the contrasting references to Blair and Alston in the previous footnote, in addition to Szondi (1980: 323-43; esp. 324-35), who reads Diderot’s early treatises in conjunction with the plays themselves.

57 As well as to his own efforts to resuscitate the Horatian tag in the poetic sense in the *Salons*, on which see Cohen (1997: 195-207).

58 See also, Lada-Richards (2010: 31), who contends on solid grounds that “Greco-Roman pantomime must have been able to offer a ready-made answer to the prayers of Diderot, who was dreaming of plays able to transfix the viewer not by ‘coups de théâtre’ but by way of being punctuated by striking, emotionally laden, essentially silent ‘tableaux’, plays, that is, which would treat the spectator as if he [sic] were in front of a canvas on which a series of tableaux would follow one another as if by magic.”
long run “it is the study of the great models” that perfects “Nature’s gifts” (1883: 4). Likewise, “the second proposition”, Lacoue-Labarthe goes on to elaborate, “simply backs up the first with an argument that is properly aesthetic and dramaturgical—or, if one may risk the word, ‘dramatological’: ‘How should [N]ature without [A]rt make a great actor when nothing happens on the stage exactly as it happens in nature, and when dramatic poems are all composed after a fixed system of principles?’” (1989: 254-5 brackets added). Lacoue-Labarthe’s “dramatological” perception of the Paradox is promising in that it leaves an interpretative margin to push for a “translatological” reading of the Paradox, which resonates with the succeeding question that Diderot poses: “How can a part be played in the same way by two different actors when, even with the clearest, the most precise, the most forceful of writers, words are no more, and never can be more, than symbols, indicating a thought, a feeling, or an idea; symbols which need action, gesture, intonation, expression, and a whole context of circumstance, to give them their full significance?” (1883: 5, emphases added). The fact that this question slips Lacoue-Labarthe’s notice does not overshadow the virtue of his in-depth examination of the Paradox; after all, his is one of the rare perusals that zooms in Diderot’s ground-breaking theory on acting. And the present critique simply adds to Lacoue-Labarthe’s scrutiny by throwing “translotogical” light on his “dramatological” insight into the paradox of mimesis, if not into the paradox of the actor, who would infuse performative life into these signs on stage.

In actual fact, the ground that Diderot breaks harks nowhere but back to the common—ontological—one, where the actor as the master of mimesis once stood. Keeping in mind that Diderot’s vocabulary of mimesis draws its semantic-cum-conceptual strength from the Roman imitatio, that is, imitation of reality, of life, and of models, brings into focus his unique methodology by way of which he achieves this breakthrough. The encyclopaedist makes one pivotal move to move the actor to an unmoved position: to “philosophise” in a sense that would scarcely have been (re)commended by René Girard. Filling the non-philosophical void intrinsic to Roman translation of mimesis qua mimesis into mimesis qua imitation by holding philosophical reservations over centuries of art’s identification with nature, Diderot arrives at the paradox of acting, which, in fact, boils down to the paradox of mimesis: “He [sic] acts the play but he gets nothing out of it. It is in him that the man of genius finds his model. Great poets, great actors, and, I may add, all great copyists [imitators] of Nature, in whatever art, beings gifted with fine imagination, with broad judgment, with exquisite tact, with a sure touch of taste, are the least sensitive of all creatures” (1883: 13, brackets added). The paradox, without a doubt, is thick with mimesis qua imitation, yet the governing factor behind the actor—“the great actor”—is intensely rooted in mimesis qua mimesis. Privileging art over nature, Diderot
propounds his profound take on mimesis *qua* imitation that is neatly encapsulated by Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf: “imitation is constituted within a theoretical complex comprising an epistemological procedure, the reconstruction of an ideal model, and a socially determined public embodiment of it. The actor’s mastery therefore rests on three different abilities; he is a knowing subject, an artist, and a creator” (1995: 176). Hence the multi-layered aspect of Diderot’s methodology, by force of which he translates at one stroke both the master of mimesis and the master of imitation into the great social actor.

Delaminating this methodology discloses one main amendment that Diderot makes in his theatrical reform, one that is likely to evince itself in the encyclopaedic definition of the great imitator of nature, whose demand from the great actor is to “forget himself [sic], distract himself from himself and, with the aid of a strong imagination, make for himself certain shapes which serve him for models, and on which he keeps his attention fixed with the aid of a tenacious memory. Only then it is not his own self that is concerned; it is another’s mind and will that master him” (1883: 80). Giving rein to the imagination of the actor, which, in turn, would give rise to the construction of an “inner model” that nods to nothing but what Joseph Roach explicates as “the creation or collection of diverse images to form a picture in the mind” (1993: 125), Diderot makes his decisive leap into the remote past at last, and redraws the line that the master of mimesis could hold in the discursive battlefield. Meanwhile, Plato and Aristotle were deeply occupied with bringing mimesis *qua* mimesis into alignment with their philosophical concerns. It is crucial to observe that when defining the paradox, Diderot paraphrases *Ion* 535b in the exact sense that Dryden uses the term, and carves out a common ground, his own *via media* if you will, that complies neither with mimesis *qua* imitation nor with translation *qua* imitation, but with mimesis *qua* translation / translation *qua* mimesis, given that after all is said and done, it would be up to the poietic talent of the great social actor to activate *theatrum mundi* that is mimesis par excellence. As such, Diderot shakes the ethical foundations of “the greatest charge” argument of the *Republic* X 605c-d by deriving moral benefit from Plato himself: within the framework of the Paradox, the actor becomes nothing, absolutely nothing so as to be able to elevate the soul/s of the “best/s of us” by metamorphosing itself into the living embodiment of theatre. Here Diderot’s methodology deepens. Through the course of his transformation of the actor into an empty Platonic persona, Diderot takes huge advantage of Aristotle’s bilayer dictum of “art imitates nature”, as both philosophers’ affinity with the stress on art’s capacity to build on nature plainly illustrate. Again, as in the case of his paraphrase of *Ion* 535b, Diderot paraphrases the cosmic equivalent of Aristotle’s “true” prime unmoved mover, nature, in the most transcendental sense of the word, and instils it in the paradox of mimesis. With one major difference: where the Aristotle was apathetic to the poietic
skills of the actor and thus had to dispatch it to the peripheries of his dramaturgical scheme in a manner evoking the writer of the “Conversations” and the “Discourse,” the author of the Paradox finally catches sight of the “genius” in these skills that “make” the great social actor the performative equivalent of the unmoved mover that is bound to be an empty persona. Whence the weight of Lacoue-Labarthe’s words: “The more the artist (the actor) is nothing, the more he [sic] can be everything. ‘An equal aptitude for all sorts of characters’” (1989: 260, emphasis in the original).

As it stands in this exegesis, it can safely be deduced that mimesis qua world-making comes to be one of the most crucial features of the notion that Diderot counts on when emptying out the emotions of the great social actor, the unmoved mover of the audience. Still, despite his revolutionary theory on acting, Diderot’s thesis—in order to move the audience, the actor must be unmoved—lacks a backup hypothesis on the prospective effects of this unmoved move on the spectators, for the encyclopaedist remains silent for the most part on that equally important party of theatrical events, apart, as Michael Fried reminds, from striving “for the illusion that the audience did not exist, that it was not really there or at the very least had not been taken into account” (1980: 96). Apparently, Diderot was content with granting autonomy to the actor, thus forming the theoretical basis for modern debates on acting, and thus playing a pioneering role by setting the stage for a firm discussion on the potential impact of the great actor’s translation of this unmoved move into a performative act—a duty, in short, he was happy to leave to his contemporary and friend Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who has already been quite responsive to the challenges of mimesis in terms of reception with a blatant opposition towards the abuse of the ut pictura poesis doctrine, which was very much in the air during the Enlightened century.

In his preface to Laocoon (1766), the dramaturg tracks the problem down to Simonides by underlining that the connection between poetry and painting has never been taken at face value in antiquity: “They [the ancients] confined the saying of Simonides to the effect produced by the two arts, not failing to lay stress upon the fact that, notwithstanding the perfect similarity of their effects, the arts themselves differ both in the objects and in the methods of their imitation, ύλη και τρόποις μιμήσεως” (1887: ix, brackets and emphasis added). To the contrary of his fairly acclaimed reputation as the repudiator of ut pictura poesis, one of the nuclei of Lessing’s prefatory essay is, to put it in the words of Halliwell, “his own adherence to a mimetic

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59 The special issue of Poetics Today 20: 2 (ed., by Burwick, 1999a) on Laocoon is a treasure for diverse views on Lessing’s treatise. See especially the contributions by Burwick (1999b: 219-72) and Matthew Schneider (1999: 273-89), where the former examines Laocoon as one of the key texts of visual hermeneutics and the latter analyses Lessing’s piece in tandem with Girard’s conception of conflictual mimesis, however with a different, yet still convincing approach than the one pursued in the previous section of the present study. See also the recent Lifschitz and Squire (2017), where Lessing’s Laocoon is still treated as one of the foremost treatises to be “rethought” from a plethora of angles.
conception of art precisely by his approval of the idea that underlies Simonides’ saying” (2002: 118). The other nucleus of the preface in particular, and Laocoon in general, can be discerned through Lessing’s clandestine hints at the Poetics 1447a16-18 and 1448a23-24, in which Aristotle spells out the three essential distinctions of mimesis at the outset: media, objects, and modes (Halliwell 1995: 28-9, 34-5), though the scholar himself does not link these two passages with the aesthetics of the dramaturg.

Diderot would embrace this common denominator without hesitation, just like Lessing would stand on the same page with the encyclopaedist, to the best possible degree that “paradox” of acting in successive tableaux, or rather, in microcosms-cum-macrocosms made via mimesis, is concerned. Bearing in mind that Lessing translated The Natural Son and The Father of the Family into German together with their critical appendices (1760); bearing, furthermore, in mind that the dramaturg anticipated Diderot’s theatrical reform in his Miss Sara Sampson (1755) and wholeheartedly advocated it in his canonical Hamburg Dramaturgy (1767) not only put the two thinkers on a par with each other, but also explain their individual poietic accents on mimesis. In that respect, it comes as no surprise to detect how Lessing’s main thesis that “Laocoon suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles’” (1887: 3) culminates in an emphasis on the factuality of theatre: “The drama, being meant for a living picture to the spectator [die lebendige Malerei des Schauspielers], should therefore perhaps conform more strictly to the laws of material painting. In the drama we not only fancy we see and hear a crying Philoctetes, we actually do see and hear him. The more nearly the actor approaches nature, the more sensibly must our eyes and ears be offended” (ibid.: 21-2, brackets and emphasis added). Siting pathos at the dead centre of theatre, Lessing at once steers his stress on the poietics of mimesis into a position that is no less ontological than that of Diderot, and attributes an active role not to the eye, but “imagination through the eye” (43) in such a way that its “free play” (16, 78) can call the re-active beholder into play to bear witness to the enacted corporeal pain in the here and now, immediately before the sheer catastrophe, or any type of “climactic” incident thereof, takes place in the theatrical occurrence itself.

60 For a comprehensive account on the mutual influence between Diderot and Lessing, see Nisbet (2013, passim; esp. ch.8, 10, 12). See also, Lessing (1890, passim) for his solidarity with Diderot’s theatrical reform, albeit with Aristotelian objections.

61 Triple checking Lessing’s German in other translations of the treatise yields interesting results. While in an older translation by William Ross Lessing’s “die lebendige Malerei des Schauspielers” reads as “animated painting of the actor” (1836: 38), E. C. Beasley in a later rendition chooses to convey it as “the living art of the actor” (1890: 23). Reading these two interpretations in conjunction with Ellen Frothingham’s “living picture to the spectator” reinforces poietic-cum-receptive tone of Lessing’s contention all the more.

62 Now, see Erika Fischer-Lichte’s counter-point, where she seems to downgrade the receptive facet of mimesis: “One might be tempted to relate Lessing’s concept of a ‘suitable relation’ to a mimesis-based esthetic. To mimic bodies or actions, it is easiest to use the signs that share material and medial conditions with what you want to portray: signs that relate to each other in space for portraying bodies, and a temporal sequence of signs that describe
The immanence of this ontology directs the attention one more time to the questions of methodology and the ways in which Lessing obtains the trailblazing role that Gebauer and Wulf assign to him by highlighting the tripartite correlation amongst the three basilar dimensions of mimesis, which the dramaturg construes as “production,” “medium” and “reproduction.” “We see here how Lessing is forcing open the door to modern aesthetic theory; there are suggestions in his work of Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic classification of signs, of the aesthetic experience of an artistic medium, and of formalist and nominalist approaches to art” (1995: 188). This surely is a salient reflexion, behind which lies the scholars’ germinal statement of their quite remarkable chapter on Lessing’s “fundamental transformation of mimesis” (ibid.: 186). The fact that Gebauer and Wulf overtly refer to the semiotics of Peirce within the specific context of Lessing’s modernity invites consideration. As could be culled from the introductory remarks on Roman Jakobson, he too, sets great referential store by “Peirce, the deepest inquirer into the essence of signs” (2000: 114), when formulating his all-encompassing comprehension of translation out of which his notion of “intersemiotic translation” emerges. Without questioning the legitimacy of linguistic-cum-semiotic investigations on Peirce and Jakobson at all,63 but by taking serious issues with the latter’s indifference to Lessing,64 it can rationally be contended that the aesthetics of the Laocoon not merely outshines what circulates as “intersemiotic translation” within the terminology of Translation Studies, but at the same time provides one with a sound basis for making a daring attempt to establish a poetics of translation. The dramaturg first gives it a thought: “Why should we not in like manner cease to admire the artist who should do no more than translate [ausdrücket] the words of the poet into form and color?” (1887: 72, brackets and emphasis added).65 And having ostensibly acceded to the urgency of such poetics, he gives his argumentative and methodological blessing further on by overruling probable objections that might come from Jakobson whose “formalist” interest resides—in “the grammar of poetry and poetry of grammar” (1985: ch.2; esp. 37-46), irrespective of the wide

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63 On the linguistic and semiotic points of contact between Peirce and Jakobson within the frame of translation, Gorlée (1994; esp. ch.8; 2004, passim) is unrivalled. Also worth mentioning is Eco (2001: pt. 2, esp. 68-73) and Petrilli (2014: esp. ch.15).
64 Aside, of course, from the common scholarly recognition that Lessing “proposed to replace, in poetic description, coexistence in space with succession in time” (1985: 21).
65 Pondering on Lessing’s question along with the wonders of translation demonstrates what is at stake again: Ross proffers another, and maybe even more attractive rendering of Lessing’s “ausdrücken” with “How then does it happen that we withhold none of our approbation from the artist, even when he [sic] does nothing more than embody [ausdrücket] the poet’s words in forms and colours?” (1836: 119, brackets and emphasis added), whereas Beasley opts to play it safe with “when he [sic] really does nothing more than express [ausdrücket] the words of the poet into form and colour?” (1890: 76, brackets and emphasis added). All three interpretations vindicate the crux of the plead poetics of translation, which expresses nothing but translation qua embodiment.
range of “applicative” spectrum that “intersemiotic translation” covers: “I do not deny that language has the power of describing a corporeal whole according to its parts. It certainly has, because its signs, although consecutive, are nevertheless arbitrary. But I deny that this power exists in language as the instrument of poetry” (1887: 105-6, emphasis added). It is essential to observe that Lessing’s denial of such potential does not amount to a total rejection of poetry; on the contrary: he seeks to find a mechanics of mimesis that would overcome the problematics of poetry in and beyond its re-workings through various media—an endeavour that would lead him to found his own via media in which his eventual agreement with Diderot on the “paradox” of acting, and, by necessity, on the paradox of mimesis, in “consecutive” tableaux proves to be the most constructive.

This is where Lessing’s methodology affords critical assistance to construct a poetics of translation, which would entail a gloss on the problematics of theatre translation, as well as a confrontation with its resultant scholarly repercussions. To begin with, Lessing’s recurrent accent on the archaic conception of poetry—the dramaturg does not build his entire argument around “Homer or some other tragedian” without reason—saves one from speculating. It can be posited that it is this stress on orality that differentiates his method from the poetics of Jakobson that is based on written poetry. In point of fact, Jakobson’s all-inclusive understanding of translation indicates both the pluses and minuses of his highly instrumental taxonomy of translation, whose “intersemiotic” element doubtlessly emancipates the act of linguistic translation from the constraints of comparative textual analyses, and enables the scholars to broaden the scope of their research in a fashion that it can engage with any type of transfer amongst a myriad of media. But one cannot help but wonder, with Anthony Pym, whether Jakobson intended “to travel too far down that path. His typology retains the notion of ‘translation proper’ for ‘interlingual translation,’ and his description of ‘intersemiotic translation’ privileges verbal signs (like those of ‘translation proper’) as the point of departure” (2010: 150). Pym’s view inevitably invokes an issue that was flagged up in the introduction to the present study as regards to theatre translation. Whilst one can feasibly work on different categories of Jakobson’s taxonomy by taking “translation proper” as a landmark, this would continue the obvious textual focus of the typology itself and exclude the definitive instrument of theatrical translation, which is the actor, or better, its corporeal re-working of the work within the dynamics of the interpretative medium that, by and large, is subject to directorial spatiotemporal arrangement of the performative space of theatre. This elucidates why Jakobson’s classification can be instrumental solely to the degree that it maintains a balance.

66 Cf. Jakobson: “For us, both as linguists and as ordinary word-users, the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign” (2000: 114).
between the textual and linguistic foci, at the cost of sacrificing the actual instrument, without which the intersemiotic theatrical transfer can hardly transpire. And this expounds why the so-called state-of-the-art approaches to theatre in Translation Studies hit a textual wall mainly (but not necessarily) by trying to find methodological solace in Lefevere’s rewarding conception of “rewriting” (1992a) in efforts to equipoise the linguistic and textual focal spots, each of which does little critical justice to the craft of acting, not to mention to the art of theatre, owing to the understandable disciplinary priorities of the researchers.67

What becomes threatening, however, is the unavoidable generalisations that ensue from such endeavours and the manners through which they are repeated in the discipline.68 Consider, for a second, Yotam Benshalom, who gears his even-handed assertion that “the potential of acting metaphor to benefit the field of translation, though, is still far from being fulfilled. It has yet to be discussed in an orderly, comparative and critical manner, and most importantly, with reference to existing acting theories” (2010: 51), toward a heavy-handed analogy between Diderot and Lessing: “Diderot’s top-down approach to acting has been taken by some even further. In the 1850’s, The [sic] German dramaturg Gothold [sic] Lessing developed a system of acting based on bodily actions alone, denying any need for feeling, imagination or even for understanding on the actor’s part” (ibid.: 64). Picked up from a secondary source, that is, Roach’s impressive The Player’s Passion (82-4), the results of this parallel can scarcely be taken for granted, even though Eva Espasa (2013: 40) and Rainer Guldin (2015: 31-2, 44, 66) seem to be fine with leaving the discussion of Diderot and Lessing to Benshalom’s (in)capable hands. Historical inaccuracies (arising, hopefully, from editorial negligence; but which, in any case, make things worse) aside, the most alarming aspect of Benshalom’s study lies in his over-reliance on Roach, who was meticulous to note that “Lessing projected a sequel that would have explained drama as the point of intersection between the arts in time (music, poetry) and arts in space (sculpture, painting). Though he never completed the larger tome, he took up the tension between tableaux and continuous action in the fifth number of the Hamburg Dramaturgy” (1993: 73), but was not keen to delve into the receptive facet that is central to the aesthetics of the dramaturg. Hugh Barr Nisbet lends a much more reliable hand to underscore this aspect again: “he [Lessing] had never, even in his early years, based his theory of dramatic illusion on the linguistic medium: already in his correspondence on tragedy in 1756–57, he had based it on the subjective reaction of the audience in the shape of Mitleid.

67 See the introductory discussion on theatre translation, as well as the sources cited throughout.
68 Although the discipline in question is Translation Studies, the danger of uncritical acknowledgement of the results of “interdisciplinary” research holds valid for other fields as well. When seen from this vantage point, the sources indicated in the first and second footnotes to the present chapter within the context of Theatre Studies turn out to be more troubling.
and sympathetic emotions” (2013: 326, brackets added). For that reason alone, it cannot be set forth that “Lessing developed a system of acting,” which Roach does not put forward anyway. Commenting on the fifth article of the Hamburg Dramaturgy, where Lessing reiterates his poietic tone of the mimetic aesthetics of the Laocoon by regarding the actor as “transitory painting” (1890: 246), Roach states that “Lessing’s ideal Schauspieler had to master the arrest of analogic action in a frozen moment, a stop frame, a digit in time, wherein an imposing posture could be held; he had then to effect the artful resumption of its continuous motion” (1993: 73). Roach’s invaluable opinion can only be accepted with the proviso that the motor behind Lessing’s “ideal Schauspieler” depends on a capability to “attain the greatest beauty under the given conditions of bodily pain” (1887: 16), so that the response of the audience can be “directed to the change wrought in each person's own views and designs by the sympathy excited in him [sic], whether strong or weak, not to the disproportion between the sympathy itself and its exciting cause” (ibid.: 30). Hence the half open mouth of Laocoon at the brink of death; hence the physical suffering of Philoctetes on the verge of catastrophe; hence Halliwell’s prolific suggestion that “the spectators of Philoctetes are compelled, if only subconsciously, to face urgent questions about the nature of pity itself” (2002: 210); and hence the plea for a poietics of translation to be able to monitor the manners via which the actor—the instrument—transmutes its own ideas into “a living picture to the spectator” in tune with the spatiotemporal organisation of the performative space of theatre.

It is, therefore, vital to insist on a poietics of translation, in the meanwhile leaving an argumentative margin now to push for an “intersemiotic” reading of the Laocoon. To begin yet again, Lessing’s recurrent accent on the archaic conception of poetry—the dramaturg does not build his entire argument around “Homer or some other tragedian making a mimesis of one of the grieving heroes” without reason—saves one from speculating. It can further be posited that it is his stress on orality, which turns the aesthetics of the Laocoon into a philosophical defence of mimesis against “the chief accusation” argument of the Republic X 605c-d. Since this is self-apparent, it arouses little interest. What proves to be intriguing, is how Lessing undertakes this defence along the lines of the Poetics 1455a29-30 in which Aristotle’s “poet-actor-rhetorician” synthesis (dis)allowed the actor to preserve its role as the master of mimesis thanks to the poietic, or to be specific, physical-cum-performative overtones of the concept, all of which constantly summoned the archaic masters of mimesis like the Delian Maidens, as well as the leaders of the choruses in Aeschylus’ Edonians and Theoroi back to the dramaturgical

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69 In the exact sense that Jakobson uses the verb in his description of “intersemiotic translation”, see (2000: 114).
70 Lessing would defer this critique to the Hamburg Dramaturgy and confront Plato with the aid of the ninth and the twenty-fifth chapters of the Poetics, see (1890: 474).
scheme of the treatise. This (un)ambiguity is ratified by the Aristotle in his terse remark on the birth of tragedy from the leaders of the dithyramb. What is more, Aristotle’s sanction gestures towards a distinction that he had to make so as to clarify the lineaments of his argument that places utmost weight on the act of reciting tragic poetry: a stress that makes his contention come full circle to the archaic notion of mimesis. In the light of this recapitulation, the maxim of the Poetics 1455a22-25 drops telling hints vis-à-vis the mind-set of Aristotle’s superlative poet: “δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους συνιστάναι καὶ τῇ λέξει συναπεργάζεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα πρὸ ὀμημάτων τιθέμενον: οὕτω γὰρ ἐν ἐναρέστατα ὅρων ὀσπερ παρ’ αὐτοῖς γεγονόμενος τοῖς πραττομένοις εὑρίσκοι τὸ πρέπον καὶ ἦκιστα ἂν λανθάνοι τὰ ὑπεναντία. / One should construct plots and work them out in diction, with the material as much as possible in the mind’s eye. In this way by seeing things most vividly, as if present at the actual events, one will discover what is apposite and not miss contradictions” (Halliwell 1995: 86-9, emphases added).71 This dictum, in a certain sense, secures the postulate that the “visualisation of the action” pivots around an ability to “get the picture” and see it through “in the mind’s eye.” The configuration of the tragic muthos, in other words, is an upshot of an array of (inter)connected (inter)semiotic epeisodia always already performed in the mental theatre of the artist. Simply put: the act of recitation is the intersemiotic re-configuration of the muthos in a way that “the person who hears the events that occur experiences horror and pity.” And with opsis, which involves an extra layer of intersemiotic transfer, Aristotle (un)willingly yields to the omnipresence of the always already present performer in his dramaturgical scheme as the master of mimesis, no matter how the actor now is subject to the talents of the “σκευοποιός”—mask-maker, or stage-designer if you prefer—by granting autonomy to the tragic performance per se: “τῶν ὀμημάτων ἢ τοῦ σκευοποιοῦ τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἔστιν. / the costumier’s art has more scope than the poet’s for rendering the effects of the spectacle” (ibid.: 54-5, emphasis added).72

It is worth conceptualising and contextualising these nuances of Aristotle’s dramaturgical design, because Lessing seems to address the exigencies of these latent intersemiotic idiosyncrasies of the Poetics. Apparently commencing from the early intersemiotics of Xenophon, then ascribing the actor to such roles as “animated / transitory painting,” “living picture to the spectator” and the like, as well as associating drama with “material painting,” Lessing tailors his aesthetics to the demands of the question of how singular

71 In an earlier Loeb edition of the Poetics, W. Hamilton Fyfe offers an alternative interpretation of these lines: “In constructing plots and completing the effect by the help of dialogue the poet should, as far as possible, keep the scene before his eyes. Only thus by getting the picture as clear as if he were present at the actual event, will he find what is fitting and detect contradictions” (1953: 65, emphases added).
72 Cf. also, Fyfe’s translation: “for achieving the spectacular effects the art of the costumier is more authoritative than that of the poet” (1953: 29, emphasis added).
effects issued forth in the theatrical medium can give rein to the recipient’s “imagination through the eye.” And here, Lessing’s well-known appreciation of time assists him to hit the mark: “Painting, in its coexistent compositions, can use but a single moment of an action, and must therefore choose the most pregnant one, the one most suggestive of what has gone before and what is to follow. Poetry, in its progressive imitations, can use but a single attribute of bodies, and must choose that one which gives the most vivid picture of the body as exercised in this particular action” (1887: 92). The corollary of this assistance is momentous: the execution of the “pregnant” moment in the hic et nunc serves to activate the imagination of the receptor by “unfreezing” that mo(ve)ment into multiple potentialities, each of which trigger an individual receptive chain re-action on behalf of the members of the audience. Viewed from this perspective, it is imperative to discern that for Lessing always already mentally performed “visualisation of the action” ties in with the “vitalisation of the action” in a whole set of successive and suggestive (inter)semiotic tableaux that turn out to re-visualise and re-vitalise the “pregnant” action “under the given conditions of bodily pain” in complete harmony with the poetics of the theatrical medium. At this juncture, it is imperative to discern that the theatrical medium gives birth to another medium, that is to say, the actor’s principal instrument, where, to conjure Diderot, the great social actor bodies forth, brushes, as well as wears the most “fruitful” intersemiotic moments of each tableau to activate and re-activate the imagination in theatrum mundi. This is how Lessing revisits the Aristotle’s opsis by not only turning Aristotle’s (un)fortunate separation of the stage setting from the work of the poet into an advantage, but also by welcoming the great social actor to transmute itself into an “intersemiotic picture to the spectator,” without forcing it to find a backway entrance to his dramaturgical framework. This is how Lessing re-contextualises ut pictura poesis in the age of Enlightenment by concomitantly foregrounding the poietic aspect of the doctrine and utilising mimesis in such a manner that it can ignite the “free play” of the imagination. And this is how he shields mimesis from the romantic critique, since, as Halliwell holds, “unlike some full-blown romantics, however, Lessing does not seek to replace mimesis with imagination but considers the activity of the latter to be a necessary completion, a kind of interpretative realization, of the significance of the former” (2002: 119, emphasis in the original).

This is where the poetics of (intersemiotic) translation affords methodological and argumentative assistance for the dramaturgy of mimesis. For, as the injection of mimesis qua translation / translation qua mimesis into the dramaturgical spine of the notion slowly but surely takes its effect in the corpus of the actor-cum-translator, it becomes more and more immune to the corpus of textually oriented critique. Shifting the focus from text to autonomous aesthetic experience, the dramaturgy of mimesis aspires to supply an answer to one of the pressing issues
of Translation Studies, wherein the critical vocabulary on theatre translation revolves either around terminological debates on the identification of texts, or on efforts to compartmentalise translational activities as metamorphosis, transposition, transfiguration, transformation, and maybe more notoriously as adaptation, thereby missing the mark of the axiomatic starting point that paved the way for the development of this discourse in the first place: translation as performance and performance as translation—an axiom that principally points out to the transaction of moments between the performers and the receptors in the here and now of the theatrical experience. Whilst the gist of the axiom is self-evident, this cannot go beyond wishful thinking without a consistent conceptualisation and contextualisation of translation. Introducing the poietics of translation to the dramaturgy of mimesis cuts through tomes of irrelevant argument about whether such and such performance utilises such and such textual translation/s in such and such way/s; instead, it brings translation qua mimesis / mimesis qua translation to the fore as a mode of actual production, wherewith to explore the manners through which the primary instrument, that is, the actor’s corpus is wrought and re-worked in the theatrical medium. And this poietics, in a word, forms the mimetic bases of translation as performance and performance as translation.

This is where Diderot and Lessing step in to take active part in the notional dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis. Without their respective methodologies, the present poietics of translation could barely be established. Still, even if the two philosophers complement each other, minute details of their methods dovetail with them with different roles in the dramaturgy of mimesis. Remembering Richard Sennett, who hand-picks Diderot as “the first to conceive of performing as an art form in and of itself, without reference to what was to be performed” (2002: 111, emphases added), is important in the sense that it compels one to regard Diderot as the great social actor within the conceptual dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis. And with respect to Lessing, recalling Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who rank him as one of the “antiofficial thinkers” (2002: 147) of the Enlightenment, might be of help in that it coerces one to highlight an overlooked trait that underwrites Lessing’s scholarly and historically acknowledged status as the founder of modern dramaturgy, a trait that is perhaps best recognised by Hannah Arendt: “Lessing’s famous Selbstdenken— independent thinking for oneself—is by no means an activity pertaining to a closed, integrated, organically grown and cultivated individual who then as it were looks around to see where in the world the most favorable place for his [sic] development might be, in order to bring himself [sic] into harmony with the world by the detour of thought” (1968: 8). Taking both Arendt’s words, as well as Adorno and Horkheimer’s view to heart, one can easily site Lessing as the “official” dramaturg within the conceptual dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis, simply because his aesthetic
maxim that “imagination through the eye” evolves into an intellectual exercise carried out by each recipient within the realm of theatre. And now that argumentative and methodological building blocks of the dramaturgy of mimesis are thus constituted, one can lend a close ear to its resonations in modern drama so as to probe into the ways in which the concepts of translation as performance and performance as translation manifest themselves further in contemporary theatre practice.

**Paradoxes of Mimesis and Their Implications for the Contemporary Staging Praxis (as Translation)**

At certain times in history, a set of conceptual circumstances cluster around a term to form a coherent constellation, whereby to illuminate and illustrate at once a series of complexities associated with that particular notion. Classical antiquity was a defining moment in the history of mimesis not mainly because the notional accounts of the term were first formulated in the writings of Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle to be reformulated by such notable Roman figures as Cicero and Horace, but rather because meditations on the medium through which the concept could be concretised were identical with the said thinkers’ particular views on the (re)creation of models—*paradeigmata*—in the material world. The Enlightenment was a milestone in the history of mimesis not chiefly because the actor *qua* the archaic embodiment of the superlative *paradeigma* was redefined *qua* the great social actor against the backdrop of reception in the reflections of Denis Diderot and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing on theatre, but rather because their takes on the medium by way of which performative encounter could occur were identical with the two philosophers’ distinct views on where to lay the *poietic* stress of mimesis over the course of (theatrical) world-making. Modernity epitomises such a constellation in the history of mimesis not primarily because the twentieth century witnessed unprecedented vigour to theorise the craft of acting in tune with the kaleidoscopic conceptions of theatre, but rather because the motive behind these changing notions was identical with professed views to ostracise mimesis from the impending (anti)theatrical world owing to the “imitative,” “realistic” and “naturalistic” insinuations of the concept, none of which could accommodate with modernism’s determination to break away from such aesthetic clichés. Still, one thing is crystal clear: in all cases, mimesis was an expressive and a factual *re-action* to the political climate at hand whose *modus operandi* could barely be thought irrespective of the competing worldviews at that given period in time.

Today there is reason to denounce mimesis to announce what Theodor Adorno would probably call as the “new matter-of-factness in theatre” in efforts to “shatter” the mimetic
mirror, as Marvin Carlson has most recently tried, since “the systems established by Plato and Aristotle” (2016: 5) furnish ready-made solutions to the perpetual perplexities of the concept to an extent that the gestural/vocal/corporeal capacity of the archaic master of mimesis even in the empty persona of the great social actor can scarcely draw scholarly interest in the critical discourse on the contemporary stage. But calling Carlson’s negligence of the archaic lineaments of mimesis into question would not go beyond scratching the surface of the actual issue. At the end of the day, his understanding of the notion goes very much hand in hand with that of Martin Puchner (2002; 2010), as well as with those who are tempted to (dis)regard mimesis as meagre theatrical imitation/representation of reality. Such shallow conceptions of mimesis point out a deep-seated problem in Theatre Studies: the ostensible fact that mimesis has become a taboo. This diagnosis makes particular sense when it is thought in conjunction with studies in which one is on the cusp of a scholarly urge to do critical justice to the evolution of acting theories in a vein that follows Thomas Kuhn’s accent on “paradigm shifts” (1970)—the prerequisite for scientific revolutions—to the letter. Joseph Roach’s excellent inquiry into the player’s passions is a case in point, as he fulfils his aim to “demonstrate how the revolutionary achievements of eighteenth century theory, outstandingly those of Denis Diderot, seemed to promise answers to those questions [of movement, imagination, memory, motivation, and so forth] by approaching the actor’s body as a physical instrument, like a piano or a clock, whose capacities and limitations can be objectively analyzed and whose mind and body comprise a material continuum, subject to physical laws in its entirety” (1993: 13, brackets added) to the best possible degree. The virtue of Roach’s study peaks with his (pen)ultimate chapter/s, where he sites Diderot’s “Paradoxe as paradigm” at the heart of his absorbing analysis of the manners through which the twentieth century theatre responded to the paradox most blatantly with Konstantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht and Jerzy Grotowski (ibid.: ch.6, 218-26). With hindsight, Roach’s investigation can be complemented with the credence that the transformation of the great social actor into “system actor,” “biomechanic actor,” “epic actor” and “holy actor” in the respective approaches of Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Brecht and Grotowski to the study and praxis of theatre is a living proof that Diderot’s paradigm provides fertile grounds for a variety of theoretical and practical shifts, each of which harbours a potential to revolutionise Theatre Studies in a way that Kuhn would sanction.

Having said that, Roach’s reluctance to build on the basic premise of mimesis—the embodiment of the supreme model—even at pivotal phases of his study, where he aptly deems it as the sine qua non of Diderot’s modèle idéal (ibid.: 125), indicates that the scholar is inclined to build his work around the premises of the taboo. As a consequence of this fallacy, Roach’s promising suggestion that “the Paradoxe as paradigm” remains wide of the mark of a sturdy
research orbit that would remunerate the agents, who actually shifted the paradigm through their individual incarnations of the “system actor,” “biomechanic actor,” “epic actor” and “holy actor”. It is here that Diderot’s discovery of his modèle idéal in David Garrick and his eventual transformation of him into a great social actor proves to be all the more vital, since it is this mimetic constant that makes his theory stand on firm grounds, regardless of the ways in which Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Brecht and Grotowski would break these grounds only to foreground the mimetic constant in their methodologies through praxis. And from here, it is a short step to detect that Garrick was the spark for Diderot’s theory, whereas for Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Brecht and Grotowski, and perhaps for anyone who is genuinely concerned with developing a consistent theory of acting, the spark can burst into flames only via the enactment of the theories, or better, models themselves. This is why one cannot talk of the “system actor,” “biomechanic actor,” “epic actor” and “holy actor” without taking into consideration how Vasili Toporkov (to whom Roach gives his due to some degree), Erast Garin, Helene Weigel and Ryszard Cieślak stand for the embodiment of these theories in harmony with the paradox of acting bequeathed by Diderot and parphrased most emblematically by Meyerhold: “The internal mystical vibration is conveyed through the eyes, the lips, the sound and manner of delivery: the exterior calm which covers volcanic emotions, with everything light and unforced” (2016: 63).

Far from intending to reach a compromise with the advocates of the taboo in Theatre Studies, these preliminaries highlight the immediacy of the dramaturgy of mimesis conceived hitherto. The fact that the love and hate relationship with mimesis in Theatre Studies is likely to abide induces one to test this dramaturgy by the waters of literature, a sphere that protects the mimetic inheritance more than its “home” discipline does by adopting, quite ironically, more or less the same tunnel vision to envision mimesis as an overarching element of literary world-making and narratology, thereby producing taboo-breaking works like that of Erich Auerbach (2003), of Hayden White (1973; 1987; 2000), of Paul Ricoeur (1984; 1985; 1988),

73 As well as for Lessing’s deceptively scant remarks on acting: “That an actor can imitate the cries and convulsions of pain so closely as to produce illusion, I neither deny nor affirm. If our actors cannot, I should want to know whether Garrick found it equally impossible; and, if he could not succeed, I should still have the right to assume a degree of perfection in the acting and declamation of the ancients of which we of to-day can form no idea” (1887: 32).
74 Of these collaborations, Toporkov (2008) is probably the best known. For Garin’s embodiment of the biomechanics, see the passing remarks in Meyerhold (2016), in Leach (2004), as well as in Braun (1998) specifically regarding the production of The Government Inspector. Brecht’s notion of Modellbuch speaks for itself. On Weigel’s incarnation of the epic actor, think, for instance, her roles in The Antigone and Couragemodell in their (un)abridged versions in Brecht (2014) and in Willet (1974). For Cieślak’s enactment of the holy actor, see Grotowski’s comments in (1975) especially with respect to the production of The Constant Prince, in addition to Richards (1995: 9-17, passim); also worth looking at are Fischer-Lichte (2008: 82-4) and Salata (2013: 47-50) to see how the latter amplifies the observatory scope of the former.
and of Gérard Genette (1983; 1988; 1993), to name but a few, providing the notion with a home away from home, so to speak. Or perhaps the “true” dwelling house of mimesis has always been literature, and for that reason, scholars of theatre have never felt at home when dealing with this wayward concept.

Anyhow, it is safe to enter the prison house of literature\(^{75}\) with Lessing, who, immediately after rejecting that the power of depicting an organic whole in graphic detail exists in language as the apparatus of poetry, underlines the range of prose with reference to description, narration if you like, in a spatiotemporal scale: “Where the writer does not aim at illusion, but is simply addressing the understanding of his [sic] readers with the desire of awakening distinct and, as far as possible, complete ideas, then these descriptions of corporeal objects, inadmissible as they are in poetry, are perfectly appropriate” (1887: 106). As such, Lessing reduces the communicative function of prose to its bare bones, without, of course, forsaking his momentous accent on orality. Two interpretative avenues emerge from this reduction. The first one is well explored by Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, whose assertion that “writing as the site at which time is preserved, combined with the oral character of actions” (1995: 197), allows them to pinpoint the always already mentally performed aesthetics of the \textit{Laocoon}: “The temporal dimension of writing lies in its theatrical and scenic character for silent reading; the written letters disseminate the text as a total enactment. In reading, the reader follows the temporal succession of written characters of an internal performance, which though distinct from physical time, remains always bound to it” (ibid.: 202). This significant path inevitably converges into the second avenue, no matter how Gebauer and Wulf seek to dispense with the connotations of orality too soon on the grounds that “we no longer routinely read aloud” (198). Then again, within the context of the archaic, yet modern aesthetics of the \textit{Laocoon}, holding on to the implications of reading aloud is of paramount importance for literature in general, and for prose in particular. This would most certainly relieve Gebauer and Wulf from the burden of their apologetic tone that “had we retained the custom of reading aloud, it would be easier to summarize the points at issue here” before recapitulating them in a highly cogent fashion: “what we are interested in here is not fictional at all, but thoroughly real, namely, the time that the empirical reader spends when he or she answers the appeal that comes to expression in the text. How much and whose time the reader reactualizes in the process is insignificant. What is critical is the appeal of the text to readers that they spend their time reading it, just as the author spent time writing it down” (199). As it

\(^{75}\) Rephrasing Fredric Jameson’s famous deployment of the (not exclusively Nietzschean) metaphor in his seminal critique of formalism, see (1974).
is, these two interpretative routes merge into one and form a line of thought that gestures not
towards an avenue of escape, but to a legitimate exit from the prison house.

Behind the apparent simplicity of this idea, there lies the modernity of Lessing’s triple
poietic mimesis that consists of “production,” “medium” and “reproduction.” The dramaturg,
to top off his semiotic critique, nods to a visceral aesthetic experience, whose contour is best
engraved into intellectual memory by Samuel Beckett76 in the opening command of Company:
“A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine” (1996: 3). Addressed solely to imagination, the
imperative confronts the recipient with a definitive situation in the *hic et nunc* and leaves it up
to the receptor to decide whether to answer or ignore the appeal. The corollary of heeding the
call, which implies nothing but the meeting of the author with the recipient within the passage
of time *through* reading, comes with a small price though: “In order to be company he must
display a certain mental activity. But it need not be of a high order” (ibid.: 7). Setting the
“imagination through the eye” into motion by teasing the reader to follow the progressive
sequence of palpable letters on “page,” Beckett transforms the *here* and *now* of the reading
activity into a mental performance that was initially undertaken by himself during the course
of the de-/re-composition of the text, or his corpora for that matter, as the somewhat recent archival
explosion in Beckett Studies would testify.77 The more the recipient tries to marshal the skills
of focalisation, the more one gets closer to what differentiates the author from other modern
novelists, as Jonathan Kalb would have it, in a section of a monograph on Beckett in
performance: “the unnerving precision of the process; you are out-maneuvered, second-
guessed, so often in your attempts to gain some overview of the narrator, or the situations he
relates, that it sometimes begins to feel as if you are reading about the structure of your own
thoughts. And this experience of the functioning of your mind can be so actual, so present, that
you end up asking whether it should even be called ‘reading’” (1991: 142). Brimming with an
awareness of the implications of Beckett’s prose, Kalb’s opinion strikes the right note in the
sense that it is by way of this self-questioning that the internal performance gradually
metamorphoses into a tangible experience, so much so that it makes the receptor aware of its
corporeal presence in the *hic et nunc*, just like where Beckett, to quote from Molloy, “happened
to be” (2009a: 85) once, busy with effacing the traces of his poietics, if not poetics, of mimesis.
Furthermore, this ensuing self-questioning, which might (mis)lead one into Brecht’s celebrated

76 The author’s acquaintance with the aesthetics of Lessing is validated by James Knowlson (1996: 242) and Mark
Nixon (2011: 78, 166).
77 Charles Krance’s bilingual variorum edition of Company (1993) is a good source for monitoring the evolution
of the novella from the vantage point of genetic/textual criticism, on which see, amongst many, Gontarski (1985)
and Van Hulle (2008: esp. ch.3) together with the already tremendous achievements of the Samuel Beckett Digital
Verfremdungseffekt, amounts to what might instead be called as Beckett’s own V-Effect which, in turn, can be elucidated as Visceral Effect that does not necessarily depend on ratiocination to raise critical awareness on behalf of the receptor. What is more, in lieu of “aiming at illusion,” but by “simply addressing the understanding” of the readers, this phenomenological procedure brings into focus the substrate of Beckett’s corpus by dint of which he attains this V-Effect: “negativity” that, to put it in the words of Wolfgang Iser, “is produced by a relentless process of negation, which in the novels applies even on the level of the individual sentences themselves, which follow another as a ceaseless rejection and denial of what has just been said” (1985: 126).

It is exactly at this juncture that the interpretative valence of the second avenue comes into the open, since, as Enoch Brater reiterates, “Beckett’s real energy as a writer of prose is based on a single assertion: the line is written primarily for recitation, not recounting” (1994: 5). Brater’s accent gains additional value in that it sets up a perspective wherewith to translate Beckett’s V-Effect into a working hypothesis to grasp how it is that the internal performance proves to be a prelude for the actual corporeal event\textsuperscript{78} that gives vent to the manifestation of mimesis qua mimesis in the author’s universe. The exposure of the receptor to its bodily presence during its encounter with Beckett’s letters in the form of a “total enactment” simultaneously signifies the moment that mental “panting stops” (1970, passim), as well as the instant that the recipient’s “re-enactment” of the author’s time within the passage of time; an act, which, in fact, is no different than going through a rite of passage. Contrary to the proposition that there is an “ideal” Beckett reader out there waiting to “conduct” certain rite/s before being admitted to a secret sect, the re-enactment itself does nothing more than introducing the receptor to the author’s world, albeit momentarily. The effect is directly proportionate to the plainness of the meeting in question: it can either persuade the recipient to go on trailing Beckett’s passages that have been “carefully calculated to deprave the cultivated reader” (1963: 83) to the point of substantial self-questioning, or make one to abandon them with a simple gesture, putting down the book, for example. In both cases, V-Effect permits the recipient the freedom to choose between the two alternatives, each of which has already interfered with the receptor’s established perception of prose upon its confrontation with the intense event: reading Beckett. In both cases, moreover, silent reading fails in toto and paves the way for another event: trying to read aloud, to re-enact Beckett yet again, unleashing the archaic force of mimesis qua mimesis thereof. If the proposed working hypothesis holds valid,

\textsuperscript{78} Following Alain Badiou’s correlation of the word with intervention: “An intervention is what presents an event for the occurrence of another. It is an evental between-two” (2005a: 209). See further meditations 20 to 25 in (ibid.).
then it becomes possible to stretch its argumentative sense and scope by positing it at the kernel of Beckett’s oeuvre, for “in an œuvre”, as George Steiner maintains, “different genres—fiction, poetry, critical essays—take on a personal unity. The achievement argues as a whole, its sum greater and more coherent than any of the parts” (1998: 288). Steiner’s definitional explication serves no author better than Beckett, whose achievement as an artist does argue as a whole and minimises his gigantic oeuvre into a single narrative on going on in an aesthetic vein analogous to an early remark that the author himself passed vis-à-vis James Joyce’s then Work in Progress, now Finnegans Wake: “Here form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read — or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself” (1984a: 27, emphases in the original). Despite the differences between the two authors, these words map out Beckett’s artistic accomplishment which, for the most part, subsists in this concrete transmutation\(^{79}\) of one unique narrative into a thing in itself that is capable of both being looked at and listened to even on and through “page,” let alone the tableau that ensue from its subsequent re-enactment on “stage,” as well as its incarnation in a broad array of media ranging from radio to television.

Be that as it may, considering Beckett as a mimetic artist per se is no news for Beckett Studies, for the domain itself is quite familiar with the author’s mimesis of mimesis. H. Porter Abbott, amongst others,\(^{80}\) neatly captures the gist of the issue under scrutiny, when he unpacks the nuances of what he rightly calls as Beckett’s “imitative form” via which “the reader is forced into a relationship with the book, which imitates the central figure’s relationship with his world. There ought, perhaps, to be a better term than ‘imitative form,’ but in its absence it is important to stress this version of ‘imitation.’ The procedure admits of a much more extensive and various working of form than the simple representational mode” (1973: 7). And because what Abbott once more duly recognises later on as “immediate experience” is far easier to be identified with the factuality of theatrical experience, he lays maximum stress on the gifts that “imitative form” offers for the criticism of Beckett’s prose: “Fictional experience is more reflective. One has no physical presences. One is not trapped in a room and forced to undergo an experience. One can put the book down, think about it, look up words. And as one does so, the book changes. It is harder to conceive of in terms of immediate experience. Yet, immediacy is one of the basic features of ‘true experience’ and became a dominating formal concern in Beckett’s fiction” (ibid.: 8). Abbott penetrates the core of problem in a manner reminiscent of Roach’s

\(^{79}\) Unintentionally invoking Adorno’s understanding of reification: “The inextricability of reification and mimesis defines the aporia of artistic expression” (2002: 117).

\(^{80}\) See, for instance, McMullan (1993: ch.1); Levy (2001: 620-32) and Guest (2007: 69-98), for various readings of Beckett’s mimesis of mimesis in different media varying from prose to theatrical pieces.
aforementioned influential investigation on acting. Whilst the strengths of Abbott’s contemplation of Beckett as a mimetic artist need no affirmation, one cannot help but notice how the taboo itself has insinuated its way even into a sensitive area like Beckett Studies\(^\text{81}\) to downplay the force of a major contention on Beckett’s prose, the medium where “it all began” (1984b: 241), as the faint female voice in Footfalls would gently remind. In point of fact, Abbott concomitantly seizes the opportunity to entrench the vocabulary of mimesis within the realm of Beckett Studies at a time when the field was still in its bourgeoning state, and lets that chance slip by upon his apprehension that he has entrenched on the domain of the taboo—apparently a serious crime for the scholar that turns him into his own most trenchant critic, where he excuses himself for the lack of a better word than imitation to accentuate that Beckett’s mimetic form, which “admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else” (quoted in Driver 2005: 243), transcends mere representation. This is what happens when mimesis is shrunk into imitation: it revolts. After all, it never occurs to Abbott that mimesis could mean something more than imitation, something that could “force” the reader into a physical relationship with Beckett’s books, as a corollary of their condition of being solid works of art bestowed with what Adorno reckons as “the immanent character of being an act, even if they are carved in stone, and this endows them with the quality of being something momentary and sudden. This is registered by the feeling of being overwhelmed when faced with an important work” (2002: 79).

Under these dreadful discursive circumstances, one must not flinch from committing felonies against the prohibitions of the “cutting edge” discourse of academia to deploy the terminology of mimesis \textit{qua} mimesis in order to clear the air around the conceptual constellation that Beckett proffers for Theatre Studies. To be able to alter, or at least to undercut, the (re)current scholarly paradigm regarding the concept, the closed circuit discursive system—the taboo—around mimesis has been knocked down from two angles, with the sole theoretical assistance of the hitherto propounded dramaturgy. By deliberately keeping distance from the salvos of the present-day discourse on mimesis, but by exercising due diligence to tune in to the wavelength of a transdisciplinary trajectory at the same time, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that the resources of Theatre Studies are sufficient to develop a methodology to conceptualise, contextualise, and, by allusion, to theorise the ways in which mimesis evinces itself both on “stage” and on “page,” without slavishly and uncritically imitating the processes of disciplines, whose priorities reside miles apart from those of Theatre Studies.\(^\text{82}\) Hence the

\(^{81}\) Regrettably, the shadow of the taboo falls on the exceptional studies cited in the previous footnote.

\(^{82}\) Recall the approaches adopted in the sources cited in the first and second footnotes, as well as the consequences of the inevitable generalisations result from the so-called interdisciplinary research in Translation Studies.
indicators of the two angles of attack: Diderot on acting and Lessing on reception to outwit the taboo, which is the outcome of a scholarly neglect to tackle mimesis qua mimesis with its archaic background. This is why principally Diderot and Lessing have been brought into play as a precaution against this intellectual laxity, in accordance with the fact that these two modern cornerstones of the dramaturgy of mimesis encompass the problematics of the mimetic heritage evidently handed down from antiquity to be performed to the limit, qua limit by Beckett in a fashion that makes the notion part and parcel of the author’s legacy for contemporary staging practice: a form of artistic praxis that, by and large, rests on the poietics of (intersemiotic) translation, as was broached in the preceding section.

That the author’s oeuvre argues in its entirety enables one to put the dramaturgy of mimesis into its final shape now by deeming Beckett as the artist par excellence, who fully embodies the building blocks of the conceptual edifice constituted thus far. Indeed, with the entrance of Beckett into the notional dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis, one comes full circle to the decisive paradox that emanates, first and foremost, from the “mimetic rejection of mimesis” and reaches an impasse with the futility of talking about non-mimetic works of art, insomuch as their (re)production hinges on a commitment to express. Even so, as has repeatedly been shown through the course of the present venture into the fundamentals of theatre, speaking of supposedly non-mimetic artworks seems to be the raison d’être of contemporary critical discourse in the age of “supersonic reproduction.” Exactly because this discourse feeds on an expertise to take evasive actions when it comes to coping with mimesis qua mimesis, it is vital to reprise the decisive paradox one more time by hearkening to Beckett, so as to “bring this horrible matter to an acceptable conclusion” (1984a: 145). “All that is required now,” he implores towards the end of the Three Dialogues, “is to make of this submission, this admission, this fidelity to failure, a new occasion, a new term of relation [between the artist and his occasion], and of the act which, unable to act, obliged to act, he [the artist] makes an expressive act, even if only of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation” (ibid., brackets added). The irresolvable nature of the paradox thus puts the underlying ontological problem into action within the conceptual dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis: the obligation to express the unnameable, i.e. what lies beyond perception, via reworking the paradeigmata at the disposal of the artist. Remembering that Beckett wipes out “desire” in his initial formulation of the decisive paradox and replaces it with the “obligation to express” proves to be rewarding, for it gives rise to another schema to (re)think mimesis along the lines of the author’s oeuvre:
The diagram resets the drastic aspects of the discursive circumstances problematised above to a secure position and opens up a space to conceptualise and contextualise Beckett’s aesthetics within the dynamics of the dramaturgy of mimesis. To start with, in addition to striking a raw nerve with respect to the philosophical rivalry over “pure mimesis” in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the context within which Beckett formulates the paradox is intriguing in that it drops hints about a comprehension of painting that euphemises ut pictura poesis in a tone that Diderot and Lessing, or even Horace, would see the doctrine eye to eye with each other to the extent that the autonomous poietic\(^{83}\) effect—the zenith of the always already mentally implemented images of the artist—bodied forth by the work of art is taken into account. It is, moreover, precisely at this point that the implications of the decisive paradox of mimesis for contemporary theatre practice begin to unfold, as it turns the tables on the main ontological dilemma by summoning the paradox of acting that obliges the actor to be an empty persona to be able to express what lies beyond perception, i.e. the unnameable, in a way that the undertaken expressive act can concurrently allow the “free play” of the imagination to “unfreeze” the moments of potential re-enactments. And that, in a nutshell, is the hallmark of Beckett’s artistic praxis, which falls within the definition of “authentic art,” that, to spell it out with Adorno, “knows the expression of the expressionless, a kind of weeping without tears” (2002: 117). Now, bearing the directorial practice of the author in mind, this exegesis can be fortified all the more with yet another schema to theorise the mimetic dynamics at work within the theatre of Beckett:

\(^{83}\) Differing, therefore, from Lois Oppenheim’s important discussion of the poetics of Beckett’s tortuous response to painting, see (2000, passim; esp. ch.5-6).
Rather than purporting to be a “scientific” theory in its “exact” sense, the graph sets reasonable parameters under which one can foster the idea that artistic practice is a self-sufficient activity to shine theoretical light on aesthetic phenomena in a register that overturns the discursive ban on mimesis, the most fundamental faculty of humans by virtue of which creative occurrence finds expressive voice in the first place. On that note, studying Beckett denotes a lifelong attendance to the faculty of artistic expression, where attendance to the lessons would eventually confer one with the ability to “be foolish enough not to turn tail” (1984a: 143) against discursive prejudices, even at the expense of (re)stating the obvious sometimes. So the moral of the present lesson: praxis not only precedes theory, but also tends to exert itself *qua* theory without uttering a single word about theorisation at aesthetic cases extraordinaires, like that of Beckett. This double-entendre puts the critic in a situation that is no less puzzling than the decisive paradox of mimesis: on the one hand, it is left with the relatively easy task to postulate “justifiable” hypotheses, all of which derive from the meticulous observance of the aesthetic facts at stake; and on the other, one is faced with the taxing task of coming to grips with taboos that are garrisoned by an army of scholars, most of whom are inclined to displace the axis of praxis with a certain theoretical agenda that, more or less, endeavours to ingratiate itself into the most up-to-the-minute, or most profitable, discourse of the academia at that particular time, a process during which minute details of the project suffers the most.

More often than not, breaking taboos under these dire discursive circumstances is not a backbreaking enterprise, especially when one is in the company of Beckett, who provides the critic with the required practical-cum-theoretical tools to do so. In the light of Beckett’s praxis, two theories on (and of) mimesis come in sight: the scholarly and the artistic rejections of mimesis, both of which pivot on negation and can be verified even through a cursory glance at the state-of-the-art in discourse on contemporary study and practice of theatre. Looking back
on the praxes of such *empty personae* as Jack MacGowran, Patrick Magee, Pierre Chabert and Billie Whitelaw indicates that the paradox of acting—the paradox of mimesis—comes to be the integral part of the actor’s craft throughout performative events in which the *instrument* is bound to breathe interpretative life into the *unnamable* mainly but not exclusively “under the given conditions of bodily pain.” That currently Barry McGovern seems to continue to embody the paradox in a vein that is tantamount to its twentieth century incarnations simultaneously belies the so-called non-mimetic assumptions within the discipline of Theatre Studies and divulges one of the many secret treasures of Beckett’s *oeuvre*: its paradigm-shifting dimension.

Of special interest is doubtlessly the latter (dis)avowal of mimesis, since the former starts to wear thin after it is diagnosed once. The fact that none of the contemporary directors would align themselves with mimesis, yet all of them would immediately observe a moment of silence before Beckett, illustrates the degree to which the implications of the decisive paradox can reach on modern stage. To that extent the second theory that Beckett’s praxis issues forth concomitantly justifies and reinforces itself with the belief that the author’s *oeuvre* has shifted too many paradigms of mimesis, and, by necessity, too many paradigms of acting for artistic-cum-scholarly discourse to handle that the surest way to deal with the writer’s mimesis (of mimesis) turns out to deal blows to the concept by taking refuge behind the taboo—a strategy that is liable to be undermined with the intellectual inertia to recognise an aspect, which Adorno fathoms as, “art is a refuge for mimetic comportment” (2002: 53). Nevertheless, Beckett’s legacy for contemporary staging praxis reveals itself as a proof anew that mimesis is indispensable to the aesthetic bars that the author has set for contemporary makers of theatre. This contention too can be verified by the sheer desire of the majority of theatre practitioners’ ceaseless efforts to blazon their work with a quality that, one way or another, gravitates to an effect that Beckett primarily achieves on “page” and exhausts on “stage;” V-Effect.

That this desire is exemplified by the work of the present day doers of theatre buttresses the braces of the dramaturgy of mimesis, so much so that it can finally embrace the staging praxes of Theodoros Terzopoulos, Şahika Tekand, and Tadashi Suzuki as other aesthetic cases *extraordinaire* in which Beckett’s artistic genius strikes these directors more than a source of inspiration and proves to be an aesthetic motor behind their respective responses to Ancient Greek tragedies. Considering that these aesthetic *re-acciones* to the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides can hardly be thought independent of their translations into the dynamics of reception via the actors’ *embodiment* of the directors’ individual methods of acting,

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84 In the exact sense that René Girard uses the word, as was previously discussed.

85 On the aesthetic symbiosis between Beckett and the three directors, see *seriatim* Sampatakakis (2008: 173-83) and Hatzidimitriou (2010: ch.5); Dinçel (2012a: ch.2, esp. 41-4; 2013b: 205-21; 2017a: 375-87); Tanaka (2003: 258); Tajiri and Tanaka (2009: 145-6).
prompts the dramaturgy of mimesis to deliver its parting shot and deem Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki as exempla, or to be more precise in philological terms, paradeigmata, to disrupt the scholarly paradigm as regards to the mimetic transformation of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage.

Nonetheless, this statement should by no means be taken as a sign of victory against the 1st assault battalion of the 2nd millennial discourse on mimesis and translation. The conceptual edifice as it stands might have won the argumentative battle over these notions at long last, but is destined to lose the discursive war; not because it cannot break the already “shattered” taboo/s ex hypothesi; not because it cannot replenish its contentious stocks against any conception of mimesis and translation that commences; either from a rehearsal of the notorious competition of Plato and Aristotle over “pure mimesis;” or from a textually oriented approach to translation; not because it cannot blot a myriad of copybooks on mimesis, or on theatre translation for that matter, but simply because it resists to tilt at windmills. At its best, the attainment of the present journey to the fundamentals of theatre is connotative of a Pyrrhic dance, if not victory, performed through the moderate means supplied by mimesis qua mimesis. As such, the dramaturgy of mimesis achieves nothing, absolutely nothing aside from bringing the contemporary wager on these concepts to a momentary halt, just before it launches a counteroffensive on the present achievement with all the technological advancements of discursive warfare at its beck and call. Still, what is of utmost significance, is this disruptive moment, this standstill, where the discourse would have surely been stopped, however temporarily. This, in essence, is a moment for this discourse to reassess itself on mimesis qua mimesis. What matters the most, therefore, is to prolong the effects of this moment of disruption by way of thickening the tragic fabric of the dramaturgy of mimesis and pore over the manners through which tragedy comes to be the aesthetic expression of a philosophy, or rather, a counter philosophy that needed to be pacified during the entire course of history. This is going to be the purpose of the next chapter to delineate.

86 As recounted by Xenophon in Anabasis VI. 1. 12.13, where the performer as the master of mimesis has not been inflicted with discursive claims yet, see (Brownson 1980: 440-1).
PART II
Chapter 2

The Translational Journey of the “Tragic”

The Idea of the “Tragic” and Attic Tragedies

The intuitive relation via which people constitute themselves as subjects in the world ensues, by and large, from one major impulse: the desire to know. The achievement of this aspiration marks the latent transition from intuition to actualisation. In a certain sense, an individual’s self-realisation is the direct outcome of this process, which impels one to interact with life, to partake in the ways of the world by embracing its each and every aspect, putting the personal cumulative knowledge to test thereof. Then again, in the grand scheme of things, the question of how and when an individual realises itself is of secondary importance. What becomes more of an issue, instead, is the ostensible fact that things take their course throughout the journey that one comes to call life. To take part in the ways of the world is to witness the inscrutable ways in which things run their course and eventually trap people in positions, where they are forced to make choices so as to be able to alter the course of events, if not things themselves. Denoting the Α and Ω of an individual’s self-realisation in the same breath, these moments of decision-making concurrently expose humankind in its most (in)vulnerable state(s) and reveal the far-reaching consequences of the choices made. And those who live through these consequences prove to be the fortunate ones, albeit temporarily. At the end of the day, things do take their course; an individual’s free will turns out to be limited and is driven, for the most part, by a firm, yet natural belief that knowledge-cum-experience can supplement one with an everlasting fuel, as well as an error-proof shield against the calamities of the voyage at hand.

No serious interpreter of tragedy can easily dismiss this point. Indeed, from antiquity to German Idealism, and from modernity to the present, tragedy and the idea of the “tragic” have been a thorn in philosophers’ flesh, precisely under the guise of an aesthetic mode of ontological inspection into the conflictive correlation amidst people and the cryptic ways of the world. Simultaneously lighting the beacons on the dark road of periodisation in the long history of tragedy and demarcating the lines between tragedy as a form of art and the tragic as a vehicle of thought, this preliminary projection frames the terms of the debate that is perhaps most ably articulated by Peter Szondi: “Begun by Schelling in a thoroughly non-programmatic fashion, the philosophy of the tragic runs through the Idealist and Post-Idealist periods, always assuming a new form. If one counts Kierkegaard among the German philosophers and leaves aside his
students such as Unamuno, the philosophy of the tragic is proper to German philosophy. Until this day [1961], the concept of the tragic has remained fundamentally a German one” (2002: 1-2, brackets added). Szondi thus formulates a very powerful thesis that continues to comprise a basis\(^1\) for investigations not only over philosophy and tragedy, but also on the cardinal part that dialectics acquire for comprehending the lineament of the tragic, which, in the words of the scholar, “is a mode, a particular manner of destruction that is threatening or already completed: the dialectical manner. There is only one tragic downfall: the one that results from the unity of opposites, from the sudden change into one’s opposite, from self-division” (ibid.: 55, emphasis in the original). As it stands in this explication, dialectics suggests itself to be a robust method of inquiry into the kernel of the tragic and appeases the absence of such pivotal movements as French Neoclassicism and English Renaissance from the initial designation, and, by logical inference, from Szondi’s conceptual framework.

That being said, the obscurities at play hamper one from putting the wheels of this method into motion straightaway. Even though it is truly impossible to come up with a satisfactory definition of tragedy that can cover the demands of a plethora of perspectives varying from, say, G. W. F. Hegel to Friedrich Nietzsche, the axiom that “tragedy is a mimesis of a praxis,” or better, “tragedy is mimesis not of persons but of praxis and life,” as was discussed in the previous chapter in conjunction with Aristotle’s identification of mimesis with praxis through the medium of tragedy, can be established as a plausible zero benchmark. Nevertheless, any assay to loosen the ties, let alone to sand off the rough edges of the other chunk in the wheelwork, is tantamount to stirring up a scholarly horns’ nest: the tragic. Especially juxtaposing it to Szondi’s rejection of its existence qua “essence” and commendable struggle to detect it “in the most concrete element of tragedies” (ibid.: 56), namely, the plot, illustrates that attempts to delineate the tragic raise matters that overreach the problematics of definition. The fact that Szondi himself reverts to the notion of plot-structure in order to break the deadlock of his approach can be taken as an accidental sign of respect to Aristotle, who assigns a vital role to muthos in his dramaturgical schema to a degree that its construction grows into a virtual surrogate for the vague end goal of tragedy, katharsis. Nonetheless, it is significant to underscore that this homage is paid involuntarily in the sense that it stands in stark contrast with Szondi’s point of commencement, where he bluntly states that “Aristotle’s text strives to

\(^1\) Or even a covert basis, for Szondi’s thesis permeates through the literature dedicated to tragedy and philosophy to such an extent that it finds a secret entrance into the introduction to one of the finest collections of essays produced on the topic. The editors of the volume, Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks, seem to paraphrase Szondi: “apart from the texts of Greek philosophy which treat of tragedy, whether from the point of view of its political status (the Republic), or from that of its form and effects (the Poetics), there actually exists another tradition, indeed a group of traditions, anchored in the German thought of the end of the eighteenth century, which takes tragedy—and particularly Greek tragedy—as its theme” (2000: 1).
determine the elements of tragic art; its object is tragedy, not the idea of tragedy” (ibid.: 1). Far from being a drawback, however, this is the strongest asset of Szondi’s An Essay on the Tragic, since it enables him to utilise one of the key concepts of the Poetics in a highly flexible vein, so much so that it obviates efforts to reconcile his enterprise with Aristotle’s treatise at the outset.

Such efforts deserve attention. Bernd Seidensticker, for one, takes notice of the other apparent Aristotelian correspondence in Szondi’s formulation, and after ascertaining his tragic dialectics in the light of peripeteia deduces that “when it came to recognizing the essence of the tragic, Aristotle was more perceptive than many modern critics have been willing to concede” (1996: 393). Be that as it may, Seidensticker’s textually-oriented analysis of Euripides is persuasive insomuch as tragedy qua drama² is concerned, and it can barely be brought to bear on the idea of the “tragic” as such. Furthermore, without addressing the urgencies of the tragic phenomenon, Seidensticker does not really add much to Szondi’s views. That Seidensticker admits the “fundamental differences between the two approaches” (ibid.: 380) yet still insists to straightjacket Szondi into a design from which he deliberately distanced himself right from the start gives rise to an examination that contributes to certify the dialectical nature of tragedy in general, and of Attic tragedies in particular. Seidensticker’s conclusion is worthwhile, though, because it piques curiosity as to whether “the essence of the tragic” can be found in the Poetics or not. In this regard, harking back to Stephen Halliwell, who ponders over the allusions of the question in a context independent of Szondi, but at the same time dependent upon hamartia, anagnorisis, in addition to peripeteia, might be of help in terms of forming a relatively objective opinion about the issue: “There is an ultimately reassuring underpinning to Aristotle’s reflections on tragedy: a conviction that, at any rate in the heightened mythical world of unified plot-structures (a world from which ‘the irrational’ is excluded), tragic suffering lies within not beyond the limits of human comprehension. If Homeric and Attic tragedy may sometimes seem to intimate an awareness of how much falls outside those limits, there is no trace of this in the Poetics” (2006: 139).³ Stacking the odds against exertions to discover the tragic in Aristotle’s Poetics, Halliwell’s reflexion implores the necessity of a more delicate reading of Szondi’s obviously valid thesis.

Joshua Billings’ Genealogy of the Tragic (2014) fulfils this need to the best possible extent. Having acknowledged the critical valence of Szondi’s essay, he first contends on solid

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² Rather, “literature,” as Hans-Thies Lehmann would have it in his promising, but somewhat too generic criticism of Szondi (2016: 47-9).
³ See also, Halliwell’s earlier approach to the problem (1996: 332-49) that was published in the same volume with that of Seidensticker. It is regrettable that these two essays have been separated from each other in this publication whose ostensive value hinges on the manners through which contributors respond to individual papers.
grounds that the problems at stake “remain deeply Aristotelian” (ibid.: 8), and later on unrolls the delicacies of his contention: “without disputing that there is something radically new in what Szondi calls the ‘philosophy of the tragic,’ I argue that questions of history, which have been central for thinking about tragedy since the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, persist through the idealist era and continue to define modern approaches to tragedy” (ibid.: 9). As it is, Billings discloses the real difficulty with Szondi’s take on the tragic and rightly pins down the Querelle as one of the most decisive moments in the history of tragedy. Building on the critique-resistant premise that the French competition over the genre at the end of the seventeenth century is indispensable to an ample understanding of German Idealism, the scholar proceeds to challenge Szondi’s account by proffering a “genealogical” methodology by way of which he unveils the historical subtleties of the movement, where Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus and Antigone were the cherished texts of Hegel and Friedrich Hölderlin, both of whom occupy the centre stage in Billings’ work. And there is certainly much in Billings’ other writings on the subject that does intellectual justice to the “tragic turn” in German philosophy, above all his alertness to the chorus and the essential role it obtains for tragic dialectics. And yet, the risks entailed by endeavours to stress the exigency of Athenian tragedy to German Idealism and vice versa are considerable. What tends to get lost, even in as scrupulous a handling of the matter as that of Billings, is not merely the immediacy of the exact, if convoluted, condition within which humans are situated in Ancient Greek tragedies in toto, but more importantly, the breadth of the ways in which Roman transformation of the Attic canon divulges itself in forms that shape the opposing aesthetic views of the Querelle: the Ancient Greek tragic paradeigma on the one hand, and the Senecan shadow on the exemplum of William Shakespeare on the other, together with the theoretically loaded exempla of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine located in between.

These preliminaries do more than recapitulating the well-known historical trajectory of tragedy. Functioning as provisional signposts, they concomitantly chart out the journey of the tragic before German Idealism and hint at the problematics of reception, if not definition, inasmuch as the future of this history is in question—a question to which the present chapter intends to respond. Behind this intention there lies a triple hypothesis that operates on interwoven branches, one positing that the idea of the “tragic” has already been a philosophical constant in antiquity prior to its reconfiguration into a metaphysical Weltanschauung by the German thought, another postulating that the voyage of the tragic goes hand in hand with the

4 Where his negligence of the chorus within the specific context of German Idealism is evenly troubling, as has been noted by Goldhill (2013: 50).
5 Cf. “Both Hölderlin and Hegel read Greek tragedy as the representation of a kind of revolution, a comprehensive social change that alters collective consciousness. Their theories place the chorus within a temporal dialectic, in which insight emerges from the collision of opposed forces” (Billings 2013: 319).
changing conceptions of mimesis throughout history, and the other asserting that the future of the tragic resides in its poietic translation into the dynamics of the performative space of theatre. This, of course, is an offshoot of an overall (hypo)thesis that brings the notion/s of source and target dramaturgy to the forefront when it comes to the afterlife of Athenian tragedies on the contemporary stage, as was propounded earlier at various phases of this study. And here, it is imperative to underline that the proposed tripartite hypothesis neither stands for an excavation of the source of Ancient Greek tragedies, nor seeks to prove something, existence of the idea of the “tragic” qua essence in antiquity, for example. On the contrary: the hypothesis on the tragic—a hypothesis, au fond, of the inscrutable and therefore inexplicable ways of the world—encloses the area around signposts with argumentative wire so as to lay the groundwork for both exploring how philosophy reacts to the tragic in and beyond antiquity, as well as for scrutinising the manners through which contemporary theatre practitioners construe it on stage in times to come. But for the time being, the three branches of the hypothesis resolutely point towards a spot, the spot in Oedipus Tyrannus 716, “ἐν τριπλάξ ἀμαξιτοῖς / where three roads meet” (Storr 1962: 66-7).6

All the same, several methodological facets still need clarification before probing into the implications of the illustrious crossroads scene of Sophocles’ piece. This gloss becomes all the more necessary, once one recalls Simon Goldhill’s binding reservations on “hypostatization of the ‘tragic’” and invaluable suggestion that “one crucial move toward coming to terms with ‘the tragic’ is to historicize the term and thereby to see what the consequences are when it is applied with its full panoply of German Romantic associations to the genre of ancient Athenian tragedies. The challenge for the critic remains to pay due attention to the specific socio-political context of ancient drama, while recognizing the drive toward transhistorical truth both in the plays’ discourse and in the plays’ reception” (2008: 61). Goldhill rightfully remonstrates against generalisations about Attic tragedy and the tragic in the wake of German Idealism, now properly expanded into German Romanticism, and demonstrates the correct methodological path on a topic that is fraught with the perils of ungrounded speculation. Whilst the scholar is in favour of historicising “the tragic” by thinking the varied registers in which Plato and Aristotle speak of its derivatives such as tragikos, tragoidia, tragikôtatos in relation to the discourse of the tragedies themselves, the accent he places on “the drive toward transhistorical truth” paves the way for an alternative methodology, one that would pinpoint the problematics of the term in antiquity. In that respect, what comes into prominence is the burning issue of how to recognise

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this impulse in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, alongside of their reception in performance. Keeping in mind that reception of Ancient Greek tragedies in performance is a question that falls within Goldhill’s sphere of interest⁷ encourages one to press the issue even more by reiterating a point that was raised in the introductory chapter of the current study: Attic tragedies’ precision to display the situation pertaining to the world and human conduct with remarkable simplicity via mimesis. In point of fact, this situation reveals the “transhistorical truth” that Goldhill leaves unspecified; the truth that derives from the dialectical tension between the course of things and the course of events in life, which, in turn, is embodied nowhere but in the performative space of tragic theatre. This, in a word, is the overarching truth that does not change in essence. It is this truth with which Athenian tragedies confront the contemporary receptor at an age where the credibility of such notions as truth and reality are called into doubt, whereas the real truth of death and grief is beyond doubt.

But on a deeper level, the situation itself seems to be stuck in a *topos* in which matters related to the tragic can be settled within the bounds of reason. On that note, the spot in *Oedipus Tyrannus* might serve as the least common denominator of an extremely complex phenomenon and compel one to (re)envisage the crossroads scene in a setting for the purpose of setting the wheels of the dialectical method into motion. Signposts now metamorphose into telling signs, onto which two Delphic aphorisms, that is, “Τγόθη σεαυτόν / Know thyself” and “Μηδὲν āγαν / Naught in excess”⁸ are engraved for the particular attention of the person(a), who stands at the crossroads as an epitome of Heraclitus’ apothegm that “ἔδιξησάμην ἐμοι / I searched for myself” (D. 101).⁹ Charles H. Kahn captures the paradox inherent in Heraclitus’ axiom and nicely ties it to the first Delphic dictum: “Normally one goes looking for someone else. How can I be the object of my own search? This will make sense only if my self is somehow absent, hidden, or difficult to find. Thus XXVIII [D. 101] states, or presupposes, what one might have thought was a distinctly modern reading of the Delphi *gnōthi sauton*: self-knowledge is difficult because a man is divided from himself [sic]; he presents a problem for himself to resolve” (1979: 116, emphasis in the original, brackets added). Kahn’s annotation takes one straight to the heart of the matter, for the problem he identifies in the Ephesian’s tenet sheds fresh light on

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⁷ As he vigorously shows in (2007, passim and 2010: 56-70, esp. 66-9).
⁸ Once inscribed into the entrance to the temple of Apollo, these adages are attributed to the sayings of the Seven Sages of Greece, yet the precise authorship remains controversial. Having said that, the anonymous epigram in Paton (1917: 198-201), from where the two bywords are quoted, appears to be the most reliable primary source in which the first saw is ascribed to Chilon of Lacedaemon and the second saying is credited to Pittacus of Mytilene. For extensive perspectives, see Parke and Wormell (1956a: 378-92, esp. 387-9), and Kurke (2011, passim).
⁹ Other translations of this fragment include: “I went in search of myself,” “I searched into myself,” “I investigated myself,” “I made enquiry of myself,” “I searched myself” and “I searched out myself.” Unless indicated otherwise, all Greek quotations and accompanying translations, where appropriate, of Heraclitus are from Kahn (1979), who prefers the first option (ibid.: 40-1). See Kirk and Raven (1957: 212-4); Guthrie (1962: 416-9), and Robinson (1991: 60-1, 147) for alternative renderings and commentary.
the ontological one that lies at the core of the tragic, whose artistic pronunciation can reasonably and arguably be traced back to Theognis, 425-427: “πάντων μὲν μὴ φῦναι ἐπιχειροῦσιν ἄριστον [...] μὴ ἐστὶν αὐτὰς ἡμέλιον, φῦντα δ᾽ ὅπως ὅκιστα πόλας Ἀἴδαο περήσαι / It is best of all for mortals not to be born [...] and not to look upon the rays of the piercing sun, but once born it is best to pass the gates of Hades as quickly as possible” (Gerber 1999: 234-5, brackets added).10 Read side by side, the stances of Theognis and Heraclitus form an ontological symbiosis11 in which the unavoidability of being born develops into a moral investigation that is—has already been—carried out by the self in search of the self while making haste towards Death. As a matter of fact, the persona at the crossroads happens to be “μέτοικος οὐ ξάσιν, οὐ θανούσιν / an alien midst the living and the dead” (Antigone 851, Storr 1962: 380-1), yet goes on. Hence Heraclitus: “πολυμαθὴ νόον οὐ διδάσκει / much learning does not teach understanding” (Kahn 1979: 36-7, D. 40)—an axiom to which Aeschylus would give a tragic twist by re-working it into “πάθει μάθος” (Agamemnon 177, Smyth 1976: 18), which, in return, would be re-worked by Sophocles and Euripides in unique manners under the ontological fabric of “μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἀπαντα νικᾷ λόγον: τὸ δ’, ἐπεὶ φανῇ, βήναι κείθεν οὖν περ ἥκει, πολύ δεῦτερον, ὡς τάχιστα. / Not to be born at all Is best, far best that can befall, Next best, when born, with least delay To trace the backward way” (Oedipus at Colonus 1255, Storr 1962: 260-1) along with “τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι τῷ θανεῖν ἵσον λέγει, τοῦ ζῆν δὲ λυπρῶς κρείσσόν ἡστι καθανεῖν. / To have been unborn I count as one with death; But better death than life in bitterness” (Trojan Women 636, Way 1930: 406-7).12

Seen in this light, pieces in Szondi’s oft-cited exposition of tragic dialectics finally slot into their places: emanating, first and foremost, from the aforesaid problem, “self-division” of the persona inevitably brings it into collision with the ways of the surrounding world, where, pace the Ephesian, “γινόμενα πάντα κατ᾽ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα (?) / all things come to pass (and are ordained?) in accordance with conflict” (Kahn 1979: 66-7, D. 80) over the course of the search per se, which involves a whole set of confrontations with other personae, a series of potential clashes against conventional habits of society; a range, in short, of (dialectical) choices to be made in pursuit of the self. Szondi’s acknowledgement of his debt to Hegel13 takes a heavy

11 Guthrie (1962: 418) forges a convincing etymological bond between the two figures by tracking Heraclitus’ verb down to Theognis, 415 (cf. Geber 1999: 232-3), thereby lending credence to the ontological symbiosis that is being brought forward here.
13 Cf. “Hegel must be named before all others at the beginning of this book, for its insights are indebted to Hegel and his school, without which it never could have been written” (2002: 3). See also, Billings (2014: 8, fn. 13), who
toll on his standpoint, since, to put it with Martin Heidegger, “in Hegel's judgment, Heraclitus is the first to recognize dialectic as a principle, and thereby to advance further beyond Parmenides” (1998: 330). Heidegger’s words exceed the boundaries of plain statement in that they explain why Heraclitus takes precedence over the other pre-Socratics like Anaximander, Democritus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and so on, within the special context of tragic dialectics, and why Hegel is not the perfect port of call to drop ideational anchors to gain insight into the dialectical-cum-conflictual nature of the tragic.

Even so, to grip the gist of the dialectic at work in the ongoing (re)envisioning of the encounter at the crossroads, the blanks in Kahn’s elucidation of Heraclitus’ abovementioned fragment require filling. Although Kahn is acute to tie the Ephesian’s precept with the former Delphic edict, the intimations of “Know thyself” can hardly be thought irrespective of “Naught in excess.”14 After all,15 it is by dint of this latter decree that the persona is forewarned against the hazards of exorbitance, which are more than likely to debouch throughout the search for the self that ought to know its limits and avoid excess. Yet the persona stands, notwithstanding the complementary warnings of the Delphic credos. And the sole thing left for the critic to do is to lend a close ear to Heraclitus, “ὁ ἄναξ οὗ τὸ μαντείον ἔστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὐτὲ λέγει οὐτὲ κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει / 'The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither reveals nor conceals, but gives a sign” (Kahn 1979: 42-3, D. 93, emphasis added),16 not mainly because this specific fragment epitomises “the characteristics of the Delphic oracular style” (Parke and Wormell 1956b: xxiii), not chiefly because the inborn hybris of the persona sooner or later culminates in (un)predictable hamartia during the course of the search, not primarily because the dialectical strain between the two Delphic dicta arises exactly from persona’s lack of self-restraint, but rather because at the crossroads one penetrates to the nucleus of the tragic problem, which depletes sense in the proverb that “forewarned is forearmed” in every sense. And yet the persona stands still, until yielding to the passion for carrying on with the search for the last time. The direction to which it goes does not actually matter anymore, for both signposts amount to the

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14 G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven offer a more balanced reading of Heraclitus’ creed by taking a step further: “It [D. 101] stresses the importance of moderation, which itself depends upon a correct assessment of one’s capacities. But this kind of advice (with which one normally compares with the Delphic maxims ‘Know thyself’ and ‘Nothing too much’) has a deeper significance in Heraclitus because of its grounding (not explicitly stated but clearly implied in 197 [D. 1] etc.) in his physical theories, and because of his belief that only by understanding the central pattern of things can a man become wise and fully effective” (1957: 213, emphasis and brackets added). Though this is a sound step in its own right, it goes against the grain of D. 40, in which the Ephesian comes to deny comprehension on such a grand scale.

15 Cf. “These maxims were the expression of the archaic age, when the priestly moralist was deeply aware of the violence of human Hybris and the need to curb it” (Parke and Wormell 1956a: 420).

16 Kahn’s translation is modified in concordance with Heidegger’s objections to such options as “speak,” “declare” or “state” to the degree that the rendition of “λέγει” is concerned, see (1998: 213).
same route, to self-realisation, to a reverberation of Theognis’ dictum: “ἄνδρα θεωρὸν εὐθύτερον χρῆ / A man sent to consult the oracle [theoros] must take care” (805-806, Gerber 1999: 288-9, emphasis and brackets added): and, congruently, to an affirmation of Heraclitus’ elocation: “θυμῷ μάχεσθαι χαλεπόν· ὅτι γὰρ ἐν θέλῃ, ψυχῆς ὀνείδα. / It is hard to fight against passion; for whatever it wants it buys at the expense of soul” (Kahn 1979: 76-7, D. 85, emphases added).

That lack of self-restraint is a shared symptom of all tragic personae, ranging from Xerxes of the early Persians to Pentheus of the late Bacchae, calls the beautiful Ancient Greek notion of σωφροσύνη (sophrosyne) into play to cast conceptual light on its connotations for the soul’s agon into play, and, by natural extension, with emotions. Whilst the idea itself defies translation, not to mention easy explanation, the Ephesian encapsulates the entire niceties of the concept in his gnomic style: “σωφρονεῖν ἄρετὴ μεγίστη καὶ σοφίη ἀληθεὰ λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἔπαϊνται. / Thinking well is the greatest excellence and wisdom: to act and speak [reveal] what is true, perceiving things according to their nature” (ibid.: 42-3, D. 112, brackets added). Buttressed by his subsequent commentary (119-23), Kahn’s rendition brings Heraclitus’ idiosyncratic contribution to the discussions around sophrosyne, “the paramount virtue of his age” (120), out into the open: “The man whose thinking is sound will not hide the truth but signify it in his [sic] actions as in his words. In this he will imitate the lord of Delphi, who does not hide the truth but shows it with a sign (XXXIII) [D. 93], and whose lesson to mankind is sōphronein. What is distinctive here is the meaning of self-knowledge as recognition of one's true or hidden self, and the connection of this with knowledge of a universal logos which distinguishes things ‘according to their nature’ (122, brackets added). In view of Kahn’s comments, Heraclitus’ bitter recipe for the persona at the crossroads—for the soul in jeopardy—rises to the surface: total control over emotions through the search for truth, which emblematises nothing but the search for the self. On that score, the Ephesian stretches the notion of sophrosyne qua self-restraint by elevating it to the highest pedestal of rational thought, and Kahn is quite accurate to attach distinct value to this fragment by deeming it as Heraclitus’ “most interesting utterance as a moral philosopher” (120). Still, the interest ratio of the fragment can scarcely be estimated regardless of the cunning D. 123, “φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ. / Nature

17 The context of Theognis’ poem widens the radius of the present analysis by invoking the traditional role of theoros as “oracle delegate,” whose task was to bring the divine message back to the polis without tampering with its contents. As well as this, attending to (sacred) festivals and sanctuaries were also amongst the civic duties of theoroi—an aspect, which would be taken up most famously by Plato and be appropriated into philosophy as theoria. For miscellaneous studies on different features of theoria, see Goldhill (1999: 5-8); Nightingale (2004); Kowalzig (2007); Rutherford (2013); the relevant chapters in Elsner and Rutherford (2005); and in Bénatouïl and Bonazzi (2012).

18 But see, amongst many, North (1966), Goldhill (1986: ch.5-7), and Rademaker (2005) for useful accounts on sophrosyne and the many ways in which it ties in with Attic tragedies.
loves to hide [itself]” (32-3, brackets added), and the compelling D. 119, “ἠθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμον. / Man’s character [ethos] is his fate [daimon] (80-1, brackets added), simply because the dialectical interplay between the course of things and the course of events in human life depends on mankind’s ethos to first fathom and then triumph over something that is at once in perpetual flux and in continuous disguise: nature. As is, the idea of sophrosyne turns out to be the ideal antidote for human hybris, whereby to transform the self into a sophron, whose ethos dwells in its ability to moderate the self against excessive behaviour and show this skill through “signs” and actions in moderation. This, moreover, is as close as one could get to apprehend the cosmic logos through the medium of a virtue—sophrosyne—that is ancillary to nature. And this, in a nutshell, is the (con)junction in which the crossroads scene becomes the sine qua non of the dramaturgy of Athenian tragedies, from where the problematics of the tragic radiate. The genre itself proves to be the mimesis of the encounter at the crossroads to counter the claims of philosophy.

Plato knew this very well. Without falling for the fallacy that pairs Heraclitus up with Democritus by conferring on the former the epithet of the “weeping philosopher” and the latter that of the “laughing philosopher,” and while abstaining from heralding the Ephesian as the precursor of the philosophy of the tragic by being utterly cognisant of the fragmentary structure of his writings, which does not permit room for a more engaged exegesis, it can be maintained that Heraclitus’ conception of sophrosyne accompanied by an understanding of nature in continual flux has provided Plato with the clinching philosophical evidence vis-à-vis not only the variability of human emotions, but also the instability intrinsic to the material world, the mimetic creation of the Demiurge, the craftsman par excellence. What is more, drawing on the observations of the preceding chapter with respect to Plato’s intricate response to mimesis, it can plausibly be contested that this reaction is triggered by a philosophical fortitude aimed to nip the tragic in the bud before it can evolve into a full-fledged worldview that might be integrated into philosophy. Whence Plato’s invocation of “παλαιὰ μὲν τις διαφορὰ φιλοσοφίᾳ τε καὶ ποιητικῇ / the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” in Republic X. 607b.

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19 Involuntarily evoking Heidegger’s interpretation of “ἦθος” as “abode” and “dwelling place,” but without wholly consenting to his theological reading into this fragment via Aristotle: “The (familiar) abode for humans is the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)” (1998: 271).

20 Which originates in an epigram from the 9th Book of Palatine Anthology and breeds a charming discourse that contrasts the two pre-Socratics in dubious ways. For a brilliant discussion, see Halliwell (2008: ch.7, esp. 343-71). Palatine Anthology aside, an earlier variant of the “laughing philosopher” and “weeping philosopher” contrast can be found in Seneca’s De Ira 10.2.5, as was insinuated by Chitwood (2004: 129) in passing.

21 The issue of whether Plato intensified this quarrel, or, more radically, invented it to bolster his philosophical cause continues to be a heated scholarly debate. Nightingale (1995: ch.2, esp. 60-9) and Goldhill (2005: 60), for instance, go so far to suggest that the quarrel was Plato’s invention; whereas Most (2011: 1-20) highlights the difficulties in coming to terms with this passage. See also, Gould (1990) and Barfield (2011) for broader considerations.
shortly after delivering the biggest blow on mimesis with “the greatest charge” argument of
605c-d. Reflecting on the manifold ramifications of this passage, Halliwell senses the prospect
of “a rapprochement between poetry and philosophy, indeed, nothing less than a reversal of the
verdict of ‘banishment’ we [Socrates and Glaucon] have reached and a welcome return of
poetry to the city (607c)” (2011a: 252, emphasis in the original, brackets added). This
optimisation begs the questions: can tragic poetry, or to employ Aristotle’s terminology, the
most superlative execution of artistic techne, tragedy, whose own soul is muthos that cannot but
stem from myths unlike comedy that is based on daily life, be admissible to the ideal polis—
“the city in the soul”—which, in fact, is the communal socio-cultural-political embodiment of
the supreme Platonic paradeigma? If so, at what expense, to conjure Heraclitus, such
reconciliation would occur?

On the trail of a fair answer, one ineluctably ends up in the wellspring, where motion
springs forth in the Platonic system of thought. Soul and its eloquent description in Phaedrus
once more furnish an occasion to tease out the determining factor that brings Plato’s reply to
mimesis to an impasse. Having an extraordinary knack for tailoring traditional myths to his
philosophical agenda, Plato can be said to deploy a tactical manoeuvre by way of which he
puts myth(s) into the service of philosophy. The subject matter of Phaedrus that more or less
revolves around the ethical-cum-practical issues germane to the transition from motion to e-
motion inside the soul, coerces Plato to hammer out these problems by tackling them against a
background in which the philosopher reworks the already existing mythical images to construct
a splendid figurative visualisation of his ideas. Thence the chariot myth, by means of which
Socrates associates the soul with “ὑποπτέρου ζεύγους τε καὶ ηνίοχου. θεόν μὲν οὖν ἦπαι τε καὶ
ηνίοχοι πάντες αὐτοί τε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν, τὸ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων μέμεικται. / a couple of winged
horses and [their] charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good
and also of good stock, whereas others have a mixture” (246a6-247b1, brackets added), comes
to the foreground. Reading the fine print of Plato’s chariot myth, Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi
discerns that “grouped into eleven sections and led by eleven gods, all soul-chariots fly high in
the air while patrolling the heavens. In key moments of the Socratic narrative the soul chariots,
thus divided, are designated either with the collective attribute choros (chorus) or with the
individual attribute choreutês (member of a chorus)” (2013a: 20). Fleshing out the bare bones
of the choreographic dynamics of the “extra-celestial” realm of the Demiurge, i.e. the terrain of
“pure” mimesis, Peponi’s remarks throw light on the backdrop upon which the ideal form is
imposed on soul. Because this imposition is given, Plato can send his striking echelon to the

22 Cf. The Poetics 1450b1-2; 1461b26.
23 On which, see the impressive Collobert et al. (2012) for diverse scholarship.
frontline at the exact moment when soul loses its wings and is on the point of turning into an envoy of the Demiurge, following the fall, which, as Elizabeth Belfiore reminds, “is caused not only by the disturbance of the horses, but also by the bad driving of the charioteers” (2006: 188). Unsurprisingly enough, Plato pauses to suspend this transformation, since it is a quality that he reserves for philosophers and philosophers alone on the grounds that “μόνη πτεροῦσθαι ἐς τὸν φιλοσόφου διάνοια / only the mind [thought] of a philosopher grows wings” (249c5-6, emphasis and brackets added). And wings are the most divine component that can come into one’s possession throughout its journey on the phenomenal world as a reflection of the Demiurge. Additionally, and maybe more intriguingly, Plato converts sophrosyne into the true linchpin of the human charioteer in such a way that the notion gradually comes to signify a modus vivendi, in the meanwhile prospective sophrones learn to tame the excess innate to both of the horses: specifically to the “white” one with the capacity to mask this defect amidst the surplus of good merits like “excessive (self)restraint,” as opposed to the “black” one where exorbitance is overt. In other words: attaining this ability grants upon the charioteer the wisdom to figure out how much is too much in life, to strike a balance between the instability of the perceptible world and the variability of human emotions, to move the soul in harmony, so that it “can raise his [sic] head up and glance at the Forms while being carried around in the circular motion along with the gods’ chariots” (2013a: 20-1, emphasis added), to crystallise the point with Peponi.

If sophrosyne endows Plato with an unequivocal warrant to evade the practical-cum-ethical conundrum of mimesis, then choreia of the Laws allows him to project his philosophical system onto socio-cultural-political plane in the full mimetic sense of the term, by virtue of what Lucia Prauscello calls as the “tragedy claim” (2013: 257-77; 2014: ch.3, esp. 119-28). As was shown previously, in the rivalry between the lawmakers and the wandering tragic actors, “the so-called serious [spoudaios] poets, the tragedians,” Plato bestows upon the legislators of the “well-governed” polis a constant margin of victory thanks to this claim, with the proviso that they put mimesis into practice. Apart from harbouring partial information regarding the tragedy competitions in the fourth-century BCE Athens, the most thought-provoking feature of the Athenian’s imaginary retort appears to be its ending (VII, 817d-5) that reads as “So now, you children born of the soft Muses, do you first display to the rulers your songs for comparison with ours, and if it is evident that what you say is the same as we say, or even better, we shall grant you a chorus [χορόν]; but if not, my friends, we could never do so” (2014: 121, emphasis added).

24 See, for example, Laks (2010: 217-31) and Meyer (2011: 387-402), for studies that historicise Plato’s recourse to “tragedy.” See also, the pertinent articles in Peponi (2013b), as well as Wilson (2000) for a thorough exploration of the Athenian institution of the khoregia.
and brackets added) in Prauscello’s translation. After weighing the pros and cons of the prevailing viewpoints on the “tragedy claim” with apposite rejoinders, each of which assents to the indisputable role of mimesis, Prauscello contextualises the Athenian’s hypothetical answer by convincingly contending that “the claim that the political and social organization of the civic body of Magnesia represents ‘the best’, ‘most beautiful’ and ‘truest tragedy’ because it reproduces the most beautiful and virtuous life’ occurs within a broader section (7.814d8–817e4), specifically devoted to those bodily movements that can be ‘correctly’ (ὀρθῶς) categorized as dance (7.814d8e2 ὀρχησίς)” (ibid.: 125, emphasis in the original). Bearing in mind that the notion of sophrosyne receives a great deal of attention from Prauscello throughout her study as the ultimate pathway to philia that consecutively ensures harmony in the polis (pt. 1, passim), 25 induces one to regard it as a philosophical constant that forms the backbone of the choreia whose mythical façade also receives an in-depth investigation from the scholar (128-135)—no matter how the substantial performative kinship between the Platonic chorus and the Delian Maidens is left for Leslie Kurke to hammer home in an extensive work dedicated to Plato’s identification of human beings with “divine puppets” and “puppets of the gods” in Laws 1.644d7–645c6 and 7.803c2–804c1: “Choreia is a machine for the production of pure presence, which, through mimesis links together and merges the gods, the dancers, and the human spectators. This is what makes it a thauma” (2013: 147). From here, it is a short step to surmise that constant margin of victory that Plato endorses the lawgivers over the troupe of tragic actors turns out to be a philosophical constant, which is identical with the governance mechanism of this machine, that is to say, sophrosyne. Comprised of probable sophrones with absolute control over their thymos, with souls armed against the impending “corruption” of mimesis, with a joint ethos resistant to pathos of human emotions, the divine-human puppets of the choreia transfigure into one sovereign body, which lifts its head and gazes at the “extra-celestial” realm of the Demiurge in wonder. Meanwhile, wandering tragic actors wonder whether they can compete with the legislators at all under the strict stipulations of the rulers of the polis, quintessence of the superlative paradigm, the “truest tragedy.” Now Halliwell: “One obvious but far-reaching fact about tragic suffering is that it is almost always witnessed and responded to within the dramatic context of tragedy, most often by the chorus. This means that suffering is not just shown in its raw state but already interpreted in the immediate environment of the events” (2002: 114-5, emphasis in the original). Mimesis qua mimesis might find a backward entrance to the Platonic system of thought, but mimesis qua tragedy has no place in Plato’s philosophy, even if it complies with the Laws. So Penelope Murray: “To

25 Cf. also the Republic IV 430d-e and Jean-Pierre Vernant’s terse comments on sophrosyne within the frame of Plato’s philosophy in (1982: 96).
describe the truest tragedy as the ‘mimesis of the finest and noblest life’ is to redefine the idea of tragedy itself” (2013: 303)—an idea that resists definition. “The mourning voice of tragedy,” to borrow from Nicole Loraux (2002), is bound to be stifled in the ideal polis. In Plato’s oeuvre tragedy sensu strictu is confined to theory: theoria, that is to say, pure contemplation.

The fact that Halliwell continues to drive his point home by punctuating the certain interpretation of tragic suffering that gets under Plato’s skin tops it all: “the translation of a particular pathos, a particular injury to the fabric of life, into a symbol of the limits on the human condition in general. Perhaps the aptest example of this idea is the final stasimon of Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus, where the chorus treats Oedipus as in every respect a ‘model,’ a paradeigma (1193), for its understanding of man” (2002: 115, emphasis added). Halliwell’s touchstone to broach his incisive assertion that pivots around Plato’s “repudiation of the tragic;” that this disavowal accommodates an avowal of the philosophical potential of the tragic; that this negation contains in and of itself a philosophical theory on and of the tragic qua worldview (long before the German intervention),26 could not have been more fitting than Oedipus Tyrannus. Yet, the gravity of the problem obliges one to spell out the crux of the matter that chimes in with Plato’s enmity towards the praxis of tragedy. It is no coincidence that the philosopher restricts tragedy to the domain of theory in a fashion that resounds with his suspension of the transformation of the soul into an ambassador of the Demiurge. This is why Plato divides the line between theoros and theoria exactly at this juncture with complete cognisance of such (dis)reputable mythical tragic stage figures as Oedipus and Kreon, both of whom have become theoroi at Delphi in the full etymological-cum-traditional sense of the word by contemplating the divine “signs,” yet due to their “bad driving” of the horses, to their lack of sophrosyne, to their “false reading” of the “signs,” have been dragged into pathos and fallen short of extending their ethos into theoria, and consequently, have wreaked havoc on the polis following their return from Delphi by their inability to take heed of Teiresias’ “signs.” Plato’s deep awareness of the tragic prompts one to wonder whether he would be better off if the soul has not settled down in an earthly soma at all, for in Gorgias after citing a (now lost) fragment by Euripides in 492e7-8,

But who knows whether being alive is being dead
And being dead is being alive?

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26 Halliwell’s salient thesis that holds Plato as the first philosopher of the tragic has also been advanced by Kalliopi Nikolopoulou for its opposite end in her outstanding study: “whereas Halliwell’s Plato is a thinker of the tragic, mine is a tragic thinker, a thinker who thinks tragically. Both versions, however, point to the fact that with Plato we have entered the precinct of the tragic well before German idealism” (2012: 56).
Socrates replies the question in terms that are reminiscent of the ontological problem posed by Attic tragedies as a whole—“Perhaps in reality we’re dead”—and goes on to utter one of the most poignant recognitions of the tragic—“and our bodies are our tombs” (1997: 836)—only to riposte it for the remainder of the dialogue. In the last analysis, Plato gets to the bottom of the tragic problem, perceives it as a direct threat to his philosophy and having literally theorised the idea of the “tragic” qua worldview, sends it into exile. The impact of Plato’s verdict on the tragic can be felt in every nook and cranny of the philosophical discourse on Ancient Greek tragedies.

Aristotle knew the loophole in Plato’s laws very well. As a law-abiding citizen with a special fondness for poetry, he took Socrates’ willingness to listen to its defence “in prose” on the condition that lovers of poetry can justify their counterclaim that it is a beneficial source of pleasure (Republic X. 607d) to heart. And he levelled his celebrated definition of tragedy at the Athenian’s witticism—“the so-called serious [spoudaios] poets, the tragedians” (Laws VII, 817a)—with which he began to call dibs on the genre: “ἐστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἔρχοσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρίς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι᾽ ἀπαγγελίας, δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. / Tragedy, then, is mimesis of an action which is elevated [serious], complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions” (The Poetics 1449b23-28; Halliwell 1995: 46-9, emphases and brackets added).28 Given the Aristotle’s wide-ranging treatment of emotions in Nicomachean Ethics, Eudemian Ethics and Rhetoric, this concurrent accent on pity and fear as a by-product of the seriousness of the action comes as no surprise. What remains startling is the way in which Aristotle brings his most cogent, if curious, conceptual tool into play to acquit mimesis-cum-tragedy of the charges of “corruption” in his Poetics. That katharsis makes an impressive definitional appearance before its disappearance into blue in Aristotle’s dramaturgical blueprint for tragedy did not daunt innumerable commentators from reading into it.29 Quite the reverse: it incentivised them to take katharsis to be the definitive telos of tragedy, without necessarily

27 Though the date (c. 335 BCE) of the Poetics is a matter of scholarly dispute, the posthumous transcription of Plato’s Laws corroborates the present opinion that the “tragedy claim” loomed large in Aristotle’s mind. This also is supported by W. K. C. Guthrie: “The only external evidence for the date of the Laws is Aristotle’s statement in the Politics (1264b26) that it is a later work than the Republic” (1978: 322). See also, Laks (2010: 222-4), who is inclined to read the passage the other way around, that is, as a response to the Poetics. For the convolutions around the date of Aristotle’s treatise, see Halliwell’s first appendix in (1998: 324-30).

28 Retaining the stress laid on the sensitive distinction between diēgesis and mimesis in the previous chapter in connection with Martin Puchner’s over-simplification of the two terms in the Platonic nomenclature, where, as Halliwell recaptures, “diēgesis is the genus of which mimēsis is one species, equivalent to pure diēgesis” (2002: 54, fn. 42).

recognising the palpable Platonic provocation behind it, or taking into account Aristotle’s meditations on the notion in Politics VIII. 7 along the lines of musical composition; whereas these two explicative strands do clarify the majority of complexities as regards to the concept. Opting to cope with the issue by keeping in sight Plato’s own appeal to katharsis and its cognates, Martha Nussbaum opines that “to a middle-period Platonist it would be profoundly shocking to read of cognitive clarification produced by the influence of pity and fear: first, because the Platonic soul gets to clarity only when no emotions disturb it; second, because these emotions are especially irrational” (2001a: 390). Choosing to deal with the discursive complications around katharsis with an eye to siting it in Corpus Aristotelicum, Halliwell on the other hand, educes that “a related conclusion holds good for tragic catharsis itself, whether one identifies catharsis directly with the ‘peculiar pleasure’ of the genre, or treats it, as I have argued, as a supervenient ‘benefit’ or value of the total experience, including the conversion of painful into pleasurable emotions. In his definition of the genre Aristotle says that tragedy brings about or effects (περαίνειν) catharsis. The verb is best understood here, I propose, as denoting an entire, cumulative process, not just its end-point” (2011b: 256). Having both Nussbaum and Halliwell in the same corner, one can appreciate how Aristotle gives Plato a taste of his own medicine by summoning emotions under the elusive rubric of katharsis to court, where tragedy-cum-mimesis is on trial.

It is this elusiveness that shifts the emphasis from katharsis to muthos, or rather, plot construction qua the telos of tragedy, as the Aristotle makes it crystal clear in 1450a22-23 of the Poetics: “τὰ πράγματα καὶ ὁ μύθος τέλος τῆς τραγῳδίας, τὸ δὲ τέλος μέγιστον ἁπάντων. / the events and the plot are the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the most important thing of all” (Halliwell 1995: 50-1, emphasis added). It is, likewise, this telos that rationalizes the combination of pity and fear as the emotional motor behind the optimum tragic muthos—a minor, yet momentous detail that Aristotle apparently imports from Rhetoric II. 8, 1386a13: “ὅλως γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα δὲ λαβὲῖν ὅτι ὅσα ἐρ’ αὐτῶν φοβοῦνται, ταῦτα ἐπ’ ἄλλων γεγομένα ἐλεοῦσιν. / For, in general, here also we may conclude that all that men fear in regard to themselves excites their pity when others are the victims” (Freese 1926: 228-9). As well as exhibiting that pity and fear stand in close proximity to each other, this keen deduction makes allowance for the chain reaction that these emotions can generate in tragic muthoi, which, after dispensing with the episodic ones, the Aristotle divides them into two: “λέγοι δὲ ἀπλὴν μὲν πράξιν ἢ γινομένην ὡσπερ ὄριστα συνεχοῦς καὶ μᾶς ἀνεν περιπετείας ἢ ἀναγνωρισμοῦ ἢ μετάβασις γίνεται, πεπλεγμένην δὲ ἢς ἢς μετὰ ἀναγνωρισμοῦ ἢ περιπετείας ἢ ἀμφοτῷ ἢ μετάβασις ἢστιν. ταῦτα δὲ δεῖ γίνεσθαι ἢς αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ μύθου, ὡστε ἐκ τῶν προγεγενημένων συμβαίνειν ἢ δὲ ἀνάγκης ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἰκός γίνεσθαι ταῦτα / I call ‘simple’ an action which is
continuous in the sense defined [beginning, middle, end], and unitary, but whose transformation lacks reversal and recognition; ‘complex’ one whose transformation contains recognition or reversal or both. And these elements should emerge from the very structure of the plot, so that they ensue from the preceding events by necessity or probability” (The Poetics 1452a13-20; Halliwell 1995: 62-4, emphases and brackets added). Because Aristotle a fortiori binds pity and fear together, the dramaturgical manners in which they might correspond with peripeteia and anagnorisis in a logical sequence of events can feasibly be esteemed as tangible gestures of revelation lying in ambush to strike home with the audience, whose comprehension of muthos rests assured by the dual force of ananke and eikos, an intelligible control mechanism that guarantees the translation of pounding emotions into a (com)passionate, but pleasant avenue of communication, or what Ismene Lada duly takes it to be as “a privileged way of getting access to the truth, of reaching both understanding of others and, most importantly, self-realization” (1996: 404).

Being mindful of the caveats that Halliwell intersperses throughout his meticulous consideration of Aristotle’s “particulars-universals dichotomy,” one might as well say that the Aristotle seems to have his say on the “ancient quarrel” by the “famous remark that ‘poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, because poetry speaks more of universals, while history speaks (more) of particulars’ (1451b5–7)” (2002: 193, emphasis added). It is worth remembering that this renowned statement comes almost immediately after “οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τούτῳ ποιητῷ ἐργὸν ἔστιν, ἀλλ᾽ οἷα ἀν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκός ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον. / it is not the poet’s function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity” (The Poetics 1451a36-39; Halliwell 1995: 58-9, emphasis added). That being so, the Aristotle accredits the tragic poets with a vast amount of possibilities to explore while constructing their muthoi to arouse pity and fear on behalf of the spectators. Halliwell gauges the pith and marrow of Aristotle’s argument thus: “Emotional authenticity and the dramatic rationality of an implied structure of universals operate in harness with one another. They form an imaginative armature within which the audience, in turn, can become both cognitively and emotionally absorbed in a mimetically conjured world, exercising in the process a kind of quasi-philosophical contemplation (théoria) by means of imaginative thought and feeling. For Aristotle, mimesis was no unmediated

30 Cf. The Poetics 1451b8-11: “ἔστιν δὲ καθόλου μὲν, τὸ ποιεῖν τὰ ποιητὴ όπιος συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἰκός ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὗ στοχάζεται ἡ ποίησις οὐδὲν ἐπιθύμησε· τὸ δὲ καθ’ ἐκάστον, τί Ἀλκιβιάδης ἐπεξεργάζεται ἢ τί ἐπεθύμησε. / ‘Universal’ means the kinds of things which it suits a certain kind of person to say or do, in terms of probability or necessity: poetry aims for this, even though attaching names to the agents. A ‘particular’ means, say, what Alcibiades did or experienced” (Halliwell: 1995: 58-61). Cf. also: “The universals in question are not quasi-Platonic ideas that transcend the realities of our experienced world; nor are they moralistically or didactically formulable principles; nor, finally, are they generalized abstractions” (Halliwell 2002: 193-4).
depiction of ‘life’ but a reworking of some of its inherent possibilities into dramatically intelligible form” (2011b: 235-6, emphases added). Wrapping up the specifics under scrutiny, Halliwell, without a doubt, puts one on the right track to amplify the angle he sets here into the neighbouring territories of Corpus Aristotelicum. As the scholar himself would most probably agree, any mention of *theoria* forms an instant adjacent angle\(^{31}\) wherewith to concentrate on Aristotle’s equally famous affiliation of contemplation with happiness in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178b28-32: “δὴ ἀλλοθρείται ή θεωρία, καὶ ή εὐδαιμονία, καί οίς μᾶλλον ὑπάρχει τὸ θεωρεῖν, καὶ εὐδαιμονεῖν, οὔτα συμβεβηκός ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν θεωρίαν· αὐτὴ γὰρ καθ’ αὐτὴν τιμία. / Happiness therefore is co-extensive in its range with contemplation: the more a class of beings possesses the faculty of contemplation, the more it enjoys happiness, not as an accidental concomitant of contemplation but as inherent in it, since contemplation is valuable in itself” (Rackham 1926: 624-5, emphases added).\(^{32}\) This focus on the affinity between *eudaimonia* and *theoria* takes on a new significance when it is dovetailed with Aristotle’s readiness to accept an inclusive array of *muthoi* as long as they adhere to the criteria of *ananke* and *eikos*. The more the tragic poets “πουεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν / create a sense of awe [wonder]” (*The Poetics* 1460a12; Halliwell 1995: 122-3, emphasis and brackets added), the more a body of citizens exercises *theoria*, and correlatively, the more it picks the fruits of *eudaimonia* by making use of its *nous*. And “καὶ γὰρ ὁ νοῦς τῶν ἐν ἦμιν, καὶ τῶν γνωστῶν, περὶ ὧν ὁ νοῦς / since the intellect is the highest thing in us, and the objects with which the intellect deals are the highest things that can be known” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a21-22; Rackham 1926: 612-3, emphasis added), the objects of *theoria* as the taproot of knowledge satisfy the basic hunger of humans, in accordance with the equally famous proposition of *Metaphysics* I, 1.980a22: “Πάντες δὲνθροποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρκύνονται φόσοι. / All men naturally desire knowledge” (Tredennick 1933: 2-3).\(^{33}\)

It can, with good reason, be argued that these equally legitimate correspondences drawn amongst *muthos*, *eudaimonia*, *theoria* and *thauma*, facilitate a grasp of Aristotle’s philosophical attitude towards the tragic, as was initially hypothesised *qua* the dialectical

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\(^{31}\) The strong connexion that Halliwell finds amidst Aristotle’s conceptions of seriousness, happiness and contemplation lays bare the immanence of this angle. “‘Seriousness’—as Aristotle’s overarching concept of the domain of epic and tragic poetry, as well as of what he supposes, more specifically (in chapters 2–3, 5, and 6), to be the defining property of the action and characters of tragedy—contains and communicates,” claims Halliwell, “a recognition that the search for virtue and happiness (*eudaimonia*) inescapably brings human beings up against the risk of suffering and misfortune (“pain and destruction,” in Aristotle’s shorthand). The contemplation of this aspect of the (human) world, when dramatized in tragic plots that have the vividness of particularity but also the larger resonance of ‘universal’ structures of action and experience, activates tragic pity” (2002: 220).

\(^{32}\) Unless indicated otherwise, all Greek quotations of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* are from *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* translated by H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library, 73, London: William Heinemann, 1926.

interplay between the course of things and the course of events in life. The \textit{thauma-theoria} nexus lends assistance to unpack the nuances of this hypothesis, for “\textit{διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθρωποί καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἦρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν}, εἰς ἀρχής μὲν τὰ πρόχειρα τὸν ἀπόρων θαυμάζαντε / It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities” (\textit{Metaphysics} I, 2.982b11-13; ibid.: 12-3) and they stay wonderstruck for quite a while, “θαυμαστὸν γὰρ εἰναι δοκεῖ πάσι τοῖς μήπω τεθκορηκόσι τὴν αἰτίαν / because it seems wonderful to everyone who has not yet perceived the cause” (\textit{Metaphysics} I, 2.982b15, ibid.: 16-7, emphasis added). Singling out translational options like “theorize / see the cause” in this last phrase, Andrea Wilson Nightingale is surely right to note that “to ‘theorize’ or ‘see’ the cause of something perplexing is to move from a state of wonder to a state of certainty” (2004: 254). So long as tragic \textit{muthos} is mimesis of “praxis and life,” tragedy \textit{ipso facto} proves to be a wondrous host to a spate of wonders, most of which withstand human intelligence, and consequentially, or \textit{intrinsically}, contravenes the laws of probability and necessity. Herein lies the living proof that \textit{the} tragic \textit{qua} the \textit{unnameable}, yet pleasurable \textit{cause} of wonder manifests itself as an aesthetic expression of a philosophy—a philosophy which is counter to the one that Aristotle \textit{theorised}. As the most assiduous defender of tragedy in face of the charges of “corruption” in antiquity, the Aristotle was prescient to descry the degree which the fluctuant nature of human emotions could reach. And he had to take such countermeasures as probability and necessity against threats that might destabilise the audience perception. Having accentuated the philosophical thrust of Aristotle’s minutes on wonder by stating that “\textit{any} direct comparison between philosophy and the mimetic arts, however seemingly casual and qualified, could hardly fail to strike someone familiar with the Platonic background as bold” (1998: 78, emphasis in the original), his most attentive interpreter Halliwell appears to vindicate this point: “even this pattern [‘complex’ \textit{muthos}, in Aristotle’s theory, must leave intact the underlying necessity or probability of the plot-structure. It is emblematic of the philosopher’s whole view of the genre that intelligibility must be preserved even at the heart of tragic instability” (ibid.: 104, brackets added). It is this instability embedded in \textit{the} tragic that rebels against theorisation and sustains the continuity of wonder at the humans’ (in)ability to grapple with the inexplicable ways of the world, and as a corollary, turns the idea of the “tragic” into a wonderful source for philosophising. \textit{Theoria}, then, marks the end of tragic \textit{thauma} and brings along \textit{eudaimonia} by moving the spectators from the murky terrains of uncertainty to the purified landscapes of certainty within the scaffold of Aristotle’s dramaturgical plan. And this works perfectly fine with his overall philosophical outlook that is bent on praxis, for he is shrewd to keep φρόνησις (\textit{phronesis})—prudence, practical wisdom—in lieu of \textit{sophrosyne}, in reserve as a prerequisite for \textit{eudaimonia} prior to his observations on
the practical futility of *theoria*. For the Aristotle, in brief, theorising tragedy, despite *the* tragic, happens to be the *telos* of his *contemplation* of the incalculable wonders of the genre. In the final analysis, Aristotle pervades through the deep reaches of human emotions, perceives them as the fountainhead behind tragic *muthoi*, and having literally theorised tragedy *qua* drama, relegates the fathomless *thaumata* of the tragic into exile. The impact of the Aristotle’s contemplations on tragedy can be felt in every nook and cranny of the literary discourse on Ancient Greek tragedies.

But there is more to it. Provided that wonders of *the* tragic undoubtedly embrace the divine *thaumata*, which Aristotle markedly excludes from his deliberations on the genre, one can reckon *theoria* as an investigative journey that bears striking resemblances to the enquiry that tragic personae set out to make of themselves at the crossroads, in front of the Delphic dicta. That said, this by no means come to suggest that the journey analogy sits well with Aristotle, who, as Nightingale cautions, “does not use the metaphor of the journey of *theoria* at all. He identifies philosophic theorizing solely with the spectatorial activity in traditional *theoria*” (2004: 188)—which is why his pacification of *the* tragic yields different results than those pursuant to Plato’s denial of the idea, where the metaphor fits well with *the* tragic *qua* worldview owing to his assimilation of the journey trope into philosophical activities (ibid.: passim, esp. ch.2-3).

Without losing heart at the Aristotle’s termination of the tragic *thauma* in the *Poetics* and being heartened by his line of reasoning that aligns the divine with *theoria* in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b19-31, one can venture to diagnose the hallmark of the tragic *thaumata* that present themselves as riddles whose mysteries can only be unfolded to tragic personae. Moving cautiously along Aristotle’s line, the mind, or to be more precise, the *nous*—the divine part of man—itself becomes the part and parcel of a pattern, “complex” *muthos* if you like, that has already been set in motion. It is this matrix that gives the ontological weight

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34 Compare and contrast, most ostensibly, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a25-28 and 1141b14-18 with 1177b1-3. Still, Aristotle’s musings on *philia* seems to supply the required link to come to grips with the conceptual difficulties of his separation of *theoria* from praxis. As Amélie Oksenberg Rorty points out, “the discussion of friendship in Book 9 helps show what contemplation can contribute to the comprehensive practical life. By placing that discussion in the middle of his treatment of pleasure, Aristotle shows how virtuous friendship enables a person of practical wisdom to recognize that his [sic] life forms a unified, self-contained whole” (1980: 378). Rorty’s point is picked up and to a certain extent followed by Nightingale (2004: 209-18). See also, Nussbaum (1992a: 107-59) and Belfiore (2000) for wider perusals on the inestimable insinuations of “self-sufficiency,” as well as of *philia* for Attic tragedies.

35 At this point, it is important to note that Nightingale’s rigorous account tips the practical scales against Aristotle in Plato’s favour: “Aristotle severs the connection that Plato forged between *theoria* and *praxis*, and thus has no use for the metaphor of a journey in which contemplating and acting are conceived as a continuum” (198). But Plato’s connection cannot be taken for granted, since it is still subject to regulation, as she is apt to remark earlier: “the reentry of the *theoros* is treated as a momentous and potentially dangerous political event: the importation of foreign ideas and practices can bring benefits to the city, but it can also lead to corruption. Plato offers detailed legal measures for the practice of *theoria* precisely in order to avert this danger” (66). Besides, the fact that Nightingale surprisingly omits Plato’s hostility towards the praxes of tragedies from her study downplays the very scales of her appraisal of the two philosophers.
to the Aristotle’s theory of tragedy at the risk of marking the telos of tragic thauma, because it ensnares the intellect in a plot where pathos is omnipresent. Inviting the audience to contemplate on the manners through which the nous fights to prolong the (in)evitable, Aristotle’s theory succeeds in injecting the divine component of his moral philosophy into the experience of tragedy. But this injection comes at a cost, which is accurately assessed by Halliwell: “The price of Aristotle’s rapprochement with the tragic poets turns out, at the level of ideal theory, to be secularisation” (1998: 233, emphasis in the original). Whilst the wheels of the tragic muthos are turning, the spectators zero in on the choices that govern the actions of the tragic stage figures. This pattern synchronously transfixes the audience concentration and the resultant pleasure on this facet even under circumstances that are tight-knit with the divine. And with the presumed reciprocal implementation of the nous, the Aristotle walks a fine line between the divine and the secular.

Aristotle’s dramaturgical pattern is worth the cost though, for it issues forth a rewarding paradox apropos tragic thauna that determines its telos and drives the tragic personae towards this telos whose logical dynamics have their own course upon which the decisions of the characters have no effect; yet they go on in compliance with the rules of probability and necessity. The paradox emanates from the notion that tragic thauma survives this telic aspect that Aristotle preconditions for the writing of tragedies and lends itself to be suitable for “συνεχεστάτη / the most continuous” (Nicomachean Ethics 1177a22; Rackham 1926: 612-3) activity of theoria as spectacle. Within this context, the survival of tragic thauma comes to be contingent upon its actual, “quasi-philosophical” if you will, translation into the ever-changing dynamics of the performative space of theatre—a field that the Aristotle notoriously slurs over, as could be culled from the premium he puts on the act of recitation. In that regard, tragic thauma heads towards a telos on theatre that is yet to be determined, yet to be translated, yet to be theorised, yet to be philosophised, insofar as it continues to pull countless makers of theatre, a myriad of theatregoers, and, by interpolation, centuries of intellectuals towards itself to “perceive the cause” of human suffering. It is for this reason that there exist tomes of successive theories of tragedy after Aristotle and not one sustainable theory of the tragic that can explicate the actual nature of this cause, which, in all likelihood, is nearly synonymous with the ambiguous nature of tragedies that leaves their recipients in a constant want of certainty. It is similarly for this reason that performative space of tragic theatre gravitates to cancel out receptors’ assumed (theoretical) acquaintance with the genre by rekindling wonder at human transcendence via negativa. The contours of this procedure is aptly canvassed by Nussbaum: “Tragedy elicits wonder at human excellence not by showing its heroes untouched by the deaths of children, by rape, war, and material deprivation, but precisely
by showing how these horrible things do cut to the very core of the personality – and yet do not altogether destroy it” (2001b: 371).

This fractured core of human paradeigma is what rivets the audience members’ attention in the main. As they bear witness to the ways in which the paradeigma is broken into pieces during the mimesis of praxes and life, tragedy, to use a well-worn expression, holds up a marvellous mirror to human ethos that endures pathos in all (pre)conditions. The idea of the “tragic” is nested in this mirror. It evinces itself through a stream of thaumata that are nothing short of sparks of truth, which, more often than not, fall short of individual expectations and tempt humans to play with fire. They embark on a foretold journey, where they will be urged to fight against multiple faces of thymos on a well-trodden path and meet the expenses along the way. Whilst the sparks of truth burst into flames at long last, the stream of thaumata transmutes into a stream of thought reflected in the mirror for spectators’ constant theoria on humans’ impetus to go on. In that expansive sense, the journey simile fares well with the tragic, in that it translates the idea into a wonderful vehicle of thought for permanent contemplation on the true cause of human suffering. The moment that the translational journey of tragic personae comes to an end on stage, the nous itself sets off on another exegetical journey, by dint of which it meditates on the adumbrations of the re-enacted human praxes and life in the performative space of theatre.

It is through wonder that men began to philosophise. The idea of the “tragic” is one of the many profound intricacies of the sensible world. And the tragic does appear wonderful to everyone who has not yet perceived its authentic cause—a cause, which, in any case, remains at large, but shapes the ontology of Ancient Greek tragedies in absentia. The presence of the idea itself in the absence of a theoretical consensus on its disclosure in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides carves out a wondrous void, a formidable philosophical hole that, one way or another, draws the nous into its mysterious vortex. The intellect appreciates the process by virtue of hypostatisation: certainly not in the name of determining the cause, but for the sake of setting up a counter-current in the discursive maelstrom initiated most notably by Plato and Aristotle. Hypostatisation is one and the same with well-defended argumentation in this swirl, where the critic is forced to ascend by descending to the particulars of the “ancient quarrel.” Halliwell lays the nub of the strife on the line: “This rivalry was of a peculiarly threatening kind. It was not just that tragedy could be thought of as expressing one (or maybe more than one) alternative vision of human experience. There is a sense in which tragedy presented such potent and disturbing images of the field of this experience that it might, if taken with the fullest seriousness, crack the very foundations, the essential rationality, of philosophy itself” (1995: 85). Halliwell’s point of view sets tenable parameters under which the unfeasibility of tracking
the cause of tragic *thauma* down to a genuine source can be counterpoised with the transparency of the discursive problem that casts a shadow all over Attic tragedy. The burden on Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides is so heavy that it puts the onus on the critic to plunge into the whirlpool created by Plato and Aristotle, both of whom started to philosophise with wonder\(^36\) but stopped short at *the* tragic for the *teloi* of their respective philosophical programmes after taking tragedy with the fullest seriousness. Under the guidance of Heraclitus, it was possible to gain a toehold in delving into the manners in which Plato and Aristotle agonised with the tragic problem.

Subjecting this philosophical agony to hard scrutiny against the backdrop of an ontological framework exhumed through the symbiosis between Heraclitus and Theognis, as well as of a resonant (re)envisioning of the crossroads scene of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, rendered the toehold into a foothold, conducing to a sundry of closing observations. Aside from procuring a thread to defend the triple hypothesis on (and of) the knotty (cor)relation between philosophy and tragedy, Heraclitus’ guiding light aided to extract two strands of thought that resonate with the philosophies espoused by Plato and Aristotle. On the latter’s testimony in *Metaphysics* I, 987a30-34, it can safely be said that the first strand, that is to say, Plato’s lifelong adherence to the Ephesian’s doctrine of “constant flux,” proves to be a conclusive stimulus that reverberates through his relentless suspicion towards the conflict between the instability of the material world and the variability of human emotions, each of which lies at the bottom of *the* tragic. Though it is not as explicit as the first one, the echo of the second strand, namely, Heraclitus’ insight into humans’ *agon* with *thymos*, can be heard so loud and clear in *Corpus Aristotelicum*\(^37\) that it becomes an implicit reflective register for the Aristotle to qualify and define the variability of human emotions in tandem with actions in a way that he could rationalise the irrational in the eternal conflict between the course of things and the course of events in life, and theorise Ancient Greek tragedies accordingly.

Pursuing these two strands further might furnish more interesting resonances. That there is a linear ideational (d)evolution from Heraclitus to Plato and from Plato to Aristotle, blazes a trail to feel the pulse of *the* tragic as a philosophical constant in antiquity. Referring to the double-entendre of “bow” and “life” in *Philoctetes*, Pierre Vidal-Naquet draws an effective parallel: “The bow is what guarantees Philoctetes’ *life*. Sophocles, following Heraclitus, plays on the word βιός (bow) and βίος (life): ‘You have taken my life by taking my bow [*ἀπεστέρηκας*


\(^37\) Aristotle’s repeated references to Heraclitus’ D. 85 in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105a10-12, *Eudemian Ethics* 1123b21-23, and in *Politics* V, 1315a31 illustrate the point.
It is noteworthy to add that this textual parallel between Heraclitus’ fragments and the pieces of Sophocles, as well those of Aeschylus and Euripides, can be reinforced on conceptual-cum-metaphysical level by attending to what these subtly (dis)similar genres share in common: ambiguity. It is the same ambiguity that approximates the Ephesian’s thought to Attic tragedy in a vein that might relieve them of the burden, but not the critic, who stays enmeshed in a permanent rite of passage now to try to see the cosmic cause of the conflict behind human suffering through the tragic glass darkly, by walking on the same line of ambiguous fire that unites Heraclitus with Prometheus. With Plato the glass turns into a mirror, which, as Halliwell stresses, “is not a definitive conclusion but a dialectical gambit” (2002: 136) made just before the announcement of “the chief accusation” against mimesis. Plato’s wager on the notion led him to recognise one of the deepest fissures in the crust of mimesis through which tragedy qua philosophy could erupt, and this cognisance put him in a position to safeguard his ideal polis against the imminent eruption of the tragic. The size of Plato’s bulwark is such that it even casts a cloud on Aristotle’s succeeding defence of tragic poetry. As dominant as it might appear, the cloud over this defence is liable to dissolve when one is prepared to step outside the Poetics and revisit Aristotle’s theory of tragedy in company with his ethical philosophy. While doing so ferrets out the rigour of the Poetics and restores the treatise to its equitable status as a philosophical defence of tragedy in the accompanying milieu, it also consolidates the fact that with the Aristotle the tragic is institutionalised as dramatic literature. By securing the theoretical future of Attic tragedy, or tragedy for that matter, Aristotle plants the seeds of a novel dimension in the “quarrel” that would shade off into Querelle in the centuries to come. To that degree Billings is right. Questions at stake do “remain deeply Aristotelian” but only in the sense that they tally with the compartmentalisation of tragedy and the tragic in antiquity, as well as to the extent that they foreshadow the shifting substrata of the dispute that characterises the problematics of modern discourse on Ancient Greek tragedies, which overshadow their Nachleben on the contemporary stage.

All in all, working hand in glove with each other, both Plato and Aristotle sought to take stringent measures against the tragic. Yet, the idea itself throbbed between them, throwing into sharp relief two philosophies of the tragic that thrive on its refusal. If Plato has the upper

38 Cf. Heraclitus: “τὸν βίον τὰ τοξὸν ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος. / The name of the bow is life; its work is death.” (Kahn 1979: 64-5, D. 48).
39 The notional kinship that is being advocated here finds good warrant from the comparative textual analysis of Heraclitus’ aphorisms and Prometheus Bound proffered by Horky (2013: ch.6, esp. 206-10). See also Vernant’s exhaustive discussion of the ambiguity of the Promethean myth in (1996: ch.8).
hand on Aristotle in the “quarrel,” it is probably because his engagement with the idea in hard-and-fast terms engenders a worldview, whereas the Aristotelian compromise with the tragedians begets a dramatic theory prone to be violated by the “irregularities” of the individual pieces of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Whilst these two philosophies pale in comparison with the ambiguity of Heraclitus, they lay the bedrock of the philosophy of the tragic well in advance of the German interference. Recognition of this ancient ideational substratum is the first task of the modern reception of Attic tragedy, whose “performance tradition,” as Goldhill persuasively enunciates, “is fundamentally organized through German eyes” (2012: 8). Goldhill’s extrapolation strikes a chord with inquiries into the future of the tragic such as the present one, which, admittedly, is a carefully calculated response to the German seizure of the tragic. At the cost of diverging, at least for now, from the route favoured by Goldhill, the methodological-cum-argumentative distance covered hitherto emblazens the discursive problem around Ancient Greek tragedies; a vexed issue to which the scholar himself is no stranger. Paying meticulous attention to this problem puts one on equal footing with the concerns of the scholar. And this, by the same token, exhorts one to power through the translational journey of the “tragic” on the modern stage. But not before zooming in on the Roman mediation inter alia and re-considering the German appropriation of the tragic afterwards.

**Roman Transformation of Attic Tragedies**

One would be hard pressed not to tease out the socio-cultural connotations of the philosophical exploration undertaken in the preceding section. In a fashion evoking the transition, which has most famously been described by E. R. Dodds as a move “from shame-culture to guilt-culture” (1951: ch.2), innate to the *Oresteia*, such vital notions as sophrosyne and theoria went through a series of changes in the Ancient Greek society before, during, and after the fifth century BCE. Of interest is the politicisation of the Delphic dicta that were attributed to the sayings of the Seven Sages of Greece, whose role, as Jean-Pierre Vernant expounds, “was to identify and put into words, in poetry or maxims, the values that remained more or less implicit in the citizen’s conduct and social life. But their intellectual efforts not only led to a conceptual formulation; they put the moral problem into a political context and linked it with the development of public life” (1982: 91). And of particular interest is the subsequent expansion of the theoria vocabulary into θεωρικόν (theorikon), i.e. the Theoric Fund, which was introduced to Athens in the mid-
fifth century BCE,\(^41\) wherewith to provide the poorer citizens of the *polis* with the opportunity to attend the City Dionysia Festival. It was entirely up to the individual whether to participate in the event(s), or take the handout and walk away,\(^42\) in contrast to the prevalent supposition that all members of the *polis* had to partake in the festival as part of their civic duties.\(^43\) Though charging its citizens for admittance to a religious festival is altogether a startling manoeuvre for democratic Athens, the decision to do so was purely practical. “It was just the kind of regular maintenance work which the Athenian democracy liked to farm out to private entrepreneurs,” clarifies Eric Csapo, who goes on to state that “the root cause of the introduction of the *theorikon* was fierce competition for seats in the theatre of Dionysos” (2007: 100-1). That Csapo bases his statement on audience figures varying from 4,000 to 7,000 even on a modest estimation (ibid.: 97) and that, moreover, the Great Dionysia was a centre of attraction for foreigners and *theoroi* alike from all over Ancient Greece, are some of the many indicators of the fact that *agon* was not restricted to tragic competitions in the Festival that hosted its well-documented\(^44\) rhetorical deployments by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. It was an act reified on any and every level of society, and the City Dionysia was the most veritable epitome of the democratic values of the *polis*—values that could scarcely have flourished without the omnipresence of *agon*.

Amidst the colossal literature on the modes through which the democratic achievements of the fifth-century BCE Athens resonate with the Great Dionysia, there lies an aspect that is surprisingly overlooked: the citizens’ freedom to choose between being a part of the event and not being one. This is a very simple point, which is why it can easily go unnoticed, or on a better estimate, can readily be taken for granted. But its implications are overarching. Pursuing the above-intimated conversation between Simon Godhill (1999: 6-7) and Andrea Wilson Nightingale (2004: 49-51) on the *theorikon*, and, by logical extension, on *theoria* with Barbara Kowalzig, opens up a fertile ground to begin conceptualising and contextualising these implications: “*Theōria*, on whichever level it is enacted, is a ritual process, and hence has a performative quality to it; it is the ritual dimension from which all its significance emerges” (2005: 43-4). Kowalzig, in a way, brings Nightingale and Goldhill, or other scholars versed in the topic for that matter, on the same page: scholarly opinion might differ from the claim that

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\(^{41}\) But see Pickard-Cambridge (1973: 265-8); Sommerstein (1997: 70-1); Wilson (1997: 97-100) and Nightingale (2004: 49-52) on the complicated history of the establishment of the *theorikon* in Ancient Greece, which goes back to the mid-fourth century BCE.

\(^{42}\) Following Nightingale (2004: 57).

\(^{43}\) So Godhill: “This fund was protected by law: it was a prosecutable offence even to propose changes to the fund. It is easy to infer that attendance at the theatre was regarded as a citizen’s duty, privilege and requirement” (1997a: 67).

\(^{44}\) See, for example, the excellent analyses by Halliwell (1997: 121-41) and Goldhill (1997b: 127-50) on the ways in which the three tragedians employ *agon* as a rhetorical device.
every Athenian citizen counts as a *theoros* (Goldhill) to the counterclaim that insists on the international characteristic of *theoria* as a cross-cultural practice (Nightingale), yet no one would argue against the performative-cum-ritualistic feature of *theoria* (Kowalzig) that unites spectators and actors in a communal event that exposes humans’ *agon* with *thymos* into view through mimesis of praxis and life.

If this conceptualisation makes even a tiny bit of sense, then Vernant’s well-known sociological contextualisation of Ancient Greek tragedies surely gains more depth: “Tragedy is not only an art form; it is also a social institution that the city, by establishing competitions in tragedies, set up alongside its political and legal institutions,” he writes, “but although tragedy, more than any other genre of literature, thus appears rooted in social reality, that does not mean that it is a reflection of it. It does not reflect that reality but calls it into question. By depicting it rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem” (1990: 32-3). Hinting at mimesis as a critical praxis, Vernant saves the specific task of elaborating on the hallmarks of the notion’s “presentification” of the invisible in the *hic et nunc* of the ritualistic procedures for elsewhere: “In the context of religious thought, every form of figuration must introduce an inevitable tension: the idea is to establish real contact with the world beyond, to actualize it, to make it present and thereby to participate intimately in the divine; yet by the same move, it must also emphasize what is inaccessible and mysterious in divinity, its alien quality, its otherness” (2006: 336). This “inevitable tension” contributes to the embodiment of the truth that the dialectical tension between the course of things and the course of events in human life engender. Mimesis *qua* tragedy via critique and *theoria* turns the City Dionysia into “a privileged way of getting access to the truth,” to invoke Ismene Lada’s beautiful phrase.

In the introductory chapter of the current inquiry, frequent stress has been laid on the evental facet of theatrical occurrences while referring to Athenian tragedies’ precision to reveal the situation between the world and human conduct, truth if you like, with notable simplicity by virtue of mimesis. And now the time is ripe for qualifying it against the double backdrop of the simple point raised previously, as well as of Vernant’s insight into tragedy’s “historical moment” that “occurs when a gap develops at the heart of the social experience. It is wide enough for the oppositions between legal and political thought on the one hand and the mythical and heroic traditions on the other to stand out quite clearly. Yet it is narrow enough for the conflict in values still to be a painful one and for the clash to continue to take place” (1990: 27). Vernant’s diagnosis serves as a prelude to Alain Badiou’s rhapsodies for the theatre (2013) that can cast ontological light on the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. This methodological push is far from switching gears, however. The inherent evental nature of Attic tragedy calls for a dialogue with Badiou in the first place, which,
in return, can catalyse to (re)frame the phenomenon in a register that might form an ontological-cum-philosophical trajectory for the remainder of the present chapter.

To start with, in his sparse remarks on Ancient Greek tragedies, Badiou takes the tragic oeuvre to be an event in its own right by bringing one of his key ideas to the fore: “The initiating event of tragedy bears the name ‘Aeschylus,’ but this name, like every other name of an event, is really the index of a central void in the previous situation of choral poetry. We know that with Euripides, the configuration reaches its point of saturation” (2005b: 13). Badiou’s thought ties in nicely with that of Vernant, carving out a space between the ontology and sociology of the Athenian tragic canon. What is of cardinal importance therein is the dialectical exchange between the former’s “void” and the discourse aligned with the latter’s “gap,” or vice versa. The fact that Badiou treats Attic tragedy largely as prima facie evidence to illustrate the minutae of his philosophy, might at times lead him to smooth out the socio-cultural niceties of the fifth-century BCE Athens, but it is through his line of reasoning that the ontological textures of tragedy qua event achieves exposure. Having posited that “for the process of truth to begin, something must happen. What there already is – the situation of knowledge as such – generates nothing other than repetition,” Badiou sets out to spell out this position, “for a truth to affirm its newness, there must be a supplement. This supplement is committed to chance. It is unpredictable, incalculable. It is beyond what is. I call it an event” (2004: 62, emphasis in the original), and, as he always does, exemplifies: “the work of Sophocles is a subject for the artistic truth – or procedure – of Greek tragedy, a truth begun by the event of Aeschylus. This work is a creation; that is, a pure choice in what, before it, was indiscernible. And it is a finite work. However, Tragedy itself, as an artistic truth, continues toward infinity” (ibid.: 63, emphasis in the original). Within this frame, the void per se can plausibly be regarded as an aesthetic puncture sui generis in which the tragic abides, for sensing something potent in the artistic praxes of, say, the dithyramb, the three tragedians came to grips with those practices by giving a profound voice to that thing (whatever it was). In other words: they translated that idea into theatre by means of myths at their disposal, following each other under the ontological fabric scrutinised in the earlier section to such a degree that Goldhill would deem it as “a cliché” (2008: 61). Actually Goldhill, whilst offering a valid critique of “hypostatization of the ‘tragic,’” especially the sorts—including the present one—that lean particularly on this rubric, proffers one of the most solid reference points to buttress the ontological basis for the continuing defence of the triple hypothesis on and of the tragic. After all, this ontological “cliché” gestures towards the three tragedians’ fidelity, which, to put it with Badiou, is “a

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45 With the brilliant exception of his comparative Lacanian reading of the *Oresteia* and *Antigone* in (2009: 158-68), of course.
sustained investigation of the situation, under the imperative of the event itself” (2001: 67)—
 fidelity to that thing they perceived in the void; fidelity, in short, to the idea of the “tragic.” It is, furthermore, noteworthy to underscore that this “cliché” by no means alludes to any type of repetition that Badiou sees as an obstacle to hinder the truth process. On the contrary: thanks to the “highly experimental” (Goldhill 2008: 60) feature of the genre, the voice of that thing stroke anew each time that it was resounded in the theatre of Dionysus, striking, in turn, a raw nerve with the fifth-century BCE Athenian audience each time that it was heard.

Nevertheless, the socio-cultural weight of Badiou’s ontology resides in the pivotal role he assigns to theatre in the full philosophical, yet quite tangible sense of the word. Drawing on the pregnant premise that endorses performance as an event of thought likely to labour theatre-ideas, Badiou accentuates that “the idea arises in and by the performance, through the act of theatrical representation” (2005b: 72). Remembering Edith Hall’s perfectly working definition of tragedy, together with Vernant’s contextualisation, aids one to shed an ancient light on Badiou’s modern accent: “it [tragedy] constitutes the dramatic expression of an enquiry into suffering, an aesthetic question mark performed in enacted pain. For tragedy, while representing an instance of suffering in dramatic form, always asks why it has occurred” (2010: 6, emphases in the original, brackets added). As it is, the Great Dionysia proves to be an event par excellence in that it for sure proliferated a myriad of ideas in the imagination of at least 4,000 people under the aegis of one single question. The Festival itself was an execution of these ideas, a public embodiment of the shared impetus to find an answer to that deceptively simple question, which, in point of fact, was alight with allusions to the intricate manners in which truth manifests itself in human life. Because the question was an open-ended one apt to spawn more and more inquiries in lieu of definitive answers, each and every tragic performance delivered nothing but an array of aesthetic question marks posed on the polis, and, in the words of Vernant, “in this way it turned itself into theater” (1990: 33). Echoing him, Hall gives a persuasive sociological picture of the event: “Drama did not simply ‘reflect’ social reality in a one-to-one process; members of the social cast of Athens, its acting families, poets, and amateur chorusmen, collaboratively created fictions in their communal spaces that in turn had a dialectical impact, whatever metaphors we use to define it, not only on themselves but throughout their community—the real, social beings who gathered together to watch them in the theatre” (2006: 2). It is exactly at this juncture that the ancient theatrical praxis stands in close relation to Badiou, whose root proposition—“theatre is an assemblage”—a priori conceives the function of dance as “the thought-body showing itself under the vanishing sign of a capacity for art” (2005b: 70). Though Badiou sounds as if he would be content with a view of theatre in which dance would play little or no part, a careful reading of his maxim implies that he considers body
as the part and parcel of the art of theatre, the palpable thinking-instrument whereby to complete the theatre-idea by being a part of an aesthetic experiment in simplification; an experiment that always asks for the implementation of the most diverse and formidable artistic expressions (ibid.: 73-4). Badiou’s ontology fits into Hall’s sociological picture in telling ways, each of which would reckon the performative space of the theatre of Dionysus as a testing ground for the “thought-bodies”—specifically those of the “amateur chorusmen”—to realise their potential to produce ideas cumulatively, meanwhile urging the polis to design that space in order to create wonderful theatrical worlds that could endow the spectators with food for thoughts vis-à-vis the cause of suffering re-enacted. As a matter of fact, just like the simple question generated a plethora of ideas in the collective imagination of the fifth-century BCE Athens, a set of aesthetic question marks performed in the City Dionysia eventually gave rise to the invention of one of the most varied and complex staging techniques of the Western theatrical practice for a brief span of time, or to be more precise with P. E. Easterling, for “a period of only about seventy years (from 472, the date of Persians)” (1997: 46). The polis’ evental experiments with the theatrical space in the Great Dionysia lasted until, as David Wiles reminds, “the techniques of fifth-century tragedy became fixed and codified in the Hellenistic period” (1999: 134). That being said, the close of this experimental epoch neither derogates from the diverse festivals of the Greco-Roman Period as a whole, nor from the tremendous performance traditions of the late antiquity. But the sense of community that the fifth-century BCE Athens injected into the performative space of tragic theatre has most certainly been one-of-a-kind, no matter how the marked absence of the women from the process is an issue in and of itself.

It is, therefore, necessary to flesh out the subtleties that allowed for the emergence of this heightened sense of community. On the face of it, the amalgamation of religious, mythical, aesthetic, social and political elements in the Festival settles the matters for good. Still, the specifics of the event requires for a more engaged interpretation of its ontological dynamics. Hall continues to nourish the present dialectical exchange with Badiou by supplying another convenient terminus a quo: “Many of the spectators would have performed in a tragic chorus at some stage of their lives, probably when they were young men; numerous others would be proudly watching one of their brothers, sons, nephews, grandsons, or neighbours performing. Greek tragedy seems less daunting if we remember that it was community theatre, and a

46 On which, see amongst many, Beacham (1991), Rehm (2007: 184-201) and the pertinent contributions to Wilson (2007).
47 On the “lost” theatre and performance traditions, see Denard (2007: 139-60). For comprehensive explorations of the ancient pantomime and dance, see the essays in Hall and Wyles (2008), as well as the admirable Webb (2008).
48 The problematics of the obvious masculine ideology of the ancient Athenian society have been fairly treated by classicists. See, above all, Loraux (1993), Fantham et al. (1994), Zeitlin (1996) and Foley (2001).
significant proportion of the men involved in the productions were what we would call amateurs” (2010: 14). Hall’s concurrent emphasis on amateurship and the need to look at Attic tragedies in relatively plain terms takes on a new meaning when it is coupled with the preamble of an extremely influential volume devoted to choral practice in antiquity and beyond: “For the Greeks, to be ‘without chorus’ (ἀχόρευτος) was to be lacking something essential” (Billings et al. 2013: 1). Encouraged by these complementary perspectives, one can return to the moderate point signalled earlier, though in an effort to hammer out the ontological gist of its far-reaching implications now on the assumption that the citizens were free to decide for themselves whether to be a part of the event or not. Adhering at once to the fact that chorus, or better, tragic chorus was the fulcrum of the collective experience, and to the presumption that no one in the polis would have wanted to be devoid of this crucial practice, it can safely be designated that the stimulus to be a chorus member had a direct bearing on the subjects’ decision to participate in the event in which they could also be spectators to other fellow citizens’ performance. The interchangeable usage of subjecthood and citizenship in this sociological framework enables one to shift the critical ground to Badiou’s ontology, albeit with a view to revisit his notion of fidelity in the light of the hitherto underlined socio-cultural nuances of the event extraordinaire. Keeping in mind that Badiou calls “‘truth’ (a truth) the real process of fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity produces in the situation” (2001: 42, emphases in the original), prior to his identification of the “subject,” agency if you will, as “the bearer of a fidelity, the one who bears a process of truth” (ibid.: 43), one can locate the polis’ fidelity to the Festival at the crux of its singularity in the history of Western theatre. If this ontological exegesis is accepted, then one might as well construe the polis’ socio-cultural fidelity to theatre as the governing factor behind its subjects’ decision to take part in the event either qua performers, or qua spectators to tragedy, to mimesis of praxis and life. Rather than putting the fifth-century BCE Athens on a pedestal, this construal simply highlights society’s commitment to theatre at one point in history. All in all, the polis was not pure as the driven snow, when it came to such burning questions as slavery, ethnocentrism, social hierarchy, gender inequality, and so forth. Nonetheless, it is this range of (subjective) commitment to the art of theatre that is seriously missing from the contemporary society nowadays. For that reason alone, the evental façade of Attic tragedies can be idealised, in the meanwhile the sociological problematics of the polis sustain to nurture the modern classical scholarship.

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49 See, in addition to the sources cited in the previous footnote, Hall (1991) on the ethnocentrism of the Athenian society and the essays in Alston et al. (2011) on how ancient conceptions of slavery find their way to the (early) modern world.
Even so, this ontological-cum-sociological account cannot come to a close if one fails to notice how Badiou himself idealises Plato. In fact, Badiou’s blatant Platonism is a rewarding case in point in the sense that it demonstrates how difficult it is to walk a thin line between Plato and Aristotle after the discursive maelstrom that both philosophers incited. To be able to reap the benefits of this example, it would be feasible to hark back to Plato’s *Laws*, where the ancient philosopher concomitantly retains, even if for educational purposes, the institutional *choreia* in the *polis* and envisages it as the *sine qua non* of a wondrous choreography of divine-human marionettes in the phenomenal world, the mimetic *opus magnum* of the Demiurge. Leslie Kurke perceptively notes that “here again the key term is *thauma*, as a chorus perfectly coordinated in song and movement evokes wonder in response to the several kinds of transfiguration thereby achieved” (2013: 146). Kurke’s astute point attains additional significance when it is thought in relation to the Athenian’s “tragedy claim” by way of which Plato makes it apparent that he delineates the genre as “the mimesis of the finest and best life” acted out by *sophrones*, by the marionettes of the gods, who “do share small portions of truth” (ibid.: 136). Transformation of human puppets into one supreme body *qua* the communal socio-cultural-political embodiment of the superlative *paradeigma*—“the city in the soul”—is the wondrous visage of the Platonic *choreia* in which Badiou’s understanding of theatre as “the putting-into-bodies of the Idea. From the point of desire, it is its life; from the point of the Idea, it is its tomb” (2013: 73) finds its promised land. But owing to Plato’s vigilance of the tragic problem, as well as to the fact that the idea presents itself first and foremost as an ontological issue for the philosopher, it is no surprise to surmise that there can be no room for the tragic *thaumata* in this sociologically laden *choreia*. Having said that, the obvious ontological parallels between Plato’s foray into the tragic problem and Badiou’s comprehension of theatre acquire a new dimension, once the latter places his most effective conceptual tool at the core of the true theatrical experience of the recipient: “Genuine Theatre turns every representation, every actor’s gesture, into a generic vacillation so as to put differences to the test without any supporting base. The spectator must decide whether to expose himself [sic] to this void, whether to share in the infinite procedure. He is summoned, not to experience pleasure (which arrives perhaps ‘on top of everything’, as Aristotle says) but to think” (ibid.: 62). Although this “perhaps” saves Badiou from stumbling into what Stephen Halliwell detects as “the hedonistic reading of the *Poetics*” (2002: 204), his attitude towards the Aristotle speaks for itself. Nowhere in his writings on theatre has Badiou come to a position that would subscribe to the ontological rigour of Aristotle’s theory of tragedy, which, even when taken at its face value, addresses the exigencies of Badiou’s ontology to the best plausible extent, due to the ways in which the prerequisites of the “complex” *muthos*—probability and necessity—trap the tragic personae in a plot that leaves
them with no choice other than going on towards truth, namely, the tragic *thauma*. Yet, on a more reflective level, the issue boils down to Aristotle’s recourse to *theoria* through which he inserts the *nous* into the “complex” *muthos*, provided that tragic *thaumata* present themselves primarily as enigmas whose secrets can only be revealed to tragic personae in a plot already set in motion and is on display in the performative space of theatre for the *contemplation* of the audience. Now Badiou, who is unpacking the minutes of the elusive notion of “subjection,” speaks not merely for Aristotle, but also for the entire problematics in question: “‘Some-one’ can thus be *this* spectator whose thinking has been set in motion, who has been seized and bewildered by a burst of theatrical fire, and who thus enters into the complex configuration of a moment of art” (2001: 45, emphasis in the original).

Be that as it may, the benefits that can be derived from this example do not solely hinge on Badiou’s professed Platonism, which, in the last analysis, opens a pathway for unleashing the latent ontological force of Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. As it stands in this argumentative arrangement, Badiou’s instrumental theses on theatre turn out to be modulations, if not transpositions, on from one key to another, that reassures the harmonic progression during the ongoing composition of a wider methodology that can throw light on the event of the tragic on the contemporary stage. Even though that realm is still a long way down the road, the path found at this seemingly distant phase of the journey rescues one from getting bogged down in centuries of disputes over tragedy posterior to the formation of the Attic paradigm *qua* dramatic literature, as an ineluctable corollary of the two key figures’ philosophical rivalry over “pure mimesis.” Here, it is essential to record that this rivalry brings forth two conceptions of mimesis that go very much hand in hand with Plato’s and Aristotle’s divergent views of the *polis* that Martha Nussbaum pinpoints: “Plato[,] he [Aristotle] aptly says, tried to make the city a unity in the way that a single organic body is a unity: with a single good, a single conception of ‘one's own’, a single pleasure and pain” (2001a: 353, brackets added). Whence mimesis *qua* world-making that revolves around *choreia* and mimesis *qua* tragedy that pivots around life. It is, likewise, fundamental to take heed of the dialectics at work in this modulation that, at any rate, makes up for the alarming absence of the chorus from life (Aristotle), whereas the embedded conflict between the course of things and the course of events in the grand design gives life to the *choreia* (Plato). That being so, the Idea of the “tragic,” as was perceived by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in the void, found its polyphonic voice in the City Dionysia through the medium of theatre that produced “in itself and by itself a singular and irreducible effect of truth” (2013: 101), as Badiou would concur.

This, of course, is a synthesis that breathes life into the puppets of the gods via mimesis. And it is aimed to pin down a vision that would evolve into one of the most dominating
tropes of the Western thought throughout history: *theatrum mundi*. That said, this synthesis does not confine the so-called origins of the notion chiefly to Plato. Rather, it sets the scene for poring over the Stoic twist that Seneca gave to the relationship between world and stage in Roman Period, with the purpose of building on the observations of the previous part regarding the underlying socio-cultural dynamics of the Roman translation movement that culminated in the transformation of mimesis into imitation of reality and of models under the *non*-philosophical auspices of imitation of nature, which further culminated in Stoics’ consideration of their individual wisdom “*a mimêma* of nature.” All the same, Stoicism compensates for this shortage of philosophical agenda inasmuch as the transformation of Attic tragedies and the “tragic” idea is concerned. Reiterating the peculiarity of Plato’s negation of the idea, Halliwell compares it to the Stoic stance towards *the* tragic: “The Platonic disavowal of the tragic reflects an awareness, paralleled in antiquity only by the later and partly Platonizing views of the Stoics, that the tragic itself is *a philosophy in embryo*” (2002: 116, emphasis in the original). As is, Stoicism suggests itself to be a common ground in the “ancient quarrel” to (re)negotiate the boundaries between tragedy and *the* tragic after Plato and Aristotle in a vein that the idea not mainly grows into a worldview, but more significantly, comes to be a vehicle of thought to trigger emotions in a cognitive setting where the world is viewed as theatre. Gregory Allan Staley carves the Stoic worldview in stone: “one of the ways in which the Stoics viewed all the world as a ‘stage’ was their comparison of this process of cognition to the experience of the audience in the theater. As ‘spectators’ to life’s impressions, we constantly see, judge, and then act. Tragedy is therefore a portrait of the soul” (2010: 95). And Thomas Rosenmeyer properly narrows the subject down to Seneca: “In Seneca, life as play irrupts in the form of self-

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50 Who, in any case, was familiar with Heraclitus’ D. 52, which gives grounds to trace the “origins” of the trope back to the Ephesian: “αἰὼν παῖς ἔστι παιδόν, πεττεύων παιδόν ἡ βασιλεία. / Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child” (Kahn 1979: 70-1). The literature on *theatrum mundi* is expectedly gigantic. For a recent treatment of *theatrum mundi*, see the thought-provoking essays in Quiring (2014), whose introductory chapter makes no mention of Plato’s “divine puppets” while referring to the “tragedy claim” of the *Laws* (ibid.: 9). Ernst Roberts Curtius’ now classic study on the literature of the Middle Ages and the Medieval Period (1953) still offers a helpful overview of the metaphor (2013: 138-44). See also, Dodds, who follows Curtius to show how the simile finds its way to Christianity through Pagan filters, even if he does not carry out his examination under the name of *theatrum mundi* (1965: ch.1, esp. 11). Neither of these scholars, nor the impressive contributions to Quiring (2014) make the connection to Heraclitus; nor Kahn to *theatrum mundi* in his commentary to D. 52 (1979: 227-9). Seeing the gap in Curtius, Cleve (1965: 87-129) goes so far to speculate that Heraclitus is the originator of the *theatrum mundi* trope, which, on the whole, was an explosion of archaic ideas circling around the metaphysical tension between celestial world and the terrestrial one in the seventeenth century. Also worth looking at is Puchner (2014: 65-86, esp. 70-2, 84-5), where he zeros in on *theatrum mundi* within the philosophical context of site-specific performance(s) and draws an effective conclusion via Heidegger’s reading of Heraclitus’ “divine child,” which does justice both to the *theatrum mundi* trope and the literature surrounding it: “Heidegger translates fragment fifty-two from Heraclitus as referring to a child playing a board game [Brettspiel]. But then he subtly shifts and speaks of the ‘Weltspiel’, clearly referring to the tradition of the *theatrum mundi*. *Spiel*, even when it is primarily associated with game, is never far from play. Here, in these last pages of Heidegger’s extraordinary reflection on the ground, philosophy has veered close to speaking the language of site-specific performance” (2014: 85).
dramatization, the refurbishing of the self as a paradigm. It is a function of Seneca's own brooding tendency to see himself as the lonely source of moral energy” (1989: 52). And finally Seneca himself tops it all off in his oft-quoted Epistle 80.7: “Saepius hoc exemplo mihi utendum est, nec enim ullo effi cacius exprimitur hic humanae vitae minus, qui nobis partes, quas male agamus, adsignat. / I often feel called upon to use the following illustration, and it seems to me that none expresses more effectively this drama of human life, wherein we are assigned the parts which we are to play so badly” (Gummere 1920: 216-7, emphases added).

From this vantage point, it is easy to monitor the orbit of the figurative projectile launched into the early modern Western theatrical space from the ancient Roman complex. The psychomachia of Prudentius (circa fifth-century AD) paves the way for the Everyman of the supposed Dark Ages and of the Medieval Theatre. And from William Shakespeare’s emblematic As You Like It (circa 1598) to Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s celebrated El gran teatro del mundo (1645), to Baltasar Gracián’s neglected (within the sphere of Theatre Studies, at least) El gran teatro del universo (1657), to Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s Das Kleine Welttheater (1897), to his Jedermann (1911), and to his Das Salzburger Große Welttheater (1921), “the flight of the soul through the universe” (Dodds 1965: 7) has been reflected nowhere more efficiently than in theatre that is the world itself; whereas the dictum asserts itself in Pierre Corneille’s L’Illusion comique (1636) behind Jean Racine’s Jansenism that permeates through his tragedies with the all-inclusive notion of Deus abconditus. The dominant axiom of the trope is best encapsulated by the inscription—totus mundus agit histrionem—that welcomed the spectators of the first Globe Theatre, whose affiliated playwright puts the tragic vision intrinsic to theatrum mundi in a nutshell: “As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods, / They kill us for their sport” (King Lear 4. 1. 38-39, 1997: 306). In the meantime it would be up to Calderón to conjure the ontological “cliché” at stake almost synchronously with him: “birth itself is man’s greatest crime” (Life’s a Dream 1.1. 111-112, 2004: 93).


52 The connection between Seneca’s Epistle 80.7 and Shakespeare is commendably severed by Staley with a nod to Macbeth as a parting shot in (2010: 134-6). For Shakespeare’s fusion of Senecan elements into his theatre in tune with the literary traditions of inventio and imitatio, compare Miola (1992) with its critique by Gray (2016: 211-3), who also references to King Lear, but to liken it to the cruelty of the gods of the Senecan cosmos in (ibid.: 204-5). Star (2017: ch.3); the relevant contributions to Damschen and Heil (2014), to Harrison (2015a), to Bartsch and Schiesaro (2015), and Dodson-Robinson (2016) as a whole are goldmines on the reception of Senecan tragedy, And for the intersections between Shakespeare and Calderón, see Howard (2010); between Calderón and Hofmannsthal, see Bennett (2009). Hall (2006: 106) briefly mentions Shakespeare and Calderón before drawing quick attention to the “metatheatrical” features of Senecan tragedy in (ibid.: 110-1); but on which, see further Schiesaro (2003: ch.2, esp. 13-5, 36-7) and contrast it with the reservations of Staley in (2010, passim). Szondi on Calderón (2002: 66) has to accept that he is disregarding the Stoic view adopted by Seneca when he writes that “Calderon’s play completely frees itself from antiquity and realizes a central idea of the Baroque: the world as theater.” For Senecan resonances in Corneille and Racine, see Boyle (1997: pt.2, esp. ch.8-9) and Slaney (2016: 105).
Seneca is indeed no exception amongst the Stoics who, one way or another, held sway over Western thinking in a manner that is no different than the influence that Plato and Aristotle exercised. But in the great scheme of philosophical affairs in antiquity, Seneca is an exception; and all the more so within the specific context of the idea of the “tragic.” Because unlike Plato and Aristotle, not to mention his relative coevals such as Cicero, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, he took matters related to the tragic problem literally into his own hands by writing tragedies—works that, for better or worse, also became yardsticks during the (re)formation of French neoclassical tragedy alongside of the Shakespearean exemplum, which did not cease to haunt John Dryden in his search for a translational via media whose actual “purpose was to test the neoclassical ‘precepts’ in his ‘native’ land, or rather, to experiment the reconcilability of the neoclassical ‘principles’ with Shakespeare” (Dinçel 2012b: 79), where Senecan aesthetics was by and large buried. Seneca’s wager on tragedy introduces more questions than answers though, for it compels the critic to cope with two Senecan personae (in the most theatrical sense of the expression) co-existing in a huge corpus with eyes set on virtually every genre available to him: epistolary, satire, poetry, prose, philosophy, to name but a few. Then again, the methodological troubles that lurk behind wrestling with Seneca tragicus and Seneca philosophus in the shadow of his enormous corpus creep into attempts at coming to terms with the two personae after a certain point, and merge them into a reductive dichotomy that makes itself apparent in the foregone conclusion that “Seneca’s plays might be seen as negative examples’ (2016: 51), as Christopher Star correctly diagnoses. This is why zooming in on the theatricality of this corpus in view of its evident long-term impact on the history of tragedy and the tragic happens to be the safest way to deal with Seneca, which otherwise would be a suicide mission ending, sooner or later, in the quicksand of centuries of dramatic criticism in the wake of antiquity.

Also mindful of Star’s diagnosis, Joachim Harst touches a sore spot in that regard: “on the level of content, the idea of theater and spectatorship is always at hand: the Stoic has to set an example before his contemporaries by acting in a self-controlled way, and his fight with fortune—which Seneca compares to gladiatorial combat—is understood as a ‘spectaculum’ before a divine audience” (2016: 151). Harst’s point calls to mind an equally sore spot that was touched in the preceding chapter as to the overall image surfaced in Horace’s writings and spoke on behalf of the socio-cultural specifics of the Roman translation movement by dint of his

ch.4) with a special focus on Phèdre. On Racine’s Jansenism, Goldman (1964) is still insurmountable. Probably because of their divergent scholarly objectives, none of these fruitful studies touch upon, let alone take cognisance of the ontological thrust of the conditio humana in the great theatre of the world, excluding, of course, the remarkable example of Lucien Goldmann: “The God of tragedy is a God who is always present and always absent. Thus, while his presence takes all value and reality from the world, his equally absolute and permanent absence makes the World into the only reality which man can confront, the only sphere in and against which he can and must apply his demand for substantial and absolute values” (1964: 50).
“vivid metaphors” rife with paratheatrical innuendo. *Ars Poetica* plays two decisive parts at this junction: on the one hand, its presence partially explains the curious absence of dramatic theory from Seneca’s vast *corpus*, as he seems to espouse Horace’s five-act structure in which the chorus is (loosely) equated with actor (*AP* 189-190, 193-194, Fairclough 1942: 466-7); and on the other, Seneca’s seeming acceptance of Horace’s dramaturgical pattern perpetuates the most distressing facet of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, that is, its underestimation of the role of the chorus in Attic tragedy. This prompts Halliwell to ask “why Aristotle’s failure to offer an assessment of the chorus commensurate with its importance and status in Greek tragedy should have been so readily tolerated, or even overlooked, by many readers and interpreters of the treatise” (1998: 251). That Halliwell’s rebuke is aimed at a modern target permits one to locate the taproot of this scholarly indifference in Horace and Seneca, both of whom had the critical faculties to expand on the choral shortcoming of the *Poetics*. The harshness of it notwithstanding, Martin Heidegger’s ascription of the “rootlessness of Western thought” to this socio-cultural translation process holds true, unfortunately. But then, the source text, the critical source text to say the least, was not perfect either, especially on the choral front. What is more, both figures’ alertness to the paratheatrics of the arena, gives way to a critical backlash that bestows an extraordinary flavour upon their writings. Since the paratheatrical repercussions of the arena in Horace was well-savouried during the previous parts of this study, it would now be appropriate to appreciate what genus of *ut pictura poesis* comes to light from Seneca’s close acquaintance with a wide range of (Roman) performance traditions, spanning from the gladiatorial fights to the ancient pantomime; the former has long been under scrutiny, the latter has only recently been foregrounded. Helen Slaney, for one, convincingly demonstrates that there is more than meets the eye in Seneca’s choruses, the majority of which “lend themselves to pantomime, with everything this implies for the power dynamics articulated within the theatre. The early empire was notorious for its ‘aesthetization of politics’ and for the mutual dissembling that maintained the emperor as locus of absolute power. The solo star performer replaced the ensemble cast at roughly the same time as republican oligarchy gave way to autocracy” (2013: 115). Slaney’s views tally with the earlier observations made with respect to the consequences of the actor’s competence with its new performative companions in Roman Period: the actor had no chance but to be a master of imitation capable enough to deliver whatever amount of shock it took to mount a performative counterattack against the *reality* of the arena so as to surmount it through theatre. And within the terrain of tragedy, it had no choice but to become

53 See, for instance, the pertinent essays in Hall and Wyles (2008) along with Harrison (2015b: 367-87), as well as the source cited in the related sections of the previous chapter, for the correlation between Seneca and gladiatorial spectacles.
a “solo star,” both in choral and individual senses of the term, adept at translating the larger than life ekphrases that run through Seneca’s tragedies from Cassandra’s descriptio of the death of the titular tyrant in Agamemnon 901-906,

habet, peractum est. pendet exigua male
caput amputatum parte et hinc truncus cruor
exundat, illic ora cum fremitu iacent.
nondum recedunt: ille iam exanimem petit
laceratque corpus, illa fodientem adiuvat.
uterque tanto scelere respondet suis—

[He has it! the deed is done! The scarce severed head hangs by a slender part; here blood streams o'er his headless trunk, there lie his moaning lips. And not yet do they give o'er; he attacks the already lifeless man, and keeps hacking at the corpse; she helps him in the stabbing] (Miller 1968: 74-5, emphases in the original)

to the messenger’s depiction of Astyanax’s body after the boy’s self-sacrificial leap in Trojan Women 1110-1116:

ossa disiecta et gravi
elisa casu; signa clari corporis,
et ora et illas nobiles patris notas,
confudit imam pondus ad terram datum;
soluta cervix silicis impulsu, caput,
raptum cerebro penitus expresso— iacet
deforme corpus,

[His bones were crushed and scattered by the heavy fall; the familiar marks of his noble form, his face, the illustrious likeness of his sire, have been disfigured by his body’s weight plunging to earth below; his neck was broken by the crash upon the rock, his skull was crushed, his brains dashed out—he lies a shapeless corpse] (Miller 1938: 216-7)

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Horace, without a doubt, would raise eyebrows over these *ekphrases* and dismiss them outright as “purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter adsuitur pannus / purple patches so stitched on as to glitter far and wide” (AP 15-16, Fairclough 1942: 450-1). Still, these and other *ekphrases* sprinkled across *Thyestes, Medea, Oedipus,* and *Phaedra* provide one with sufficient reasons to contest that this oratorical device turns out to be the linchpin of Seneca’s translation of the tragic idea in tandem with his Stoic concerns. This combination of philosophy and tragedy not just results in Seneca’s creation of his own theatre, but at the same time allows him to proffer an implicit critique of Horace’s *Ars Poetica* in which “a purple patch,” as D. A. Russell educes, “involves a breach not only of unity but of *decorum,* since this implies the consistent maintenance of a single tone of discourse” (2006: 329). Seneca might take Horace’s general pattern as read, yet insomuch as the doctrine of *decorum* is at issue he would have none of it. Besides—and this is the nucleus of Seneca’s theatre—when taken *in toto,* he does stick to a singular discursive tone, that of violence, throughout his tragedies with recurrent outbreaks of passionate *ekphrases* that concurrently overturn the rule of *decorum* and yield themselves to theatricality that sets out to vie with the reality of the arena via imitation. If Ruth Webb is right to assert that “for the ancient rhetoricians the impact of ekphrasis is visual; it is a translation of the perceptible which mimics the effect of perception, making the listener seem to see,” before divulging her argument—“what is imitated in ekphrasis and *enargeia* is not reality, but the perception of reality” (2009: 38)—then Seneca’s utilisation of the device simultaneously denotes *his* comprehension of the parathetical violence and *his* staging of cruelty with which the spectators of the arena were overwhelmed. But not himself. After all is said and done, his famous repulsion towards the paratheatrics of the arena discloses another theatre, *his* theatre, where both Seneca *tragicus* and Seneca *philosophus* buckle down to avail against the ostensible decline of tragedy in Roman Period. If A. J. Boyle is right too to ascertain that “by describing violent death verbally and representing it and the reaction to it theatrically Seneca is able to control the perception and evaluation of death in a way that the arena could not do” (1997: 134-5), then the indisputable success of this alliance brings to light another overall image that *speaks for* the ideational dynamics of Roman transformation of Attic tragedies. This, in a word, is Seneca’s version of *ut pictura poesis* that goes against the grain of Horace’s tenet.55 And this image, in the final analysis, was meant to send constant shockwaves through the audience of his tragedies at the expense of the chorus that has already been taken over by solo stars from community.

55 Seneca’s “subversive achievement” of Horace’s *ut pictura poesis* doctrine with his *ekphrases* is also noticed by Budzowska (2017: 216-8), yet the scholar’s persistence to see Seneca’s tragedies as negative examples undermines the force of her contention in that it verifies Star’s prognosis.
Maybe “the rootlessness of Western thought” commences with the transformation of the tragic chorus from amateurship into profession at one point in history, at one stage during the Romans’ translation of the actor from master of mimesis into master of imitation: an expert in delivering shocks, without necessarily intending to be an integral part of a genre that poses constant aesthetic question marks on res publica, which, to paraphrase Vernant, turned itself into another kind of theatre, theatre of public affairs. On that note, translation of mimesis into imitation of reality and of life fits the Roman civic body like a glove. Correlatively, Romans’ transformation of Attic tragedies into furious pieces at the hands of Seneca suits well with the changing notions of the tragic as a philosophical constant, which apparently slipped through the cracks of Roman life that, for the most part, subordinated theatre to sheer realistic entertainment. Seneca did lift the lid on the deterioration in the Roman theatrical-cum-tragic taste, which ironically reverberated itself through the controversial means he employed. In the long run, this dramaturgical strategy turned Seneca into a sparring partner of such cornerstones of tragic poetry as Corneille and Racine during the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes of the late-seventeenth century France, the end of which marked “the constitution of genres clearly defined by theorists and the maturity of a literature that boasts its own national models leads to the emancipation of playwrights from Seneca” (de Caigny 2016: 147). By the same token, soon after German dramatists (re)discovered the chorus of Ancient Greek tragedies with national concerns through Friedrich Schiller (1803), they set out to eradicate Seneca from the history of tragedy, most notably by August Wilhelm Schlegel (1808). Reading the small prints of his obituary penned in the spirit of Schiller, Slaney one more time pegs down the bottom line of the matter: “Every narrative needs a villain, and Schlegel’s is Seneca: a counterweight to Greek pre-eminence, an uncanny shadow cast by the gallery of marble profiles which he cannot afford to pass over in silence (too often ‘imitated in modern times’). Instead, Schlegel attempts to repress this recurring force with a diatribe as violent as the material he seeks to expel from the repertoire. Seneca, compelled underground, persists in the very passion of Schlegel’s rhetoric” (2015: 313-4). And now that the end of the present section is close at hand, there is no harm in leaving Slaney’s trenchant remarks as they are, to play themselves out as concluding notes of a requiem for Seneca’s fate at German hands.

Taking these notes to heart, it becomes possible to probe into the adumbrations of the “death” of Seneca from a different perspective redolent of James Ker’s penetrating examination of the “deaths” of Seneca throughout history as an offshoot of Tacitus’ account on his “forced-suicide” in Annals (2009: pt.1, esp. ch.1). Doing so also makes it possible to go beyond Seneca’s tragedies that could at first sight legitimately be taken as negative exempla to foster critical spectatorship. This closing move proves to be even more compulsory, especially when
Nussbaum, one of the strongest voices in that strand, draws this binding conclusion: “Seneca promotes Stoic spectatorship – although the complexities of his dramas make it clear that the tragic genre, even in such careful and sophisticated hands, is not an altogether reliable tool for Stoic moralizing” (1993: 148). With Nussbaum, one comes full circle to Seneca’s genius that esteemed theatre as the melting pot of tragedy and philosophy in a shockingly theatricalised age in which the former paradoxically fell from popular esteem and receded into private domain. The more the theatre of res publica acted itself out in the Empire most (in)famously by the imperium on and offstage, the more the lines between the real and the theatrical got blurred—so much so that “under Nero and his perversions,” as Shadi Bartsch maintains, “the theater seemed to lose its character as a site merely for mimesis, whether of mythical plots or even the emperor’s own crimes. Instead, we find a theater that spills over into the emperor’s offstage life” (1994: 41). Hence the abundance of theatrical metaphors deployed by the Stoics in their endeavours to moralise life. Hence the irrefutable merit of Seneca’s tragedies as negative examples, as moral parables, as red alerts advising against the sweeping perils of humans’ agon with thymos insofar as leading “the finest and best life” is an ideational constant.

It is at this point that the idea of the “tragic” starts to come into collision with tragedy. And predictably, this is where Plato kicks in, while Aristotle lies in wait. This encounter, in essence, is tantamount to the defining moment of the “ancient quarrel,” for according to Staley, “Seneca’s plays have shaped the idea of tragedy precisely because the Stoics had resolved the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy that led Plato to ban tragedy” (2010: 9). It is worth restressing here that Plato’s verdict on the genre is preceded by a willy-nilly recognition of mimesis qua tragedy as an ontological problem, whereas the Stoic acknowledgement of tragic poetry as embryonic philosophy depends on the ways in which mimesis could be operated as a didactic apparatus.56 In that respect, the excessive theatrical circumstances under which the Stoic solution arrived on the scene signify, pace Vernant, the “historical moment” of the “ancient quarrel” that re-demarcates the lines between tragedy and the tragic, one that consolidates the former’s status as drama—Aristotle—and that of the latter as a philosophical category—Plato—relegating theatre qua theatre into exile. That theatre is markedly absent in Staley’s cogent explanation of the Stoic-cum-Senecan treatment of the “ancient quarrel” vindicates this observation: “Seneca’s idea of tragedy was not three removes from reality. For Seneca and the Stoics, tragedy was not just a literary form but also a metaphor for life in which all the world was a ‘stage.’ Tragedy in the traditional form portrayed lives lived badly; lives lived well, however, such as those of Socrates or Cato, constituted philosophy’s alternative to

56 As was made crystal clear by Halliwell: “Stoics, accepting poetry in particular as a kind of protophilosophy, regarded mimesis as a means of presenting instructive truths about life” (2002: 31).
tragedy, an alternative Seneca sought to emulate through the manner of his death” (2010: 10). The Stoic urge to establish the self *qua* paradigm comes to the forefront on that score, and bearing in mind Ker’s notion of “spectacular paradigm,” it can be further observed that Seneca’s imitation of the deaths of Socrates and Cato falls in line with his own characterisation of virtuous life “not by turning away from spectacle per se, but by appealing to spectacles of a different kind” (2009: 120)—of a kind that is *true* to life. Hashing over Seneca’s meditations on self-shaping, Bartsch once again calls attention to the gladiatorial analogy: “The philosopher is born ‘*sine missione*’: his gladiatorial fight is lifelong. And while the gladiator can ask for pity, the philosopher must die on his feet and unconquered” (2015: 193). At the end of the day, Seneca did fight with his fortune in a vein reminiscent of a gladiator, with open veins, dripping blood; unable to die, he drank hemlock; still unable to die, he evaporated at long last not on his feet unconquered, but in a steam bath.

Yet, contrary to what he contemplated in his epistles, Seneca’s ultimate *spectaculum* did not take place in an imaginary arena. It took place in one of his suburban villas. Ker, not without caveats in terms of strict identification, tends to associate the death scene with Seneca’s “crumbling” residential estate in *Epistle 12*, whose *ekphrastic* portrayals transfigure the letter itself into a *meditatio mortis* that progresses “from exploring the projection of the elite Roman self in the space and time of his suburban estate, to presenting the abstract model of the concentric circles centering on the single day, and finally to the even more immediate space of the biological body, from which we can be liberated in an instant” (2009: 340-1). Seneca’s definitive *spectaculum* did not take place in front of a “divine audience” either. Ker’s analysis provides a sound basis to comprehend the witnesses to Seneca’s death both as the characters and “participatory” audience of the spectacle: “Seneca’s redoubled efforts to die also entail a widening of the circle of characters involved in conveying him to death: it becomes a domestic team effort” (ibid.: 32). Ker’s keen elucidation obtains new heights when it is dovetailed with the aforesaid excessive theatrical circumstances that do not solely correspond with the withdrawal of tragedy from the public domain, but above all, issue forth a renewed kind of audience participation that requires witnessing to truth in crude terms under conditions where truth *qua* truth via mimesis *qua* theatre, mimesis *qua* tragedy escapes discernment. Seneca’s tragedies elicited shock at its audience each time they were recited, and the characters-cum-audience enveloping him at his moment of parting breath were appalled to see his resistance to pass away quickly. And Staley is more than justified to reckon Seneca’s (exerted) imitation of the death of Socrates (and Cato) as the fulfilment of Plato’s “truest tragedy” 57 without losing

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57 But see Star (2015: 254), who points out Seneca’s unsuccessful attempts at dying in the manner of Socrates and Cato, thus failing to imitate his models.
sight of the Aristotelian thrust in his tragedies: “tragedy presents images of truth; it stages the plot of the soul, the scene of true action for the Stoics; it is the genre best suited to Stoic villains swollen with passion, for their bodies are especially theatrical” (2010: 136). Staley’s sound standpoint can be reinforced by distinguishing the equilibrium at play in the Stoic solution to the ancient debate between philosophy and (tragic) poetry: the positive example that Seneca philosophus sets counterbalances the negative example(s) of Seneca tragicus, institutionalising the man himself as one of the most exemplary names in the history of tragedy. The Stoic impulse to establish the self qua paradigm thence induces the establishment of tragedy qua spectacular paradigm with Seneca.

Before subsuming the conclusions of the current section under this paradigm, it would be viable to make one final set of notes as regards to the death of Seneca at the hands of his student, who has been transmogrified into a mad-emperor, Nero. In Tacitus’ Annals, Seneca’s “forced-suicide” reads more as a fledgling domestic tragedy,58 well in advance of Denis Diderot and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing championing the genre in the Enlightenment within the scope of their respective theatrical reform packages. The fact that this thematic correspondence is one of the many ways in which Seneca can be exhumed at various periods of the history of Western theatre as a compelling alternative to his overly-studied presence in the poetics of tragedy from antiquity onwards begs the sinuous question: where to locate the tragic in human life, and how to reinstate the idea in theatre qua theatre first and then translate it into performance, considering that the genre itself has gone to extremes with Seneca, and that the Stoic solution to the quarrel tipped the scales against Aristotle in Plato’s favour to such an extent that generations of dramatists had to apologise for writing tragic poetry? The question itself hits a sour note, once one recalls how beneath their declared kinship to Aristotle the better part of these defences were in actual fact variations on Horace’s Ars Poetica, just like the tragedies accompanying them were substantial variations on Seneca’s rewritings of Ancient Greek tragedies.59 The question sets off an alarm bell too, once one also recalls how these apologies mostly served to complicate matters more with inventions like the notorious doctrine of three-unites that increased fractions amongst dramatic circles, instead of solidifying theatre against philosophy.

Diderot and Lessing were probably the last figures who took serious notice of Seneca in the Enlightenment. Attending to both intellectuals’ captivating reactions to Seneca in general,

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58 Viewing Seneca’s tragedies through the lens of Aristotle’s katharsis, Julian Young passes a curious conclusive remark on that score and deems the pieces as “melodramas” (2013: 57).

59 On this and miscellaneous problematics of Aristotle’s transmission to Renaissance and the Early Modern Period through the mediation of Horace’s Ars Poetica, see Halliwell (1998: ch.10). Seneca’s presence in and beyond the periods in question is very-well canvassed in the sources cited in the previous footnotes.
and to his death in particular, against the background of the observations of the previous chapter might fertilise intriguing conclusions now. Pondering over the encyclopaedist’s response to the occasion, Ker opines that “Diderot scrutinized Seneca’s death for the lessons it could offer about confronting tyranny, and presented himself not only as a modern-day imitator of Seneca, but as his avenger” (2009: 230). In addition to bringing the political potential of Seneca to the centre stage, Ker, in a certain sense, calls on Diderot’s great social actor for an encore. This thought-provoking invitation can be juxtaposed to Staley’s perceptive views on the corporeal façade of the Senecan corpus: “The angry body is by its very nature a tragic actor, providing ‘signs’ that are ‘manifest’ and kataleptic impressions that demonstrate the insanity of passion; these are ‘infallible marks’ (certa indicia). The imago of Senecan tragedy is this vivid face of an angry body” (2010: 65). Read side by side, both scholars put into perspective the degree to which Diderot’s great social actor is ready to go with its capacity to mask this ira and burst it out even with a smile, or a laughter. Where Diderot ardently reacts to Seneca’s death, Lessing approaches him with caution by factoring in both Seneca tragicus and Seneca philosophus. Concentrating on Lessing’s initial confrontation with Seneca before he turned his back on him in Laocoon, Hugh Barr Nisbet, for instance, punctuates his “insistence on the need to judge a poet according to the circumstances of his age” (2013: 186); meantime Ker extends his provocative invitation to the dramaturg by offering him a seat in a hypothetical theatre hall to have his word on Seneca’s enforced suicide: “‘A dying philosopher is no everyday spectacle’” (2009: 225). To this, the dramaturg would later add two poignant remarks—“Every thing stoical is untheatrical” (1887: 6) and “the theatre is no arena” (ibid.: 28)—before hauling Romans over the coals for their transformation of Attic tragedies: “I am convinced that the gladiatorial shows were the chief reason why the Romans never attained even to mediocrity in their tragedies” (29). Perhaps that is why Empedocles’ sacrificial leap into the blazing void of Mount Etna—arguably a more “spectacular” death, when compared to Seneca’s death in a bath—endued Friedrich Hölderlin with a more evocative image to work on and on most likely under the ontological fabric of the “cliché.”

This sensational criticism is in step with the fervent support that Diderot and Lessing would give to Shakespeare against the rigidity of Corneille and Racine. Having furtively called

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60 Whilst Hölderlin did not translate Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colonus in its entirety, he did use the pivotal line in Greek followed by a translation as an epigram to the second volume of his epistolary novel Hyperion (1799): “Not to be born is, past all prizing, best; but, when a man has seen the light, this is next best by far, that with all speed he should go thither, whence he hath come” (1990: 75). The fact that the poet himself started working on The Death of Empedocles in 1797 when the first volume of Hyperion was published confirms the ontological proximity between the two pieces. For historical accuracy, see Krell (2005: 250), who dates the publication of Hölderlin’s fragmentary translation of Sophocles back to 1796, and bolsters the ontological affinity at stake further by validating the present opinion that Hölderlin’s “troubled” mind was presumably occupied with the line while engaging with Empedocles’ death.
into question “what they believed to be the emotional essence of Greek tragedy. Lessing and Diderot justified their own modernizing practices. The way to be more Greek was, paradoxically, to be more modern” along the lines of the Querelle; Joshua Billings informs how “it is around this period that das Tragische and le tragique come into usage in French and German as independent nouns” (2014: 42). Though quick to tar Diderot and Lessing with the same critical brush that brands them as sentimental advocates of Shakespeare, Billings’ covert critique of their bent on laying claims to the “emotional essence” of Attic tragedy holds water in the sense that it discerns a sign of their times that underwrites the contemporary fascination with the “origins” of Ancient Greek tragedies. But the paradox that Billings mentions implicates in more paradoxes than he is willing to tackle at this part of his study. His praiseworthy specific objective, that is, reconsidering the compound historical reasons why German post-idealistic thought focussed on Attic tragedy to the point of obsession around 1800, exempts him from delving into the explicit paradox, that of Diderot’s paradox of acting. The other paradox on the line is implicit and turns Lessing into, as Halliwell captures, “a major advocate of the Poetics, which he was even prepared, in a manner ironically reminiscent of the French themselves, to call infallible” (1998: 312). This point is directly germane to Billings’ laudable contention that sets great store by Aristotle and the Querelle around the turn of the nineteenth century (2014: 6). It calls for contemplation.

Questions at stake “remain deeply Aristotelian” because with the Poetics tragedy is institutionalised qua drama at the cost of “secularisation” that brought about the relegation of tragic thaumata into exile. Aristotle, who was acute to site masters of mimesis—the leaders of the dithyramb—at the kernel of the birth of tragedy, glossed over the chorus at best, failed to theorise it at worst. At first blush, this failure forms a counterpart to the important sociological problem spotted by Hall, who finds the absent polis in the Poetics by thinking the treatise in conjunction with Politics, Nicomachean Ethics and Rhetoric (1996: 298-9, 303-4). In this regard, she weighs in with the conclusion drawn in the previous section: the urgency of moving beyond the Poetics to gauge the (underestimated) philosophical rigour of his theory of tragedy against Plato’s ontological rejection of the tragic. Aristotle’s failure demands a second glance, for it postulates a lacuna that accommodates with the survival of tragic thaumata through the chorus in “the most continuous” activity of theoría as spectacle. This failure does not detract from Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. Quite the opposite: it sanctions the chorus as a haven for the wonders of the tragic throughout their “quasi-philosophical” translation into theatre qua

61 Cf. Halliwell: “It is certainly superficial to believe that Aristotle in any sense took the chorus of tragedy for granted, or presupposed, but declined to provide, an analysis of its function which would square perfectly with the rest of his view of the genre” (1998: 251).
theatre. In so doing, the Aristotle foments trouble for the Platonic choreia that is comprised of “divine puppets”—sophrones—each of which would act out “the mimesis of the finest and best life” on the Stoic stage, which Lessing likens it to be an arena, where “no sound of lamentation must be heard, no painful contortion seen” (1887: 28).

Such was the dialectics between Aristotle and Plato prior to the Roman transformation of Attic tragedies. There was still a capacious room for the wonders of the tragic to come into play through this lacuna to render the two philosophers’ denial of the idea invalid. That this dialectics between the two receives short shrift from interpreters of tragedy is totally tolerable and understandable. The manners through which Plato and Aristotle refuse the tragic warrants this neglect imprimis. The wonders of the tragic idea go through a gory translational process, in the Stoic solution to the “ancient quarrel,” in which the distinction between tragedy and the tragic was drawn for good and all. The title of Staley’s prescient study demonstrates the point: Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy, not the other way round. The title itself explains why the Stoic solution is one and the same with the continuance of Plato’s negation of the tragic and has more to say on the contours of this translation of the tragic wonder into semi-tragic shock. And it is here that Staley proves to be the most valuable, since his indifference to the idea of the “tragic” opens a broad vista on the reception of Aristotle through history. After noting how “a monstrum is at the center of almost every Senecan play because Seneca sees tragedy as a visual and horrific revelation of the truth” (2010: 113), Staley measures the “theatrical” distance covered over the course of the Roman translation movement in Aristotelian terms: “Horror is a shock effect that stuns us, whereas Aristotle wants tragedy to foster pity and fear as the means by which to make its events intelligible” (ibid.: 114). The scholar places the accent in the right direction and betokens to another translation movement, namely, the Querelle during which Corneille would subject pity and fear along with katharsis to Stoic scrutiny, whilst Racine would resuscitate the “complex muthos” on the neo-classical stage that was under the tragic supervision of theatrum mundi. Billings shrewdly historicises Lessing and Aristotle: “Ancient or modern, tragedy remains synonymous with pity and fear” (2014: 58). For the sake of strengthening both Staley’s and Billings’ hand(s), one finds it tempting to rephrase: ancient or modern, tragedy remains synonymous with drama. Shakespeare’s splendid theatrical reconsolidation of tragedy qua spectacular paradigm does not assist to change this situation either. And with a lacuna in his theory of tragedy, Aristotle still lies in wait.

62 Regardless of her persistence to see Seneca’s tragedies as negative examples, Budzowska (2012: 152-6) proffers a neat overview of Corneille’s Stoicism, which has most recently been addressed also by Ibbett (2018: 86-90). For the responses of Corneille and Racine to the Poetics, see Halliwell (1998: 301-8).
Lessing’s advocacy of Shakespeare, to be sure, was a critical one fuelled by “the pity and fear” of the Poetics. This is particularly obvious in his review of the performance of Richard III, which begins with a sceptical avowal of the terror that the production stimulates and peaks with a broadside on the theatrical milieu of the Enlightenment: “He [Aristotle] speaks of pity and fear, not of pity and terror” (1890: 407, emphases in the original, brackets added). Nisbet takes Lessing’s attitude towards Shakespeare in the Hamburg Dramaturgy to be “essentially negative, as a stick to beat the French with” (2013: 395). But on a closer inspection, Lessing’s critical remarks on the Elizabethan turn (in)directly on Seneca, as a result of the ways in which he is inscribed into Shakespeare. As such, they interlock to constitute one final defence against the impending shocks of the spectacular paradigm. The lineaments of this defensive line are truly Aristotelian, or even more Aristotelian than Aristotle was, because when Lessing appeals to “pity and fear” he always does so with an eye to the public function of theatre, due, of course, to his national concerns that were not far cry from those of Schiller. “To what end the hard work of dramatic form?” the dramaturg asks and lays maximum weight on the here and now of the tragic experience in the classical period: “the Greeks felt themselves animated by their stage with such intense, such extraordinary emotions, that they could hardly await the moment to experience them again and again” (1890: 426). It is for this reason that Lessing raises doubts over the excessive theatrical circumstances of Seneca’s age, where tragedy lost its currency in the public domain and became shocking pieces of drama to be delivered by masters of imitation in private settings, settings under which Seneca would vaporise. The dramaturg, paradoxically, counted Seneca’s death as an exceptional spectacle, as long as it can be translated into performance by “living picture(s) to the spectator” to arouse pity and fear on the Enlightened stage. Does this rate Lessing as a philosopher of the tragic? Fat chance. But it certainly shows—and now Diderot can join the “sustained investigation of the situation”—how Aristotle’s and Plato’s refusals of the tragic can be put into the service of theatre qua theatre without having recourse to arouse shock. It is on these grounds that the plea made for a poetics of translation in the previous part of the present study finds its argumentative-cum-methodological equivalent now in the plea for a poetics of tragedy.

Questions at stake remain deeply Aristotelian as much as they remain deeply Platonic, because with them, two sturdy philosophies on and of the tragic still remain on the loose together with the wonders of the idea whose survival is bound to be contingent upon their poietic translation into the performative space of theatre. If Aristotle has the upper hand on Plato over the long haul after “quarrels” over tragedy, it is probably because of the lacuna in

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63 See Miola (1992: 72-92) for the re-emergence of Seneca within the specific context of Richard III on textual level.
his theory of the genre that can barely be thought irrespective of his ethical philosophy, whereas Plato’s engagement with \textit{the} tragic \textit{qua} worldview in hard-and-fast terms engenders a permanent banishment of the idea—a verdict that is fortified by the Stoic resolution to tame \textit{the} tragic, which, paradoxically, results in the translation of tragic wonder into shock. The fact that neither Lessing nor Diderot addresses the lacuna in Aristotle’s theory of tragedy might well be read as a failure that is also truly Aristotelian, in that they keep the theoretical door open to the wonders of the tragic to thrive on in “the most continuous activity” of \textit{theoria} as spectacle until yet another translation movement: the German seizure of \textit{the} tragic that would knuckle down to monopolise the chorus in the name of the sublime. This, as Billings admits in his discussion of Schiller, “takes on a stoic characteristic, as an awareness of the inevitable failure of human freedom” (2014: 96), before unfolding its distinctive feature in a stout comparison: “In antiquity, before culture diverged from nature, the chorus was a harmonious element, part of the beautiful effect of ancient tragedy; now, the chorus is an aesthetic shock, which creates the educative disharmony of the sublime” (ibid.: 123). This marks the point of no return, for once the aesthetic shock is backed up by such reputable philosophical movements as German Idealism and Romanticism, as well as by their ensuing resonances in modernity, it rips through anything that stands in its way.

The present section started with a simple observation: the fifth-century BCE Athens’ commitment to theatre under the ontological-cum-sociological specifics of tragedy \textit{qua} event. And at the end, it arrived at the point of no return—a point that broaches matters related to translational phenomena. In that sense, the point itself obliges one to return to Badiou’s subtle notion of fidelity. To Badiou’s surprise, it is not ideally Plato, but Aristotle who gives an edge to his instrumental theses on theatre through the nexus of \textit{thauma-theoria-muthos} that leaves a constant ontological-cum-philosophical margin for the wonders of the tragic to survive on the contemporary stage. This margin remains intact, whatever happens. As a consequence of its ontological matrix, the \textit{nous}, anyhow, stays trapped in the “complex \textit{muthos}” to arouse \textit{thauma} in “the most continuous activity” of \textit{theoria} as spectacle. The \textit{modus operandi} of this matrix paradoxically circles around a figure that Aristotle passes over: the actor and its ability to translate the ontological problem, “cliché” if you prefer, into theatre \textit{qua} idea. A closing glimpse at its ironic position amidst the writings of Aristotle, Horace and Seneca begets more paradoxes. The actor \textit{qua} master of mimesis could still have managed to find its way to the backdoor of \textit{opsis} and eloquently knock at the door to receive an unpleasant welcome by the Aristotle to his dramaturgical scheme where \textit{prepon} preponderated. Romans’ translation of the actor from master of mimesis into master of imitation gathered momentum with Horace’s translation of \textit{prepon} into \textit{decorum} with his “vivid metaphors,” each of which oddly led the
actor straight to the front door to knock before gaining entrance to the satirist’s dramaturgical
design that Seneca took as read along with the Aristotelian pattern. In both of the dramaturgical
plans the actor had to knock. With Seneca it had to bash in. If only it could, as it had to wait a
bit, some fifteen hundred years or so, to begin terrorising the stage from the Renaissance
onwards. If that is really the case, then, the entire discourse on tragedy exercised—and still
exercises—impeccable fidelity to literature, definitely not to the theatre of Dionysos that was
packed to the gills at some point in history.

This, then, is the modest conclusion of the current section: the spectacular paradigm
of the Roman transformation of Attic tragedies is identical with the translation of the tragic idea
into drama. While this translational paradigm can be of huge interest for the textually-oriented
approaches to the study of modern reception of Ancient Greek tragedies in performance, it
serves little purpose for an ontologically loaded translational methodology that is hell-bent for
the contemporary stage. One cannot emphasise enough the major change that this translational
paradigm brings along: problems at hand are not a matter of tragedy qua drama anymore. They
are apposite to the convoluted correlation amongst tragedy, ontology and translational event in
the absent presence of theatre, as was petrified by the integration of the idea of the “tragic” into
philosophy during the course of the German Romantic translation movement that is the
progenitor of modern discourse on tragedy and the tragic. Even though the way has already
been cleared for the contemporary stage and although the key problematics of this translation
movement have already been framed, there still remains the philosophical translation of the
“cliché” that moulds the ontology of thinking on and of the tragic at the outset and apex of
German Romanticism. To that translation one must turn now.

The Birth of Tragedy (out of Music)

In order to prepare the ground for a fuller elaboration and defence of the triple hypothesis, it is,
first and foremost, essential to pinpoint the governing theatrical variant between the Stoic and
German ways of thinking in action under the aegis of art’s imitation of nature, the translational
constant at work in both responses to the Attic tragic paradeigma. The preceding inquiry into
tragedy and the idea of the “tragic” in and beyond antiquity sets forth two spectacular imago
morte. The first, where a dying philosopher is surrounded by scribes and probable household
staff, abounds in the history of Western painting to such a degree that the theme itself happens
to be a testimony to the astonishing predominance of literature and philosophy over theatre in

64 See Figures 1 and 2.
a highly theatrical setting that possibly attested to Seneca’s exitus. The canonical paucity of the second image, where another philosopher plunges into the fiery void, gives one a pause—a pause that Salvator Rosa’s sublime The Death of Empedocles presumably gave to its contemplators in advance of the revalorisation of the notion as a philosophical constant by Immanuel Kant, to whom German Romantic appropriation of the tragic owes too much. On the one hand, the conditions under which two philosophers were forced to bid farewell to the a priori “finest and best life” fare well with the ensuing depictions of the circumstances themselves that (v)indicate the minuscule space between theatrics of thinking and ontology of thinking. On the other hand, these spectacular dying images certify the enduring impact of the Roman transformation of Attic tragedies. They form an angle to see the state of theatrical-cum-philosophical affairs before and after the German take on the tragic in another light: the well-established tradition of tragedy qua dramatic literature unifies Plato with Aristotle at long last in the forever absence of theatre with remarkable registers. They relegate their complementary philosophies on and of the tragic into exile, just as the two refused the idea throughout their joint struggles against theatre, or—to be more specific—against theatrocracy, which Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi explains as “the damaging effects of the overall theatricalisation of the city’s musical culture” (2013c: 215). The reverberations of their rejections of the tragic are overreaching and can clearly be heard in the present-day discourse on Plato and Aristotle that is prophetically announced by Friedrich Nietzsche, who deems the former as “the greatest enemy of art Europe has yet produced” (1989: 154), and grumbles about the latter’s elusive concept of katharsis, “which leaves the philologists uncertain whether to count it amongst the moral or medical phenomena” (1999: 106). Nietzsche’s foresight into the future passes the validity check for both philosophers, whose systems of thought are prone to be reduced to fit either/or approaches that can easily brandish the nemesis of mimesis around the proponents of affective treatments of artistic practices, most of which hinge on katharsis that, one way or another, end up in (re)producing what Stephen Halliwell problematises as “hedonistic reading(s) of the Poetics.” Nevertheless, pleasure-seeking spectatorship itself was in the

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65 As is ably documented by Billings (2014) and by the relevant contributors to Billings and Leonard (2015). While the scholarship in the historiography of Western painting is unequivocal to herald Rosa as the harbinger of the seventeenth and eighteenth century sublime (Sigurdsson 1999: 1315-38, esp. 1324-5; Langdon 2012: 163-85), the philosophically charged discourse (Clewis 2009; Doran 2015) seems to be indifferent to him. The notion of sublime surely has a long history that goes back to “Longinus” in antiquity, on which, see Halliwell (2011: ch.7), as well as the pertinent essays in the more Kant-specific Courtine et al. (1993).

66 It is worth mentioning here that Peponi extends her discussion of the theatrokratia of the Laws III.700a-701b to Aristotle’s Politics VIII.1339a-b and 1341b. The result is a judicious comparison that bolsters both philosophers’ antagonism against (excessive) theatricality during musical performances: “The elder Plato and the much younger Aristotle were very likely diagnosing, perhaps over approximately the same time, the same problem in Athenian musical matters” (2013c: 229). See also, Weber (2004: ch.1) for a broader perusal on the overarching connotations of theatrocracy.
crosstracks of Plato and Aristotle in their animadversions on theatrocracy, “a cultural regime where the audience dictates and encourages constant musical experimentation with the sole criterion of pleasure” (2013a: 23), to clarify the term further with Peponi. Nietzsche, without a
doubt, was much more antagonistic than Plato and Aristotle ever were, when he disinterred theatrocracy—“the sheer idiocy of believing in the priority of the theatre, that theatre has the right to dominate over the arts, over art”—after he burned bridges with Richard Wagner, to whose devotees, and, by interpolation, to whose critical interlocutors such as Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig in the twentieth century, he left one definition of theatre to remember: “that it is below art, that it will always just be something secondary, cruder, bent into shape, lied into shape for the masses!” (2005: 256, emphases in the original). Showing how to philosophise with a hammer, Nietzsche was not solely nailing down the verdict on theatre, but at the same time was finding at one stroke a perennial solution to the problematics of tragedy in a fashion that would please both Plato and Aristotle.
Actually, Nietzsche’s announcement is not far off from the renouncement of Plato and Aristotle on *the* tragic, regardless of the ways in which the German (post)idealist and Romantic handling of the tragic problem redressed mimesis and *katharsis* in favourable veins. Wrapping up the minutiae of the intellectual milieu encompassing Nietzsche’s judgment, Joshua Billings first points out that “tragedy for the idealist era presents an image of truth, yet the artistic image is not a debased reflection of ultimate reality (as for Plato), but the nearest access that humans have to a higher realm” (2014: 226), and then states that “the notions of *catharsis* suggested by Idealism (often under the name of the sublime) are far more wide-ranging than any previous understanding, because they respond to a far deeper sense of the horror of the tragic” (ibid.).

Billings’ deduction hits the right historical note in that it throws light on the reception of Plato and Aristotle through and beyond the period in question. Considered, by and large, as two ancient authorities on philosophical and literary vocabulary associated with tragedy *qua* drama, Plato and Aristotle could scarcely provide the German line of thought stretching from G. W. F. Hegel to Arthur Schopenhauer, with ontological insight into the issues of *the* tragic. Nor the Stoic solution to the “ancient quarrel” could satisfy such sinuous minds as those of Friedrich Schiller and August Wilhelm Schlegel, with its (para)theatrics of thinking on tragedy.67

As a matter of fact, the moment that the German thought approached Ancient Greek tragedies with an unprecedented philosophical determination, the robust walls enveloping the earlier denials of the idea were quick to crumble, because there has never been a candid embracement of *the* tragic *qua* philosophy or *qua* philosophical category. Tackling, moreover, the Aristotle’s theory of tragedy head-on with special sensitivity to its lacuna, to which both Denis Diderot and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing—arguably the two towering figures who gave serious thought to the craft of the actor during the course of moving dramatic texts from page to stage—were apathetic, the German (post)idealistic thought transfigured, most of all, the chorus into a *topos* wherewith to give voice to the sublime in terms that are appropriately studied by Billings. Furthermore, the subsequent integration of the chorus into the experience of tragedy driven by the impulse towards music, *the* music, which Philip Lacoue-Labarthe elucidates along the lines of the early Nietzsche as, “the healing dithyramb: the music capable of relieving, calming, even sublimating ‘terror and pity’—the obsession with death” (1989: 196), opened the floodgates to the artwork of the future, or better, to an ideational (d)evolution “from the spirit of music to the core of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and from *Gesamtkunstwerk* to the heart of Bayreuth” (Dinçel 2012c: 331-42). Throughout this process, music stood at once for the expression of the

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67 This, of course, is not to say that Stoicism had no influence on the German thought. *Au contraire*—Seneca and the Stoics had direct bearing on the movement in general and on Nietzsche in particular. See Nussbaum (1994: 139-67) for an extensive exploration of Nietzsche’s Stoicism.
obsession with death and obsession with theorisation, thanks to the manners in which it served as a hypothetical entryway into the idea of the “tragic.” What is more, the moment that Billings rightly takes it to be “liminal” (2014: 7), where the German seizure of the tragic took place, might as well correspond to yet another “historical moment” in Jean-Pierre Vernant’s
nomenclature, albeit the *a fortiori* “gap” developed at the crux of the intellectual experience prompts one to delineate the epoch as the historical moment of the tragic, if not tragedy *per se*. In the wake of the translation of “pity and fear” into “pity and terror/horror,” of tragic wonder into shock/sublime, of *theoria* into (disinterested) contemplation (of Platonic ideas) in the absent presence of the medium, which endowed Plato and Aristotle’s rejections of the tragic with ontological vigour, such (re)translators of the “cliché” as Friedrich Hölderlin (*Hyperion*), Schopenhauer (1969a: 254; 1969b: 586-7) and Nietzsche (1999: 22-7) faced a genuine expressive-cum-philosophical vacuum that harks back to Alain Badiou’s conception of “void.” Consequently, the moment that German intellectuals were on the cusp of assimilating the Attic tragic *paradigma* into philosophy in and around the nineteenth century, they were, more or less, on the similar ontological verge from where Empedocles was about to dive into the blazing void in Rosa’s sublime meditation on his death—a meditation that in all likelihood came to be a haunting image for Hölderlin too.68

Seen in this light, the ontology of thinking topples the theatrics of thinking and evolves into an argumentative methodological motor to cut across the hedonistic readings of the German appropriation of the tragic idea.69 If such argumentation is permitted, then it becomes possible to monitor the historical moment of the tragic from a different view, one that sites translational phenomena at the dead centre of the era and zooms in on Hölderlin thereby to concomitantly build on the above contextualisation, on the persuasive historical explanations supplied by Billings vis-à-vis the German fascination with Attic tragedies around 1800, as well as on the legitimate questions posed by Simon Goldhill as regards to the repercussions of “the nineteenth century construction of the idea(l) of the tragic” (2008: 52). Indeed, the cardinal role that translation played in the epoch bestows a genetic translational quality upon this construction and immediately transmutes it into a re-construction of the tragic idea(l), substantiating the

68 A minor biographical detail buttresses this point: “Salvator Rosa” was amongst the names that Hölderlin identified himself with when signing his poems towards the end of his life in the crutches of schizophrenia, on which see Jakobson (1985: 135, fn.1).
69 That said, this contention does by no means come to question the validity of the virtually uncontrollable literature on the German (post)idealistic and Romantic engagement with Ancient Greek tragedies, which, for the most part, continued and continues to revolve around a series of notional twists that Aristotle’s *katharsis* took during the era—so much so that to list only the literature amassed around Friedrich Schelling, for example, would be one and the same with assembling an array of critical appendices next to those of Halliwell on *katharsis*. See, in addition to Billings (2014), the remarks on Schelling’s comprehension of *katharsis* in the invaluable studies by Lacoue-Labarthe (1989); Schmidt (2001); Krell (2005) and Föti (2006) each with further bibliography. Whilst utilising Aristotelian *katharsis* as a theoretical apparatus to address the urgencies of the curious pleasure of tragedy was undoubtedly a chronic inclination, it always had an ethical bent behind it. There are sufficient grounds to ascribe the establishment of the hedonistic paradigm of *katharsis* to Jacob Bernays with Halliwell: “whatever the reasons for the obsession with *katharsis*, there has been a strong tendency to follow the lead set by Bernays in the mid-nineteenth century, and to reject the idea that *katharsis* is a doctrine with any ethical import” (1998: 323). A crucial section of Bernays’ work on *katharsis* has recently been published in English translation as an appendix to Billings and Leonard (2015: 315-28). See also, James I. Porter’s salient contribution to the debate in the same volume (ibid.: 15-41).
ongoing assertion that tallies the tragic with the act of translation thereof. The rationale behind setting the focus deliberately on Hölderlin, rather than, say, on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, does not chiefly stem from the former’s formidable translations of Sophocles, but more fundamentally, emerges from the terminus a quo of these translational activities that is perhaps best captured first by Lacoue-Labarthe in a comment while charting out the transition from The Death of Empedocles to Sophocles in Hölderlin’s so-called “career” that was turned upside and down because of his mental breakdown: “The ‘return to Sophocles’ does not, for Hölderlin, mean some sort of ‘nostalgia for Greece’. It means: a return to the ground of theatricality” (2000: 117). And later on by David Farrell Krell in a Vernant-assisted response to Lacoue-Labarthe, in favour of a more articulate term: “theatrality” (2005: 275-9). Anyhow, these compatible opinions alone suffice to turn Hölderlin into valence par excellence that brings disciplines together to shed philosophical light on translation qua event, which, in return, can grow into an alternative reflection on the reasons why the German thought swiftly took over the philosophy of the tragic from Plato and Aristotle, but above all, managed to (re)kindle the ambiguous fire that unites Heraclitus with Prometheus without facing any major conceptual difficulty.

To begin with, the (almost) autonomous significance of German Romanticism for the history and historiography of Translation Studies makes it obligatory to rethink the lineaments of the movement with Antoine Berman, who underlines that “the Romantic theory of translation, poetical and speculative, constitutes the basis of a certain modern consciousness of literature and translation” (1992: 18). The “speculative” facet of this intrinsically dialectical translation theory is suggestive of the ways in which Lacoue-Labarthe subsumes Hölderlin’s translational practice under the heading of “the caesura of the speculative,” where he identifies the Swabian’s translation(s) of Sophocles with “ontological translation” (1989: 217). Although Berman gives short shrift to Lacoue-Labarthe in his seminal study, whose appealing title is derived from Hölderlin’s praxis that “connects the ‘experience [épreuve] of the foreign’ (of the fire from heaven, the sacred pathos, the aorgic, the South, Greece, the Orient) and ‘practicing

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70 As a supplement to the sources cited in that regard hitherto, see the still unrivalled Silk and Stern (1981, esp. ch.1 and 9).

71 The importance of Berman’s work cannot be stressed enough. As was hinted at in the previous part of the present study, Berman urged translation scholars (i.e. Lawrence Venuti) not only to scrutinise what German Romantic translation movement has to proffer for the study and practice of the craft, but also propelled them towards an “ethics of translation” by frequently bringing “the trials of the foreign” (2000: 284-97) to their attention. But on a more profound dimension, Berman’s study is most certainly one of its kind in Translation Studies that came to be a beneficial reference point for Germanistik on this special occasion. Charlie Louth’s systemic examination of Hölderlin’s translations in their entirety (1998), for instance, carries weighty vestiges of Berman. It is also noteworthy to add that Billings’ discussion of Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles is “heavily indebted” (2014: 196, fn. 15) to Louth. Having said that, Berman’s source-oriented approach to translation is liable to be questioned in methodological terms. See Chesterman (2004: 1-13) for a brief investigation of this blind spot.
of what is one’s own’ (homeland, the native, the national)” (1992: 162, brackets in the original, emphasis added), there is plenty of room for transdisciplinary dialogue whereby to tease out the paradox, which, in the words of Lacoue-Labarthe, “founded the speculative interpretation of tragedy and permitted the deduction (or reconstruction) of its organically dialectical structure” (1989: 230). For this exchange to commence, however, one is bound to set the terminological allusions straight with Billings. He places a premium on Hölderlin’s employment of the Vaterland and holds, with good reason, that it “can take on an extraordinary variety of meanings, denoting by turns Swabia, German modernity in general, the Occident, and even a purely spiritual state of totality. Common to all these meanings is a sense, which may be more or less geographically and temporally localized, of a sphere of existence characterized by wholeness and essential relations between all parts” (2014: 191-2, emphases added). It is this temporal façade that rivets the attention: whether one opts to render it as “homeland” (Berman 1992, passim; Badiou 2005a: 255-61), or as “fatherland” (Krell 2005, passim; Fóti 2006, passim), the Vaterland inscribes itself into the translational act. This is why for Hölderlin, the act itself, “is incipient to ancient tragedy, which is in its essence a genre of transition and transformation” (2014: 197), to vocalise what is at stake with Billings one more time.

As it is, the scholar once again touches a momentous point that invites wider inspection. On one level, as Billings himself would concur, the transition he nicely equates with Ancient Greek tragedies is redolent of the transformation from culture of shame into culture of guilt, to evoke E. R. Dodds once more. But on another level, this transition is also evocative of the transition from motion to e-motion inside the soul (Plato), which gives way to the transition from intuition to actualisation in human life. The tragic, whatever it is, attains exposure exactly at this conjuncture where the translation of (individual) knowledge into action takes place side by side with the “complex muthos” (Aristotle) of life, or as was canvassed so far for lack of a better conceptualisation, it manifests itself in the raw alongside the dialectical tension between the course of things and the course of events. Put succinctly: the tragic is always already in transit, always already a translation, always already a thinking in action. And when Hölderlin brackets the tragic with “the metaphor of an intellectual intuition” (1988: 83), he does penetrate to the nucleus of tragic problem accurately the way that the (presumed) persona did at the crossroads, somewhere around in Ancient Greece—in the Orient—in a remote, irrecoverable past; a problem perceived in and through the void by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and translated into theatre to be embodied in the theatrical event of the Great Dionysia.

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72 But compare and contrast, Lehmann (2016: 330-42) where he tends to deny dialectics to Hölderlin’s theatre against Lacoue-Labarthe.
Then again, for Hölderlin the problem was manifold. Penetration into the tragic via the “cliché” took Hyperion to the zenith of Etna to contemplate on “the great Sicilian who, weary of counting the hours, knowing the soul of the World, in his bold joy in life there flung himself down into the glorious flames” (1990: 126). This contemplation, in turn, gave rise to Hölderlin’s allegedly “failed” endeavour to write a “modern” tragedy on Empedocles, “a son of his fatherland and of the massive oppositions of nature and art in which the world appeared to his eyes. A human being in whom those opposites are united so intensely that they become one in him” (2008: 146, emphases in the original). And this failure resulted in the “return to Sophocles.” Lacoue-Labarthe and Krell respectively attribute this failure largely to “Empedocles’ lack of theatricality” (2000: 118), or “theatrality” (2005: 275-9), and confine their comprehensions of theatr(ical)ity to the (re)production of tragic effect, that is to say, the notorious katharsis. Be that as it may, the result itself can equally be read as the Swabian’s theoretically laden poetic manoeuvre to concentrate on the tragic qua intellectual intuition and set this recognition into speculative motion over the course of his agon with the materials waiting to be transported to the Vaterland, or to deploy his conscious adjective, to Hesperia (1988: 111-4). The fact that Hölderlin’s decision to translate only two works—Ödipus der Tyrann and Antigonä—from the extant corpus of Attic tragedies bears the imprint of Aristotle, is one amongst many of the (un)fortunate outcomes of the Aristotle’s attempted termination of the wonders of the tragic, for it confers an ambivalent character on the theatrical translation project at hand. Luring Hölderlin into Sophocles, Aristotle compelled him, for better or worse, to narrow down his focus on two plays and two plays alone. These two tragedies, so to speak, functioned as magnifying glasses for Hölderlin to focalise on the tragic problem more and more, while simultaneously injecting his grasp of the idea qua intellectual intuition into the act of translation. Its extraordinary calibre notwithstanding, the evental scope of Hölderlin’s project was maimed by the controversies it stirred, since, as Berman reminds, “in their time, most notably by Schiller, these translations have been considered ‘the work of a madman’” (1992: 157). Berman’s poignant point can be taken a few steps forward. Without a Walter Benjamin to tell the German intellectual circles that “Holderlin's translations in particular are subject to the enormous danger inherent in all translations: the gates of a language thus expanded and modified may slam shut and enclose the translator with silence” (2007: 81); without a Bertolt Brecht to make effective use of these recreation(s) on the German stage, the Swabian’s project

73 Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe: “In Hölderlin’s eyes, these two tragedies are models—an idea which comes from Aristotle, who held Sophocles to be the greatest and most perfect of tragedians: the first, Oedipus, is a model of modern tragedy; the second, Antigone, a model of properly Greek tragedy. It is, moreover, in order to bring out this trait—the innately ‘Western’ character of Greece—that Hölderlin twists the translation of Antigone in an extremely violent way” (2000: 116).
was doomed to remain on textual level as a projection of the idea of the “tragic” onto the future,\(^{74}\) as a translational equivalent, or maybe more than a translational equivalent to the Attic *paradeigma*. Whence George Steiner on *Antigonä*: “suppose the Greek original had been lost *after* Holderlin’s version—such cases are known in the Middle Ages and even the early Renaissance—what then? We would be in possession of one of the supreme tragic plays in literature. It would be a play, in certain respects, ‘beyond’, ‘in excess of’, Sophocles” (1996b: 105-6, emphasis in the original). Whence Hölderlin’s well-known paradox: “original matter can only appear in its weakness; however, to the extent that the sign is posited as insignificant = 0, original matter, the hidden foundation of any nature, can also present itself. If nature properly presents itself in its weakest talent, then the sign is, nature presenting itself in its most powerful talent, = 0” (1988: 89).

In the light of these deliberations, Hölderlin’s equation of the idea of the “tragic” with “the metaphor of an intellectual intuition” comes to the fore as the linchpin of his translational theory of the tragic.\(^{75}\) It is precisely at this juncture that “metaphor”\(^{76}\) provides fertiliser for a non-hedonistic appreciation of the Swabian’s speculative theory, even if Hölderlin’s own critical recourse to Aristotle\(^{77}\) inevitably summons *katharsis* into play. Lacoue-Labarthe gives a helping hand to settle the matters related to this vague notion once and for all within this special framework: “Basically, in his consideration of tragedy, he [Hölderlin] is uninterested in the spectator. Rather, *katharsis* is for him, in a certain way, the effect of *mimesis* (*Darstellung*), but it is an internal effect of (re)presentation, which is not the effect of representation” (2000: 124, emphasis in the original, brackets added). This clarification triggers a conversation with Krell: “at all events, tragic transport is what Holderlin means by *metaphor*. He thinks of metaphor as a mode of transport(ation), the μεταφορά” (2005: 300, emphasis in the original);\(^{78}\) meantime Lacoue-Labarthe continues to loosen the ties of *katharsis* in that respect: “In tragedy, the transport is ‘empty’—and it is in this that it is not properly tragic. The tragic is not the transport, but...”

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\(^{74}\) Brecht’s resort to Hölderlin’s translation in his *The Antigone of Sophocles* is best examined by Taxidou (2008: 241-62) with an eye to his *Antigonemodell*. The (re)current accent on the “future” also finds substantial support from Romeo Castelucci’s *Ödipus der Tyrann* in Schaubühne (2015). See Hyldig (2017: 119-45) for an examination of Castelucci’s staging of Hölderlin.

\(^{75}\) Diverging, therefore, from Steiner, who makes no mention of intuition in his monumental analysis of Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles: “It emerges that Holderlin’s theory of translation is a ‘tragic theory’ exactly mirroring Holderlin's model of tragedy” (1996b: 75).

\(^{76}\) But see, at this early junction, Courtine (2000: 57-75) for a broader consideration of the tragic metaphor within the overall context of the German (post)idealistic thought.

\(^{77}\) Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe, once more: “Whereas the model of speculative tragedy is constructed upon the ‘denegation’ of Aristotelian mimetology and theory of catharsis, Holderlin, for his part, returns to it insistently, struggling to get back to Aristotle, or, in any case, a general theory of mimesis” (1989: 227).

\(^{78}\) Françoise Dastur chips in here to throw the translational correspondence in Hölderlin’s thought into starker relief: “Hölderlin takes here the word ‘metaphor’ in its literal sense, in Greek *metaphora*, meaning transposition, translation” (2000a: 78).
but the empty transport—Hölderlin said beforehand: the sign=0. This emptiness is nothing other than the ‘purification’ or the ‘infinite separation’ of the ‘infinite becoming-one’ of the transport itself. This emptiness is the place of *katharsis*, the point of *katharsis*” (2000: 127, emphasis in the original). To these Krell would add: “no matter how we are to understand it, intellectual intuition is in Holderlin's view tragic thinking” (2005: 302, emphases in the original), and leave it up to Lacoue-Labarthe to cut the Gordian knot: “it is in this way that the tragic effect is produced: when *mimesis*, as Aristotle says, produces *mathesis*: gives it to be thought and understood. That is its function. On this point, as on others, Hölderlin is absolutely faithful to Aristotle: the theatre is an exercise in thinking” (2000: 127). Again, to Badiou’s surprise, it is not essentially Plato, but Aristotle who gives a sharper edge to contextualise Hölderlin—a name also dear to Badiou himself, who detects a telling paradox in the *Vaterland*, “a paradox which makes an evental-site out of it” (2005a: 255). And in view of this all-embracing conversation, Hölderlin’s celebrated concept(ualisation) of caesura, “the counterrhythmic rupture” (1988: 102), starts to come out into the open as the hallmark of his speculative translational theory of the tragic, which, on the whole, signifies an ontology of thinking that zeros in on the sign *qua* absolute zero, or to put it with Lacoue-Labarthe, “the sign of the Absolute: the hero. That it equals zero means that he [sic] dies, and dies from the very fact of what he is: the sign of the Absolute or, more exactly, the Absolute as sign” (2000: 117).

Having divulged the nuances of Hölderlin’s ontology, it is now necessary to confront the far-reaching adumbrations of this exceedingly sophisticated theory. To begin yet again, it would be tenable to revert back to the translational-cum-philosophical constant—art’s (sublime) imitation of nature—under which Hölderlin was operating so as to ground Badiou’s paradox in the present setting first. Hence the weight of the second portion of the Aristotelian axiom: “art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish” (*Physics* II, 199a15). Lacoue-Labarthe explicates how this maxim fits in with the German thought of the era: “it is up to the Moderns to accomplish—to see through or bring to term, to complete—what nature cannot carry out. Consequently, it is up to the Modems to go a step beyond the Greeks—to ‘accomplish’ them” (1989: 238). As it stands in this explanation, the stress falls on Hölderlin’s association of Ancient Greece with the Orient, which, in point of fact, is tantamount to the disassociation of the up-until-then (pre)supposed foundational axis from the Occident. Even though Kalliopi Nikolopoulou would regard this *rupture* as a mere “unusual gesture” and not sanction it as the kernel of a prospective paradox, she is correct to note that “the Orient functions as a differential mark, a kind of caesura” (2012: 12). Here, it is worthwhile to bear in mind what (evental) caesura amounts to in Badiou’s system of thought. In a context independent of Hölderlin, after highlighting that “the truth of a situation, with this [evental] caesura as its
principle, forces the situation to accommodate it: to extend itself to the point at which this truth—primitively no more than a part, a representation—attains belonging, thereby becoming a presentation,” Badiou gets to the root of the problem: “The trajectory of the faithful generic procedure and its passage to infinity transform the ontological status of a truth: they do so by changing the situation 'by force'; anonymous excrescence in the beginning, the truth will end up being normalized” (2005a: 342, emphasis in the original, brackets added). Badiou’s views, in a certain sense, resonate with the pros and cons of a process that culminates in the City Dionysia and comes to a head with Aristotle: the tragic perceived in the void gets translated into theatre-idea to be institutionalised qua theatre-event to be institutionalised qua tragedy, that is, drama, only to be trapped within the domain of literature, or on a better, yet more troubling estimate within the sphere of philosophy. Irrespective of the multifarious changes in theatrical-cum-performative traditions throughout history, the tragic idea ensnared therein on “page” ever since. Even so, at any rate, caesura is embedded in the truth process of the tragic: on the positive side, the procedure boils down to the poietic translation of the idea into theatre, where tragic truth could still “force” the status quo of the target culture “to dispose itself such that this truth—at the outset anonymously counted as one by the state alone, pure indistinct excess over the presented multiples—be finally recognized as a term” (ibid.); and on the negative, the process always runs the risk of stabilisation and normalisation, each of which nods to theorisation in the absence of theatre.

Hölderlin is absolutely faithful to Aristotle on this last point too, to invoke Lacoue-Labarthe, who aids to shift the ground back to the Swabian to foreground Badiou’s paradox: “An Oriental Greece, if you will, always tempted in the direction of what Hölderlin calls the aorganic in order to distinguish it from the organic” (1989: 244); in the meanwhile Françoise Dastur takes it upon herself to disclose the nuances of this twofold nexus: “the Orient is formed in this double figure (figure of separation and of limitlessness) every time there is the menace of an excess in the one or the other direction – an excess of culture and art, therefore an excess of separation from nature, or an excess of enthusiasm and thus an excessive union with the All” (2000b: 164). As such, both Lacoue-Labarthe and Dastur cast light on Badiou, who, in a context utterly dependent on Hölderlin now, attaches a paradoxical value to the Vaterland by way of a meticulous reading of the Swabian’s “The Journey.” Badiou predicates the gist of this paradox on Hölderlin’s fidelity to the Vaterland in his wandering towards the furthest reaches of the Orient: “just after having evoked his ‘native loyalty’ to the Swabian homeland Holderlin cries out: ‘But I am bound for the Caucasus!’”, this Promethean irruption, far from contradicting the fidelity, is its effective procedure” (2005a: 256). Leaving the acute reference to Prometheus aside for the time being, the accent that Badiou places on Hölderlin’s fidelity generates nothing
but what Vernant would most possibly esteem as “tensions and ambiguities” (1990: 28-49) in the German setting. Keeping this in mind, one can lend a closer ear to the ways in which Badiou reads the fine print of Hölderlin’s fidelity to the evental-site: “The originary and apparent disposition of the Greek world is Caucasian, unformed, violent, and the closed beauty of the Temple is conquered by an excess of form…” (2005a: 257, emphasis in the original); meantime Dastur fills the ellipsis: “Thus the Greeks were not able to return to that which was properly native (vaterlandisch) to them, they perished from an excess of art, because they did not manage to reconcile in themselves nature and culture” (2000b: 166). Following Dastur, one can rush, as Nikolopoulou does for good reason, to assign a “corrective function” (2012: 13) to Hölderlin’s speculative theory of the tragic; whereas thinking this translational enterprise through with Badiou reveals more of an exegetical problem. Having surmised that “for a Greek, interpretation is what is complex, whilst for a German the stumbling point is fidelity,” he once again pins down the taproot of the issue: “It thus requires that one be more faithful to the evental essence of the Greek truth than the Greek artists themselves were able to be. This is why Hölderlin exercises a superior fidelity by translating Sophocles without subjecting himself to the law of literary exactitude” (2005a: 258).

These divergent perspectives hold good for a safe and sound conclusion that espouses Hölderlin’s project qua translational event extraordinaire. And it does so with rock-solid certainty; not primarily due, pace Berman, to the “epoch-making” (1992: 157) characteristic of this project, not mainly due to the aesthetics by means of which it metamorphoses the Vaterland into a German site that can be said to had a narrow escape from the atrocities of the twentieth century, even when Martin Heidegger was praising Hölderlin to the skies as “the poet of poets as poet of the Germans” (2014: 195),79 not chiefly due to the ways in which it lays bare the

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79 As Heidegger outlines in the task of the Hölderlin lecture course that ran from 1934 to 1942; cf. in full, Heidegger in the beginning of the 1934-35 semester: “Why do we choose Hölderlin’s poetry for this task? This choice is not some arbitrary selection made from among available poets. This choice is a historical decision. Of the essential grounds for this decision, we may name three: (1) Hölderlin is the poet of poets and of poetizing. (2) Hölderlin is, together with this, the poet of the Germans. (3) Because Hölderlin plays this concealed and difficult role of being the poet of poets as poet of the Germans, he has not yet become a force in the history of our people. Because he is not yet such a force, he must become such” (ibid.: 194-5). The shadow of Heidegger’s regrettable affiliation with the National Socialist Party falls on his scrupulous analyses of Hölderlin and the Attic tragic paradeigma. This is a sensitive topic and demands to be handled with due care, as in the manner(s) exercised by Steiner (1989), Lacoue-Labarthe (1990), and by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1997), for example. Besides, the recent publication of Heidegger’s Black Notebooks harbour information that still needs to be digested. See therefore, with caution, the rapid scholarly response accumulated in Farin and Malpas (2016), as well as in Björk and Svenungsson (2017). That being said, Heidegger’s distressing ties with fascism is only the tip of the iceberg of a more interpretative-cum-methodological problem. This is underscored by Badiou: “any exegesis of Holderlin is henceforth dependent on that of Heidegger” (2005a: 255). The breadth of Heidegger’s philosophy is such that it holds sway over interrogations on and of the tragic, including the current one that is frank enough to acknowledge its lifelong debt to Heidegger, regardless of the deliberate distance it keeps from him, insofar as his sat(i)d involvement overshadows his daunting philosophical project. Against this turbulent backdrop, what requires to be stressed, contra Miguel de Beistegui’s insinuations in (1998: ch.4, esp. 88-95), is the ostensive fact that Hölderlin’s the Vaterland managed to escape, in a certain way, from the fascist attention that was exploiting the Vaterland in every
mind-set behind the German appropriation of the tragic in toto, but rather because it fleshes out translational paradox\textsuperscript{80} of the tragic qua empty transport, (un)gebundenste Kaukasos zu. Nonetheless, the terrain wherein such conclusion is articulated urges one to sacrifice security for the sake of a more speculative (dis)closure. This sacrifice is all the more urgent and is grounded in the argumentative-cum-methodological ground gained thus far to counteract the perils of ungrounded speculation, as was accentuated earlier while laying the groundwork for this decisive encounter. On that note, this conclusive sacrifice is also grounded in the correlation between speculatio and theoria, to which Dastur alludes before subordinating it to “the visio Dei, the vision of the supersensible” (2000a: 77) and finding her way to Hölderlin’s identification of the tragic with “the metaphor of an intellectual intuition” through Kant and Schelling. That being so, the clues buried in theoria come to the forefront to delve deeper into Hölderlin’s speculative translational theory of the tragic that is centred on the widely-discussed caesura, which the Swabian unequivocally conjoins with “the speeches of Tiresias” (1988: 102) in Oedipus Tyrannus and Antigone. Taking the implications—ranging from the ways in which caesura punctuates the action to the ways in which it potentially alienates the recipient for contemplation—of these discussions to heart, one can hence dig further into emptiness, into the void, into the sign qua the Absolute: 0.

Lacoue-Labarthe correctly appoints the sign of the Absolute to the hero. And with him it is easy to infer that the protagonist is the epitome of (human) nature “presenting itself in its most powerful talent, = 0” in Hölderlin’s system of thought. This premise points nowhere but to the premises of the spot in Oedipus Tyrannus, where, as was (re)envisaged previously, the problematics of Attic tragedies are glued to the spot during the encounter at the crossroads. Moving warily along this line with Lacoue-Labarthe, it can additionally be gathered that the persona at the crossroads is in its most (in)vulnerable state; the state of emptiness, if you like, that Hölderlin for sure wants it to be displaced via katharsis through the course of the transport, which is why he aspires for excellence in his ability “to discern, amongst the effects of the Greeks’ formal excellence, the denial of a foundational excess and the forgetting of the Asiatic event” (2005a: 258), as Badiou would consent.\textsuperscript{81} It is possible to press more on this point, for possible sense of the word exactly at the same time when Heidegger was schematising the mission of his Hölderlin lecture course in the 1934-35 lecture. See Ioannidou (2013: 327-46) for a grave, yet non-Hölderlinian exploration of the exploitation of the Vaterland and its cognates in choral terms in the Interwar Germany, where Attic tragedies were being abused, on which see further Fischer-Lichte (2017: ch.5).

\textsuperscript{80} Agreeing with Billings to some extent: “It is only in translation, out of context, that the full power of Sophocles can be actualized, as modernity discovers its own fate in Greek tragedy. The final paradox of Hölderlin’s tragic thought, then, is that the death of Greek tragedy is the birth of the tragic” (2014: 221).

\textsuperscript{81} And Billings too, who follows almost the same line of reasoning with Badiou: “In the tragic moment, the extreme of comprehension (the experience of the caesura) is paradoxically coincident with the extreme of forgetting (the process of transport)” (2014: 213, emphasis in the original).
it gestures towards the core of Hölderlin’s paradoxical poetics of translation that consolidates the transfiguration of the tragic *thauma* into sublime. In that regard, it can reasonably be claimed that Badiou’s paradox foretells a far more superlative paradox that is rooted in Hölderlin’s excessive—superior—fidelity to the evental essence of the Attic tragic *paradeigma*. Recollecting how Hölderlin opts to convey the τὸ δεινὸν of *Antigone* 332, initially as *gewaltige* (1801), and finally as *ungeheuer* (1804) in complete harmony with his philosophical translation project reinforces this claim.

What becomes more of an issue here is certainly not the semantic subtleties of these conceptually and metaphysically charged adjectives on which much ink has been spilt, and which smack of Heidegger. No, what matters the most is simply this: at the end of the day, Hölderlin himself proves to be a caesura in the translational journey of the “tragic” plainly because he too arrives at a “monstrous” comprehension of tragedy without resting his aesthetics on theatrics of thinking, as Seneca does in his *monstra tragoedia*. Both conceptions of tragedy are shockingly wonderful. They are, in fact, wondrous translations of the tragic wonder into something else; something that shows only two, yet all-inclusive faces amidst a myriad of facets of tragedy. Seneca is the angry face of tragedy; whereas the sublime face of the genre is Hölderlin, who interrupts the translational dynamics of tragedy and reinstates the tragic into drama under the rubric of the “cliché” through his ontology of thinking and poetics of the tragic. The distinction between wonder and sublime is almost impossible to draw, inasmuch as the common denominator is awe. But fortunately there is Martha Nussbaum, who pitches in with a notable (foot)note: “Wonder and awe are akin, but distinct: wonder is outward-moving, exuberant, whereas awe is linked with bending, or making oneself small. In wonder I want to leap or run, in awe to kneel” (2001b: 54, fn. 53). Nussbaum’s explication serves as a beautiful caption for Rosa’s sublime *The Death of Empedocles*. It appears that even Hölderlin’s own excessive form cannot impede him from (re)incarnating the tragic *thauma* while he was translating it into the sublime with an entirely different philosophical agenda. And Heidegger is undoubtedly on the right ontological track to base his whole argumentation of tragedy on τὸ δεινὸν by choosing to render it as *unheimlich*—a translational choice that is “initially alien to us, violent, or, in ‘philological’ terms, ‘wrong’” (1996: 61)—on the brink of turning himself into an instructive interpretative filter for Hölderlin, and, by extrapolation, for Ancient Greek tragedies.

In other words: Hölderlin’s punctuation of the translational journey of the tragic carves out a space for the foreign to come into play *qua* the sign of the Absolute: 0. Lacoue-Labarthe

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82 See Heidegger’s commentary to Hölderlin’s *gewaltige* and *ungeheuer* in (ibid.: 69-71). See further also, his famous reading of the first choral ode of *Antigone* in (2000, passim; esp. ch.4).
carefully stops here by taking the zero *qua* the hero. He does so probably because Hölderlin’s allocation of the tragic moments of the caesurae to Teiresias complicates things in a fascinating way, especially when it comes to the more comprehensive problematics of Attic tragedies. To be able to do critical justice to the precision of Hölderlin’s translational theory of the tragic, Lacoue-Labarthe’s perceptive remarks have to be dovetailed first with the explicit details: the tragic is a (translational) journey of the foreign; and then they need to be juxtaposed with the more implicit specifics: the sign belongs to Teiresias, as much as it belongs to the protagonist, inasmuch as “the *caesura* is the condition of possibility for manifestation, for the (re)presentation (*Darstellung*) of the tragic. Such is the law or, if you prefer, the principle of its theatricality” (2000: 127). Against this background, the journey analogy of *theoria* comes to light to (de)cipher Hölderlin’s densely codified theory of the tragic, whose *modus operandi* turns out to be contingent upon the personae’s *reinterpretation* of the divine message, that is encrypted in Teiresias’ signs now. After all, Teiresias’ signs do operate as final warnings for Oedipus and Kreon, both of whom journeyed to Delphi, became *theoroi* by experiencing the foreign, that is, the mysteries of the divine message. And on their return to Thebes they are offered one last chance to reinterpret the divine signs through Teiresias. To be sure, Teiresias is not the oracle whom the Ephesian had in mind in D. 93, yet his dictum resounds perfectly with Hölderlin, whose “programmatic adoption of ‘oneness’ in Heraclitus” (2011: 172) asserts itself in every nook and cranny of his aesthetics, as Steiner would assent. But only to that degree; after all is said and done, the Swabian’s commitment to the Ephesian with respect to the tragic passes unnoticed beneath the (multi)layers of his labyrinthine philosophy, as well as behind the subject matter of his supposedly “failed” modern tragedy. It seems that just as Hölderlin was lured into Sophocles by Aristotle, he lures the commentators into Empedocles, while in the meantime the actual tragic conceptual connection between the Ephesian and the Swabian stays right there on the spot.

Inclined to see the German Romantic translation movement as the culmination of a project started with Martin Luther, Berman singles out Hölderlin’s translations and reiterates that “they inaugurated a new epoch in the history of Western translation that is still in its initial stages” (1992: 175). Berman’s statement still holds true, in spite of its reduction of the philosophical ambit of Hölderlin’s ambitious project, which, in essence, is a translational theory  

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83 Cf., at random, Courtine: “Leaving aside the question of this proximity of Hölderlin and Heraclitus, let us hold on to the thesis that the primordially united remains as such only in mobility and in the antagonism of separation and differentiation” (2000: 64); and Schimdt: “But it is not simply the facts of his life that motivate the choice of Empedocles as a tragic hero. It is equally the key elements of his thought which make him so suitable. Empedocles is, along with Heraclitus, the thinker prior to Socrates who is most easily read as a speculative thinker” (2001: 154).
of the tragic. The radius of this theory is such that it contains within itself the locus classicus of the ontological problem of Attic tragedies that goes back to Theognis, let alone Sophocles; not to mention the fact that his comprehension of the tragic qua “the metaphor of an intellectual intuition” puts him on a par with Plato and Aristotle. With one difference: where the two ancient philosophers were vowed to disavow the idea, Hölderlin was ready to avow it and this enabled him to set forth a theory of the tragic in action. Whilst the Swabian treats theatre no more than as a given, as the Aristotle does, hampers one from making tangible inferences regarding the overtones of his poetics of the tragic, it is obvious that he translated Sophocles for the stage “with the hope, certainly, of being performed in Weimar” (2000: 115), to make it crystal clear with Lacoue-Labarthe. Since theatre is a given and since Hölderlin’s theory intrinsically stands for a translational poetics of the tragic, there is no harm in extending the previous appeal to the poietics of tragedy into a plea for a poietics of the tragic, against the poietic backdrop of Diderot and Lessing to shine (inter)semiotic light on the contours of the sign qua 0 in due course.

Correlatively, the answer to the question why Hölderlin exposes the mentality behind the German appropriation of the tragic in its entirety must be sought in his cognisance of the idea as “the metaphor of an intellectual intuition” in tune with the spirit of the period that witnessed the birth of tragedy (out of music) and peaked with the establishment of Wagner as “a paradigm for how the chorus as an aesthetic concept is deeply embroiled in political and philosophical agendas” (2013: 44), as Goldhill observes. That, in the final analysis, Hölderlin goes underground during this process is a striking irony, for the ontological niceties of the epoch come in sight through and through his understanding of intellectual intuition qua metaphor, concurrently postulating the German thought qua tragic thinking on the edge of the void and expounding the far too easy takeover of the philosophy of the tragic from Plato and Aristotle at the cost of excess, a truly dear price for the tragic personae themselves as well.

All the same, this is where the German thought was in its most (in)vulnerable state: the German intellectuals were so obsessed with the idea that they altogether become one corpus in the history of the tragic. This exorbitance was going to explode at some point. And it did: for Hölderlin it took the excessive form of superior fidelity that reconsolidated the shockingly monstrous face of tragedy for good; for Schopenhauer it took the shape of excessive pessimism; and for Nietzsche, who took over from them, it aggrandised into passionate rhetoric that ended up striking down the philosophers of “false” with a Dionysian hammer in a brilliant imitatio of Heraclitus. That, in the last analysis, it is Nietzsche, who encapsulates this wonderful explosion by translating Hölderlin’s “aorgic” and “organic,” Schopenhauer’s “principium

84 Totally on the same page with Krell: “Yet precisely in this most positive moment the negative reasserts its prerogative” (2005: 302).
individuationis” and “will” into his monumental conceptualisation of the Apollonian and Dionysian is the most captivating façade of this irony. Thence Silenus introduces its wisdom to the tragic scene with a bang of laughter: “The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon” (1999: 23, emphases in the original).

It would, in any case, be appropriate to bring this grounded, yet unbound (speculative) section to an end with a remark on appropriation qua event in tandem with Heidegger, who, all in all, is the philosopher that gets to the bottom line of the theatrical variant under scrutiny. Heidegger’s (or Nietzsche’s?) word for the void is abyss, of course, “but this abyss is neither empty nothingness nor murky confusion, but rather: the event of appropriation” (1969: 39), “the domain of the belonging together. How can such an entry come about? By our moving away from the attitude of representational thinking. This move is a leap” (ibid.: 32, emphasis in the original). In lieu of adopting a theatrics of thinking, the German intellectuals at the turn of the nineteenth century engaged with the tragic in hard-and-fast terms through their ontology of thinking. All took the leap into the abyss. But only Hölderlin excavated a translational theory of the tragic from the void in the absent presence of theatre.

The Death of Tragedy

Be that as it may, the act of appropriation is inherently a dangerous one. More often than not, things tend to work the other way around in the procedure, that is to say, as base ideological manipulation. Each and every German intellectual, who took the leap into the abyss at one point has been subjects of thorough appropriation throughout the Dritten Reich: Friedrich Schiller, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, to name but a few. By the end of the Second World War, Friedrich Hölderlin too had been exploited by the Nazi ideology “as the poet of ‘the ‘fatherlandish’ (the Vaterländische, in the sense of the patriotic)” (2017: 186), as Erika Fischer-Lichte reminds. Fischer-Lichte’s reminder is important in the sense that it calls to mind Martin Heidegger’s controversial role in the process, during which he brought his Hölderlin lecture course in the 1941-42 semester to a close with futile efforts to safeguard the Swabian’s the Vaterland against the “vorhandene politische Konstellation” (1992b: 47). Along with any and every German historical figure, Heidegger was swallowed up for good by fascism as well. Under those dire circumstances, his understanding of the tragic could not be but unheimlich; a foreignising translational strategy coming directly from Hölderlin, but moving away from the monstrous towards “the un-canny as that which throws one out of the ‘canny,’
that is, the homely, the accustomed, the usual, the un-endangered. The unhomely does not allow us to be at home” (2000: 161).

At first glance, the extent to which inappropriate appropriation can go might stand for a vindication of the wisdom of Silenus as ultimate pessimism at best, or utter nihilism at worst, setting the stage for the notion of the absurd as a philosophical category\footnote{And yet, both schools of thought consolidated with the absurd are valid ways to approach tragedy and the tragic in general, and to the wisdom of Silenus in particular, as was done in favour of pessimism by Dienstag (2006, passim, esp. ch.5), for instance.} to address the exigencies of the tragic in the aftermath of catastrophe thereof. The bang of laughter with which Nietzsche introduces it to the scene gives sufficient bases for such categorisation in the first place, for it brings the comic into play as a coping mechanism to simultaneously make sense of the insensible and laugh “in the face of death” (2004: 82), as Simon Critchley would concur. That being so, Nietzsche’s \textit{inventio} of the wisdom of Silenus from Hölderlin,\footnote{Contrary to the common assumption—i.e. Weller (2011: 81)—that tends to see Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s contemporary source for the wisdom of Silenus, the more likely candidate in that regard is \textit{Hyperion}, as Krell (2005: 391-2) persuasively shows, while at the same time raising eyebrows over the generally held opinion in traditional Nietzsche scholarship that considers Aristotle’s \textit{Eudemian Ethics} as the ancient source for the Silenic wisdom. Discussing the issue in detail, Halliwell (2008: 339-40) draws attention to Jacob Bernay’s hedonic glosses over Aristotle’s text, which he obviously takes it to be the ancient source for Nietzsche.} calls for a second look at the manners through which laughter chimes in with being “thrown” out of the “canny” onto earth that is the great theatre of the world. Reading the small prints of \textit{Hyperion} with Heidegger, after having noted that “in a homeland that has become a place of exile, Hyperion finds joy. But joy is not something that can be found and gathered up. Joy is in the mourning for joy” (1993: 80), Jean-Luc Nancy underscores that “what Hyperion’s joy is, is not inexpressible: it seeks neither to be expressed nor thought. It remains silent” (ibid.: 81, emphasis in the original). Nancy is at one here with Shane Weller, who takes issues with the tendency of the absurd to rationalise the irrational to such a degree that “as soon as we are familiar with its rules, principles, or logic, it is no longer absurd, which is why there will always be something dubious about references to Absurdism or to a theatre of the Absurd” (2006: 125). There is, moreover, reason to believe with Nancy that the “inexpressible” silence of Hyperion’s joy is an \textit{a priori} of an impending explosion of laughter, since he goes on to demonstrate at length that “in laughter, the essence of art bursts—presents itself—as the ‘art’ of making each of the arts disappear in its own essence, in its own absence of essence. Laughter of infinite mockery, of derision, and irony: the subject of art sees itself there \textit{as what bursts}” (1993: 388, emphasis in the original). Both Nancy’s elucidation and Weller’s problematisation of the absurd square nicely with the bestiality of inappropriate appropriation in which suffering \textit{as such} proves to be proportionate to laughter in and around the process. The stakes are high, and they need to be spelled out carefully: where the oppressor uses laughter to brutally ridicule, for the oppressed...
the laughter evolves into a horrific (semi-manic) expression that, to take only one example from the Attic tragic canon, is redolent of Cassandra’s “wedding-song” in Euripides’ Trojan Women 325-341.

Far from signalling a forthcoming confrontation with Heidegger’s interpretation of the tragic, opening this section partially with him and partially with the absurd actually subscribes to the force of his accent on permanent homelessness. After all, undertaken in possibly the most devastating period of world history, his exegesis constitutes the cornerstone of the “modern” quarrels over tragedy and the tragic—one that encompasses a variety of reinterpretations of the idea ranging from Walter Benjamin to Theodor Adorno, thereby generating a tremendous secondary literature that matches up with the gravity of the problems at hand.87 Again, as in the case of the German Romantic obsession with tragedy around 1800, there is a discursive-cum-ideational exorbitance at play, which induced George Steiner to pronounce the death of the genre in 1961 and recently impelled Terry Eagleton to try to rebuke him as one amidst many “latter-day custodians of the classical tradition” (2003: 20). To Eagleton’s overtly political and cataloguing reading of tragedy, Steiner’s covert politics as “a kind of survivor” (1998: 140-54) is much more preferable, no matter how his premature obituary has long been rendered invalid by the ever-growing interest in staging Attic tragedies and the subsequent scholarly response to their Nachleben on the modern stage.88 It appears that the assimilation of the tragic into philosophy finally yielded fruitful, yet tricky results when aiding to reinstate the idea into theatre qua theatre: stagings of Ancient Greek tragedies prevail in contemporary stage to such a degree that the act itself inevitably borders on becoming a commonplace now. Provided that the tragic is everywhere in the world to the point of absurd(ity) as a philosophical brand, incites one to reframe the sinuous question posed earlier: where to locate the tragic in human life and translate it into performance? The question hits another sour note here, once it is bracketed with the fact that the Western performative paradigm emanating, for the most part, from the German Romantic seizure of the idea turned the tables on Plato and Aristotle by downscaling the allusions of their negations of the tragic for performance analysis, which, as was laid bare while building the dramaturgy of mimesis, is inflicted with anti-mimetic, if not anti-theatrical per se, prejudice. The above-reframed question does not set off an alarm bell anymore though, for the performative problematics of the Attic tragic paradeigma are arguably nested and settled at once in Samuel Beckett’s universe, where “there’s no lack of void” (1978: 66).

87 See the contributions to Felski (2008), to Billings and Leonard (2015), as well as the individual studies by Lehmann (2016, passim) and Ioannidou (2017, esp. ch.1) for debates surrounding the idea of the “tragic” in and beyond modernity, all of which are excellently covered in the latter’s literature review.
88 See, in addition to the relevant sources cited in the introductory chapter of this study, the most recent essays collected in Rodosthenous (2017).
Standing in strong opposition to most (but by no means all) of theatre scholars, who jumped on the bandwagon following Martin Esslin’s train of thought (1961) and (attempted to) stabilise(d) Beckett as an illustrious member of the so-called theatre of the absurd, the said argument dovetails the artist’s “obligation to express” with his imperative to “go on” (2009a: 407) within the framework of the poetics of the tragic, wherewith to elicit wonder on stage. Then again, prior to poring over the lineaments of the translational-cum-ontological, albeit paradoxical, kinship between Beckett and the Attic tragic paradeigma, the (re)current shift from poetics to poietics requires further justification against the backdrop of Aristotle’s thaumata-theoria-muthos nexus. That both Martha Nussbaum and Stephen Halliwell have also been responsive to Beckett’s work supplies a critical starting point to unfold the scaffold of the poetics of the tragic, which, in point of fact, is nothing but the epitome of the dramaturgy of mimesis, where Denis Diderot’s great social actor grows into an empty persona and joins ranks with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s “ideal Schauspieler” so as to translate the sign qua the Absolute into performance “under the given conditions of bodily pain.”

Nussbaum, on her part, concentrates on three novels—Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnameable—and rehearses well-known verdicts about Beckett by conveying concerns over his “pessimism,” “nihilism” and “his search for silence” (1992b: 308), before giving vent to her main line of criticism: “mortality in Beckett’s world is seen not as our neutral and natural condition but as our punishment for original sin. The complete absence in this writing of any joy in the limited and finite indicates to us that the narrative as a whole is an expression of a religious view of life” (ibid.: 309). For the time being, one can acknowledge the value of Nussbaum’s critique inasmuch as it foregrounds the religious facet of Beckett’s apprehension of (tragic) life, and be content with Critchley’s response to her: “The cruel power of Beckett’s humour exhibits a joyous relation to finitude, a celebration of human limitedness that is replete with sardonic, side-splittingly anti-depressant comedy” (2004: 265, fn. 85, emphasis in the original). Whilst Critchley is right to accentuate the manners through which comic and tragic intertwine in Beckett’s universe, he seems to be discarding the underlying tenet of Nussbaum’s

89 As a representative voice of this kind of scholarship, see Bennett (2011), where he concomitantly neglects Beckett’s own objections to being categorised as “absurd” and the manners in which Esslin’s categorisation is called into question within the realm of Beckett Studies. On that score, see, amongst many Beckett scholars, Pattie (2000: pt. 3, esp. 105-25) and McDonald (2006: ch.2, esp. 23-6). Although it is undoubtedly true that Beckett’s oeuvre abounds with absurd elements, such label barely holds water after, say, Happy Days. Besides, even when thought along the broad lines of the theatre of the absurd, the early Beckett has a distinctive quality that is memorably captured by Herbert Blau: “For the Absurd in Beckett, unlike Sartre or Camus, or Ionesco, is neither a dramatized doctrine nor formulaic with intention, but something to which meaning surrenders like the absence of meaning, as in the ‘breaking of the waters’ into labor or the metabolic rhythms of his prose. What is canonical in Beckett, arising from the traumatizing image of the recurrence of birth, is the enfevered famished craving of what’s to come, and come again, another kind of contraction” (2004: 79-80). See also, Dinçel (2013c: 177-89) where problematics of the absurd are further explored in relation to performance.
criticism: “Beckett’s people are heirs of a legacy of feeling that shapes them inexorably. They cannot help but being shaped in this way, and they feel like ‘contrivances,’ like machines programmed entirely from without” (1992: 308). As is, while articulating her critique with a totally different agenda in mind, Nussbaum gets to the crux of the matter that she (in)directly associates with the problematics of form earlier in her analysis (ibid.: 289-91). And because she does not quote Beckett on form, it is worth reproducing him here: “The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now” (quoted in Driver 2005: 243). Adorno would probably comprehend this separation of form and content in exegetical terms and point out that “as reflection increases in scope and power, content itself becomes ever more opaque” (2002: 27); whereas this rupture can equally be taken as the hallmark of Beckett’s “movement towards the extremes of minimalism” (Dinçel 2012a: 19), whereby to create more and more, pace Adorno, “empty personae” (1985: 60). As a ready-made response to Nussbaum, the legacy of feeling that she calls into doubt can be tallied with Beckett’s tragic vision of life derived, on the face of it, from Schopenhauer, yet by no manner of means is restricted to him. But on a more fundamental level, what shapes his “contrivances” is nothing but form, the form that allows him to transform his empty personae into “theatre machines” (1996: 69), to invoke Peter Brook’s notable phrase with respect to Beckett.

In any case, however, it is still Nussbaum, who grasps the pith and marrow of tragic wonder at its best: “Tragedy elicits wonder at human excellence not by showing its heroes untouched by the deaths of children, by rape, war, and material deprivation,” wrote Nussbaum, “but precisely by showing how these horrible things do cut to the very core of the personality – and yet do not altogether destroy it” (2001b: 371). To this Beckett would reply with an accurate comparison of his work with that of Franz Kafka: “The Kafka hero has a coherence of purpose. He’s lost but he’s not spiritually precarious, he’s not falling to bits. My people seem to be falling to bits” (quoted in Shenker 2005: 162). In the “complex” muthos of praxis and life stipulated according to the rules of probability and necessity, both of which denote the obligation to go on insofar as Beckett’s oeuvre is at hand, the author’s fractured empty personae are “flung backwards on stage” (1984b: 43) to evoke thauma in “the most continuous activity” of theoria in which the trapped nous of the recipient wonders at humans’ impetus to go on at all costs. Contra Nussbaum’s cognisance of wonder, Beckett’s wonder does not urge one to leap or run; instead, it roots the receptor to the spot for continuous contemplation about the contours of his single narrative on going on, where suicide is no option because for him this is one and the same with “an unacceptable kind of surrender” (1997: 569), as James Knowlson
reminisces. And here Beckett is the direct heir of Schopenhauer, for whom suicide is “a vain and therefore a foolish action” (1969a: 281).

If Nussbaum’s reading of Beckett paves the way for a (re)formulation of tragic wonder, then Halliwell’s brief evocation of “the guffaw of the Abderite” in *Murphy* might give rise to a (re)conceptualisation and (re)contextualisation of Beckettian laughter in view of the tragic. Halliwell takes this “guffaw” adding up to the Nothing as “an unmistakably absurdist species of existential laughter – laughter (whether literal or metaphorical) that embodies an attitude not just to specific, local circumstances but to life, even the cosmos, as a whole” (2008: 333). Halliwell, to be sure, is much more sensitive to Beckett than the scholars of the absurd, and he is correct to detect this significant strand that would eventually develop into the author’s famous dictum: “nothing is more real than nothing” (2009a: 186, emphasis in the original). Halliwell does not take that path and opts to use Beckett’s clandestine hints at ancient philosophy in *Murphy* as modern entryways into antiquity in order to shed light on laughter engraved into the wisdom of Silenus, which the scholar apparently aligns with pessimism and nihilism under the auspices of the absurd and tragic (2008: 335-40). Even so, such coupling gives way to a domino effect in that it brings a set of critical perspectives to the fore. On the one hand, Halliwell’s reiteration of Nussbaum’s views on Beckett in more sympathetic terms turn both scholars’ remarks into “interpretations of Beckett that are filtered through the ‘nihilistic’ worldliness of the metaphysical tramp” (2003: 3-4), to put it with Alain Badiou, whose reading of the author, in return, runs the risk of neglecting “the manner in which nihilism haunts Beckett’s œuvre as an uncanny guest” (2008a: 208), as Weller perceptively captures. And on the other, even though Halliwell’s alliance of Beckett with the absurd might lead, sooner or later, to an examination where the tragic will be subjugated “…to…mean something” (1972: 27, aposiopesis in the original), he drops the right anchor in antiquity and provides substantial backup for Steiner’s influential conception of “absolute tragedy” in which “substantive truth is assigned to Sophoclean statement that ‘it is best never to have been born’” (1996a: xi), against Simon Goldhill’s critique of him grounding t/his notion on a “cliché, exposed as such in tragedy, an all too easy response that is viciously shown up as hollow by the play’s [Trojan Women’s] unfurling horror” (2008: 61, brackets added). It is at this juncture that things start to come together thanks to Beckett, who is surprisingly absent from Goldhill’s valuable writings on the topic, unlike those of Steiner, where the author’s œuvre has been deemed as “hilarious” (1976: 21), as much as it has been regarded as absolutely tragic.

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See Ackerley (2010, passim) for a thorough exploration of Beckett’s references to Ancient Greek philosophy throughout the novel.
For that reason, it is vital to lend an ear to the connotations of Arsene’s “short statement” in *Watt*, the *locus classicus* of laughter in Beckett, by means of which he distinguishes amidst ethical, intellectual and dianoetic laughter, the last being “the laugh of laughs, the *risus purus*, the laugh laughing at the laugh, the beholding, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word the laugh that laughs — silence please — at that which is unhappy” (2009b: 40). Halliwell chooses to relegate this passage into a footnote (2008: 485-6, fn. 38); meanwhile Weller does justice to it by weighing the pluses and minuses of the literature produced on laughter in Beckett—spanning from the “guffaw” to the *risus purus*, from the “nothing is funnier than unhappiness” of *Endgame* to the absurd—and asks, in the final analysis, “whether there is any laughter there at all” (2006: 133). Weller’s question touches a raw nerve, especially when one recalls the ways in which he casts suspicions on Critchley’s insistence to read into Beckett’s “syntax of weakness” and ultimately associate the *risus purus* with ethical laughter counter to the *locus classicus* itself. The merit of Weller’s investigation notwithstanding, his critique needs to be pressed further. Critchley’s inclination to prescribe three squares of “Beckett” as an anti-depressant to the tragic in life not merely runs athwart the maxim that “you’re on earth, there’s no cure for that!” (1972: 44), but also puts him on a par with Badiou owing to his penchant for imposing “courage” (2008: 55) upon ethical action—a tendency that Weller himself also diagnoses in Badiou’s “courageous” (2008a: 208) interpretation of Beckett. In the light of these deliberations, then, Badiou’s delicate notion of fidelity proves to be the least objectionable term insomuch as the ontological-cum-metaphysical bond between Beckett and the tragic is at stake, irrespective of the manners through which Badiou himself, in the words of Andrew Gibson, “prefers to speak of Beckett’s courage rather than his fidelity” (2006: 130).

Fidelity exists in a myriad of manifestations in Beckett so much so that it can scarcely be put it in a nutshell; except for “fidelity to form,” for lack of a better saying. It is this fidelity that, first and foremost, enables him to translate the Ancient Greek event into a miniature and disperse it around his cosmos *in toto* under the ontological rubric of the “cliché.” Whence, Beckett’s quintessential translation of the Attic tragic *paradeigma* takes place on two interrelated planes: dramaturgical, (inter)textual if you will, and ontological, metaphysical if you like. As was argued elsewhere,91 the late Katharine Worth is the only Beckett scholar, who brought the textual façade of this transformation to the attention of Beckett Studies and Classics alike. In an insightful essay published in a volume where Beckett is the only modern playwright whose works were discussed in the collection that is dedicated entirely and specifically to the

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91 Building, therefore, on Dinçel (2017a: 379-81).
reception of Attic tragedies, and edited by such prominent classicists as Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh, Worth first contends thus: “Beckett is the modern playwright above all others who has recreated (in his own terms) not only much of the theatrical stylization—scenic, musical, poetic—of the ancient Greek theatre, but also something of its spirit. He has restored to theatre a metaphysical dimension through situations that might seem to deny its existence” (2004: 265-6). Afterwards, she probes into a selection of intersections between Beckett and the Ancient Greek tradition for the remainder of her study: she points the spotlight on “severe physical restraints” (Winnie as a distant echo of Prometheus),92 “messengers” (the boys in Waiting for Godot and Ghost Trio), “music and dance” (Music as a stage figure in Words and Music and Lucky’s “dance” in Godot), “mask-like effects” (the presence of Mouth in Not I) and the “chorus” (utilised in Play). Amongst too many highlights of Worth’s article to list, her comment on the preferences of Didi and Gogo whether Lucky should dance or think comes to be the most captivating one. Thence Estragon’s solution—“Perhaps he could dance first and think afterwards, if it isn’t too much for him”—and Pozzo’s renowned reply—“By all means…It’s the natural order”—which Worth eloquently takes it to be “a glancing allusion to the history of ancient theatre, beginning with the singing/dancing chorus and moving to dialogue, character, and thought” (ibid.: 278). Despite the fact that Worth does not go into the details of the metaphysical dimension which she astutely alludes to at the start of her article, the correspondences she draws between Ancient Greek theatre and Beckett buttress the contention that the bond is there.

On that note, taking heed of Steiner’s notion of “absolute tragedy” lends assistance when hammering out the metaphysical texture of this bond. In the wake of Heidegger, Steiner pinpoints the taproot of the tragic absolute in the “original sin” which “implies that men and women’s presence on this earth is fundamentally absurd or unwelcome, that our lives are not a gift or a natural unfolding, but self-punishing anomaly” (1996c: 536). Within this special context, “absolute tragedy” is tantamount to an aesthetic vocalisation of an ontological human condition that is identical with the tragic—a viewpoint that Goldhill is so critical of, and potentially Nussbaum too. That being said, it is essential to bear in mind that Steiner’s meditations on tragedy and the idea of the “tragic” covers a period of almost fifty years, which is why “absolute tragedy” reads as a sequel to The Death of Tragedy. What is more, as early as the appearance of the generic obituary in 1961, he was attentive to Beckett’s art, let alone its adumbrations for his conception of absolute tragedy.93 All the same, over the course of these

92 Also noted by Steiner, who is followed by Kott: “Beckett’s Happy Days is the final version of the Prometheus myth” (1973: 42).
years, Beckett *qua* artist operated as a vehicle of thought for Steiner and coerced him to frequently alter his critical grounds regarding Beckett’s “admission” to his canon of “absolute tragedy” whose *exempla* are “very rare” (1990: 147). Nevertheless, during the course of time, he ultimately conceded the absolute tragic vein intrinsic to Beckett, as his last piece on the subject exemplifies in Heidegger’s terminology: “the necessary and sufficient premise, the axiomatic constant in tragedy is that of an ontological homelessness—witness this motif in Beckett” (2008: 30). Rather than tackling Beckett within the heyday of the absurd, Steiner has contextualised him as an autonomous artist with regard to his idea of “absolute tragedy.” And this, in short, is the real, yet ostensibly underappreciated (in Beckett Studies to say the least94) virtue of Steiner’s critical stance towards the author.

Juxtaposing Worth’s observations, most of all, with Steiner’s cogitations on tragedy and *the* tragic side by side Beckett, triggers a trajectory to a conclusion shot out of the author’s double-barrelled cannon. The balls, without a doubt, yet with(out) a bang, fell on the interwoven fields of translation and ontology. In his perception of the *conditio humana* Beckett stands all the more closer to the Attic tragic *paradeigma* than Hölderlin does, of whom he was a great reader and a student of.95 Almost two and a half thousand years, if not “twenty-nine thousand nine hundred and seventy years” (2009a: 257), after the ontological cliché, Beckett would strike the same tragic chords in his *oeuvre*, as the root proposition of *A Piece of Monologue* epitomises: “Birth was the death of him. Again. Words are few. Dying too. Birth was the death of him” (1984b: 265), as do the basic premises of the third and fourth “Fizzles” in more conclusive fashions: “I gave up before birth, it is not possible otherwise, but birth there had to be” (1995: 232-4). The proximity ratio amidst the void, the Attic *paradeigma*, Hölderlin and Beckett, does not simply depend on the latter’s form to set the cliché free from the quotation marks at the end of the day. But rather, it hinges on a minute difference in *tragic thinking* that posits an *eo ipso* failure even before being “flung,” which *ipso facto* postulates a “fidelity to failure” not just on *el gran teatro de mundo*, but on *el gran teatro del universo*, where “this body homeless” (Beckett 2009b: 142). In other words: on the *quí vive* for the tedious problematics of writing a modern tragedy, Beckett shatters the tragic *paradeigma* to translate it into a plethora of tiny *paradeigmata* and intersperse them throughout his *oeuvre*, exactly the way he did with the paradigms of mimesis. Here Steiner is the strongest: “Where the postulate

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94 So McDonald, who is quick to exclude Steiner possibly because of his “extreme anti-meliorism” (2002: 14), from his promising analysis of Beckett, which also explains the exclusion of Attic tragedies from his scrutiny.

95 Cf. Nixon: “Crucially, Beckett started reading Hölderlin at the precise moment when he himself was moving towards a more complete integration of utterance and self, a more immediate and unadorned style of *writing* that admitted incoherence and unknowing. In a sense, Hölderlin replaced Goethe as a writer from whom Beckett could learn” (2011: 82).
of the absolutely tragic, of man unhoused in being, is made articulate, the performative act—that of the play, of the novel, of the metaphysical or psychological pronouncement—will be fragmentary” (1990: 147). Hölderlin aimed high, too high, much too high in Etna, but for tragedy to survive “the imagination had to descend to the plains” (1996a: 237), as Steiner would have it. Hölderlin’s translational theory of the tragic is the direct outcome of this failure, which, in fact, negates the failure itself. How does this lesson resonate with Beckett is perfectly predicated by Weller: “Through making Hölderlin a poet who succeeds only through failure, Beckett locates him within his own well-known conception of a paradoxical art of failure” (2008b: 41).

Indeed, where Promethean fire is ablaze in Hölderlin, this would present itself as a possibility that ought to be ruled out outright by the tragic, the unnameable, The Unnameable, whose voice reacts to Prometheus “as cold as camphor. For between me and that miscreant who mocked the gods, invented fire, denatured clay and domesticated the horse, in a word obliged humanity, I trust there is nothing in common” (2009a: 257), in, to borrow from Gibson after Badiou, “The Event of the Event” (2006: ch.5). Having said that, the voice of the tragic does not refrain from adding: “But the thing is worth mentioning” (2009a: 257). Where, furthermore, the Promethean fire for Hölderlin stands, by and large, for “oneness” that conduces towards his excessive, yet still wonderful tragic form, Beckett employs the fire motif for minimal purposes, like disintegrating the paradeigma so as to inject its pieces into a group of murky dramaticules, each of which “lights a candle and curses the darkness” (2004: 27, emphasis in the original), to conjure Herbert Blau’s haunting phrase on Beckett.

Against this background, the author’s celebrated aside on tragedy comes into prominence to cast light on what kind of modus vivendi emerges from his comprehension of the genre: “Tragedy is not concerned with human justice. Tragedy is the statement of an expiation, but not the expiation of a codified breach of local arrangement, organized by the knaves for the fools. The tragic figure represents the expiation of the original sin, of the original and eternal sin of him and all his ‘soci malorum’, the sin of having been born” (1965: 49). This vision cannot be straightjacketed into religious vocabulary, as Nussbaum and many others are ready to do. Quite the opposite: there is good reason to ascribe the decisive role to the Jung Lecture that Beckett attended on 2 October 1935, after he commented on the genre in the earlier Proust, 1931. In Knowlson’s words, “the lecture stayed in his mind for many years” (1997: 176)—such that its gist recurs throughout the author’s oeuvre from the “never been properly born” (2009b: 96)

96 Tonning (2014: ch.4, esp. 105-9) is the most typical in Beckett Studies; in the meantime, McDonald (2002: ch.4, esp. 155-71) skilfully equipoises his reading between religion and broader insinuations of Beckett’s deployment of the “original sin.”
Watt, to its downright description in *All That Fall* with the girl who had “never really been born” (1984b: 36), to May in *Footfalls* who proves to be “Beckett’s own poignant recreation of the girl who had never really been born” (1997: 616), as Knowlson indicates. As a matter of fact, the tragic motor behind the “punishment for being born” (2009a: 304), turns out to reside in whatever Beckett heard in this idea as regards to improper birth. The author’s treatment of the cliché reverts all the way back to the liminal situation that Antigone, or persona at the crossroads for that matter, finds herself in as “an alien midst the living and the dead.” Already given up before birth, Beckett’s *empty personae* wander throughout earth, evoking constant wonder at their joyful, if unhappy, knack for going on in their “life journeys” (2001), to commemorate Worth one more time.

Nonetheless, this section cannot come to an end without teasing out the question that Weller laid on the table: is there any laughter at all in Beckett? Harking back to the author’s immersion into Hölderlin might furnish an occasion to hash over the issue within the frame of the *poietics of the* tragic. Weller and Marx Nixon give the most helping hands in that respect, owing to the manners in which the former crystallises that “in Hölderlin – and, above all, in the works of the period 1801–5 just before the poet’s so-called *Umnachtung* – Beckett found a form of what he would later term a ‘syntax of weakness’” (2008b: 41), and the latter calls attention to “Beckett’s initial attraction to *Hyperion* and poems written before the German writer retired to his tower at Tübingen gradually made way to a focus on the ‘terrific fragments of the *Spätzeit* [late period]’” (2011: 83). As it stands in these explications, *Hyperion*, and, by justifiable extension, Beckett’s reworking of Hyperion’s “mourning for joy” (Nancy) into the *risus purus* suggest themselves as major indicators, both of which ring through the author’s *poietics of the* tragic. Weller continues to pass an extremely important remark: “the reading of Hölderlin between the completion of *Murphy* and the commencement of *Watt* helped Beckett to move from a writing about the ‘schizoid voice’ to a writing of that voice” (2008b: 42, emphases in the original). It is worthwhile to remember that Weller poses the question on laughter in Beckett, where the equation that “he’s crying” = “then he’s living” (1972: 41-2) could still be subsumed under the heading of “nothing is funnier than unhappiness.” As it turns out, in lieu of disappearing, laughter begins to accelerate towards another direction from *Watt* onwards, one that is accurately pinned down by Weller himself *qua* voice. Correlatively, it is also worthwhile not to overlook the notion that this laughter, as in the case of *Play* for example, is always already accompanied by corporeal constraints, each of which are outbound to stage, where they will be translated into performance “under the given conditions of bodily pain”—not to mention the fact that the company of *pathos* “as such” in life peaks, sooner or later, with, what somewhere else designated as “the tragic burst of laughter” (Dinçel 2017b: 235-56).
Hence the good laughs of Mouth in *Not I*. Hence Steiner on Beckett vis-à-vis the cardinal problem on how to respond the inhuman via art: “The inchoate scream out of the blackened mouth in the Beckett parable may be the only sort of response whose patent inadequacy does not trivialize (in contrast to the theatrical scream in Picasso's 'Guernica')” (1990: 152).

Such are the upshots of the encounter between the artist par excellence and the event *extraordinaire* that seemingly took place under the ontological fabric of the cliché. Beckett, all in all, has a field day with clichés: “he throws into relief unique works of art through stereotypes and situations that people from every walk of life are so acquainted with” (Dinçel 2013b: 205). And, on the whole, the idea of the “tragic” is no exception. Without pronouncing virtually anything on the matter, Beckett cuts to the quick of it; and does so in a fashion that salutes the ancient performative tradition. That said, the overemphasis on the cliché might as well be a trick devised to send scholars to look for the right answers in wrong places, or vice versa. Maybe the “axiomatic constant” of the tragic absolute is not its almost immediate equivalent that “you’re on earth, there’s no cure for that!” of *Endgame*. It might very well abide in the play’s more latent key with a double-note running like a bassline throughout the piece: “Something is taking its course.” That something taking its course while the course of things and the course events take their course, is where the tragic dwells in human life. Its artistic re-cognition translates it into *the* tragic, into *the* tragic absolute that is (un)bound for stage.

**The Birth Pangs of the Tragic Absolute on the Contemporary Stage**

Perhaps the safest way to conclude this unashamedly long chapter would be to recapitulate its main chains of thought in relation to the development of theatrical space in antiquity, without, of course, any intention to embark on a folly quest at the last minute regarding the evolution of Ancient Greek theatre, which, in the words of David Wiles, “is a hazardous business” (2000: 105) in and of itself. As well as Wiles, Richard Beacham and Rush Rehm have also taken upon themselves to do critical justice to this daunting enterprise. Their respective opinions on the so-called origins of performative space of theatre are worth bearing in mind prior to juxtaposing them with those of Wiles as regards to the essential distinction between the Ancient Greek and Roman theatrical spaces. Beacham, on his part, proceeds with the caveat that “certainty is not possible; what on balance seems probable is that the performance space itself consisted at first of a large circular dancing area, the *orchêstra*” (2007: 205, emphasis in the original); meantime Rehm points out that “once accepted as the a priori fact, a circular orchestra allows us to see the theater as a visual-spatial image of the cosmos, a symbolic microcosm” (2002: 39). Built in the shape of an eye, with the *orchestra* being the pupil also harbouring the chorus, the ancient
theatre was indeed a place to see; but most of all, was a site to see together with the on-looking gods and the audience alike who occupy the theatron, the dwelling, or what Martin Heidegger (2001: 141-59) would most likely to deem as the “thinking” place of demos. So Wiles: “Greek theatres were modifications of the landscape rather than impositions, and Greek architects always built their theatres with attention to the view, unlike the Romans who enclosed the audience within high walls” (2000: 113). Furthermore, as everyone would agree, by that time the circular dancing and singing area of the chorus has long been transformed into a semi-circular one with the introduction of the skênê in the classical period, impairing, one way or another, the integral shape of the theatre as an eye and leaving the Romans to complete the rest by cutting through the dead centre of the pupil first and by the invasion of the orchestra by the imperium afterwards. Factoring all these in, Fiona Macintosh nicely encapsulates the ways in which the two theatrical spaces differ from each other: “With the disappearance of the orchestra, the odes were now delivered from a raised stage, which was enclosed both from above (by a roof) and behind (by a towering facade). The Roman audience was thus denied both the privileged viewpoint and the vista beyond that the Greek theatre afforded its spectators. With the introduction of a stage curtain, the audience’s new role as spectator rather than participant was enhanced” (2009: 39-40). Macintosh’s words touch a sensitive point, for in the “theatricalised” res publica in which life itself is transmogrified into a theatre, the audience participation came to denote a dangerous activity that might include having a close brush with death, as could be culled from the “domestic team efforts” depicted in Morte di Seneca.

Chiming in with the observations made throughout the current chapter, these scholarly perspectives set a new angle wherewith to move towards a conclusion by adding up the pros and cons of the evental process that was saturated with the Great Dionysia, and, by extension Aristotle’s institutionalisation of tragedy qua dramatic literature. As was canvassed earlier when scrutinising Friedrich Hölderlin’s notion of caesura with Alain Badiou, the tragic truth procedure in theatre always entails the risk of stabilisation and normalisation, while at the same time leaving a constant margin for the poietic translation of the idea into the performative space of the medium in order to “force” the truth itself into the dynamics of reception. At this junction, taking cognisance of Wiles’ elaboration on the manners through which the Ancient Greek theatrical space and tragedies were modified in tune with nature might drop more hints vis-à-vis the pluses and minuses of the City Dionysia: “Greek plays dealt with the limits of the human ability to control the world. Spectators sat inside the city they created and looked at the wilderness beyond. From the security of their seats, they contemplated a world where nothing was secure. In tragedy the city was viewed in its relation to the wilderness beyond” (2000: 113-4). As is, Wiles’ stress on the “wilderness beyond” comes to the fore as the key to unlock the
problematics of the event *extraordinaire*, since it, at any rate, involved the gradual domestication of the occult rituals that once took place in the sacred groves in the “wilderness beyond.” Partially civic and partially religious *theoria* was the valence over the course of taming the mystic rites during the political event of democracy whose lineament was *agon*. As the mystery itself together with its associated myths were being domesticated by their simultaneous assimilation into the “official” competitions and into drama, the chorus dwelling therein the *orchestra* was committing the basic codes of democracy to the collective memory of the society that exercised full commitment to the theatrical event in the public sphere. Even so, inasmuch as the domestication of the tragic truth downcycles the overall process, the obvious fact that theatre not merely signified a place to see together, but more importantly proved to be a *topos, pace* Heidegger, for “building dwelling thinking” appears to equipoise the issues at the end of the day.

In a good light, the incursion of the *orchestra* by the *imperium* would be seen as a shift from “seeing together” to “thinking together” in theatre, especially insofar as democracy is a political constant. Nevertheless, it is exactly at this juncture that the distance between the public and the ruling cast that is supposed to produce ideas on its behalf starts to widen. The inward turn in theatrical space and the resultant evanescence of the chorus, let alone the ensuing hegemony of drama over theatre are telling indicators of this divide. Whence, it is not surprising at all to witness how the historiography of drama goes hand in hand with the histories of the dominant ideologies that it was subjected to, so much so that it turns drama itself into a dominant ideological lens to look at tragedy and the tragic, regardless of theatre. That said, the role of theatre has not been innocent either. Qua institution it was not only subjected to those prevailing ideologies, but also served, more often than not, as a mouthpiece for them throughout history. Whilst the Great Dionysia too had its share of subjugation in the process, the *agon* intrinsic to the democratic *polis* eventually gave rise to the formation of a unique theatrical public domain whereby to act the truth *per se*. Christopher Balme underlines the significance of two Greek terms in that regard: “*isègoria* guarantees to speak and is therefore a formal principle, whereas *parrhèsia* regulates the content of what can be said” (2014: 32, emphasis in the original). Though Balme opts to associate the latter term with its maybe the most celebrated artistic practitioner in antiquity—Aristophanes—these two concepts do fare well with acting the tragic truth and responding to the *pathos* collectively via the chorus, albeit *parrhesia* still being liable to regulation. On that note, “the re-birth of tragedy out of the chorus” (2017: 315-27), to borrow from Erika Fischer-Lichte, on the contemporary stage can plausibly be read as a sign of a deliberate aesthetic decision to put this communal aspect of the choral practice into the service of (subversive) performances under socio-political circumstances, where “thinking
together” by means of democracy is a “reasonable percentage” (1978: 11), as Samuel Beckett would consent.

In the introductory chapter of the present study, a substantial case has been made for siting the directorial praxes of Theodoros Terzopoulos, Şahika Tekand and Tadashi Suzuki in a translational framework that could candidly embrace mimesis qua mimesis, which, in return, would pave the way for an appreciation of translation qua mimesis, and vice versa, thereby to emancipate the two notions from the heretofore problematised simplifications of contemporary critical discourse. Admittedly, however, the remarks passed on the three directors have been scarce hitherto, ending with a cliff-hanger in the previous chapter, in which the methodological restrictions of such understandings of translation as textual production and mimesis as imitation were blown wide open throughout the construction of the dramaturgy of mimesis, a conceptual motor of the poietics of the tragic absolute. That the poietic, not to mention the (inter)semiotic translation of the tragic absolute boils down to the symbiosis between directors and actors thrusts one to reiterate what is at stake with Avra Sidiropoulou, whose admirable relocation of “auteur theory” from the territory of film terminology to the realm of Theatre Studies enables her to raise this highly important point: “The conviction that the functions of director and actor are actually complementary also proposes that auteurs who attempt to unite theatre’s inherent duality as a semiological/mimetic field and a phenomenological performing space have a lot more space to move in and many more weapons at their disposal,” she writes and goes on: “In fact, only if we take this duality seriously, by beginning to recognize and enjoy the fact that its two poles are mutually connected, rather than downright opposing, can we actually begin to grasp the range of creative possibilities available to directors” (2011: 8). That, moreover, Terzopoulos and Suzuki receive considerable attention from Sidiropoulou during the course of her invaluable study concurrently reinforces the earlier weight laid on the directors’ reworking, if not rewriting, of Attic tragedies and allows room for Tekand to be posited along these lines as well. Having said that, what makes the work of these three directors arguably exceptional does not chiefly reside in the distinctive manners in which they rework on the Ancient Greek tragedies for their individual directorial purposes. Instead, their distinct acting methods, each of which are profoundly indebted to Beckett, come to the forefront as the hallmark of the three directors’ theatrical praxes. At this junction, it is noteworthy to stress that “the translation of the pure tragic axiom into a performative act is infrequent” (1996c: 537) with George Steiner, whose Beckett-driven accent can be dovetailed with the directorial practices of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki so as to suggest them as pivotal aesthetic avenues to trace the author’s legacies for performance in general, and for the translational poietics of the tragic absolute in particular. After all, whether by dint of his “minimalism,” or by virtue of his “rules,” or by
means of his “footfalls” that blaze a trail for the realisation of a “grammar of the feet,” Beckett owns an exclusive spot in the minds of these three directors, each of whom also wholeheartedly welcome aboard the physical constraints that the author’s aesthetics body forth throughout the course of the translational journey of the “tragic.”

Nonetheless, Beckett qua the artist par excellence is by no means the sole common denominator amidst Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki. The close collaboration amongst the three directors commencing from the early 1990s and gathering momentum following the inauguration of the International Theatre Olympics in 1994, as a fruitful consequence of Terzopoulos’ initiation of the idea back in 1985, in the first Meeting on Ancient Greek Drama, turns out to grant another asset upon their encounter with Attic tragedies. The fact that this artistic alliance falls within the jurisdiction of the overexploited terrain of “intercultural” dialogue in Theatre and Performance Studies makes it necessary here to straighten out the terminology that is going to be deployed for the remainder of the present study. Whilst it is true that the directors themselves are fond of using this term, the consumption of the “intercultural” in Theatre and Performance Studies is not a far cry from the utilisation of “rewriting” in Translation Studies. Having already conceptualised reworking as a compelling substitute for rewriting in a translational context, it is now obligatory to call the validity of “intercultural theatre” into question with Fischer-Lichte: “The concept of ‘intercultural’ theatre makes the false assumption that cultures are sealed entities—once Japanese, always Japanese; once European, always European,” she accentuates before surmising that “the concept ‘intercultural theatre’ implies a sharp division between ‘our’ culture and ‘other’ cultures, and should therefore be avoided” (2014a: 130–1).97 What is more, as is well-known, the scholar herself is in favour of tallying the performative encounters reminiscent of those of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki with acts of “interweaving performance cultures,” which, to be sure, is a much more convincing manner of treating the issues at hand.

Then again, as was discussed at greater detail elsewhere,98 both “intercultural” and “interweaving performance cultures” are institutionally affiliated notions, the former presaging the theatre anthropology of Richard Schechner, the latter gesturing towards the eponymous research centre in Berlin with which Fischer-Lichte is allied. Be that as it may, taking heed of the neutral Adrian Poole’s standpoint on the trajectory of tragic imagination might be of enormous help to strike a balance between “intercultural” and “interweaving” insomuch as the poietic translation of the idea is of utmost importance: “In its various forms of disfigurement,

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97 On that score, also worth looking at is the rewarding conversation at http://www.textures-platform.com/?p=1667 (Accessed 31 December 2018) in which Fischer-Lichte (2011) throws more light on the grounds for her rejection of “intercultural theatre.”

98 Drawing, therefore, on Dinçel (2017b: 242-4).
mutilation, aberration or simple exigency, the human body has provided a focal image, the focal image, of tragic consciousness from Aeschylus to Beckett” (1976: 279, emphasis in the original). As it stands in Poole’s view, body takes precedence over everything and as such ties in subtly with the modi operandi of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki. In the light of these parameters, it can reasonably be argued that the performative dialogue between cultures may take place inter, whereas pinpointing the corpus at the crux of theatrical praxis always nods to trans. This holds valid even more when the problem is narrowed down to the adumbrations of these prefixes. Additionally, and more decisively, as the punchline of Fischer-Lichte’s critique connotes, inter delineates a condition in which the engaged parties are inevitably separated by definition, while trans by its etymological nature, evokes a movement that is at once ‘across’ and ‘beyond’ by definition. As a matter of fact, it is only logical to side with Fischer-Lichte in the dispute, even if the special context of the poietic translation of the tragic absolute obliges one to espouse “transcultural” in the final analysis for lack of a better nomenclature, without necessarily conferring any “universal” value upon the staging praxes of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki.

All in all, the translational journey of the tragic continues on stage, as do the two and a half millennia of philosophical quarrels over its nature continue on page, scaling the idea back to its “weakest talent” thereof. The tragic absolute, in turn, defies any and every of these debates, “presenting itself in its most powerful talent,” that is to say, as a counter-philosophy. The domestication of the tragic truth in antiquity notwithstanding, mimetic transformation of Attic tragedies on the contemporary stage is evocative of its wonderful afterlife through and through in performance, always already a terra incognita for both the actors and the receptors in the “most continuous activity” of theoria. The recipient opens up to the theatrical experience of the tragic, in the meantime the actor itself willingly sets off on a journey towards the unknown, since to perform is one and the same with not knowing—all the more so when it comes to the idea of the “tragic,” reworked on and on throughout history by countless theatre practitioners to the point of becoming a cliché.

According to Philip Lacoue-Labarthe, “when Hölderlin begins to write, a specter is still haunting Europe: imitation” (1989: 236). The socio-cultural climate was no less different after three centuries when Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki began to direct in Greece, Turkey and Japan, where the same spectre was still at work. Thence, the remaining chapters of the present study will be devoted to the painstaking exertions of the directors to part company with the accompanying spectre. The last task of the ongoing endeavour starts with Greece, wherein the ancient heritage has been the most contested, such that it happens to be identical with an emblem of Greekness.
PART III
Chapter 3

Attis Theatre

Underlying Dynamics of the Socio-Cultural Milieu in Greece before Attis

On April 21, 1967, Prometheus made a bizarre appearance on the Greek socio-political scene. Treading down the streets of Athens as a telling epitome of the consequences of what Günther Anders diagnosed as “the quasi-glorious triumph of Prometheus” (1961: 24), this mythical incarnation—“Operation Prometheus”—was bringing plaster, if not fire, to Greece. The country, after all, was undergoing surgery performed by a team of colonels under the leadership of Georgios Papadopoulos, whose consistent deployment of the plaster metaphor during the rise and fall of the Junta (1967-1974) was evocative of another operative prognosis that is deftly paraphrased by Rodis Roufos: “Greece is a recalcitrant patient who has to be immobilized in plaster for her own good” (1972: 161). Encased in plaster, the patient was drip-fed with concentrated chauvinism, the staple food that all repressive regimes always have in stock. And the treatment itself was boosted by, in the words of Gonda Van Steen, “the junta’s nationalist history of heroes and battlefields of triumph (from Troy to Salamis to Grammos and Vitsi). This single but ‘spectacular’ culture of nationalism and the radio and television broadcasts that promulgated it stressed an essentialist Greekness” (2015: 161). Van Steen’s elucidation does cast light on the odd texture of the Colonels’ plaster cast that pretends to cast the victors of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and those mourned for the fall of their enemies within “μηδέποτε μεσοῦν κακὸν / the tale of disaster is not yet even half told” (Persians 435, Sommerstein 2009: 62-3) in Aeschylus’ tragedy, or in Homer’s epic for that matter, in the same mould.

This Greekness was actually driven by two notions that rose to the surface mostly at the final stages of Tourkokratia, where, as Richard Clogg lays it bare, “under the stimulus of western classical scholarship, the budding intelligentsia developed an awareness that they were heirs to an heritage that was universally revered throughout the civilised world. By the eve of the war of independence this progonoplexia (ancestor obsession) and arkhaiolatreia (worship

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* Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine for the remainder of the study.
1 Building on Roufos, Karen van Dyck offers a broader exegesis of the plaster metaphor against the background of Papadopoulos’ views on the constitutional and republic referendums: “on the one hand, conspicuous and much advertised tolerance—you can see for yourselves the leg without the cast—and, on the other, a sharpening of general oppressiveness to totalitarian extremes—the patient will, if necessary, be put back in a cast” (1998: 17).
of antiquity), to use the expressive Greek terms, had reached almost obsessive proportions” (1997: 28). Progonoplexia and arkhaiolatreia have indeed been the ideational building blocks in and beyond the War of Independence (1821-1829) that Yannis Hamilakis reads between the carefully selected lines of archaeology as “a war to rid the classical lands from the Ottomans who had polluted it. It was, in a sense, a continuation of the ancient wars against the Persians, since the Ottomans were constructed as the oriental other” (2007: 78). The archaeological sanitisation of monumental theatrical spaces like Epidaurus, Delphi and Herodes Atticus, to name but a few, went virtually hand in hand for more than a century with efforts to purify the Greek language from foreign remnants first; and then, from “dangerous” elements, such as those of communism and socialism, peaking with the Junta’s legislation of katharevousa as the official language in 1968, before the dispute was settled for good after the deposition of the regime with the recognition of dimotiki—the language of the demos—as the official one in 1976. The Colonels’ interference with language over the course of the Junta was tantamount to a socio-cultural policy that drew direct correspondence between the “purified” ancient theatrical spaces and katharevousa by means of which they “perpetuated the National Theater’s monopoly of Epidaurus,” to put it with Van Steen, who also highlights that “in a purist approach, ancient drama, hallmark of classicism, served the Colonels’ antiquated linguistic, didactic, and ultra-nationalist agenda” (2015: 50).

That being said, the Junta’s enforced imitation of antiquity by way of katharevousa was “the faultline running through the twilight zone of its cultural policies” (Dinçel 2014: 175). The Colonels’ arbitrary recourse to ancient legacy would backfire at them at some point, thanks to the inherent subversive quality of Attic tragedy. And it did. Remembering a series of bans that Ancient Greek tragedies enjoined under the Junta against the backdrop of the plaster metaphor proffers a surrogate orbit to glance at the rise and fall of the military rule: Euripides’ Elektra was banned in 1969 owing to the production’s “un-Greek” costumes (Schwab and Frangos 1970: 111); whereas his Phoenician Women and Suppliants together with Sophocles’ Ajax had already been banned in 1967 due to Mikis Theodorakis’ incidental compositions in the associated productions (Roufos 1972: 149; Garland 2004: 172; Van Steen 2015: 114). Concurrent with these last prohibitions was the curious case of Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound. Proscribed in the same year that also witnessed the execution of “Operation Prometheus,” Anna Synodiou’s intended production with the Hellenic Stage was seen as a potential leftist revival of Aeschylus’ piece by the censoring bodies. Van Steen herself attributes a poignant function to this production (2015: 120-2), prior to her discussion of another Prometheus Bound (1974)

3 Mindful of the tragedy’s debated authorship, the present study clings to the name Aeschylus. On the questionable authorship of Prometheus Bound, see Taplin (1977: ch.5, esp. Appendix D).
in which the performances of Synodiou as Io and Manos Katrakes as Prometheus under the close surveillance of the Colonels would herald the downfall of the Junta in the long run. For “Synodinou as Io embodied tyranny’s female and right-wing victim, and she therefore functioned as an ideological complement to Katrakes/Prometheus,” the scholar writes as follows: “Although the two of them were set in mythical times, their recent personal experiences of the regime’s retaliation rang through to the modern spectators. Differences in time, space, and affiliation collapsed and ideological divisions between Right and Left began to be eroded. This was what the dictators should have feared more than the effect of a play’s lines: that, against all expectations, the Greek Right and Left could and would join together against them” (ibid.: 132). Keeping in sight Van Steen’s scaffold, where she historicises the two productions by triangulating them with “Operation Prometheus,” one might assign the pivotal part to Prometheus in this three-act socio-cultural spectacle: unbound and bound in the first two acts in Anders’ terms, unbound yet again in the closing act in the absolutely tragic sense of the word that is bound to its poietic translation into theatre. Hence Hephaestus’ utterance of the tragic experience: “ὁ ρᾷς θέαμα δυσθέατον δύμασιν[;] [Do] you see this sight [spectacle, play], hard for eyes to look on[?]” (Prometheus Bound 69, Sommerstein 2009: 452-3, emphasis and brackets added).

The Colonels’ disappearance from the socio-political scene would eventually lead to the dissolution of the National Theatre’s monopoly of Epidauros and subsequent admittance of private companies into the “purged” theatrical spaces of antiquity. Of special interest is the internationally acclaimed Karolos Koun’s concordantly celebrated Theatro Technis’ production of the Bacchae in Epidauros (1977). Even though Koun’s staging of Euripides’ play is somehow overshadowed by his more reputed interpretations spanning from the early Birds (1959) to the late Oresteia (1982), and as a corollary abide in the periphery of the director’s project, which, as David Wiles maintains, “was to rescue the classics from a social and cultural élite, and give them back to the people” (2004: 253), his Bacchae proves to be a landmark in debates over Greekness because of the ways in which it, to use George Sampatakakis’ words, “epitomized a democratic version of theatre either as a metaphor for the restoration of constitutional

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4 Van Steen nicely encapsulates the director’s modus operandi: “This paradigm stressed the continuity and unity of the vernacular Greek heritage and legitimized the Romain, oriental, and folkloric element of indigenous Greekness. Koun’s performance-oriented esthetics disclosed an alternative transhistorical continuum linking the modern Greek people to the legacy of the Golden Age—a modernist position that gained currency among artists and intellectuals after the 1922 Asia Minor debacle” (2016: 208, emphasis in the original). See also, the scholar’s earlier scrutiny on Koun in (2000: ch.4) for a wider perusal on this paradigm within the context of the director’s famous Birds. Having said that, equally indispensable to Koun’s project was to establish a New Greek Theatre independent of antiquity. Keeping in mind that the works of such prominent playwrights as the late Loula Anagnostaki and Iakovos Kambanellas made their debut performances in the Theatro Technis one can locate Koun at the outset and apex of the evolution of the New Greek Theatre. On this second aspect, see further Van Steen’s remarks in (2015: pt.1, passim).
democracy, or as a free artistic expression of the Dionysiac spirit once oppressed” (2004: 180). Heavily indebted to Sampatakakis, Erika Fischer-Lichte focusses on the director’s amalgamation of the folkloric ingredients into his _Bacchae_ and attaches a particular value to the production’s employment of the _anastenaria_, the fire-walking ritual performed in North-eastern Thrace in honour of Saint Konstantinos on every 21st of May, on the grounds that “some of the actors’ movements alluded to this ritual, which is said to have its roots in the Dionysian mysteries” (2014b: 122). The spectators’ response to the director’s renovation of Greekness through his combination of the Dionysian and Christian components was in all likelihood more than what he bargained for. Sampatakakis recounts their enthusiasm: “An audience of 28,000 people attended the performances during the weekend shouting at the end _Koun…Koun…Koun…_, which was a common practice in the productions of _Theatro Technis_ in Epidavros. This is indicative of Koun’s idolization into a cultural icon who expressed with his Art the lower-class Greek’s hopes for social equality after –and before– the restoration of Democracy” (2004: 178, emphasis in the original). In the aftermath of Koun’s revision of Greekness, the country was set to sail into the 1980s, or what Clogg would deem as “the populist decade” (1993).

Commenting on Koun’s _Oresteia_, Fiona Macintosh notes in passing that Andreas “Papandreou’s ticket of ‘Change’ won him the election in 1981” (1997: 316). With respect to the reception of Attic tragedies, maybe the most significant change in the Greek socio-cultural climate occurred in 1985, when, as Fischer-Lichte reminds, “Melina Mercouri, Greek Minister for Culture, launched the Greek Drama International Meetings in Delphi in order to give the ongoing discussion on ancient Greek drama in the age of globalization an official forum” (2014b: 116). Furthermore, there is good reason to believe with Macintosh that this event was (and still is), in a certain historical sense, a continuance of a notable experiment conducted in the 1920s and 1930s by “Angelos Sikelianos and his American wife Eva Palmer to plan an international gathering of intellectuals at Delphi with the aim of working towards world peace” (1997: 305). The first artistic director of this second experiment would be Theodoros Terzopoulos, for whom the inaugural International Meeting in Delphi was identical with “a call from Dionysus” (2006: 148).

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5 Cf. Sampatakakis: “The sacred _thiasos_ walks barefoot to the mountains where it prepares itself for fire-walking. After descending the ‘cleansed’ actors dance on burning coal with the icon of the Saint in hands without getting hurt, (cf. _Bac_. 757-758), probably due to the anesthetization of the feet from walking barefoot on the rocks” (2006: 100, fn. 14). The analogy between the _Bacchae_ and the _anastenaria_ has been captured by E. R. Dodds too in his commentary to the lines that Sampatakakis mentions: “The same claim is made in modern times: e.g. painless fire-walking is practised today in Thrace by orgiastic dancers at the feast of Saint Constantine” (1963: 170).
Attis Theatre

1985 was also the year when Theodoros Terzopoulos founded the Attis Theatre, after having spent his formative period chiefly under the tutelage of Heiner Müller in Berliner Ensemble (1972-1976), as well as after having worked briefly with the Theatriko Ergastri in Thessaloniki (1977-1982)⁶ and his ensuing decision to take a break from the practical field of theatre for a biennial travel outside Europe (1983-1985). Pinelopi Hatzidimitriou, for one, sets a premium on this specific journey qua search, and vice versa, in which Terzopoulos “would come into contact with the theatrical expressions of other cultures, predominantly those of the Asian” (2010: 38). The director’s (re)search qua journey, still under the imperative of Müller’s initial encouragement,⁷ would take him to Japan, to China, to Beijing and to New York, and as a result, he would open himself up to the theatrical traditions of nō and kabuki.⁸ Amongst too many substantial encounters of this journey, the most meaningful one could be said to happen in New York, where Terzopoulos saw a production that stayed with him ever since: Tadashi Suzuki’s Trojan Women. “Theatre,” as Jerzy Grotowski memorably accentuated, is not simply an encounter per se, but “also an encounter between creative people” (1975: 57). That the encounter with Suzuki would have a deep impact on Terzopoulos as regards to his successive development of the Biodynamic Method is a living vindication of Grotowski’s prediction. This encounter would at the same time give rise to an artistic collaboration that continues to this day—a collaboration starting to bear almost immediate fruits in the first International Meeting in Delphi, during which the seeds of the International Theatre Olympics have also been sown, to rephrase from Kerem Karaboğ’a’s account of the first period of Terzopoulos’ work (2008: 40-1).

Provocative theatre is inclined to bisect the recipient in such a fashion that leaves no room for compromise: one either loves, or hates the theatrical occasion. This is precisely what Terzopoulos’ Bacchae (1986) did in the second International Meeting in Delphi. The passive

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⁶ The plays of Bertolt Brecht unsurprisingly marks both the A—The Bakery (1977)—and Ω—Mother Courage and her Children (1982)—of this first period. Unlike providing Terzopoulos with aesthetic satisfaction, however, Brecht turned out to be a harassing figure for the director especially in this early phase: “The only artistic gratification I felt was with Yerma, where indeed I got to the point of working internally with the body and little by little to get rid of all those constrictions which came from the information I had from Brecht” (Terzopoulos in McDonald 1992: 161). Terzopoulos’ staging of Federico Garcia Lorca’s Yerma and its allusions for the later course of his directorial approach are aptly canvassed by Varopoulou (2006: 80-7) and Sampatakakis (2008: 45-64).

⁷ Cf. Terzopoulos on Müller: “I was very much impressed and influenced by his views and his methodology. During that period [1972-1976] he was reworking Philoctetes. Having himself been deeply involved with Greek mythology, he urged me to engage myself with the myths and tradition of my country” (2000: 48, brackets added).

⁸ Here and throughout Japanese spelling will be used. Inconsistencies might arise from the sources who adopt the Westernised spelling of “Noh.”
aggressive reaction of the Greek theatrical circles inclusive, ironically, of Anna Synodiou amidst others, stood at the antipode of the positive response to the production by the international audience encompassing but not limited to Eugenio Barba, Jocelyn Herbert, Tony Harrison, and Marianne McDonald—such that the latter would later on play the key role in terms of bringing Terzopoulos to the notice of academia with her *Ancient Sun, Modern Light* (1992). Apparently, the director touched upon something sensitive in the Greek socio-cultural milieu, for this warm international reception reverberated itself throughout the performances of his reworking of the *Bacchae* around the globe, so much so that Şahika Tekand would emphatically reminisce about her encounter with the piece in Istanbul (1990) along these personal lines: “One day, I saw a play which changed my life” (2006: 62), since it persuaded her to return to theatre *qua* theatre at a time when she was quick to realise how “Performance Art, in essence, transforms itself into what it opposes and becomes a domesticated form of the pursuit of opposition. And I encountered it with the *Bacchae* in the beginning of the 1990s. What really struck me in the production was this: first, what I saw was ‘theatre’ and it compelled me to say ‘yes, that’s theatre’; and second, what existed on stage was real insofar as the performance claimed to be true in and of itself” (Tekand in Karaboğa 2008: 170-1). The distinction that Tekand draws between Performance Art and theatre *qua* theatre is quite instructive and underscores the resistant-cum-political ethos of the Attis Theatre that renders its associations with postmodernism problematic. Building on the adumbrations of Terzopoulos’ socio-cultural background, Hatzidimitriou reads the fine print of this ethos: “In a technologized, postmodern condition that questions authentic, undifferentiated subjectivity, he chooses to adopt essentialist positions regarding identity and embodiment. In opposition to amnesic cyborgs or virtual replicas, he foregrounds the archetypal, suffering body caught in ontological agony” (2007: 62).

Hatzidimitriou’s explication functions as a solid bridge to a gloss on the modes through which this thoroughly and devoutly studied production gave a fresh impetus to the notion of Greekness in the wake of Karolos Koun’s enthusiastically received *Bacchae*. At this juncture, it is worth lending an ear to Erika Fischer-Lichte, whose comparative analysis of the two productions with an eye to Terzopoulos abounds with weighty remarks. The scholar centres her examination of Terzopoulos’ *Bacchae* on four headings, each of which are ably sorted out from

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9 So Van Steen: “The work of Terzopoulos and his Attis Theatre (founded in 1985) has debunked every veneer of Classical pedantry but has also been diagnostic of postmodernism itself” (2016: 215).

10 Cf. Terzopoulos, again: “I come from a family, which happened to be on the side of the defeated after the Greek civil war; that means I come from a social group, which was politically and psychologically beaten” (2000: 47).

11 See specifically Sampatakakis (2008: 67-88) and Hatzidimitriou (2010: ch.2), both of which take into consideration the ways in which Terzopoulos revisited the production alongside of its performances all around the world.
the negative reviews accompanying the production:12 “(1) ‘the function of the ancient as well as the new Greek language was reduced’; (2) it was a ‘Japanese spectacle’ instead of a Greek one; (3) it was the performance of a ritual rather than a tragedy; and (4) the production had nothing to do with the text of the tragedy” (2014b: 123). Fischer-Lichte’s pointers do resonate with the majority of the concerns vocalised through the course of the present study, above all with those recapitulated in the preceding chapter. Since the pathologies of the first and fourth “textocentric” (2003: 21), to reutilise Patrice Pavis’ emblematic phrase, objections to Terzopoulos’ Bacchae, and, by rational extension, to (the study of) theatrical praxes akin to his have been monitored in the intensive care unit of the dramaturgy of mimesis hitherto, it would be feasible now to give some thought to the connotations of the director’s “Japanizing” and “ritualistic” exegesis of Euripides’ piece.

Following George Sampatakakis, who is following Terzopoulos to the letter, Fischer-Lichte underlines that “it is revealing that it was Dionysus, the new god from Asia, who introduced movement patterns from the Japanese performing arts and, moreover, made even Pentheus employ them” (2014b: 128). As is, Fischer-Lichte points the spotlight on the cultural path that Terzopoulos would tread in the second—and ongoing—phase of his directorial career commencing with the Attis; a name that concomitantly evokes Dionysus, the cultural roots of the Bacchae’s first cast, as well as the fatherland of the director’s displaced forebears: “Because the group of actors I had then chosen from an audition were of Pontic origin, I called the troupe Attis. Attis is the Dionysus of winter, he is the seed, the gestation, the toil of birth. Attis is Dionysus from Phrygia. The Pontus, or Black Sea. My homeland” (2000: 71-2, emphasis in the original). The manifestation of this inborn Greekness would be the incorporation of the Pontic dance, where, as Sampatakakis clarifies, “the hands tremble in a mimesis of flying, while the feet march steadily on the ground” (2006: 94), into the Bacchae in which the fire-dance of the anastenaria ritual had also been integrated into the production as the part and parcel of the Biodynamic rehearsals. This Greekness, to be sure, escaped the attention of the domestic theatrical milieu and entertained a different fate than that of Koun, as was pinpointed by Fischer-Lichte: “While Koun’s production of The Bacchae in a ‘sacred’ place – the theatre of Epidaurus – fundamentally redefined the concept of Greekness and was celebrated for this by critics and audiences alike, Terzopoulos’ production of the tragedy in a similar space, the stadium at Delphi, was passionately rejected and accused of robbing the site of its power to sacralize the past” (2014b: 122-3). The local ritual of the anastenaria furnishes interesting echoes with Fischer-Lichte’s repeated stress on the manners in which the archaic rituals of

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12 See the sources cited in the previous note for these reviews. For English, see Sampatakakis’ (2004: 200-10) critical comparison between them and those document the production’s reception abroad.
sparagmos and omophageia carried out on textual plane “put the audience into a state of liminality” (2006: 116); “undergoing physiological, affective, energetic, and motor changes that led to transformations, the conclusion was drawn by the critics that they were witnessing a ritual – one typical of some ‘savage tribe’ unknown and incomprehensible to them” (2014b: 132). This is a salient observation, one that allows room for the anastenaria to be interpreted on textual sphere in the theatre of Terzopoulos. The director sets the text—any ancient, therefore, “sacred” text—on fire for the purposes of releasing its energy throughout the performances of the Attis from the Bacchae onwards, each of which correspondingly hinges on the release of the actors’ corporeal energies: “The text is spoken without meaning or understanding, but full of energy to find the rhythm of the text. It’s like dancing on fire. The energy of the text is the fire and the body has to dance on it” (2006: 168).

The price that Terzopoulos paid for opening up a space for the symbiosis of the foreign and the native was a set of accusations of violating “the Greekness of the tragedy by contaminating it with elements from Asian cultures” (2014b: 117), as Fischer-Lichte wraps it up. The fact that the scholar’s accent falls on the vast performative landscape through which Terzopoulos would wander with the Attis Theatre makes it possible to rethink the lineaments of his directorial practice in view of the terminological debates around interculturalism, as was problematised at the end of the previous chapter with Fischer-Lichte herself. Writing, by and large, in favour of an “intercultural” theatre, Hatzidimitriou charts out the route of Terzopoulos’ performative geography: “From the very beginning, Terzopoulos looked beyond Anatolia to cross borders. In order to break free from the logo-centric Western theatrical tradition, he turned to Noh and Kabuki, to the dances of dark Butoh, as well as to the ways of the other civilisations, like the Aborigines in Australia and the Native Indians” (2010: 77). Bringing Terzopoulos’ influential comprehension of borders to the fore, Hatzidimitriou undoubtedly sketches out an accurate map of the director’s pledged allegiance to cultural dialogue, whose prerequisite dwells in the politics of the body’s liberation. Thence Terzopoulos’ distinct understanding of interculturality as “a profound physical longing. A deep need, a universal need in life. The body has to move to find analogy. That is the task or the need of the liberated body. When the body is freed then it is in search of a correspondent, a partner of dialogue” (2006: 169). As beautifully as they invoke the transformative potential of theatre in regard to crossing borders through dialogue, these words must be handled with great care by theatre scholars, because, as Hatzidimitriou herself acknowledges, “the moment we classify Terzopoulos in this intercultural field of theatre anthropology, we expose him to possible objections over his claims for universality and the political effect of his practice on collaborating cultures” (2007: 65). Whilst Hatzidimitriou opts to ward off prospective reservations on the director’s theatrical practice by
addressing the exigencies of the not-so-innocent discourse of the “intercultural” theatre, addressing the exigencies of the not-so-innocent discourse of the “intercultural” theatre,13 Fischer-Lichte’s succeeding notion of “interweaving performance cultures” (2014a: 113-40)14 buttressed by Sampatakakis’ positive review (2014: 387-97) comes to be a sound bulwark against probable hesitations on the claims of Terzopoulos’ extremely rewarding staging praxis that simultaneously puts the foreignising and localising corporeality into the service of theatre so as to be able to transgress borders: “Today, in the era of globalisation, the most revolutionary thing you can do is to rediscover the lost body” (2006: 169).

That being so, the director’s search for the absent body through and beyond antiquity in the age of globalisation and capitalism, where “man is computerised” (2015: 82)—where Günther Anders’ foresight into “the Promethean shame” (1961: 21-95) turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy—attains argumentative asset: “The body is global. This is the starting point where the intercultural dialogue must begin. At this point zero” (Terzopoulos in Raddatz 2011: 98). Exactly because the director gets to the kernel of the problem, his professed interculturalism can barely be taken for granted and instead, it lends itself to be viewed in transcultural light. Terzopoulos himself seems to vindicate this point with his research into the body qua the Absolute in antiquity: “The actor in antiquity is the definition of the Body, is synonymous with the Body. In the contemporary world the body has been abolished and the man has been turned into a puppet of capitalism, exists merely to serve capitalism. Theatre of today is obliged to restore and cultivate with ethos the idea of the universal body from the start” (2015: 84). Having diagnosed one of the most pressing issues of the contemporary theatre, the director confronts the problem head-on by summoning the archaic body to the modern stage to transgress its borders, to transform the performative space into a liminal topos, wherewith to transmit the underlying verve of tragedies to the hic et nunc to transfigure the receptors’ perception of Attic tragedy into a palpable experience in theatre qua event that is one and the same with Alain Badiou’s conceptualisation.15 Behind this captivating facet of the Attis Theatre

13 Hatzidimitriou is not the only scholar, who sticks to the distressing language of “intercultural” theatre with a keen cognisance of its problematics. That from Sidiropoulou (2011, passim; 2017: 53-72) to Decreus (2012a: 181-96, esp. 189-91) and from Varopoulou (2006: 84-5) to Karaboğa (2008: 113-5) Terzopoulos is endorsed as an advocate of an already troubling discourse encourages one to problematise the existing terminology with greater reason.

14 Though Fischer-Lichte’s espousal of “interweaving performance cultures” gathered momentum roughly around the beginning of the 2010s, she has been one of the most critical voices of “interculturalism” in theatre as early as 1990: “The goal [in intercultural performance] is not that the audience be brought closer to, or made familiar with the foreign tradition, but rather that the foreign tradition is, to a greater or lesser extent, transformed according to the different conditions of specific fields of reception” (283, brackets added). This awareness regarding the assimilative aspect of interculturalism would form the backbone of her later advocacy of “interweaving performance cultures.”

15 Compare Terzopoulos: “What is the word on stage? It is the death of the word on paper. That is the word on stage. If one cannot grasp this fact, then one ends up with literature. So what is theatre then? Is it a good performance? No, good performances do not result in theatre. A good performance does not equate to theatre. Theatre is an event” (2006: 158-60). With Badiou: “It goes without saying that Sophocles and Aeschylus here
there of course lies the painstaking systematisation of the Biodynamic Method before, during and after the *Bacchae*, whose counter delineation of Greekness reinstated the Promethean-cum-Dionysian fire not only in the Greek stage, but also in the contemporary one. And with this accomplishment too, “the performance did in fact write theatre and cultural history” (2006: 117), to settle the matters with Fischer-Lichte.

**The Biodynamic Method of Theodoros Terzopoulos**

The director’s diagnosis can tenably be taken as read, for he purports to have found the antidote for the contemporary actor in a medical book that describes the method of therapy at the Amphiarai sanctuary in Attica, a hospital site of the god Asclepius, also comprising a wonderful theatre. Patients, who were about to be operated, began walking around naked in a circle on the humid ground at sunset. After the first hour they had to accelerate their step [sic] and after the second hour they had to quicken it [sic] even more. During the fourth hour they had to bend their knees like in Kabuki. During the fifth hour they had to bend their elbows and, as they kept going around and accelerating this motion with their bent limbs, they proliferated energy similar to that of African performances. They engaged in this exercise for eight hours and their bodily pain vanished. They were in a trance, like the Bacchae, brought on not by wine, not with words, but by the body's wine — their blood. Blood is the wine, and blood that circulates properly in all the veins is happiness (2000: 50-1).

Re-generating and re-energising Aristotle’s *eudaimonia* at once, this intrinsically Greek, *kathartic*, ritualistic, but most of all, transcultural technique would gradually grow into what Theodoros Terzopoulos characterises as the “Biodynamic Method,” whose five stages—“remembrance,” “biodynamic charging / parapraxis,” “deconstruction / isolation of body parts (*ek-stasis)*,” “resignification” and “restoration”—are studied in hook, line and sinker first, before everyone else, by George Sampatakakis, who expounds on each phase as the five basic goals of the method:

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16 What follows is an expansion of a recent reflection on the Biodynamic Method and on the director’s reworking of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* in Istanbul under the rubric of the Promethiade Project. It thus incorporates the findings of Dinçel (2017b: 235-56, esp. 243-54) into the present investigation by concurrently amending, building and drawing on the points raised in the relevant sections of that study.
a) To stimulate a process of self-exploration, going down as deep as the subconscious reservoirs, yet channeling the unleashed energy in order to codify and deposit the required reaction. b) To eliminate the resistances and obstacles, mainly pain, both physical and emotional. c) Consequently, to resist the idea that the acting body is a centrally controlled entity, and then deconstruct the body into smaller kinetic morphemes (significative units). d) To be able to systematize this process into an anti-memory and an anti-body (by means of behavioral associations). e) And finally, to relocate the Body architectonically according to certain geometrical patterns (2006: 91-2, emphasis in the original).

Sampatakakis’ scheme articulates the end result of the Biodynamic rehearsals that kicked off with Terzopoulos’ workshop on the Bacchae (1985) with a group of fifty people who set out on a journey down to Mount Cithaeron, as well as up to North-eastern Thrace, to the cradle of the anastenaria with burning research questions in their minds: “What is a Dionysian body? What is the body in a Dionysian cult? What is a body that can run over fire?” (2006: 169). Kerem Karaboğa pegs down the nuances of this initiatory workshop: “Those who set off without a map and a regular camping life were symbolically in search of the Maenads; but the actual terminus of the journey was to bring them somewhat closer to a Maenad’s state. By the end of the workshop, the good percentage of the participants were eliminated by themselves and only five of them managed to venture to go all lengths” (2008: 42); in the meanwhile Pinelopi Hatzidimitriou throws light on the next phases of the rehearsals, where Terzopoulos “conducted long, even twenty-four hour workshops, subverting the normal pattern of human function (day-action, night-rest), and exposed his performers to severe weather conditions. The result was physical exhaustion accompanied by a release of mental and psychic tension” (2007: 57). Expectedly enough, those who persevered and withstood fatigue would be both the founding members of the Attis Theatre and constitute the good part of the Bacchae’s first cast, amidst whom was also Sophia Michopoulou (Figure 1), who still works with the troupe as the embodiment extraordinaire of the Method, thereby serving as a paradeigma not just for a (re)generation(s) of Attis actors ranging from Tasos Dimas to Sophia Hill, from Savvas Stroumpos to Antonis Myriagkos, and so forth, but also for a myriad of international actors.

17 For a thorough account on the actors and their professional backgrounds before Attis, see Hatzidimitriou (2010: 41-52).
18 The Platonic overtones of Michopoulou’s transformation into a paradeigma are noticed by Sampatakakis within the special context of the working dynamics of the Method: “If we accept Agave as the model-actress for the biodynamic method, we practically identify the process of subject transformation and transference essential to Terzopoulos’ method. There is the imprinted behaviour of baccheia within the body of the actress in the form of a memory or Platonic idea. The subject is able to recall and relieve the restored behaviour only by means of an involuntary reaction (parapraxis)” (2006: 99).
Figure 1. Sophia Michopoulou as Agave in the *Bacchae*. Freiburg 1987. Photo by Lothar-Sitzek.
hailing from Russia (Alla Demidova), Italy (Galatea Ranzi), Turkey (Yetkin Dikinciler), Colombia (Ariel Martinez), and so on, to collaborate with Attis at different venues around the globe.  

On that score, Terzopoulos’ identification of the establishment of the Attis Theatre with the “founding of a laboratory” (2006: 148) proves to be an important entryway into the distinctive features of the Biodynamic Method that set it apart from other comparable intercultural-cum-anthropological practices of, say, Richard Schechner, Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba in the 1960s and 1970s, all of whom proceeded from Jerzy Grotowski’s insights into the craft of the actor, yet neither of whom could be said to have cultivated an acting method that is particularly concerned with Attic tragedies to the point of obsession—which is why the idiosyncrasies of the Method must be sought through a glimpse at more serious theories of acting from the twentieth century. In a manner educing his affiliation with the Italian arte povera movement, the director embraces Grotowski’s vision, underneath which exists a strenuous interrogation of Konstantin Stanislavski’s later work on physical actions, Vsevolod Meyerhold’s biomechanics and Bertolt Brecht’s forays into epic acting. In that regard, Terzopoulos’ stance towards the relationship between the actor and text becomes informative in the sense that it illuminates his proximity to Grotowski and Meyerhold, in lieu of Stanislavski and Brecht, where text and textual exegeses take precedence over physicality at the end of the day; while for the director, “the actor must leave the body passive and locked in the prison cell of the daily habits and should not appeal to psychological and intellectual analysis of the incentives of the role and the meanings of the text” (2015: 58). Further in that regard, Sampatakakis’ detection of Grotowski’s “passive readiness” at the hypothetical point of commencement of the Biodynamic Method (2006: 91; 2008: 68); Hans-Thies Lehmann’s equation of the director’s artistic patent “as an emotionally intensified form of biomechanics” (2006b: 177); and Karaboğa’s critical views on the correlation between Meyerhold and Terzopoulos, wherein the latter guides the actor from the dynamism of the machine to the dynamism of the chaos by “treating the body as a corpus of memory from where to extract the deepest and the most painful recollections” (2008: 124) all hold water and index Terzopoulos as heir apparent to the theatrical praxes of Grotowski and Meyerhold.

The director’s international collaborations are impressively documented with supplementary visuals in (2000, passim; 2015, passim), in Raddatz (2006; 2011 passim), in Sampatakakis (2008, passim), and in Hatzidimitriou (2010, passim).  

Terzopoulos himself says much of his (in)congruencies: “I accepted the Bauhaus, but not Stanislavsky. I accepted Meyerhold, but not Barrault. I accepted Grotowski, and all Artaud’s perspectives, even the philosophy of Julian Beck, and the various concepts of cruelty, which operate in everyday life” (Terzopoulos in McDonald 1992: 163). The director’s Biodynamic Method is brilliantly contextualised within the comprehensive frame of the twentieth century acting paradigms by Karaboğa in (2008: 111-56).
That said, Grotowski’s apprehension of “total act” as an alternative to Antonin Artaud’s “theatre of cruelty” (1975: 125) appears to drop more hints than Meyerhold’s biomechanics when it comes to the minutiae of Terzopoulos’ biodynamics, all of which achieve exposure by virtue of improvisation throughout the interconnected phases of *parapraxis* and *ek-stasis*. The director regards this improvisation peculiar to the Attis Theatre as “infinite, since it does not seek to give a direct form to the material, its aim is not to engender a first-hand configuration of the performative landscape. The performer does not rush to create an external choreography, but rather strives for obtaining the skill of descent towards the crux of the structure, towards the roots of his [sic] deep physical tradition” (2015: 47). Tempted, for the most part, by Ludwig Flazsen, Karaboğa bases his viewpoints vis-à-vis Grotowski and Terzopoulos on the supposed ecstatic state of the holy actor in the total act so as to assert that “Terzopoulos opposes to relate [Grotowski’s] ‘Self’ to a notion that is central to the actor’s personality, just as he opposes to identify spontaneity with the biography of the actor” (2008: 137, brackets added). This is an important assertion, yet it is regrettably downscaled by the scholar’s overreliance on Flazsen, who, arguably, is at the back of the injection of *ecstasy* into the period of Poor Theatre, whereas Grotowski himself is unequivocal on the condition of *trance* through the total act in which “the actor makes a total gift of himself. This is a technique of the ‘trance’ and of the integration of all the actor’s psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of ‘translumination’” (1975: 16), under the subtle fabric of “humility” that passive readiness preconditions—humility “not to do something, but to *refrain* from doing something, otherwise the excess becomes impudence instead of sacrifice. This means that the actor must act in a state of trance” (ibid.: 37, emphases in the original). It is for this reason that Grotowski could, and certainly would, have depicted the situation of Ryszard Cieślak in *The Constant Prince* as “he wasn’t entirely himself”—the suggestive title of his marvellous tribute to Artaud—and go on to differentiate between “healthy” and “unhealthy” trance even after the era of Poor Theatre.\(^{21}\)

In the final analysis, for Grotowski, “the body of the actor is a vehicle of his emotions. Actor undergoes ‘trance’” (2012: 291), as Magda Romanska crystallises. And notwithstanding Grotowski’s modifications of Artaud’s theses, that was Artaud’s muster call to “a theater that induces trance, as the dances of Dervishes induce trance” (1958: 83).

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\(^{21}\) Recognising the significance of trance for the ensuing phases of Grotowski’s research, James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta neatly unclose the difference between the two conditions: “In a ‘healthy trance,’ the state of alertness is very high, and this new transparent consciousness perceives simultaneously, outside and inside, but perceives without either identification or becoming attached to anything. In this state, it is not ‘you’ who reacts but it is ‘that’ (the other consciousness) that reacts. This transparent consciousness gives the impression that time slows down, but the reactions are not slow in time, they are immediate. Conversely, in an ‘unhealthy trance,’ all awareness is lost” (2007: 47).
The Attis actor, on its part, goes through *ek-stasis* via infinite improvisation in the Biodynamic Method of Terzopoulos, who clearly demarcates the line between ecstasy and trance by dint of appropriate references to Attic tragedy: “The figure of Heracles by Euripides is in a state of ecstasy, not in a trance. In this state, he accomplishes meaningful acts for mankind. Ajax is also in ecstasy when he falls upon the animals which he believes are his fighting companions. When people enter Hades [,] the Underworld to experience something, they are in a state of ecstasy. To reach a state of ecstasy, the body has to be aware of its feet. In a trance, you are not conscious of your feet” (2006: 156, brackets added). In fact, the director’s insistence on the minuscule between the two situations harbours a rigorous reformulation of both Grotowski’s holy actor and Artaud’s “athlete of the heart” (1958: 133): “After the deconstruction, the body can be auto-systematised and auto-controlled. The actor, just like an acrobat, has a continuous awareness of the energy flux; he is on the *qui vive*, ready to combat” (2015: 49). Regardless of the ways in which the scholar gears Grotowski’s trance towards Terzopoulos’ ecstasy, Karaboğa is the most resilient when he sites the *pathos* of Ancient Greek tragedies beneath the governing factor of the director’s departure from the former’s conception of spontaneity: “At any rate, risk of death, disappointment, drastic devastation or the moments of psychic shock implicated in the tragic material are such that they do not permit the actor to behave ‘naturally’; the actor, on the other hand, can still determine its own direction as the carrier of the text, with the proviso that it stays within the mood supplied by ecstasy as a whole” (2008: 127). Where Cieślak *transluminates* into the Constant Prince, Hill, for instance, as Io (Figure 2) finds her way in exile, or to be more exact with Ruth Padel, “in her wandering by madness externalized as *oistros*” (1995: 15); and whilst passing through the *ford qua ox* in absolute ecstatic *mania*, she leaves her *footsteps* there on the spot in a vein that is also true to Aeschylus.23

Juxtaposing Karaboğa’s remarks with Padel’s ictus on *oistros* paves the way for a précis apropos Terzopoulos’ methodology here, almost halfway through the present chapter.

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23 *Cf.* Prometheus Bound 729-735: “ισθμὸν δ’ ἐπ’ αὐτὰς στενοπόρος λίμνης πῶλαις Κιμμερικὸν ἤξεις, δὴ θαρσοπλάγχωσ σε χρή λιπόσαν αὐλῶν ἐκπέραν Μαιωτικόν: ἐστι δὲ θυμοῖς εἰσαι λόγος μέγας τῆς σῆς πορείας, Βόσπορος δ’ ἐπόνυμος κεκλήτει, λειτοῦσα δ’ Εὐρώπης πέδον ἱππολόν ἤξεις Ασίας / You will then come to the Cimmerian isthmus, right at the narrow gateway to the lake; with a bold heart you must leave it, and cross the Maeotic channel. Your crossing will in all future time be much spoken of among men, and the channel will be named after it—Bosphorus, ‘Strait of the Cow’. Having thus left the land of Europe, you will have come to the continent of Asia” (Sommerstein 2009: 522-3).
Figure 2. Sophia Hill as Io in *Prometheus Bound*. Istanbul 2010. Photo by Uğur Hepdarcan
On one level, the long path that the director traced from the discovery of the remedy for the modern actor to the conceptualisation of the Biodynamic Method amounts to a systematisation of trance into ecstasy in tune with his first divulgence of the ancient therapeutic method to Marianne McDonald: “From this movement of energy and ecstasis I tried to resurrect the word. Elevation of the word means exaltation of speech, not speech as a proper expression—academic speech, explanatory speech—but speech of pain” (Terzopoulos in McDonald 1992: 165). The question, then, boils down to the infinite improvisation that grants upon the actor the ability of descend, whereby to exhume the ancient word from its structural-cum-corporeal core with a view to ascending, that is, translating, it (in)to “logos-ponos” (2015: 43) in performance as a vital part of an external choreography. As it is, the staging procedure of the Attis Theatre ipso facto posits an organic relationship amongst katabasis, anabasis, parapraxis, ek-stasis and mania throughout the inherently poietic translation of the tragic pathos into logos-ponos. It would be plausible to enhance the conceptual scope of the discussion with Padel, who zooms in on the archaic bond between mania and menos, “pointing to the core violence of mania, resonant of the bloody force and flood of menos. Mania has the sudden violence of a ‘fit of madness’” (1995: 20, emphasis in the original). The notional link that Padel fosters between menos and mania strikes a perfect note in the theatrical praxis of Terzopoulos, for it is through the fusion of the two that the Method distils energy into the performing body. The maximum weight that the director lays on the pelvic triangle comes as no surprise in that respect: “The release of the triangle, an area that is comprised of the three main zones of energy (sacrum with anus, genitals, lower abdomen or lower diaphragm with navel) is of utmost significance, because it is pertinent to the release of animal energy” (2015: 24).

One, in sum, cannot help but marvel at the energy that the director disinters from the plain simplicity of the act of walking—“remembrance”—that is the sine qua non of the next stages of his biodynamics, where the katabasis into the nucleus of the corpus—“parapraxis”—slowly but surely leads the Attis actor to the anabasis towards mania—“ek-stasis”—that, in return, empowers it to transgress (corporeal) borders with explosions of energy that are most likely to transpire in the later phases—“resignification” and “restoration”—of the Method.

The Mimetic Aesthetics of the Biodynamic Method

But on a more fundamental level, the question boils down to the heatedly contested place of text in the theatre of Theodoros Terzopoulos, whose deconstruction of textual tradition as an absolute must for the deconstruction of the body eo ipso deconstructs any comprehension of translation as a type of textual production. Holding translations “responsible for great
catastrophes which lead to the death of tragedy” in a tone redolent of George Steiner. Terzopoulos announces his version of generic obituary in the light of such pivots of logos-ponos as breathing and tempo, both of which are the requisites of the director’s biodynamics: “The spirit of these translations was the death of the texts because the musicality, the rhythm was killed when all interjections were eliminated – the ‘oimee, aiais and oiois’ – because they had no semantic meaning” (2006: 162). This deduction can hardly be read as a prescriptive proclamation stating the obvious in the spirit of Steiner. The exception of Alan Sommerstein proves the rule by preserving these and analogous exclamations in a way that Terzopoulos would see them fit so that they can remain as sounds “just as in Aeschylus the ‘o! oto, to, to… ti, ti, ti…’ in the Persians’ lament” (2000: 60, aposiopesis in the original); so that the actor can wend its way down to “Hades and liberate this ‘oimee,’ give it meaning” (2006: 162), as does Sophia Hill qua Io-cum-ox brackets her logos-ponos with the ἄ ἄ, ἐ ἐ and ἰ ἰ ἰ ἰ πόποι to a hair in tandem with paroxysmal spasms signalling the stings of oistros (Prometheus Bound 566-576, Sommerstein 2009: 504-5) each time she enunciates the word that is the root cause of the heroine’s ecstatic mania. Whence the privilege that Terzopoulos bestows upon delving into the Ancient Greek texts themselves—a privilege that is best exemplified by the director’s recurrent emphasis on “κάματόν τ’ εὐκάματον / a toil that is sweet and a weariness that wearies happily” (Kovacs 2003: 16-7) in the parodos of the Bacchae, 67: “As we studied this phrase we discovered in its rhythm the tempo of the Pyrrhic war dance. The Bacchae arrive dancing the fire dance, stamping their feet on the ground just like in the Pontic dance” (2000: 52). Now, the Bacchae, 757-758 add an extra flavour to Terzopoulos’ statement in that they bring the connection to the anastenaria out into the open: “ἐπὶ δὲ βοστρύχοις πῦρ ἔφερον, οὐδ’ ἔκαιεν / Upon the hair of their heads they carried fire, and it did not burn them” (Kovacs 2003: 82-3), let alone the 123-128 of the parodos, where the kinship between the Bacchae and the frenzied Korybantes is divulged in terms germane to the Phrygian dance: ἔνθα τρικόρυθος ἄντρος βυρσότονον κύκλωμα τόδε μοι Κορύβαντες ἡρὼν’ βακχεῖα δ’ ἀμα συντόνῳ κέρασαν ἀδυβόα Φρυγίων αὐλόν / There in the cave the thrice-helmed Corybantes invented for me this drum of tightened hide; and in their intense ecstatic dance they mingled it with the sweet-hallooing breath of Phrygian pipes” (ibid.: 22-3).
From this standpoint, it is a short step to infer that the director’s suspicions about textual translations prompted him to search for what he calls “core rhythm” in Ancient Greek and in Ancient Greek alone: “For a text is composed of rhythmic units, especially in ancient drama. It’s often surprising to see how rhythm itself leads to the process of deconstruction, analysis and reconstruction of a text, without any prior dramatic study or written stage direction” (2000: 55). And from there too, it is likewise a short step to construe that the instillation of all these deceptively meaningless sounds like popoi, totoi, ototototoi, pheu, io and ani ania into the performance regulates the semantics of the director’s markedly circular staging approach by giving performative rein to “a tremendous energy, a metaphysical energy” (2006: 164), operating as signposts not solely for the Attis performers, but more substantively, for the international actors thereof to adjust their auto-controlled states of ek-stasis from the tranquil beginning (Figure 3) to the mourning middle (Figure 4) and to the unruly end (Figure 5) of a

Figure 3. Greek and Turkish actors in *The Persians*. Istanbul 2006. Photo by Johanna Weber.

given (co)production consonant with the moments of tragic pathos. Echoing the director, Kerem Karaboğa gets to the bottom line of this procedure: “the escalation of the body’s energy proportionately transforms the text into a fire to dance upon it” (2008: 83); in the meantime Helene Varopoulos draws attention to the function of circle in the performances of the Attis Theatre: “The circle is above all a place of ritual par excellence. Within it, the community
Figure 4. Greek and Turkish actors in *The Persians*. Istanbul 2006. Photo by Aylin Özmete.

Figure 5. Greek and Turkish actors in *The Persians*. Istanbul 2006. Photo by Johanna Weber.
celebrates itself and its intrinsic cohesion, the individual loses his [sic] personal features to blend in with the collective, the ‘circle’ of the others. The circle is also a space where the energy of the body can be found through a performance of ceremonial movements” (2006: 81). As Terzopoulos sets the text ablaze to burst the myth of textually oriented approaches in general, and related methodologies to the study of his alluring directorial aesthetics in particular, he blazes the trail for a re-appreciation of the always already translational material at his disposal, one that yields to be poietic, provided that the polyglossic and all the more polyphonic scenic idiom of the Attis Theatre takes precedence over the role of the reconstructed translated text in performance in the last analysis.

By the same token, the defining aesthetics of the Biodynamic Method invite re-contemplation. The director himself gives tempting guidelines to the intellectual milieu enfolding him, which, in turn, devotedly produces a secondary literature that matches the radiance of his critique-proof postulate: “The truth of the body is ontological. The form of tragedy is ontology. Tragedy gives an image of its own structure: the image of the structure of ontology” (2006: 168). The premise itself harks nowhere but back to the phases of “resignification” and “restoration” in the Method, where the actor acquires the Biodynamic aptitude to translate the ontological structure of the tragic eikōn into the here and now in concordance with the poietic work implemented on the source dramaturgy, which is conceived as concepts—i.e. mourning in Aeschylus’ Persians, rebellion in Prometheus Bound, pity in Sophocles’ Philoctetes, madness in Ajax—and tackled as such under the dome of the Bacchanalian ek-stasis, that is, the overarching directorial syntax underlining Terzopoulos’ scenic semantics. Having pinned the director’s mise-en-scène down to an aesthetic act of “bringing geometry to chaos” (2008) within its ostensible Platonic setting, George Sampatakakis gets to the gist of this scenography: “The theatre of Terzopoulos does not aim at the objectification of the natural world into some geometric figures, but hopes to give material essence to some unapproachable terrifying Truth. It is most probable that, in constructing his theatrical language, Terzopoulos meets the generic foundations of Greek tragedy, where Gesture is not merely a physical movement, but the product of standardisation obeying to certain rules” (2011a: 115). Correlatively, the performances of the Attis Theatre teem with stylised, statuesque Gestures gesturing towards Bertolt Brecht’s conception of Gestus, all of which are excavated from Ancient Greek tragedies themselves in an exertion to restore to theatre “a pre-Aristotelian or a non-Aristotelian dramatic structure, where ritual and theatre merge into one under the auspices of theatrical performance” (2008: 137), as Karaboğa puts it. These balancing vantage points confidently drop their contentious anchors in Plato and

Two radiant discourses come to the forefront in consequence: one that stems from an exceptionally unique theatrical praxis of a “director-guru” that, as Pinelopi Hatzidimitriou upholds, “proves to be a manifestation of the modernist anthropocentric paradigm of the original inventor, who treats imagination as the creative center of meaning” (2007: 61); whereas the other emanates from the notorious rivalry of Plato and Aristotle over “pure mimesis” that brought about the institutionalisation of the Attic tragedy as drama, evincing little or no concern for staging, not to mention acting, roughly until the theatrical, yet textually-driven reforms of Denis Diderot and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing with a bend towards realism. As a matter of fact, the way in which Terzopoulos conjures mimesis up in the midst of ek-stasis becomes more of an issue. “Throughout the infinite improvisation the actor counteracts the realistic approach to theatre,” he proclaims, “he [sic] is neither in search for a form of mimesis, nor a representation of daily life with the familiar behaviours, the open and hidden cards of bourgeois theatre. The performer does not act in a mimetic manner, representing the gestures of everyday life; he is not interested in the psychological interpretation of the role” (2015: 45-6). Whilst it is crystal clear that the director positions himself against the theatrical subgenre that Diderot and Lessing advocated, both figures might still shine light on his work with the actor in an endeavour to uncover the mimetic aesthetics of the Biodynamic Method that intellectual circles surrounding Terzopoulos tend to elide.

The director saves one the trouble by perceptibly appropriating Diderot’s paradox to his methodology: “As the actor performs, he should see everything, but also grasp the opposite. He should act coldly and the audience should in contrast be warm. That means he should provoke the audience’s feelings and that is also based on technique. This reminds me of Diderot’s phrase, ‘The actor’s tears surge from his brain’” (2000: 67). Nevertheless, that Diderot’s paradox of acting is facsimile with the paradox of mimesis ineluctably calls his notion of modèle idéal—embodiment of the superlative (Platonic) paradeigma—into play as a concept, which explains one more time why modernist theatre practice from Konstantin Stanislavski to Jerzy Grotowski cannot elude mimesis qua mimesis, exclusively when Vasili Toporkov and Ryszard Cieślak emblematise in toto the respective embodiments of the system actor and holy actor. What is more, that Karaboğa relies more or less on the same idea to bolster up his points on the manners in which Sophia Michopoulou and Tasos Dimas happen to be the extraordinary embodiments the Biodynamic Method28 before contextualising Terzopoulos and

28 Terzopoulos recounts at great lengths his experience with the actors, including also the international collaborators of the Attis Theatre. Though he treats all of them with parallel enthusiasm, his graphic descriptions

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Diderot in and around the frame of the twentieth century acting with remarkable apathy to mimesis (2008: 115, 143-50); that Sampatakakis again and again refers to Michopoulou as the “model-actress” (2006: 99; 2008: 75) of the Method with an equal indifference to mimesis; that he is visibly hesitant to avail himself of the mimetic vocabulary, while punctually explaining the Pontic Dance in the Bacchae, as well as perfectly indicating the Biodynamic Method’s propensity for procreating a mimesis of pain (2006: 94, 93; 2008: 73, 72), inexorably call to mind the problematics of Joseph Roach’s invaluable The Player’s Passion, where his negligence of the mimetic magnitude of Diderot’s paradox undermines the methodological potency of his submission to “the Paradoxe as paradigm.” Under the taboo-inflicted circumstances of Theatre Studies, the scholars’ reluctance to cross the threshold of mimesis, even when fruitfully focalising on the aesthetics of a taboo-breaking director like Terzopoulos is totally understandable.

If Diderot’s explicit prevalence further unveils the Platonic skeleton of the Method, then Lessing’s implicit presence29 in Terzopoulos’ biodynamics shows the extent to which the director’s (mis)guiding rejection of mimesis is prepared to usher one into the farthest reaches of mimesis qua mimesis on the contemporary stage. Lessing’s Aristotelian and kathartic axiom that asks, first and foremost, of the paradigmatic Schauspieler to “attain the greatest beauty under the given conditions of bodily pain” squares subtly with Terzopoulos’ modernist research into the archaic Body that is propelled by “his firm belief that the oldest is also the most contemporary” (Arvanitakis 2006: 188) in a technologized, or better, “computerised” age that left the performer “bodiless, and ultimately transmogrified him [sic] into a product, into a subhuman” (2015: 82). At this junction, it would be noteworthy to reiterate that Lessing’s dictum, which, pace Roach, is contingent upon “the arrest of analogic action in a frozen moment” carves out a space in time for the (inter)semiotic, poietic if you like, translation of Friedrich Hölderlin’s sign qua 030 by Samuel Beckett’s (or Diderot’s?) empty personae, relating

29 Yet, a careful reading of Terzopoulos makes the presence evident. After pointing out that “like Laocoon’s fight with the snake, man is connected to violence. This conflict determines the core of man. Violence always creates a situation where energy is increased,” the director lingers on the two axes of antiquity in terms that, one way or another, hearken to Lessing’s animadversion on the Senecan tragedy: “Tragedy is not concerned with the enjoyment of violence; that would be Roman. It is concerned with the violence of Dionysus, of Attis leading to rebirth” (2006: 153).

30 But see Erika Fischer-Lichte’s early depiction of the Bacchae, where she appears to reject (intersemiotic) translational activities in Terzopoulos’ directorial practice: “It became clear that the event of the performance was not to be comprehended as a transposition of one medium, the script, to another, the theatre. Nor was it a translation process from written characters to various theatrical signs” (2006: 115), and contrast this with her later opinion on the receptive dynamics of the production: “At the moment of the switch between phenomenality and semioticity, a break occurred. The former order of perception was disrupted and a new one established. To perceive the
“everything to the concept of ‘transition’” (2000: 82), as Terzopoulos would accede and elaborate on the reason “why the actor is present in absentia, plays between presence and absence, between ‘here’ and ‘beyond’, between ‘I’ and ‘Not I’” (2015: 51). The director’s splendid evocation of Beckett tallies with what has previously been designated in the present inquiry as V-Effect, namely, the Visceral Effect that ripples through the author’s universe to elicit wonder at humans’ never-ending capacity to go on in the “complex” muthos—mimesis—of praxis and life.

The theatre of Terzopoulos, on its behalf, gravitates towards another kind of wonder that owes too much to the director’s Beckettian working method with the body, which is underpinned by Hatzidimitriou: “like Beckett, he uses the body as a kind of plastic material, like a painter or a sculptor, he works it out, he even violates it so that all possible relations between body and movement, body and space, body and objects, body and light, body and words are explored” (2006: 74), to culminate in “a struggling physicality that produces speech, a body that strives to speak even when it has reached an energy impasse. The tragic quality of speech is not the outcome of a ‘constructed’ sentiment but of a violent wonder that the performer’s body experiences when the air supplies are exhausted, yet the body must continue sounding” (2007: 59).31 This, in a word, is what Beckett’s shattered, deconstructed if you will, empty personae are bound to do via negativa: go on at all costs within the modernist framework of the poetics of the tragic. And this, in a nutshell, is what fuels Terzopoulos’ modernist-cum-mimetic aesthetics that scatters wonderful shockwaves through the spectators: “What is Modernity? It is the explosion of the nucleus of the classic. The process itself dissolves all, so that everything can be brought together anew, creatively. This is why we deconstruct the body” (2015: 84).32

In point of fact, mimesis is by no manner of means the sole all-encompassing aesthetic locution that the director (dis)avows. Katharsis too had its share of renunciation by

performers in their bodily being-in-the-world established a specific order of perception; to perceive their bodies as a sign for a dramatic figure established another” (2014b: 131).

31 Beckett’s vestiges in Terzopoulos’ theatrical practice are further strengthened with the director’s declared fondness for the author (1992: 166; 2000: 68), which conduced towards the productions of Rockaby (2003), Ohio Impromptu (2004) and Endgame (2014). For the first two Beckett productions, see Hatzidimitriou (2010: ch.5).

32 Terzopoulos’ line of reasoning puts him on a par with Patrice Pavis: “To deconstruct tradition is not to destroy it: it is to extract its principles and confront them with today’s principles” (2013: 161). The director’s point of view on modernism is basically a riposte to hasty attachments, such as those of Gonda Van Steen for example, of his aesthetics to postmodernism. Cf. Hatzidimitriou, once more: “All postmodern expectations of him acting as a bricoleur, one that plays around with fragments of dispersed narratives that he himself has not created, are inevitably cancelled” (2007: 61). And Pavis delivers the parting shot: “Deconstruction is not a style of mise en scene, in this case a postmodern one. Rather, it is a procedure that attacks the postmodern and restores a particular way of working” (2013: 178).
Terzopoulos, only to be redressed perhaps best tersely by Hatzidimitriou thus: “The feeling that one’s body exceeds its limits and becomes a channel of energy or a site of conversion of primary materials, leads the performer to a physical, intellectual and emotional catharsis. The spectators, on the other hand, in the presence of excessive pain and intrigued by true shock and the aesthetic perfection of the spectacle are invited to undergo a personal descent into the deeper layers of their existence” (2006: 69). To Sampatakakis’ admission of *katharsis* in Sigmund Freud’s nomenclature to the theatre of Terzopoulos, which “took hold of ancient tragedy and de-psychologized it” (2006: 148), Hatzidimitriou’s confirmation is much more suitable, for it correctly, if furtively, points towards the Aristotelian dimension innate to the aesthetics of the Method. But even here, as elsewhere, scholarly disregard for mimesis creeps into Hatzidimitriou’s contention to downplay the vigour of her significant catch, since the assumed ecstatic state of the threefold *katharsis* that she rightly detects can be tracked down to *Politics* VIII, where the Aristotle subjects the frantic Korybantic music—the archaic choreographic score to Terzopoulos’ illustrious “κάματόν τ’ ἑικάματον”—to *kathartic* and mimetic scrutiny. And as he always does, Halliwell gives a helping hand to tease out the Korybantic nexus in Aristotle’s system of thought. “It is Corybantic ritual which, once it is stripped of its religious setting, supplies a striking instance of psychological homeopathy,” he writes to get to the heart of the matter: “Once the idea is extended to less extreme or abnormal experiences, it is clearly psychology and not pathology which will be pertinent” (1998: 194). It is this trait of Korybantic *katharsis* that Terzopoulos’ directorial aesthetics come to convene to the contemporary stage to “de-psychologise” Attic tragedies. It is similarly this trait that the director sets ostensive store by to anesthetise the *corpus* “under the given conditions of bodily pain” via *ek-stasis* and mimesis *qua* mimesis—to such a degree that even while rolling on, or staying still, or walking barefoot on a pair of thousands of glasses signifying the wisdom of Prometheus, the actors become immune to pain. And they re-act, *au fond*, to the *frozen* moment(s) of tragic *pathos* seized by Michopoulou’s ecstatic recitation of memories from the Greek Civil War in the company of the common inhalation and exhalation of the chorus, as well as of Yetkin Dikinciler’s Turkish Leftist ballad bewailing the recited and re-enacted suffering in a transcultural theatrical praxis (Figure 6). So Terzopoulos: “The aesthetics of the performance

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33 Cf.: “I instead search out the point exactly where all the forces, those outside and those within, are about to explode, and where one wrestles against the other, leading to the explosion. I want to research this fermentation and conflict. That is why in my performances there is no solution, there is no catharsis. There exists a despair” (Terzopoulos in McDonald 1992: 168).

34 Cf. Sampatakakis on the Biodynamic Method: “The emotional shock causes the memory to resurface, and catharsis is achieved not in the Aristotelian, but in the Freudian sense, as the therapeutic consequence of releasing repressed emotional tension by re-experiencing the original traumatic incident (the infamous *Abreaktion*)” (2006: 100). Following the footsteps of the director, Karaboğa denies *katharsis* to the theatre of Terzopoulos, see (2008: 109).
Figure 6. Clockwise from left: Savvas Stroupos, Sophia Michopoulou as the Old Woman, Yetkin Dikinciler as Prometheus, Christian Holdt in *Prometheus Bound*. Istanbul 2010. Photo by Uğur Hepdarcan.
is the upshot of the body’s dynamic rapport between Time and Memory. It is through this rapport that the cardinal ontological question is posed: ‘what is all about?’” (2015: 68).

The gravity of the question is a surefire sign that such shallow understandings of mimesis as imitation, realism and representation, fall short of shedding light on the theatre of the director that “plays in Protothanatos, in the anteroom to Hades. It is an interspace between life, the realm of the living and death” (2006: 157), where “pain is expressed with lament, is etched as grief and deepens as ontological sadness” (2015: 72). As it stands in these conclusive pronouncements, Terzopoulos portrays with unmistakable clarity the liminal condition of the (Heraclitean) persona at the crossroads before the Delphic dicta—ready to get on with its journey towards self-realisation against Plato’s will. And the question comes down to the corporeal means through which the director transforms the actors’ bodies into “living tombs” to re-create the tragic eikōn to smash Plato’s mimetic mirror that disdains mimesis qua imitation. It is precisely at this conjunction that Terzopoulos’ working hypothesis that “the actor in antiquity is the definition of the Body, is synonymous with the Body,” gives one an immediate pause for thought. Because the claims that he lays on antiquity, on the Dionysian mania as the ontological quintessence of Attic tragedies, on archetypes, on digging out the physical sources of ancient myths, of the Ancient Body, and the like, coerce one to reword his root proposition: “The actor in antiquity is the master of Mimesis, is the equivalent of the Body.” The thing, in actual fact, is that by placing such a momentous accent on the primary instrument of the performer with intent to evict mimesis from his directorial praxis, Terzopoulos comes on the heels of Aristotle in the sense that both get stuck in the archaic conception of mimesis qua mimesis, whose taproot resides in the gestural-cum-vocal physicality that is most ecstatically and corporeally inscribed into the choral performances of the Homeric Hymn to (the Delian) Apollo, Aeschylus’ Edonians and Theoroi, and last, but by no means the least, in the Korybantic rituals.

All aspects considered, it stands to reason to surmise that while Terzopoulos’ mind was occupied by bursting the myth of textually oriented approaches to staging Ancient Greek tragedies, the myth of mimesis lured the director into its discursive trap. As a matter of course, the passionate rhetoric of the director impedes one from appreciating what he realises with the always already mimetic and translational material at his disposition. The fact that this highly physical, yet highly mimetic façade of Terzopoulos’ staging aesthetics has, to a high degree, been overlooked by the scholarly literature that is sensu strictu dedicated to the Attis Theatre, gives the impression that researchers working under the spell of the director’s Biodynamics too have been drawn to the temptation of the myth of mimesis. Additionally, and more decisively, this almost blind devotion to Terzopoulos is an alarming indicator that brings to mind what has
befallen Grotowski in his lifetime: the ways in which Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba and the performative cadre around them promoted Grotowski back in the 1970s, to the point of (posthumous) exploitation under the brand of interculturalism, resemble very much the ways in which an assembly of brilliant scholars encloses Terzopoulos to the point of forming a charming modern Dionysian cult around him. After all is said and done, one guesses that this is a foregone conclusion for “director-gurus” within the terrain of Theatre and Performance Studies.

Even so, these blunt remarks do not detract from Terzopoulos’ staging practice by means of which he breathes life into Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides on the contemporary stage that is often dominated by the technological. Without succumbing to the popular trends of the present-day stage, Terzopoulos does manage to remain a director *sui generis* with a powerful charm, no matter how he can easily seduce one from doing critical justice to the aesthetics at stake. In this regard, “the icon of charm becomes enigmatic;” quite so, absolutely when the director metamorphoses the performative space of theatre into a

**Mirror** of the actor and the spectators. While the actor breaks the time open, sees himself [sic] in the mirror, until he transforms himself into to a mirror that reflects the audience.

The gaze widens to explode his icon, to shatter it into thousands of pieces. The fragments simultaneously dance and re-create his icon, a new icon, the icon of his other self, where is displayed the figure of Dionysus, the god of theatre. The actor looks deep inside the eyes of Dionysus, travels in the labyrinth, driven by his energy. And embarks on a journey towards transcendence along with the fertilising bacchanalia of Dionysus (2015: 76-7, emphasis in the original).

With this one comes full circle to Plato’s looking glass. By calling the archaic body back to the contemporary stage to embody *the* tragic with sheer dedication to Dionysus, Terzopoulos, like Aristotle, reverts—whether knowingly or not—back to an archaic and organic notion of mimesis and—whether *willingly* or not—re-energises it in such a theatrical style that it can break the Platonic mirror, the *raison d’être* of contemporary critical discourse that feeds on such taboos of mimesis as imitation (of life), realism, and representation. This is how the director destroys the *myths* of mimesis *qua* imitation, representation and realism simply to make mimesis *qua* mimesis reborn on stage in its organic shape that sets the scene for outbursts of energy that the ecstatic Dionysian *mania* bodies forth in countless acts of *poietic* translation, most of which have stealthily been demonstrated in the dormant analyses of Terzopoulos’ *Persians* and *Prometheus Bound* undertaken thus far.

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Nonetheless, this chapter cannot come to a close unless it dovetails these latent enquiries with a succinct glance at Theodoros Terzopoulos’ reworking of Aeschylus’ *Persians* (2006) and *Prometheus Bound* (2010) in Turkey for the 15th International Istanbul Theatre Festival, which also hosted the 4th International Theatre Olympics, and for the Promethiade Project respectively. Both being the director’s third take(s) on Aeschylus’ said tragedies, the two productions complement each other under the thematic infrastructure of the organisations themselves. Subtitled “Beyond the Borders,” the 4th International Theatre Olympics was the ideational precursor to the Promethiade. The main tenet of the Project is essentially a pithy summary of a joint socio-cultural-political intention to take the theme of “borders” to new heights within the scope of the Promethean myth: “How Prometheus exceeds the boundary, which the gods has established, is how the Promethiade transgress [sic] the borders, which are given by the might or power of history” (Raddatz 2011: 7). The precept itself calls into question the so-called socio-political stature of borders that nation-states and languages have drawn throughout history and propounds the notion of borders as an exclusionary category that issues forth counter ideas and polylingual theatrical practices first to confront the existence of borders, and go beyond them afterwards through theatre. It is here that the transcultural streak of the (4th) International Theatre Olympics and the Promethiade comes into prominence for an instant before turning into a losing one against the intercultural campaign that ran alongside the two events. Be that as it may, this outlook on the grand scheme of things has still much to say on the uneasy *status quo* between ever-conflicting coterminous countries, such as Turkey and Greece.

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35 See Appendix 1 for the production details of the performances.
36 Terzopoulos’ first and second exegeses of Aeschylus’ *Persians* (1990; 2003) and *Prometheus Bound* (1995; 2008) are comprehensively scrutinised in the sources cited so far. See, in addition to these, Tsatsoulis (2006: 42-54); Decreus (2006: 202-13; 2012a: 181-96; 2014: 63-74) and Sidiropoulou (2017: 53-72). The last three studies cover all three versions of the two plays, but Sidiropoulou is more diligent than Decreus (esp. 2012a: 181) in the details of *Prometheus Bound’s* performance venues, on which see the next footnote.
37 With hindsight, it is safe to say that the co-organisers—Terzopoulos, Frank Raddatz, Jolanta Nölle, Fabian Lasarzik and Dikmen Gürün—of the Promethiade have been successful in fulfilling the majority of their principal objectives. Through the collective efforts of the artists and intellectuals from Greece, Turkey and Germany, the Project (re)generated three distinct reworkings of the Promethean myth: *Prometheus Bound* by Terzopoulos, *Anti-Prometheus (How to Forget in Steps)* by Şahika Tekand, and *Prometheus in Athens* by Rimini Protokoll to take place in Athens, Istanbul and Essen. The alteration of the venues in Greece and Turkey (from the proposed Epidaurus to Elefsina and from the proposed Hagia Irene to Rumeli Fortress) mostly for bureaucratic reasons aside, of these three productions, only *Prometheus in Athens* did not see the light of the theatrical day in Istanbul. As a substitute, the recording of the production in Athens was shown in the form of a documentary theatre under the title of %100ATHENS. See Raddatz (2011) for a thorough documentation of the Promethiade Project.
38 See the attendant discourse to both organisations in Raddatz (2011, passim).
Terzopoulos stands out within this context: “I was the first Greek director to work in Turkey. Turkey is very important to my mind – to have a dialogue with Turkey. Dialogue which crosses borders has a significant meaning. I have to transcend borders” (2006: 149). Having dwelled upon the transcultural valence of the director’s instrumental conception of borders earlier, it is now necessary to flesh out the manners in which the idea itself comes to be a field day for Terzopolous in the full sense of the expression. In this particular respect, the director’s probes into the intricacies of laughter starting with its ecstatic and Dionysian preponderance in the Bacchae cannot go unnoticed. For they ripen into Terzopoulos’ singular notion of “tragic mask” where laughter is transfigured into an explosive constituent of his biodynamics, which invests the actors with the poietic capability of adopting a “facial Gestus that conveys the terror of the falling subject, expressed either with the tetanic smile and the widely open eyes or with the widening of the eyes and the gaping mouth, all of which are the symptoms of the stricken being” (Sampatakakis 2011b in Raddatz 2011: 116). The field day, then, denotes an ecstatic time frame that comes to pass on a translational minefield that, two and a half thousand years after Aeschylus imagined the Aegean shores rife with corpses through the eyes of the defeated Persians, could detonate this wailing laughter—klausigelos—through the medium of theatre, in the hope of bringing about a little change to the ever-tense set of socio-political circumstances between two countries that are separated by the same water, yet united in the same cry of mourning—“Aman, Aman”—common to Greek and Turkish cultures; a (leit)motif that Terzopoulos made the most of with great economy. At one of the most climactic moments of the production, when the line dividing the circle turned into red and the two all-male

39 Were it not for Dikmen Gürün’s initiatives (2006: 234-9), Terzopoulos would probably not have been a regular visitor of the Turkish theatrical scene since his debut with the Bacchae in 1990 and would not have been working with the Turkish actors in and beyond Turkey since 1999. The director’s theatrical activities in Turkey are best studied by Karaboğa in (2008, passim, esp. Appendix 1).
40 Stephen Halliwell grips the delicacies of the ecstatic laughter in the piece within the framework of the eminent sparagmos scene: “The Bacchae not only exhibits the ambiguities of laughter, its involvement in both celebration and cruelty; it transmutes them into the material, the motivations and the disastrous consequences of tragic conflict. One of the supreme, perpetually challenging paradoxes of the play is that Euripides has superimposed the body language of laughter, divine as well as human, onto the bleakest face of tragedy” (2008: 139). The laughter in Terzopoulos’ theatre takes the form of the ancient klausigelos, as was fittingly noted by Decreus (2012a: 193, 195; 2014, passim) and Sidiropoulou (2017: 68).
41 See especially Figures 2, 4, 6 above, and Figures 7, 8, 9 below.
42 Cf. Persians 418-421: “κύκλῳ πέριξ δεισιδαιμον· ὑπεταύτο δὲ σκάφη νεκρῶν, θάλασσα δ’ οὐκέτ’ ᾐν ἰδείν, ναυσικάι πλήθουσα καὶ φόνῳ βρυτῶν· ἀκται δὲ νεκρῶν φωράς τ’ ἐπλήθθουν. / The hulls of our ships turned keel-up, and the sea surface was no longer visible, filled as it was with the wreckage of ships and the slaughter of men; the shores and reefs were also full of corpses” (Sommerstein 2009: 60-1).
43 The director’s early declaration is a testimonial proof to this point: “Myself, what I do is very small, it is small, it is small. It is the effort of some people who communicate in order to offer truth. Life consists of cells. You, five others; we, my group, another twenty, another fifty others. That is, there exist some people somewhere who communicate and they form a dynamic on a world-wide scale. These are the hope of the world; these people are the hope. There exists no other hope” (Terzopoulos in McDonald 1992: 169).
chorus(es) faced each other sitting, a folkloric ballad begun to be sung from the Turkish side, rose to a crescendo with a semi-Dervish whirl crying out “Aman, Aman”—crying out for Mercy—and soon after that the chorus member (Ferdi Yıldız) tumbled to the ground. In his review of the production, Üstün Akmen lauds this “incomplete” Dervish whirl and Mevlevi intimations engraved in the episode and in the performance as a whole; he calls attention to their “alienating” effects and praises Terzopoulos for “not swallowing the bait and consequently saving himself of the prospective prejudicial allegations of flattering the Turkish audience” (Akmen et al. 2006: 25).

There is, all in all, reason to argue that Terzopoulos’ “alienating”, or to convert it into a wealthier critical currency, “foreignising” directorial strategies, the bulk of which grow out of his discrete comprehension of Greekness embossed onto the Biodynamic Method, enable him to supersede the commonplace interpretations of Aeschylus’ *Persians* as a lament over the war between East and West, even if Avra Sidiropoulou seems to be content with confining the production to the (re)conciliation of these parameters in “intercultural” theatre: “East meets West, as distinctly Eastern music fuses with Byzantine melodies that make the performance resonate with suggestive religious overtones” (2017: 60). Sidiropoulou’s sensitivity to the acoustic possibilities of the performance venue—Byzantine Church of Hagia Irene—is worthy of notice and forms an alternative opinion to Adnan Tönel’s critique of the acoustics space. Then again, the director’s choice to prefer an all-male cast (seven Turkish and seven Greek actors) with the role of Xerxes being distributed between Antonis Myriagkos and Yiğit Özşener implies that there might be more specifics at hand. Özşener himself clears the air around interpretative issues: “But when it comes to the war between East and West, it sounds as if two irrelevant parties are fighting each other. Our approach to the text was certainly not like that. Ultimately, we presented it as the war between brothers across the two shores of the same water” (quoted in Karaboğa 2008: 203). The actor’s words do touch a raw nerve in the ever-tense state of affairs between Greece and Turkey, or better, between brothers, or better yet, between brothers and sisters, all of whom are the victims of the same war, orchestrated time and again by the same nationalist mind-set that is still at work in both countries with a disturbing presence

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Hagia Irene is generally used as a concert hall and from time to time operates as a venue for special theatrical projects in Istanbul. Tönel’s critique do have a point but is not shared by the critics—Akmen et al.—who voiced their views in the mini-dossier allocated to Terzopoulos’ *Persians* in Tiyatro (2006: 24-7). Tönel’s other criticism is aimed at the disproportion between the production’s circular design and the relatively small performative space of Hagia Irene for such a huge cast, the consequence of which was an “uncomfortable viewing experience.” This fair critique too has also been flagged up in the dossier, which, in its entirety, testifies to the positive reception of the production in Istanbul. Most likely being the sole negative review of Terzopoulos’ *Persians*, Tönel’s major criticism is levelled at the acting style that is “based upon diaphragm attacks with deep inhalation and exhalation, excessive shaking of the bodies and total lack of control on the actors’ saliva,” see http://tiyatrofestival.blogspot.com/2006/05/persler.html (Accessed 31 December 2018). This last aspect was applauded in the dossier, together with the co-utilisation of Turkish and Greek languages in the production.
in the historical textbooks of the high-school curricula that are the by-products of political bodies in the first place.

Terzopoulos’ duplication of Xerxes’ *pathos* through Myriagkos and Özşener (Figure 7) stands for a commendable directorial discovery that beats a path to one of the many reconstructions of the “tragic double” in the performance after the deconstructions of the *corpora* during the course of the Biodynamic rehearsals. This magnification of the tragic suffering serves as a corroborating evidence in and of itself for both Terzopoulos’ and the

Figure 7. Antonis Myriagkos and Yiğit Özşener as Xerxes in *The Persians*. Istanbul 2006. Photo by Johanna Weber.

actors’ *poietic*, (inter)semiotic and always already mimetic translation of Aeschylus’ tragic imagery into the conflictive, and more often than not, perplexing dynamics of the Greco-Turkish kinship; a kinship that contributes to the director’s cultivation of Ancient “Greek tragedy in the Turkish body” (2006: 186-7), as Yetkin Dikinciler would have it. Still, the niceties of this outstanding production demand for a concise summation of the translational registers in which Terzopoulos speaks on his field day(s) to lift the lid on the war that corrodes this bond, any bond, between human beings, insomuch as the circular stage design of Giorgos Patsas signifies the cosmos, or rather, renders the cosmos as a permanent battleground. Again, as in the starkness of the “Aman, Aman” tableaux (with an unintentional nod to Denis Diderot’s
scenographic reform package “pregnant” with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s stylised “frozen moment/s”), the director’s resort to a minimum set of props, varying from the black and white photographs of the war victims to soldiers’ boots, from red handkerchiefs to pseudo-ancient coins, allows him to put them into intersemiotic use with arresting translational precision to denounce the militaristic *ethos* embedded in the ways of the world via tragic *pathos*.

A couple of sequential cases in point: first, the announcement of the victims’ names by the chorus at the outset, while Atossa (Meletis Ilias) follows suit by reading the names from pieces of paper with an additional *Gestus* as though s/he is scattering money around from a bankroll, forms a modern counterpart to the quasi-ancient coins thrown later into the cosmos, that, split into two with the red line, open up a vista to apprehend this second *Gestus* as tosses of coins into the sea from the two divided coasts. Later, the actors’ (save for Ilias) unclothing themselves with frantic sorrow matches up to their consecutive futile attempts to wipe the ground with handkerchiefs in shock and mania; the gradual transformation of the cast’s frenzied laughter into an ecstatic outcry comes to a climax with the actors’ stamping the ground in stylised movements with boots in their hands; the linear positioning of the boots on the Greek and Turkish edges *outside* the cosmos (and the sea) precipitates its complete metamorphosis into a scene of chaos, where the actors (except Ilias) ecstatically dance the drowning dance on photographs-cum-corpses, coins, handkerchiefs sprinkled all over the place, until they collapse to the ground, to the same ground that is punctured with bloodstains. And as the lights go dark, the director willy-nilly crowns the charming, if deplorably neglected, mimetic aesthetics of the Biodynamic Method with mimesis *qua* world-making through Aeschylus’ *Persians*.

Performed as the opening play of the 4th International Theatre Olympics and the 15th International Istanbul Theatre Festival, Terzopoulos’ *Persians* received a heartfelt welcome from the Turkish audience and most of the critics alike. Whilst the director’s amplification of the tragic *pathos* through Turkish language indubitably built up the already polyphonic choral substratum of Aeschylus’ *Persians*, the Turkish incidence in Epidaurus had been a bitter pill to swallow for some of the Greek critics and theatregoers. Without witnessing the

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45 See Figures 3, 4, 5 above.
46 For a robust support from the Classicists’ font, see Claude Calame’s excellent essay (2013: 35-57) on the polyphonic nature of the Persian chorus.
47 Sidiropoulou also takes a brief heed of this point in a delicate way that pits interculturalism against transnationalism: “Terzopoulos’ intercultural approach raised controversy in Epidaurus; some critics and spectators resisted the production’s trans-national scope” (2017: 61). Sidiropoulou, as with most of the scholars mindful of the problematics of “intercultural” theatre, comes too close to settle the score with interculturalism, yet still gives in to the existent perturbing lexicon of Theatre and Performance Studies. This is a good opportunity to settle the matters between intercultural and transcultural theatre once and for all: far from imposing any “universalism” on the study and practice of theatre, transcultural theatrical praxis is innately trans-national and looks beyond borders with the purpose of overthrowing them. This is what Terzopoulos’ theatre does but ironically under the banner of interculturalism. Here, as elsewhere, disciplinary insensitivity to terminology is at its worst in
performance in Epidaurus it would be useless to try to evaluate the level of controversy that Terzopoulos stirred. But the fragility of the situation deserves a mention, at least. Obviously deeply moved by seeing the “Aman, Aman” episode acted out in the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, Peter Aspden first notes how “a power cut that afflicted its opening night was treated with suspicion by Terzopoulos, who voiced fears of sabotage,” and then makes an attention-grabbing connection: “A review in the leading Greek newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, by no means a culturally conservative publication, was scathing about the Turkish presence in one of the cradles of Hellenic civilisation. The Greek electricity authorities, by cutting the power, were ‘the only ones who understood the nature of this fiasco of a production’, said the paper’s reviewer” (2006: 14). Whether the reviewer is the same person that George Sampatakakis also cites from *Eleftherotypia*, 03/07/2006 is hard to tell, yet the uniform tone at play turns this latter quote into the subtext of the former: “But what were they doing in Epidaurus? What on earth did Epidaurus do to deserve to put up with listening to the Turkish language that is unintelligible to the Greek spectators? And who exactly was behind this sanction?” (in Sampatakakis 2008: 187). As was stated earlier, one either loves, or hates provocative theatre, and twenty years after the *Bacchae* the purist-nationalist song remains the same: once again, Terzopoulos faced the same charges of “contaminating Greekness,” as Erika Fischer-Lichte would most probably agree. But by the look of things, contaminating Greekness with Turkishness in Epidaurus is a more major offense than contaminating Greekness with a “Japanizing” *Bacchae* in Delphi. Fortunately, Terzopoulos’ *Prometheus Bound* was staged in the Old Oil Mill of Elefsina and the charges against the director dropped in 2010, for the production earned nothing but critical acclaim in Greece, as it did in Turkey and Germany within the broad scaffold of the Promethiade Project.48

Now, to compensate for the abovementioned deplorable negligence of mimesis with a far-reaching conclusion, it would be viable to hash over the ways in which the director sets out to eradicate borders by pushing back the frontiers of the concept in his trilingual, and, by nature, transcultural reworking of *Prometheus Bound*, “a tragedy that has traditionally suffered from the realism of the fake rock and the red paint” (2011a: 113), as Sampatakakis appropriately describes the historical lot of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* “on stage.” Terzopoulos has none of it in the production: gone are the both and replaced by a bowl into which the (un)bound Prometheus (Dikinciler) dips his hands at intervals to rub his abdomen with black paint. Gone too are the Oceanids and replaced by an all-male chorus that contains within itself also

Theatre and Performance Studies, excluding, without a doubt, Erika Fischer-Lichte’s much better proposal of “interweaving performance cultures,” to which the present argumentation is beholden.

48 See Özsoysal (2010: 38-40), in addition to the aforesaid studies by Decreus and Sidiropoulou and to the reviews amassed in Raddatz (2011, passim).
Hephaestus (Kerem Karaboğa), Bia (Alexandros Tountas), Kratos (Maximilian Löwenstein) and Oceanus (Myriagkos), each of whom progressively identify themselves with Prometheus to the extent that they altogether evolve into one choral corpus and form a line by the time Io (Sophia Hill) pays a visit to Prometheus, and at long last lays herself—with the final words oistros—to rest in front of the Old Woman (Sophia Michopoulou), a constant dynamo nailed to her spot in mourning clothes throughout. Before going any further into the details of the Istanbul leg of the production, it is obligatory to halt here to restress that Sampatakakis’ exposition of the history of Aeschylus’ piece in performance draws the boundaries between mimesis qua realism and mimesis qua mimesis and inexorably brings mimesis qua world-making into force, which alternately enforces itself as the linchpin of the production that fabricates three (dis)similar mimetic worlds through the late Jannis Kounellis’ installations. Eduard Winklhofer elucidates their spatial contours at length:

The stone curtains above the industrial ruins in Athens, made up of simple gestures of obsessive repetition and time, looked at the stage and the audience like the day marks carved into prison walls. The installation in Istanbul demanded discipline up to self-abandonment from the actors. Being insects in a splintering world where every movement causes scraping and scrunching, they were doomed to act on a surface that was filled up with thousands upon thousands pairs of glasses. For “Zeche Zollverein” in Essen, Kounellis tested a place of migration. Two locomotives with railway cars which still had their interior lights on stood in a context of industrial ruins and rampant plants, a context that had no centre (Winklhofer in Raddatz 2011: 18).

Winklhofer’s eloquent elaboration illustrates how Kounellis’ spaces activate a process of triple mimetic world-making with entirely diverse effects on the scenography, as well as coming with in-built physical challenges for the actors, one of whom affords the most valuable assistance in that regard by poring over his experience to cope with Kounellis’ arte povera in each venue: “We as theatre performers had to make the audience, without getting lost in the gorgeous artistic narration of Kounellis, to listen to and spectate us. We had to avoid the rock spilled out from one face of the deserted olive oil plant in Eleusina [sic], avoid getting lost in the thousands of spectacles filling the open air stand of Rumeli Hisarı (Rumeli Fortress) in Istanbul and avoid being smashed among the locomotives on the rails of the coal mine in Essen” (Karaboğa in Raddatz 2011: 125). This figurative statement strikes the right chord and enucleates the blatant fact that the actors had no option other than melding themselves into Kounellis’ installations.
Where the lack of centre takes the centre stage in Essen, the circular stage designs of Elefsina and Istanbul broach thought-provoking exegetical avenues to contemplate on the implications of the choral line formed at the dead centre of the orchestra, soon after the Old Woman’s ecstatic recital of her memories from the Greek Civil War in mournful harmony with Prometheus’ Turkish μοιρολόι entitled “Yiğidim Aslanım”—a Leftist ballad by Zülfü Livaneli to whom the Greek audience is no stranger. It is at this point that Terzopoulos appears to be zeroing in on the idea buried in Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound (187-192) to translate its presumable “core rhythm” into a trilingual cry of rebellion that pulls no punches for tyranny.

The verbal choral composition starts with the belief in the day that will come in Greek—“Θα Ερθεί Μια Μέρα” —and followed by the Turkish and German questions-cum-propositions in seriatim: “O gün gelecek mi?” / “Der Tag wird kommen?”; “Bir gün gelecek.” / “Der Tag wird kommen.” Interspersed all the while is also the Turkish negation, “Asla,” that is, “Never,” and the German and Greek queries, “Wann?” and “Πότε;” that is to say, “When?” The permutation of all results in this: “Asla Wann? Πότε; Wann?” firing sonorous and rhythmic “word-bullets” (2015: 66), as Terzopoulos would call them, through the “tragic masks” of his Prometheus Bound, whose soundscape is dominated by unsettling sirens, gunshots and blasts; a soundscape to which the chorus responds with laughter in mania, meantime Oceanus ecstatically dances in the thick of his transmutation into Prometheus (Figure 8); a transformation soon to be undergone by Hephaestus, Kratos and his lackey Bia, as soon as Oceanus reunites with the chorus to set the scene for the final shape of metamorphosis that overlaps with both Io’s and the Old Woman’s relapse into silence (and stillness) in their individual purgatories.

It is crucial to insist on the importance of this transformational procedure for the overall translational dynamics of the production, because it accounts for the function of Oceanus’ riotously spectacular, yet otherwise adversely disconnected dance from the chorus. Without seeing the performance in Elefsina, the grounds on which Sidiropoulou reads the Old Woman’s answer—“Όταν θα ἔχω πεθάνει, ο κόσμος θα αλλάξει / When I am dead, the world will change”—in between the transformation as “an unequivocal political message” (2017: 68)
Figure 8. Clockwise from left: Antonis Myriagkos as Oceanus / Chorus Member, Andree Östen Solvik, Statsis Grapsas, Maximilian Löwenstein as Kratos / Chorus Member in *Prometheus Bound*. Istanbul 2010. Photo by Uğur Hepdarcan.
one that is ascribed to Prometheus,\(^{51}\) can scarcely be ascertained. Still, gauging from the Istanbul performances, as well as from an early premium the director places on Io’s meeting with Prometheus,\(^{52}\) it can be contended that the accumulation of energies triggers a second combinative chain of rhythmic and sonorous “word-bullets” to be spat out at the face of tyranny: “Πότε; Bir Tag Gelecek Wann?” From that point onwards, the words of the (un)chained titan are laudably dispersed amidst the chorus, which utterly metamorphosed into Prometheus by now forms a choral-cum-corporeal line in the middle of the orchestra, the cosmos, setting the past and the future (the Old Woman and Io) apart from the present in the eye of the storm. The somatic presence of the line thus pins the faith on the present by presenting both the Old Woman’s answer and Io’s situation *in-between*, neither alive nor dead, in a modern fashion loyal to the ancient tragic ambiguity. The argument that the production resists clear-cut readings is further consolidated by the dressed-to-kill Hermes’ (Götz Argus) entrance to the stage from the *theatron*—the present—after an off stage exchange, during which the audience perception oscillated between the *here* and *there*. Hermes utters more of Zeus’ threats and physically tortures the threadbare Promethean chorus members one by one. And the chorus revolts against him by intermittently giving forth with the “word-bullets” of the trilingual maxim at point-blank range: “Θα Έρθει Μια Μέρα, Bir Gün Gelecek, Der Tag wird Kommen,” The erstwhile Hephaestus’ committed struggle to phonate the hope even under verbal and physical torment tips the scales against pessimism in favour of optimism (Figure 9). As Hermes vanished into thin air in the *theatron* with the repercussions of his sadistic laughter, Zeus’ storm advanced towards the Promethean chorus, which delivered the ultimate line—“ἐκδίκα πάσχω / unjustly I suffer” (1092, Sommerstein 2009: 464-5)—of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* in Ancient Greek as the penultimate adage of the performance that was now fast approaching to its end with an aggressive repetition of the trilingual anticipation in a choreographic mode that saluted the Pontic Dance of the *Bacchae* in a *mimesis of tremor*. This translated, at one stroke, the shaking ground, gathering clouds, cracking sky, as the thunder and lightning headed the chorus’ way, while at the same time the *logos-ponos* progressed towards an ecstatic laughter that went on and on until it exploded into a tragic burst of laughter.

There is tangible warrant for singling out the Istanbul performances of Terzopoulos’ reworking of *Prometheus Bound* for the Promethiade Project as another case in point, where he involuntarily reaps the benefits of mimesis *qua* world-making to the hilt with an effective *poietic* variant: the director ignites this theatrical occurrence with another translational

\(^{51}\) Decreus (2012a: 191) too has a similar inkling but is unclear throughout about which performance he is basing his views on.

\(^{52}\) Cf. Terzopoulos: “Prometheus has most energy when he meets Io. And Io has most energy when he [sic] meets Prometheus. And where does this meeting take place? At the spatial meeting of their energy” (2006: 157).
differential that catalyses the transfiguration of “mimesis of pain” (Sampatakakis) into mimesis of physical pain through the anaesthetic subtleties of the Method in a performative space, which involves “50,000 pairs of glasses that make a noise when the actors step on them. This also gives rise to something metaphysical. The glasses scream. They cry. They make a sound. In addition, the sick light of Prometheus is refracted in the lenses. The glasses are not friendly towards the actor who is moving on them” (Terzopoulos in Raddatz 2011: 107). Herein lies the enormous merit of the director’s work on the body in a vein reminiscent of Samuel Beckett’s artistic practice in which the body “is worked, violated even, much like the raw materials of the

Figure 9. Clockwise from left: Kerem Karaboğa as Hephaestus / Chorus Member, Christian Holdt, Götz Argus as Hermes in Prometheus Bound. Istanbul 2010. Photo by Uğur Hepdarcan.
painter or sculptor, in the service of a systematic exploration of all possible relationships between the body and movement, the body and space, the body and light and the body and words” (1982: 23, emphasis in the original), to re-paraphrase Pinelopi Hatzidimitriou’s likening of the Attis corpus to “plastic material” with Pierre Chabert, who is curiously missing from the sources she consults to show the minimalist and abstract manners through which “Terzopoulos ties Aeschylus to Beckett” (2010: 222). The Istanbul portion of Prometheus Bound threw the Beckettian strain of the director’s methodology into relief by impelling the actors to perform “under the given conditions of bodily pain” (Lessing-cum-Beckett) in an attempt to counteract “the realism of the fake rock and the red paint,” whose (inter)semiotic translation into a bowl and black paint brimmed with minimalism that fell in line with the other two props utilised in the production: a knife with which Hephaestus shackled Prometheus in abstract stylised gestures, and the Old Woman’s shawl that fulfilled a variety of tasks. Once she produced it as a black ball of yarn and reproduced it as a scarf in her narration of memories from the Greek Civil War, using it as an auxiliary drive to an array of grief-stricken Gestus for the remainder of the performance that, on the whole, cut a wide swathe through cultural-cum-linguistic borders: “The homogenization of language is reached by energy. The common energy is responsible for the compact result. Common inhaling and exhaling create that depth of energy that makes even the German language sound universal. The principles are always the same: physicality and breath” (Terzopoulos in Raddatz 2011: 98).

Opting to discuss Kounellis’ installation(s) within the framework of “abstract art,” Karaboğa puts his finger on a vexed topic: “Kounellis doesn’t build up a ‘stage’, however the ‘space’ built up by him is evolved into the ‘stage’ through human action and it is possible to create an ‘abstract space’ only when the plastic one can be integrated with the organic one” (Karaboğa in Raddatz 2011: 125). Karaboğa, so to speak, irons out the notional kinks in Hatzidimitriou’s still worthwhile account on Terzopoulos and Beckett by shifting the diction from the “plastic” to the “organic.” This amendment brings into focus the ways in which the director moulds the actors’ bodies as “raw materials” to implant them as organic conduits of energy into the manufactured mimetic worlds. In other words: from the moment that the chorus enters into the cosmos—where the Old Woman was a solitary presence in silence and stillness beforehand—and coalesces into one with the space, either to stay still, or to roll over the glasses—with its members’ hands on their backs and with the “tragic masks” on their faces—the “plastic” takes on its own logos-ponos. In other other words: the space speaks by chipping in with the crackling clatters of Io’s barefoot wandering in Bosporus as a counterpoint to the crushing noises of Hermes’ trampling over the specs that are the markers of Prometheus’ prescience; the plastic speaks by chiming in with the Old Woman’s organic facial gestures, all
of which are *shaped* by her re-*actions* to the unfolding tragic *pathos* before her and hammered home primarily through stillness and silence, exclusive of her narration; the *stage* speaks via the Beckettian alternator—the Old Woman—that Terzopoulos skilfully positions *behind* the Promethean chorus to sustain its energy by charging it up also with that of Io for the impending confrontation with Hermes. Put yet another way: the moment when human action or, to be more precise, the corporeal articulation of human action assumes the decisive part, mimesis comes into play to spell out the underlying aesthetics of the performance, and the plastic betokens to mimesis *qua* world-making, whereas the organic attests to mimesis *qua* mimesis epitomised by the raw materials’ *poietic* translation of Aeschylus’ mimesis of (physical) pain into the dynamics of the twenty-first century.

Performed as part of the Promethiade Project, Terzopoulos’ *Prometheus Bound* provided the Turkish spectators with two nights to remember. After the actors and the director took their bows, Dikinciler asked the audience whether that day would come, or not. The reply was an overwhelming “Yes.” Yet, the years following the performance has not been that well for Turkey under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (hereafter the AKP), the tyranny of majority. The fact that the AKP pulverised this hopeful audience response by winning landslide victories over and over again in general and local elections might seem to belie the optimistic visionary Terzopoulos. But it is here that he translates the tragic visionary Prometheus into the turbulent climate of the receptive culture. For Karaboğa’s embodiment of the *agon* to express under oppression is a concrete projection of the harsh truth that pervades Turkey more and more since the time of the production, whose performative venue—the open air stand of Rumeli Fortress—has been turned into a mosque by the AKP in 2015 under the name of “restoring the place to its previous state.” Harkening back to the “purification” of the ancient landscapes from the Ottoman traces in Greece during the War of Independence, this neo-Ottoman policy turns the clock back on the thorny topical issues between the two neighbouring countries. Terzopoulos’ staging of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* in a place that played a strategic role during the siege of Constantinople resounds with these sour notes, as did his reworking of *The Persians* in Hagia Irene. Haunting questions arise on the bases of the historical and mythological overtones of Bosporus, named after Io, ox-ford, “Strait of the Cow,” from which derives the preliminary name for Rumeli Fortress: Boğazkesen Fortress, “Strait-Cutter Fort.” What was the previous state of the place before its previous state? To whom the City belonged once and to whom it belongs now, if it belongs to anyone at all? The grim fact is this: at one point in history, a brother got the best out of a brother but one cannot say who; still, someone is winning and it is neither of the two.
As Hill’s incarnation of Io in Bosporus fades into nostalgia, Karaboğa’s embodiment of the commitment to express under tyranny rises to prominence to verify the translational accuracy of the truth that Terzopoulos envisioned. Underneath the glaring “unequivocal political message” of the production, there was a sincere counsel for the Turkish spectators in Istanbul: “Batten down the hatches, comrades; we’re in this together.” The truth that the director envisaged through the factuality of theatre was more than a replica of truth. The situation has gone from bad to worse in Turkey in the intervening years. A vast majority of the public watches in aghast what is happening, whilst the past and the future lies behind. The present is on the line. Still.

That this fair warning also rings true on a global scale relieves the stern Turkish truth of its locality and evinces the transcultural qualifiers of the performance. The twofold irony is that the transcultural truth that Terzopoulos foresaw through the archaic cortex of mimesis revolves around an emphatic rejection of the notion for the sake of intercultural theatre. Anyhow, the director’s research on the body, his work on the corpus of Ancient Greek tragedies, as well as his continuing collaboration with a plethora of artists from all corners of the world bear out an aesthetics with an expansive spectrum, wherein Terzopoulos underestimates mimesis at his own peril. And therein lies the rub: the director’s approach to the study and practice of the craft of acting and to translating the tragic into the present-day stage set such extensive research trajectories on mimesis that they are at the calibre of ameliorating the blind spots of mainstream methodologies of contemporary critical discourse, which unfortunately engulfs the director. At point-blank range, “word-bullets” misfire this time. And under the guise of Terzopoulos’ vehement derision of mimesis qua realism and imitation, the re-energising mimetic aesthetics of his biodynamics go underground with all of its archaic innuendo in the formidable theatrical density of the Attis performances.

That, in conclusion, the director takes one straight “to the Beckettian topos of frozen air” (2015: 68) through the scorching heat of a summer night in Istanbul indicates how Beckett can push the performance of a given Attic tragedy to its limits in absentia. It is this absent presence that comes in sight as Beckett’s one of the most intriguing legacies for performance, one that binds Terzopoulos’ theatrical practice to those of his enduring collaborators, Tadashi Suzuki and Şahika Tekand, each of whom has Beckett at the back of their minds not only as a revolutionary artist, but more importantly, as an idea—so had Alain Badiou, George Steiner, Günther Anders, and many others before them. Within this exemplary constellation, Beckett expands into an aesthetic vehicle of thought to be thought side by side with, to borrow from Marianne McDonald, “the living art of Greek tragedy” (2003). And this taps into an uncharted territory within the domain of Beckett Studies, where the large part of the scholars lamentably
turn a deaf ear to the Ancient Greek notes that Katharine Worth heard in the author’s theatrical universe. Worth occupies the transition zone from “page” to “stage,” to the unexplored heritage of Beckett for the contemporary performances of Ancient Greek tragedies that cements the previously fortified ontological-cum-translational kinship between the author and the Attic tragic *paradeigma* through the theatrical praxes of the *exempla*: Terzopoulos, Suzuki and Tekand. The first gives a minimal taste of Beckett’s legacy by transforming the vehicle into the driving motor of “the sick light of Prometheus.” The second does so by “stamping” the inheritance on “stomping” the ground with his “grammar of the feet” upon which his directorial work on Ancient Greek tragedies rests.

The third would take the other way around: she would learn from Beckett the aesthetic means to conceptualise and contextualise her acting and staging method by mounting Beckett productions. Only then she would be poised for taking on the taxing task of the translator and set her eyes on Sophocles. Tekand’s production of *Endgame* (1998) appears to have been the watershed, as it coincides with the moment that Terzopoulos sparked her interest in Ancient Greek tragedies and rooted for Tekand in her directorial journey to *the* tragic: “I have felt that hand of Greek friendship on my Turkish shoulders over the years, stretched out from the other side of the Aegean despite the tensions and prejudice of the world and between our two countries. Warm like an Aegean morning smelling of thyme and the sea, this hand has always encouraged me and pushed me gently forwards to go beyond boundaries” (2006: 64-5). Like he gently pushed Tekand to transcend the boundaries, Terzopoulos pushes the critic to move beyond the taboo-perpetrated “cutting edge” research of Theatre and Performance Studies in an Icarusian flight into the depths of antiquity, one that is instigated by Beckett.\footnote{For Beckett’s *imitatio* of the Icarus motif in his *Murphy*, see Cousineau (2006: 355-65).} This flight continues eastwards to Suzuki via Tekand.
Chapter 4

The Studio Players

Underlying Dynamics of the Socio-Cultural Milieu in Turkey before the Studio

Richard Clogg’s designation of the 1980s as “the populist decade” finds its way out of Greece and outlines a global situation. It was, so to speak, the sod-cutting ceremony of a long-lasting condition that has fittingly been labelled by Mark Fisher as “capitalist realism” in preference to postmodernism. Having indicated that “the 80s were the period when capitalist realism was fought for and established, when Margaret Thatcher’s doctrine that ‘there is no alternative’ – as succinct a slogan of capitalist realism as you could hope for – became a brutally self-fulfilling prophecy,” Fisher registers the trademark of his notional label against the backdrop of Fredric Jameson’s ponderings upon the assimilation of modernist tenets into popular culture under the fabric of postmodernism: “Capitalist realism no longer stages this kind of confrontation with modernism. On the contrary, it takes the vanquishing of modernism for granted: modernism is now something that can periodically return, but only as a frozen aesthetic style, never as an ideal for living” (2009: 8).

Fisher’s, to be sure, is a pervasive prognosis of the status quo that transmogrifies even the alternatives into “the dominant styles, within the mainstream” (ibid.: 9, emphasis in the original), and the fact that he allows a frosty room for the return of modernist aesthetics puts him on a par with the unbound nature of the modern project, which, under these bleak circumstances obtains a resistant ethos. But the question remains: how did capitalist realism assert itself in the 1980s?

Turkey sets an interesting example to tease out the implications of this question for the art of theatre. As well as being a country regrettably notorious for its (non)working relationship with democracy, Turkey is infamous too for a resonant array of coups d’état that battered down the Republic almost every decennium since the 1950s: on May 27, 1960; on March 12, 1971; on May 27, 1975; and on September 12, 1980.

1 Apart from lending a fresh impetus to the chronic debates between modernism and postmodernism, Fisher gives one the opportunity to enunciate the blatant modernist stance that the present interrogation takes in such disputes. Suna Ertuğrul encapsulates the issues at stake through Martin Heidegger’s reading of Friedrich Hölderlin: “What we call modern is essentially an experience of the loss of origin, the loss of the transcendental structure that guarantees the meaning of the human sojourn on earth. The modern epoch is opened up simultaneously as the absence of origin and an attempt to ground it at the level of subjectivity” (2003: 630). The hints of this modernity have been dropped throughout the present scrutiny, yet reprising them with Theodoros Terzopoulos in the light of Ertuğrul’s observation further unfolds the philosophical strata of staging Attic tragedies with a modernist mindset in the face of capitalist realism: “I seek to catch some moments of the lost utopia and I mourn for its unavoidable loss” (2000: 82).

2 Deliberately evoking Jürgen Habermas’ well-known characterisation of modernity as an “incomplete project” in (1983: 3-15).
on September 12, 1980; on February 28, 1997 (which, back in the day, was defined by the Turkish military officials as a democratic, “post-modern coup” when intellectuals were still searching the high/s and low/s of cultural trends for a definition of postmodernism), and last but not least, the most recent “failed coup” that came to pass on July 15, 2016. Leaving aside the ironies and latest atrocities for the time being, the sociological parameters surrounding “September 12” invite gloss.

The 1980 coup took the political stage under the guise of a “cure” for Turkey in the wake of the extremely politicised decennia of the 1960s and 1970s, the end of which brought the country on the brink of civil war as a corollary of the feud between factions on the right and left. And more than a decade later than “Operation Prometheus” in Greece, roughly the same metaphors were exhumed by General Kenan Evren on the other side of the Aegean Sea: “Which patient lies down on the operation table willingly? But after the operation the patient regains its health. Well, we laid the patient down on the operation table, performed the operation, and the patient is on the road to recovery right now” (quoted in Gürbilek: 2001: 70). Two interrelated determinants distinguish the 1980 military intervention from its predecessors. The first is its leading cause: “while the 1960 and the 1971 coups were mainly interested in rebuilding the constitutional structure of the state, the ultimate goal of the 1980 coup—in addition to restructuring the constitutional framework of the state—was the depoliticisation of the whole society with the purpose of impeding the political and ideological fragmentation and polarization which had had a crucial role in the crisis of pre-coup Turkey” (Dinçel 2007: 99).

Whereas the second is tied to the path that Turkey took during the time of ostensive recovery after transition to democracy, following, in all likelihood, the most painful operation in its troubled past. Contra Evren’s announcement, the surgery lasted for approximately two years in which it escalated into a mopping-up operation, where, to borrow from Louis Althusser, “the Repressive State Apparatus” (1984: 17) was deployed in toto—in such a pitch that the number of house raids, mass arrests, capital punishments, and the cases of torture and prisoner abuse between 1980 and 1982 defy logic. That said, what seemed forever for the victims basically denotes a short time-frame in history. Everything happened so fast, and, to put it with Nurdan Gürbilek, “within two years the military institutionalized their position of control over political power and then withdrew” (2011: 4). Having shown the punitive face of the Turkish army, especially to the leftist domestic opposition with Evren’s consolidation of his presidency, the coup handed it over to the Motherland Party (hereafter the ANAP) in 1983 to recuperate the

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3 See the relevant sections in Heper and Evin (1988) for the complexities of this transition process.
4 For an overall idea on the size of the inflicted violence and their lasting effects, see the first-hand accounts in the interviews conducted by Karacan (2016) in her comprehensive inquest of the 1980 coup.
country with the neoliberal discourse of Turgut Özal. The ANAP’s political tendency was poles apart from that of the military regime, yet the party worked in complete harmony with it until 1991. The return to democracy was one and the same with the liberation of the country in the most literal sense of the word.

This is where capitalist realism comes in. Özal’s introduction of the free-market economy to Turkey paved the way for the emergence of consumption culture in the second half of the decade; meanwhile, Althusser’s “Repressive State Apparatus” receded into the background to give way to the implementation of “a plurality of Ideological State Apparatuses” (1984: 18, emphasis in the original). Even so, this did not put a damper on the Turkish people’s affection for this “civil” and “liberal” government that concurrently gave the green light to what Gürbilek diagnoses as “the return of the repressed” (2001; 2011), and Nilüfer Göle identifies as the formation of “hybrid patterns” (2002). Reading the fine print of the underlying dynamics of the Turkish socio-cultural milieu in the 1980s in tandem with the rest of the world, Gürbilek calls notice to the odd co-existence of two cultural policies: “In the land of liberal politics sprung on the heels of military coup, the two cultural strategies join in silent solidarity, partners in crime even when they disavow one another. What the first represses, the second provokes, transforms and includes. What the second provokes, the first represses” (2011: 7). It is this strange alliance that makes the socio-cultural transformation that Turkey has been through in the 1980s unique, one in which “a plurality of Ideological State Apparatuses” paradoxically constituted the scaffold of a cultural pluralism, where everything was controlled by a centre that was not “really” there. Cut short: a cultural centre was lost, and a cluster of voices that Turkish Westernisation went to all lengths to suppress was in the limelight. Kurds, Alevis, Gypsies, Islamists, women, gays, and transsexuals: these identities were the new “things,” spot-lit to start a Turkish spectacle that would also appeal to the capitalist West by reinforcing the hackneyed image of Turkey as the melting pot of civilisations, but this time with an arbitrary emphasis on “diversity.” Özal, as it were, joined the ranks of Ronald Reagan and Thatcher as their Turkish counterpart by setting money, wealth, leisure, consumption, and so forth, as rudimentary units of measurement in the society that ostensibly found its voice in the individual but daily narratives of the formerly oppressed classes. The ANAP, in sum, prepared the infrastructure wherein any and every of these voices would be transfigured into the “rising values” (2002: 37-49), as Göle calls them, of the post-1980 Turkey.

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5 Gürbilek herself initially takes this image as a “Pollyanna-ish, trope of Turkey as a bridge: a bridge between East and West, Muslim and Christian domains, modern and not-so-modern societies” (2011: 1), and then aptly notes how the bridge stereotype “steeped into tourist brochures by way of diplomatic lingo” (ibid.: 2).
Curiously, however, these values would chiefly be accrued to the Islamists amongst these ex-suppressed castes in the next decades. Here is a sound foundation whereby to try formulating an answer to the open-ended question that Gürbilek posed when she was hopeful that the cultural pluralism of the 1980s could fulfil its promises for Turkey: “The repressed is returning, but as what? More importantly, where is it returning to?” (2011: 89). The repressed was returning as conservative Islamism to power, reaching its apogee with “the spectacular growth of the Turkish economy under the AKP government” (2015: 18), in Göle’s words. Nevertheless, for this to occur, capitalist realism had to be “fought for and established” first and foremost by the ANAP. Theirs was an easy victory won by a (dis)location of cultural centre through the course of moving the country from “repression of speech” to “explosion of speech,” to use the evocative terms of Gürbilek: “As long as the cultural pluralism which has emerged with the loss of a centre remains an aestheticization of daily life, it will be nothing more than the freedom to consume in a world capitalism has made polycentric” (2011: 88-9). That was the route to recovery and liberation for Turkey. There simply was “no alternative.”

Correlatively, this is where capitalist realism comes to the fore as a conceptual tool to take the load off the overburdened term “postmodernism,” which, on the face of it, appears to hold the key to the problematics of the 1980s within the terrain of aesthetics in general, and within the sphere of theatre in particular. Narrowing the topic down to construing the classics in the “postmodern” world, Patrice Pavis provides a bird’s-eye-view of the period: “Everything was a question of rehabilitating undervalued cultures, marginal texts, little-known practices and less academic styles. The impact of culturalism on theatre has been appreciable. It has appeared in the levelling of readings, the interchangeability of interpretations, and finally in the disappearance of original or provocative offerings” (2013: 240). This is a tidy snapshot of a somewhat untidy era, during which the already blurred demarcation lines between “high” and “low” works of art were erased for good. The cultural state of affairs was no less different in Turkey throughout its convalescence in which the country bred a “culture industry” (2005b) in the explicit sense that Theodor Adorno utilised the phrase to problematise this sector. Göle touches a sore sociological spot with respect to the repercussions of the 1980s: “Everybody from every walk of life is talking but Turkey cannot talk altogether. Because thinking over and fathoming experiences along with words spoken is an arduous occupation. It takes time, it takes research, it takes labour, and it takes passion to produce” (2002: 9); in the meantime Gürbilek gets down to the nuts and bolts of the decade that “personified the high-handed elites’ own rural-ness, own native-ness, own ‘low’-ness, an awareness that all of this could very well

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6 Gürbilek first published her still unrivalled essays on the changing cultural climate of Turkey in and around the heat of the 1980s.
coexist with capitalism, that one did not have to be part of the ‘high culture’ to have money and power, that one did not have to be trained in modernity to be elite” (2011: 83). These punctual comments fare well with what Pavis characterises as “extratheatrical” factors to emphasise that “the financing of the theatrical enterprise is at once what saved it from extinction and what did it damage from which it cannot always recover, at least in terms of aesthetics. Theatre depended more and more on the laws of the market and on the economic conditions of the time” (2013: 274-5). This rings doubly true after “the 1980s and 1990s,” where political theatre seems to have vanished, for, to sustain the enquiry with the scholar himself, “it is less visible and less straightforwardly militant, and because it is more concerned with resistance than with revolution, with performativity rather than with the ideological message” (ibid.: 313).

As it turns out, Pavis lends the most viable assistance to translate his postmodernist snapshot into a capitalist realistic photograph, wherewith to form an opinion about the consumerist drive that shaped the cultural taste of the Turkish receptors. In the words of Gürbilek, “people had perhaps never felt so free; they tasted a freedom from institutions and the pleasure to surrender to this world, in short the freedom to consume to their heart’s delight” (2011: 7) in the last half of the 1980s. Within this cacophonic cultural “phase of stagnation” (Dinçel 2007: 91), neither the “high” political theatre of the 1970s, nor the “elite” imitatio of Western classics, and, by logical extension, Attic tragedies, with a “naturalistic-cum-realistic” bent could have occupied the centre of theatrical attention that has shifted from the stagings of, say, Bertolt Brecht, Nazım Hikmet and Henrik Ibsen, to “melodramas, comedies and quasi-splendid musicals which featured abundant number of stars” (2000: 75), as Ayşegül Yüksel points out in relation to the productions of the State Theatres and the bulk of private theatre companies in the 1980s, where Dostlar Tiyatrosu (hereafter Dostlar Theatre) and Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu (hereafter Ankara Art Theatre) were prominent exceptions to the rule. Sticking to the spirit of the exceedingly politicised theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, Dostlar Theatre and Ankara Art Theatre took great pains to fight against the demands of “culture industry” by persistently staging societally-sensitive plays,8 thereby consolidating their pioneering roles in the

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7 The English translation of Gürbilek’s reflections is apt to have this remark added immediately after the quoted sentence: “In fact it is partly here that the reasons for the summoning power of both the liberal Motherland Party of the 1980s and the Islamist-liberal Justice and Development Party of the 2000s should be sought” (ibid.). This is one of the many indicators that exemplifies the manners in which Gürbilek nourishes her musings with the kaleidoscopic dynamics of the Turkish socio-political landscape over the course of the years. As a matter of fact, this interpolation brings Gürbilek on the same page now with the parting shot of the preceding paragraph regarding the obvious correlation between the ANAP and the AKP.

8 A comparison of the repertoires of Dostlar Theatre, Ankara Art Theatre and the State Theatres during the 1980s demonstrates the point. Whilst the repertory of the former abounds with Brecht and related productions, that of the second walks a fine line between the stagings of foreign playwrights and Turkish dramatists, in the meanwhile comedies, musicals and children’s theatre dominate the repertoire of the latter. For a comparative examination of the ways in which the state ideology manifests itself in the repertoires of theatre institutions in Turkey throughout the 1980s, see Dinçel (2007: 90-109).
progression of Turkish theatre towards the West at a period when commercial success meant everything. Getting less state funding than the State and Municipality Theatres was an issue in and of itself for these two troupes, yet the actual problem had something to do with the position allocated to theatre in the industry, which had a magnetic pull on actors and directors alike, the majority of which, in turn, had a magnetic pull on the audience. Silver and small screens, let alone the technological advances available for artists and receivers, were the cultural centres of attraction towards which the majority of theatre practitioners were heading. Prestige was in these new centres, so was the money. Failing, for the most part, to adjust itself to the ever-changing dynamics of the socio-cultural milieu, theatre—“high,” “modernist” or “political theatre,” to be more specific—was pushed to the periphery of the Turkish cultural system. The country was recovering exactly the way that Evren and the ANAP prescribed with the discourse of neoliberalism, which, as Fisher reminds, “has sought to eliminate the very category of value in the ethical sense” (2009: 16-7). And the Turkish people seemed to enjoy this socio-cultural atmosphere that was virtually devoid of politics, intellectual responsibility, critical thinking, and so on.

The Studio Players

Şahika Tekand was already a widely acclaimed figure of this cultural scene when she laid the groundwork for the Studio Oyuncuları (hereafter the Studio Players) in 1988 with her husband Esat, who is also an artist himself. Founded at the outset as the performance group of the “Studio for Actors and Art” in Istanbul, the company acquired professional quality in 1990. Having performed with Dostlar Theatre in their production of Bertolt Brecht’s Galileo Galilei (1984-5); having, moreover, worked with Ömer Kavur in what will become cult classics of Turkish cinema, like Anayurt Otelı (Motherland Hotel), an intersemiotic translation of Yusuf Atılgan’s eponymous novel into screen, and Gece Yolculuğu (Night Journey) both in 1987, Tekand began her research into the fundamentals of theatre. As was mentioned in the previous chapter

9 Stressing the distinction between traditional Turkish theatre and theatre in the Western sense. How to reconcile these two forms without losing the “authenticity” of traditional forms has been one of the most pressing issues of contemporary Turkish Theatre, on which, see, amongst too many, Pekman (2002).
10 Konur (2001: 166-72) proffers an overview of the funding procedure in Turkey in the 1980s.
11 Who is predominantly taken to be the auteur extraordinaire of Turkish cinema, as Esen (2002) shows persuasively.
12 Though she is somehow dismissive of her filmography excluding her collaborations with Kavur, Tekand’s works in cinema have been substantial and tally with the socialist tradition that zooms in on the exigencies of Turkish society in a semi-surrealist vein. As well as cinema, Tekand also appeared in television series that border on the same social concerns. Gradually distancing herself from the said media, she eventually cut ties with them in 1997 with Kavur’s Akrebin Yolculuğu (Clock Tower)—a movie which rose to cult status too. Most likely because of her increasingly sceptical outlook on cinema and television, Tekand’s works in small and silver screens remain either unstudied, or subjugated under the heading of the directors she collaborated with.
on Theodoros Terzopoulos, her terminus a quo was “Performance Art,” and she was prompt to
detect its defects. Tekand continues to be instructive by justifying her aesthetic rupture from it
on telling grounds: “‘Performance Art’ pursued reality, naturalists pursued make-believe and a
very eccentric thing happened: ‘performance art’ became ‘hyper-naturalist.’ Nearly everything
that the entire twentieth century opposed, revolutionised the arts again and again in order to
oppose, reached such a point that there is not even a need to think about the problematics of
make-believe anymore, since what is being done is identical with life itself” (quoted in
Karaboğa 2008: 180). Laying bare the anti-realistic aesthetics that was going to form the
backbone of her staging approach with the Studio Players, Tekand’s important statement travels
backwards and forwards in time: on the one hand, it crystallises the downsides of the excessive
use of technology when it comes to competing with the “hyperreality” of the twenty first
century; and on the other, it glances back at the 1980s and the cul-de-sac of capitalist realism,
as mapped out by Mark Fisher, who was both keen to permit a frozen return of modernist
aesthetics and astute to point towards an outlet: “Capitalist realism can only be threatened if it
is shown to be in some way inconsistent or untenable; if, that is to say, capitalism’s ostensible
‘realism’ turns out to be nothing of the sort” (2009: 16). Tekand confronts the problem by
giving simple answers to simple questions: “According to which direction do I want the change
the world? Do I want to go with its flow, or do I want to change the world? Yes, I want to
change the world. I did not want to be integrated into the system; nor did I want to be seen as
opposing to the system while actually serving to its purposes.” Afterwards she takes the bull by
the horns: “Yet, contemporary performing arts were telling us that you can react as defiantly as
you can; but the system will swallow you up in that two minutes. This did not suit me as a
principle. Because when we lived through the 80s, the past was still fresh in my memory. That’s
the whole point. With an astounding memory loss, everything turned into art and life” (quoted
in Atmaca 2006).

This poignant evocation of the 1980s is reminiscent of Nurdan Gürbilek’s piercing
analysis of Turkey’s socio-cultural climate in the period in which “aestheticization of daily life”
was exploited to the hilt. Writing at a time when the new millennium was imminent, Gürbilek
too glances back at the decade in view of an equally permeating reading of its niceties with
Jürgen Habermas and Richard Sennett: “Those years were both initiation into a cultural
environment that lasts to this day, and witness to brutal, practically rule-less change, just like
in initial accumulation of capital. A sudden discharge of energy and a sudden explosion moved

13 The ablest example of fighting capitalist realism with highly realistic, if not anti-realistic, means is, without a
doubt, the theatre of Thomas Ostermeier, on which, see Boenisch (2015: pt.2, esp. ch.8), as well as Ostermeier and
Boenisch (2016). And how Ostermeier realistically re-treats the socio-political turbulence in Turkey, see Dinçel
(2018: 3-28).
in lockstep within the cultural field” (2002: 120). There is reason to contend that Tekand’s foresight into the impasse of Performance Art has much to say on the red flags raised by Gürbilek, Fisher and Patrice Pavis, none of whom would be content with a form of art, whose “almost verbatim repetition of reality, in essence, comes to be the merging point between what already exists and the ‘status quo’” (quoted in Karaboğa 2008: 180). Hence Tekand’s premise—“To be real to the bone, but to be theatre at the same time”—for her simple pair of questions: “Twenty years ago, nothing could be further from my mind that this would grow into a method. My thought was simple: The world was changing. Theatre’s means of expression were insufficient to meet the needs of this changing world. Disciplines were dissolving and preserving theatre as a discipline did not seem that feasible” (quoted in Atmaca 2006). Hence Tekand’s bold utterance of “high” art—“If you intend to perform high art, you have to be brave, be prepared to have less and less spectators, and even afford to be alone”—irrespective of the postmodernist “brows” that it might knit: “High art is something that one performs in spite of the existing prevalent perception and approval. In other words, it is something that one performs in spite of the popular, or existing circumstances, and it has to be like that. If not, then it has to doubt itself. While trying to reject elitism, art rejected its own oppositional and meaningful raison d’être in the last quarter of the twentieth century” (quoted in Karaboğa 2008: 182). Hence Tekand’s recourse to theatre qua theatre in the age of technology: “If I want to maintain a stance against the ways of the world, and if I am going to do this through the medium of theatre, I thought that the format of my spectacle should be theatre. But there was a new audience with different perceptions. It ought to be theatre. It was the only thing that could not be imitated in the world of computers” (quoted in Atmaca 2006). Here at her last resort, Tekand is literally at home with the anonymous motto of the Turkish modernist theatrical circles that heralded theatre as a form of art to (re)present human(s) to human(s) with human(s) humanely. That being so, it would be misleading to situate Tekand within the said tradition that oriented

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14 Sacrificing Gürbilek’s eloquent wordplay on “prime examples,” “primitive,” and “savage” in translation for the cause of precision in the terminology of Marxist economics, where ursprünglich stands for “initial” rather than the commonly held “primitive.”

15 And by Nilüfer Göle too, who ascribes a pivotal role to art and artists in terms of producing a “composition” out of cacophony so that Turkey can “show its own modernity” and “appreciate that reality can only be reproduced by the language of knowledge and art” (2002: 9).

16 Expectedly, Tekand faced widespread criticism in Turkey for being an “elitist advocate of high art”—a critique that Terzopoulos too has more often than not been subjected to. Pinelopi Hatzidimitriou makes a mention of this in a manner hearkening back to Tekand’s words: “The Attis theatre has occasionally been accused of being elitist. Paradoxically, the director himself welcomes such accusations, insisting that art finally concerns only a minority” (2006: 70).

17 Nor it would be tenable to associate Tekand with Turkish Westernisation per se because of her sensitivity to the troubles it stirred, such as the afore-stated harsh measures taken against ethnic and religious minorities before, during and after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. For broader perusals on Turkish Modernism, see the essays in Bozdoğan and Kasaba (1997).
itself towards the acting-method of Konstantin Stanislavski. Drawing on a pool of conventions varying from Vsevolod Meyerhold to Jerzy Grotowski, Tekand’s anti-realistic *modus operandi* rates her aesthetics amongst that of Western modernism, wherein she would encounter with, to deploy Anthony Cronin’s meticulous caption, “the last modernist” (1996)—Samuel Beckett—through the course of her research, and evolve into one of his outstanding interpreters with the Studio Players in Turkey.

Tekand’s retreat to a basement of an apartment at the heart of Istanbul is in tune with her simple line of questioning that resounds with Alain Badiou’s comprehension of theatre as “an art of ideal simplicity obtained via a *typical* attack” (2005b: 72-3, emphasis in the original). There is, therefore, all the more reason to contend that Tekand’s critical adherence to modernist aesthetics in defiance of the cultural logic of late capitalist realism emblematises a theatrical-cum-resistant return (Fisher) at the turn of the decade that gave rise to “the return of the repressed” (Gürbilek); a return that makes her theatre political by nature thereof (Pavis).

What is more, Tekand’s transformation of the basement into a studio renders the Studio into a potential safe haven for people, who wish to embark on a stimulating voyage to the delicacies of acting from an educational viewpoint dissimilar to the State Conservatoires and most of the theatre departments in Turkey—which is why the members of the Studio Players are comprised of professionals (i.e. architects, doctors, pharmacologists, lawyers), as much as it consists of schooled-actors. Its pedagogical merits notwithstanding, this is the Achilles’ heel of Tekand’s firm stand against the system: she, or the skeleton crew of the Studio Players for that matter, might refrain from being involved in projects affiliated with mass media, yet no one can stop the graduates of the Studio from taking their careers to “hyperreal” levels; it is an individual choice, after all. And the system one way or another manages to press Tekand into its service, even though she makes concerted efforts to protect her Studio from the traps of the “culture industry.”

This bitter fact by no means overshadows the singular achievements of the Studio Players within the relatively short history of contemporary Turkish theatre. A gaze at the journey of the group from its inception to the present enables one to periodise Tekand’s theatrical praxis into two interwoven phases, where Beckett proves to be an ideational constant. Jonathan Kalb’s fair proclamation that “Beckett’s stage plays actually changed many people’s

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18 Considering simplicity both as an “ordeal” and an “analytical introspection,” Tekand clarifies what she means within the context of her working method that is based on the elimination of “non-functional” units: “I first sort things out by removing what could be ornaments that have nothing to do with the core idea of the work and could serve no other purpose than titillating the recipient. Afterwards, I do come face to face with my own aesthetic taste and try to negotiate these two fonts. And then, this does issue forth such a possibility: for every single element you renounced, you do find a way to redevelop them in other shapes” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 94).

19 Rehashing the (sub)title of Fredric Jameson’s seminal work on postmodernism (1991).
notions of what can happen, or is supposed to happen, when they enter a theatre” (1994: 124) strikes puzzling notes vis-à-vis the author’s reception in Turkey. Ever since the first—and to a considerable degree, ahead of its Anglo-Saxon premiere (3 August, 1955)—production of *Waiting for Godot* in 1954 by Küçük Sahne (hereafter the Little Stage) in Istanbul, the best part of the Turkish theatre practitioners were inclined to put on *Godot* and *Godot* alone from Beckett’s (meta)theatrical universe, conducing the piece to become “the most debated and most staged play in Turkey” (2002:79), as Fakiye Özoysal captures it. By “deliberately staying away from *Godot*” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 42) up until 2016, Tekand stood in stark contrast to this tendency during the first phase of the Studio in which she began her directorial enterprise with *Happy Days* (1993), where she also acted (Figure 1), and carried on with “Five Short Plays” (1994) as well as *Endgame* (1998), altering, in point of fact, most of the Turkish theatregoers’ perceptions of what can come to light, or is required to be brought to light when they come across with the “blazing light” (1961: 7) of the hidden gems of Beckett’s *oeuvre*, to paraphrase Kalb. Amidst these Beckett productions, “Five Short Plays” (Figure 2)—*Act Without Words I, Act Without Words II, Breath, Play*, and *Come and Go*—can plausibly be singled out due to the ways in which it shows Tekand’s progress along the trail that the Little Stage blazed back in the 1950s. In that regard, Tekand too beats the Anglo-Saxon world to the punch, inasmuch as Katharine Worth’s allusion to the difficulty of staging Beckett’s *dramaticules* is valid and her suggestion that Katie Mitchell’s production of “a group of shorts” at the Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon (22 October 1997) comes to the forefront as one rational solution to the problem (2001: 161).

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20 The production itself has a curious (hi)story. Following his resignation from Ankara State Theatre, Muhsin Ertuğrul, the founder of Modern Turkish Theatre, returned to Istanbul and established the Little Stage as the first private theatre company of the country in 1950 under the patronage of Yapı Kredi Bank. The significant theatrical activities of the Little Stage lasted until 1957 when Ertuğrul was called back to Ankara State Theatre and the Stage was incorporated into the body of the Istanbul State Theatre consequently over the course of time. Translated and directed by Ertuğrul for the 1954-1955 season, *Waiting for Godot* was suddenly removed from the repertoire by the patrons after a couple of performances on the grounds that the play “could be seen as making references to communism,” at an era when communism was not perceived as a “threat” (yet) by the governmental authorities that had no issues or whatsoever with the piece anyway. The renowned Turkish writer Peyami Safa demurs at this decree, which impeded him from seeing *Godot*. He asks a touching question: “Aren’t we all waiting for this Godot that never comes?” And he answers in the same tone: “It will definitely come. I call it death. The other might call it the Red Revolution. There is no difference” (1955: 2). For Beckett’s reception in Turkey with an eye to the Studio Players’ role in the process, see (Dinçel 2012a: ch.2; 2013b: 205-21; 2017a: 375-87). The current scrutiny is a sequel to these cogitations.

21 Composed of two programmes—“Out of the Dark” and “Over the Years”—the production included the performances of *Footfalls, Not I, Rockaby, Embers, A Piece of Monologue* and *That Time*. For the details of the production, see the “Staging Beckett” database: https://www.reading.ac.uk/staging-beckett/Persons.aspx?p=party-2713157639 (Accessed 31 December 2018).
Figure 1. Şahika Tekand as Winnie, Cem Bender as Willie in *Happy Days*. Istanbul 1993. Photo by Esat Tekand.

Figure 2. Cem Bender as B in *Act Without Words II* of “Five Short Plays.” Istanbul 1994. Photo by Esat Tekand.
It is imperative to accentuate, with Tulû Ülgen, that “Beckett was the only playwright whose texts the Studio Players staged with almost no interference” (2007: 35).²² Bearing in mind that the landmark production of the troupe, namely, *Becoming a Rhinoceros* (1996) bears solely superficial resemblance to Eugène Ionesco’s *The Rhinoceros*, supplies one with a preliminary point of commencement to mount an argument on Tekand’s aesthetic affinity with Beckett—one that might form an orbit for the remainder of the current chapter. Whilst excerpts from *The Rhinoceros* were surely there in the production together with passages from *Endgame*, it can be claimed that *Becoming a Rhinoceros* endowed Tekand with the earliest clues of an aesthetics that could put Beckett *qua* idea to the proof a performance that was driven by a chorus redolent of its ancient analogue—an aspect that Terzopoulos has been quite appreciative of when he met her in person in Istanbul. Tekand recounts an anecdote from one of her next encounters with the visionary Terzopoulos: “When he saw my Beckett production in the late 1990s, he told me, ‘Now it’s time for you to stage a Greek tragedy.’ He chose some members of my studio group to perform in *HERACLES TRILOGY* in 1999” (2006: 64). Two conclusive points are nested in this recollection: on one level, Terzopoulos’ estimation vindicates the idea that staging Beckett is tantamount to a threshold for putting on Ancient Greek tragedies, or vice versa;²³ and on another, the director’s confidence in the Studio players is a double token of the evolution and the potential of Tekand’s “Performative Staging and Acting Method” prior to her venture into Ancient Greek tragedies.

In a certain sense, Terzopoulos’ encouragement marks the second—and continuing—period of the Studio Players. For it was put into a frame by his major Turkish (organisational) collaborator Dikmen Gürün in 2001, when she proposed Tekand to “stage a tragedy as a co-production of the European Cultural Centre of Delphi and International Istanbul Theatre Festival,” meantime the director himself advised her “to select a play from the *Theban Cycle*” (quoted in Karaboğa 2008: 172). Terzopoulos’ advice would result in Tekand’s sequential rewritings of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone* as *Oidipus*

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²² Ülgen’s accent needs to be updated with Tekand’s (re)interpretation of Beckett’s *Play* for the 18th International Istanbul Theatre Festival in 2012. Tekand directed this production within the body of the Istanbul Municipality Theatre and opted to intervene radically with Beckett’s text for the first time in her first experience in working with actors, most of whom were not members of the Studio. Be that as it may, the production earned nothing but praise in Turkey and abroad, even if the performance turned out to be concomitantly Beckettian and a far cry from what the author had structured, yet entitled as *Play*. For an overarching discussion, see the last two sources cited in the penultimate footnote. Tekand reworked this version of *Play* with the Studio Players in 2017 in a more compact *mise-en-scène*, still validating the subtleties underlined in the aforementioned sources. The Studio Players’ award-winning 2016 production of *Waiting for Godot* did not had any major interference with Beckett’s text.

²³ Given that he began staging Beckett in 2003 with *Rockaby* after mounting a slew of Attic tragedies.
Nerede? (hereafter Where is Oedipus?) in 2002,24 Oidipus Sürgünde (hereafter Oedipus in Exile) in 2004, and Evridike’nin Çığlığı (hereafter Eurydice’s Cry) in 2006. Whence the subsequent stint of the Studio Players, through which the company would ensure the international recognition it gained with their Beckett productions in the 1990s in Europe by setting sail for Japan to perform in Shizuoka Festival and Toga Summer Festival in the 2000s on Tadashi Suzuki’s invitation.25 Whence the phase in which Beckett would go underground to inscribe himself as an aesthetic idea into Tekand’s productions, arguably, most of all, into Oedipus Trilogy via which the director would break the Turkish ground when it came down to breathing performative life into Ancient Greek tragedies, most of which had their shares of Stanislavski-driven realist mises en scène thitherto. Whence the weight of Tekand’s cultivation of her method throughout these two interconnected spells of the ensemble—the director’s cherished word that does more than unmasking her long-term (dis)comfort with Brecht: “It was not that conceivable to be an ‘ensemble’ within the world-conjuncture of the last twenty years. To stake claims on being an ‘ensemble,’ to be in a state of mutual sacrifice was even a bit romantic and an outdated thing to do. But the world came full circle and the word ‘ensemble’ restarted to pique the curiosity of people” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 97).

The Performative Staging and Acting Method of Şahika Tekand

It is for the above reasons that the aesthetic bond between Samuel Beckett and Şahika Tekand amounts to a methodological entryway into the uncharted territory sketched out at the end of the preceding chapter. Regardless of the growing interest in Beckett Studies towards the author’s legacies for performative practice, the realm itself has been markedly indifferent to the adumbrations of his heritage for the contemporary performances of Ancient Greek tragedies—an indifference that is in rapport with the surprisingly enduring reluctance of the field to conceptualise and contextualise Beckettian acting within the elusive dynamics of the craft in the twentieth century.26 Puncturing a pilot hole into the exterior surface of the Performative

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24 Karaboğa (2009: 108-11), from another vantage point, drops his periodical anchor in the aftermath of the Delphi performance of Where is Oedipus? to take the international reception of the piece as the “turning point” in Tekand’s career.

25 Yet, as was contested on several occasions (Dinçel 2011: 323-52, passim; 2012a, passim; 2013b: 205-21, passim), the performer in Beckett’s (meta)theatrical œuvre lends itself to be conceptualised as “raw-actor” and be contextualised side by side with the “system actor,” “biomechanic actor,” “epic actor,” and the “holy actor” of the twentieth century against the background of Denis Diderot’s “paradox of acting.” Having said that, Enoch Brater’s still prescient article (1975: 195-205) has been alert to the congruence between Beckett and Bertolt Brecht insofar as acting is on the table, on which Barry McGovern’s contemplations from a practitioner’s point of view (2009: 173-89) contains illuminating insights, so do the remarks that Jonathan Kalb sprinkles across (1991) as regards to the reverberations of the theatrical praxes of Vsevolod Meyerhold and Jerzy Grotowski in Beckettian acting. The
Staging and Acting Method is of cardinal significance to address these urgencies, since the modes in which Tekand aligns herself mostly with Vsevolod Meyerhold and principally with Jerzy Grotowski\textsuperscript{27} will furnish the modernist framework around her engagement with Beckett.

Tekand makes great headway by instinctively finding the equivalent of the aforesaid anonymous Turkish theatrical aphorism in Grotowski’s animadversion on the “Rich Theatre” that leaves no technological avenue unexplored, while for both figures theatre “cannot exist without the actor-spectatorship relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion” (1975: 19),\textsuperscript{28} where the actor’s “passive readiness” to surrender and sacrifice itself fully to the here and now of the performance plays the determining role. Crucial to this \textit{a priori} is Meyerhold’s notional pun on \textit{jeu de theatre}, which, as Kerem Karaboğa grasps, “discloses the playful feature of theatre; that is, by way of which he defines the fundamental characteristic of his method that foregrounds the playful component in the spectacle” (2005: 167). It would be pertinent to bracket Karaboğa’s intuition into this generally taken-for-granted façade of biomechanics with Meyerhold himself, whose stylised methodology “presupposes the existence of a fourth \textit{creator} in addition to the author, the director and the actor – namely, the spectator. The stylized theatre produces a play in such a way that the spectator is compelled to employ his [sic] imagination \textit{creatively} in order to \textit{fill in} those details \textit{suggested} by the stage action” (2016: 73, emphases in the original). It would, likewise, be apposite to blanket this Grotowski-Meyerhold nexus with the sociological delineation of play, as was supplemented by Johan Huizinga in his monumental \textit{Homo Ludens}: “play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life’” (1980: 28).

That \textit{Homo Ludens} had been the “lodestar”\textsuperscript{29} in the development of the Performative Method through and through comes as no surprise, because Huizinga’s clear-cut separation of irony is that Beckett Studies’ hesitance to take Brater’s promising findings and Kalb’s rewarding notes to new heights to undertake a systematic scrutiny on the subject within the broad historical rubric of its accompanying theories is the opposite side of the same coin that avows mimesis to disavow it from Beckett’s artistic praxis, starting with H. Porter Abbott’s early apologetic study (1973) on the author’s “imitative form.” The close proximity between the publication years of these two writings not only buttresses this point, but also adds up to the irony.

\textsuperscript{27} Without, of course, neglecting the virtues of Konstantin Stanislavski and Brecht. The intersections amidst Tekand and the four pivots of the twentieth century have been well-identified by Habif (2008) and Gürkan (2011) with particular slants on Meyerhold (and Grotowski); and most recently by Ülgen (2018) in an all-embracing way.

\textsuperscript{28} Compare Grotowski: “No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television” (ibid.). With Tekand: “The theatre that aspires to tussle with the illusion of cinema is doomed to loose. From the minute that cinema appeared, this discussion is over. But for me there is an aspect of theatre that cinema cannot rival with: it is live and it has to be live; and I’m saying this for all types of work that takes place on stage. This is the very aspect that cinema cannot imitate, nor it can ever overcome. And I clung to this unique aspect” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 91).

play from daily life betokens an autonomous space for theatre to present itself as a game to the recipients. But to be able to draw practical benefit from Huizinga’s pregnant theoretical scheme, Tekand had to modify this thesis, which, in actual fact, went—and still goes—hand in hand with capitalist realism that promotes play as a mere leisure sport shorn of ethics, although the director’s tone is suggestive more of the “postmodern” wave that was sweeping the world back in the late 1980s: “It was stated that there is no room for grand ideologies, grand narratives, and there is no hope for the world to change, we tried and couldn’t succeed and now we shall put off the burden. So come and let’s play! Since there’s no way to create an alternative to the system, we can only play games within the system,” the director grills the grating, if “democratising,” socio-cultural milieu that revolved, by and large, around “aestheticization” of life, before delivering the punchline of her modification: “I situated the ‘game’ at the centre of my work and tried to express myself through the zones of responsibility within. What we call ‘game’ cannot be played without rules. There’s no ‘game’ when you abolish the rules” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 114).

It is noteworthy to dovetail these sociological bare bones of the Performative Method with the technicalities that Tekand divulges when comparing her working hypothesis to that of Theodoros Terzopoulos: “I base my theatre on the ‘game’ concept and derive the ‘performative’ from the actor’s exposition to the rules of the game. The difference is this: in place of setting out from the internal, I strive to unveil the internal through the constraints imposed on the actor by its subjection to the rules” (quoted in Karaboğa 2008: 174). As is, Tekand also throws into relief the veins in which she differs from Grotowski’s methodology, where the actor’s journey is holy, ritualistic, as well as the other way around, that is to say, from the internal to the external. This is the other mark of Meyerhold engraved onto the Method, maybe more than the gigantic constructions in which the games of the Studio are played, and his celebrated formula too is worth invoking to nail down the framework around the theatre of Tekand: “N = A₁ + A₂ (where N = the actor; A₁ = the artist who conceives the idea and issues the instructions necessary for its execution; A₂ = the executant who executes the conception of A₁)” (2016: 244). Karaboğa neatly grips the gist of this formulation that denies sentiments and passions, for “once the actor can co-exist with its mind and body behindhand all of its movements, the required emotions will automatically come into being with the slightest tension that is going to set the entire body in motion, but these emotions will belong no more to the self; they will pertain to the persona, or to the mask” (2005: 174).

Tekand wholeheartedly acknowledges the presence of Beckett in her staging approach that gave birth to the Performative Method. Tekand’s decision to put on Beckett coincides with the early stages of the director’s research when she was in search of a playwright who provided
her conceptual design with the optimal theatrical context. With all his exactitude, apparently rigid rules alongside of an unequivocal stress on a form that could “accommodate the mess,” Beckett conferred a plethora of convenient conventions\(^{30}\) for Tekand. She was specifically struck by the form and its overtones for performative praxis: “When you start to translate that form into the form of a performance, you face a real challenge and an exploration process; a reversed exploration back to the text itself begins. In fact, the text presents itself as a game” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 96). One of the most captivating facets of Tekand’s observant words resides in the ways in which she injects translational phenomena into the dramaturgical procedure as an asset that makes the game possible. Herein lies the crux of Tulû Ülgen’s caveat that “even if the staging method is based on the game concept, the ‘game’ is not an end in itself; it serves as a means for the art of theatre. The game exists simply to reveal the theatrical itself” (2007: 31). Within the underlying nuances of the Method, game is nothing more than a stepping stone for the Studio players to reach a higher dimension of theatre that aspires to be real to the bone. By expecting from the Players to translate the underwriting dramaturgy into performance, the director does not ask too much of the actors; she just calls them into play. The gamut of Tekand’s contention hinges on honesty, or better, the actor’s ability to play a game honestly in the performative moment. Theatre as such is synonymous with honesty, and as such, the director propounds ready-made answers to the prayers of George Steiner in his influential *Real Presences*, where his identification of interpreter-cum-translator with an executant—“who invests his [sic] own being in the process of interpretation. His readings, his enactments of chosen meanings and values, are not those of external survey. They are a commitment at risk, a response which is, in the root sense, responsible”—is the contentious trigger behind this far-reaching topic sentence: “Interpretative response under pressure of enactment I shall, using a dated word, call answerability” (1991: 8, emphasis in the original). Tekand could not agree more with Steiner insomuch as Beckett is concerned: “You, as the one who stages the play considering it your duty to be aware of the responsibility towards the author, I mean, having a sense of responsibility for staging Beckett and realising at all times that you will be held responsible for staging Beckett, and act accordingly, look for a proper movement and a proper voice, not the word, the meaning, or the plot, only those things as abstract, as movement and voice” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 96).

If the above foray into Tekand’s responsiveness to Beckett sheds light on the Staging portion of the Performative Method, then concentrating on the connotations of her directorial

\(^{30}\) In the precise sense that Meyerhold nods to stylisation and convention with условность (*uslovnost’*); yet, neither of the two translational options does justice to the Russian word, which Jonathan Pitches glosses it through Edward Braun: “‘It’s the whole notion of the manipulation of theatrical convention working against verisimilitude, that whole world of theatricality’” (quoted in 2016: 8, fn. 6).
acumen into the author’s oeuvre might throw light on its Acting ration. On that note, Steiner’s dictum takes one straight to the nucleus of the Method in that Tekand’s committed exegesis does lay the interpretative act on the line. One more time, the onus is on the actor’s skill to play a game honestly, for, to hark back to Huizinga, “the player who trespasses against the rules or ignores them is a ‘spoil-sport’” (1980: 11), and it has no place in the theatre of Tekand, who imbibes energy ad infinitum from the “universally” verified powerhouse of Beckett’s theatrical praxis: “Creativity is ever more stimulated by those restrictions” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 101). Brenda Bynum, for one, vocalises this in an Anglo-Saxon setting: “The rules give you the freedom. In the most restricted circumstance, if you accept those restrictions, it is like a world in a grain of sand; you get inside those parameters and you find so much, a new universe” (quoted in Ben-Zvi 1992: 52); whereas Tekand’s former director in Dostlar Theatre, Genco Erkal localises it after working with Pierre Chabert in Endgame (2006): “Chabert’s approach required, over and above, absolute fidelity to the author’s text, including the stage directions. At first, the troupe found this discipline restrictive. But after learning the rules of the game thoroughly, we were to recognise what kind of freedom this discipline would bring and admit that it would raise the creativity of the actor to an even higher plane” (quoted in Dinçel 2011: 342). Tekand, on her part, enhances these nicely articulated notions of “acceptance” and “learning” by anchoring her methodology in “unconditional surrender” to the rules. She specifies her points in an expansive frame of reference spanning from (the stage directions of) Waiting for Godot—“if you give any actor the direction to ‘think’, the first question will be on what to think. However, you want the ‘what’ to be out of question and that he finds a way to act thinking only. This, as a result, challenges the actor. This is where the ‘game’ factor comes into play”—to Act Without Words I: “The element of ‘how’ is also present here, because the feelings, which he tackled to express before, are now involved in a struggle for erasure. This struggle creates a certain emotional condition in the actor. That emotion is parallel with what the man in Act Without Words I experiences. That man is flung into somewhere he does not know” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 100). As it stands in this specification, Tekand gestures towards the absolutely performative problematics of the tragic that was handled with care so far within the moderate frame of reference of the ongoing probe on going on.

To recapitulate this first plunge into the Performative Method, it would be worthwhile to flesh out the fashion in which Tekand makes an emphatic plea for a theatre that treasures its human ingredient in the teeth of the technologised “Rich Theatre” of the capitalised twenty-first century. Against the digitalised fanfares of the contemporary stage, she puts her faith in the most real faculty of the most real constituent of the art of theatre. This talent is contingent upon the actors’ willingness—“passive readiness”—to unconditionally surrender themselves to
the rules of the game, just as the director confines herself to the dicta that governs theatre *qua* theatre. And once they honestly give in, the players under duress of re-enacting the dramatic plots on stage become obliged to cope with the challenges posed by the game, one that is nothing short of vying with a form, *the* “form,” which, as Steiner underscores, “is the root of performance” (1991: 143). This sincerity generates a performative conflict stemming synchronously from the internal and external actions of the players in the *hic et nunc*, that, in return, makes all the risks taken during the performances real to the core in an artistic genre that *sensu strictu* thrives on taking risks: theatre. Amidst too many, the most tangible risk that the Studio Players takes along the playful lines of translating *the* form into performance is the vital role assigned to the usage of (spot)lights, so much so that the light itself occurs to be the *sine qua non* of the productions, each of which credit the performers *accountable* for the operation, if not manipulation, of spotlights as “light-players.” It is through these doors that human error slips like a loose cannon on deck, to be welcomed on board by Tekand, who lays down the optimum “execution” of performance when the “executant” is exposed to light as the ground rule of the games the Studio Players play. Ülgen brilliantly hashes over the high stakes of the director’s wager within the special context of the (choral) performances of *The Oedipus Trilogy*, all of which rests on the mathematical acceleration and deceleration of the spotlights’ pace: “where there is an error, where the game stops for split-seconds, where light hovers from player to player looking for a line to start the organic flow of the game, the entire theatre-hall turns out to be subjected to this tension” (2007: 44-5).

And Beckett? He dwells incognito therein *qua* “the ‘real presence’ or the ‘real absence of that presence’, the two phenomenologies being rigorously inseparable, which an answerable experience of the aesthetic must enforce” (1991: 38), to switch off with Steiner…

**The Mimetic Aesthetics of the Performative Staging and Acting Method**

…to switch on yet again with him: “All *mimesis*, thematic variation, quotation, ascription of intended sense, derives from a postulate of creative presence” (ibid.: 99-100). As it is, George Steiner returns the favour and constitues a tailor-made metaphysical basis for the directorial practice of Şahika Tekand, who sets off with a reckless artistic credo independent of Samuel Beckett: “Design and creation are matters of knowledge. You compete with God; one has to know its place” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 101). Intriguingly, furthermore, Steiner’s maxim—by

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31 Cf. Tekand: “I wanted to set over with what can exist only on stage and naturally I restricted myself a lot. ‘What can exist only on stage’ is a tremendously restrictive material. If the technological lies and their slapsticks are not at your beck and call, of course” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 91).
encompassing the intricacies of mimesis from Plato to Denis Diderot and from Aristotle to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing—throws, at long last, the missing mimetic lexicon into the bargain of his own meditations on absolute tragedy, where he allots a decisive part to Beckett. His legacy for the contemporary performances of Attic tragedies shines through *The Oedipus Trilogy*—a series of productions that displayed Tekand’s Performative Staging and Acting Method at its zenith in a spectrum of performances that took place in Istanbul, Delphi, Brussels, and Toga, to name but a few.

As was canvassed earlier, the translational-cum-ontological kinship between Beckett and Ancient Greek tragedies abides in the modes through which the author shatters the tragic *paradeigma*, just like he shifted countless paradigms of mimesis, to translate it into a myriad of infinitesimal *paradeigmata* to be scattered in every nook and cranny of his cosmos. Katharine Worth, who has splendidly shown the formal, translational if you will, vestiges of the Attic tragic convention in Beckett’s (meta)theatrical *oeuvre*, opines from her transition zone, that “Beckett’s method bears hard on actors” (2001: 58). Worth’s pointer to the Beckett productions of the Anglo-Saxon world in the 1990s squares perfectly with Alain Badiou’s ontological notion of fidelity, which, in the case of the author, reaches its pinnacle in his absolute “fidelity to form” that guarantees the continuation of the “truth-process.” It is this fidelity that elicits wonder on behalf of the spectators who contemplate the characters’—what Martha Nussbaum would reproach as Beckett’s “contrivances”—re-enactment of one single narrative on going on. The author himself would candidly attest to Nussbaum’s scepticism and reckon his empty Platonic *persona* as “figments” (1996: 38).

Far from being a summative flashback to the past strains of the present investigation, this reminder safeguards Tekand’s aesthetics against impressions that might hastily reduce it to being an *imitatio* of Beckett. Whilst there is little doubt that the director’s understanding of mimesis is filtered through the Roman transformation of the concept into imitation of models, of reality, and of daily life, and encourages such suspicions in consequence, Johan Huizinga’s guiding light unearths an across-the-board word that bolsters her conceptualisation of game: “*Poiesis*, in fact, is a play-function. It proceeds within the play-ground of the mind, in a world of its own which the mind creates for it. There things have a very different physiognomy from the one they wear in ‘ordinary life’” (1980: 119). Huizinga does not simply salute Aristotle and Lessing, both of whom elevate the “mind-set” of the poet in the creative-cum-receptive praxes. He, in a word, pins the director’s artistic practice down to antiquity in such a tone that harkens back to the “poet/maker alliance” that was highlighted previously above all with Stephen Halliwell. That Tekand (re)writes, acts and stages all in unison is a testimonial evidence to this revamped (archaic) union in her craft, which is the Platonic embodiment of the Performative
model par excellence for the Studio Players (Figure 3). Additionally, the axis of Tekand’s praxis cuts across the excessively “theatricalised” *res publica* of antiquity, for her anti-realistic take

on mimesis *qua* imitation of daily life contains within itself a wide-ranging critique of a socio-cultural climate\(^\text{32}\) that shares striking similarities with the milieu on which Seneca had “deep-  

\(^{32}\) Cf. Tekand again: “I do not feel at ease with this dream of ‘dolce vita’ that began to hold sway all over the world after the 80s and I am more than cognisant that nothing has changed that much in actuality. So, how can I relate this seemingly changed—awfully embellished with its awfully compromised, reconciled, neutralised zones—new life to myself and for myself on stage, when I cannot enjoy living like this? It might as well be an awfully political theatre, awash with slogans; I might as well end up doing something that I would loathe to do in life. Thence the question arises: what is going to happen on stage in the here and now?” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 92).
seated reservations about the mass entertainment of the time” (2009: 38), as Fiona Macintosh maintains.

At this juncture, it is compulsory to pause for a moment so as to be able to transmute the afore-given cue into a confrontational line (of thought) for Tekand to have her say on the topic on the top of a rock-hard bulwark against imitative inklings that her absolute fidelity to Beckett qua idea might intimate. Provided that this Roman telescope (mal)nourishes the contemporary critical discourse on mimesis, obligates one to take this methodological step, albeit its lens bestows an extra flavour upon the resistant theatrical ethos of Tekand when her apprehension of the notion is sited in antiquity. There might still be hesitations. This is why a second dive into the Performative Method via Beckett becomes a necessity, owing to the fact that all of the director’s elaborations on the author draw their notional strength from Tekand’s commitment to modernist aesthetics that she inherited most (c)overtly from Vsevolod Meyerhold and Jerzy Grotowski. And after all is said and done, the monument itself will be no more than a modest homage to all.

Indeed, it is from this crossroads that Worth’s conjuration of “method” in Beckett can take a new turn and go beyond than being an incidental word-choice. In a register indicative of her penetrating sight into the ways in which the author “has recreated (in his own terms) not only much of the theatrical stylization—scenic, musical, poetic—of the ancient Greek theatre, but also something of its spirit” (2004: 265), Worth hands down yet another hard nut to crack to Beckett scholars as her own intellectual legacy. Probably because of the author’s (in)famous declaration—“Not for me these Grotowskis and Methods”—Worth’s heritage is left intact, just as that of Beckett for the contemporary performances of Ancient Greek tragedies. Then again, when read carefully, which is to say that by taking all the insinuations of Beckett’s (dis)interestedness and of Worth’s perspicacity to heart, it can easily be inferred that both figures do serve the food for thought in a silver plate, since they open doors to a vast theoretical-cum-historical landscape to monitor the poietic matters at hand from Meyerhold to Grotowski, not to mention the conceptual toolset accessible to do so from Aristotle to Lessing.

Having implicitly thrust “stylisation” into centre stage, Worth makes the same implied move for its ideational twin that is dear to Meyerhold: “Beckett could be thought of as seeing

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33 In her survey of the Studio Players, Habif (2008, passim) takes heed of mimesis buried in the Performative Method. Yet, her disinclination towards the archaic contours of the concept makes this diligent attempt a scratch on the surface at best, or a compromise with the contemporary critical discourse on mimesis at worst.

34 Cf. in full from Deirdre Bair’s biography: “For Beckett, the perfect stage vehicle is one in which there are no actors or directors, only the play itself. When asked how such theatre could be made viable, Beckett replied that the author had the duty to search for the perfect actor, that is, one who would comply fully with his instructions, having the ability to annihilate himself [sic] totally. ‘Not for me these Grotowskis and Methods’, Beckett storms” (1978: 513).
how far he could stretch the conventions of Greek tragedy to give a modern slant on the dramatic possibilities in static characters and long speeches” (2004: 271). The reason why Beckett can kaleidoscopically distribute such keystones of the Attic tragic dramaturgy as the mask(-like appearances) (Not I), the chorus (Play), the messengers (Waiting for Godot, Ghost Trio), and the like all over his theatre moves in concert with the aesthetic manners through which he shakes the paradigms, conventions if you like, of mimesis. Here, the author stands closer to Meyerhold more than ever, since, as Edward Braun pinpoints, “it is not possible to reproduce life faithfully on the stage. The stage is essentially based on conventions. All one can hope to do is to replace one convention with another” (1998: 31). And how this agile, yet frozen (Lessing) replacement of theatrical conventions can be accomplished in and through the actor’s work is codified by Meyerhold himself with what he classifies as the “manifestation of excitability” with his modèle idéal (Diderot) in mind: Erast Garin. Formed of acting “sequences” or “cycles” with the “invariable stages” of “intention,” “realization” and “reaction,” the term itself proves to be a supreme systematisation of mimesis qua mimesis in modernist theatre: “The intention is the intellectual assimilation of a task prescribed externally by the dramatist, the director, or the initiative of the performer. The realization is the cycle of volitional, mimetic and vocal reflexes. The reaction is the attenuation of the volitional reflex as it is realized mimetically and vocally in preparation for the reception of a new intention (the transition to a new acting cycle)” (2016: 247, emphases in the original). Epitomised with an unreciprocated letter in 1936, Beckett’s fascination with Meyerhold’s most reputable pupil Sergei Eisenstein makes it an easy hunch35 to posit that this systematic account on acting was not classified information for the author. All the same, what happens to be the bottom line is the minute detail that Beckett’s presumable acquaintance with how to fragmentise the actor’s craft in an infinite loop overlaps with the momentous Jung Lecture of 1935 that would lead him to rephrase “the pure tragic axiom” (Steiner) over and over again in his œuvre, which, thanks to the author’s formidable formal procedure, boils down to be a mimesis of praxes and life, or to reiterate with Worth, a mimesis of “life journeys.”

Now, it is worth putting this biomechanised commentary into critical perspective with David Lloyd’s notable alertness to the Aristotelian traces in Beckett. The scholar passes his remarks within the premises of the author’s “absolute fidelity” to the so-called unities, and he

35 Sympathising with the sense of bewilderment with which the preceding section commenced, Anthony Paraskeva is the sole scholar who deliberated on the immediacy between the two figures: “Although Beckett does not mention Meyerhold directly in his correspondence or elsewhere, it is highly unlikely, given Beckett’s extensive study of Eisenstein, and the resurgence of interest in Biomechanics in the mid-seventies, that he was not aware of Meyerhold’s work” (2017: 120). Mindful of the parallels that Jonathan Kalb draws in (1991), Paraskeva unsurprisingly gears his analysis towards Eisenstein, and makes the most of Meyerhold as a catalyst, if not as a springboard, in an exertion to come to grips with Beckett’s Film.
appreciably indicates the points of divergence from the Aristotle and the “classical theatrical tradition, the maintenance of verisimilitude as a means to facilitate identification, pity or catharsis. On the contrary, the rigorous and formally perfect unity of the plays becomes a kind of carapace that contains a material that is in a state of continuous and radical disintegration. Rather than affiriming any kind of naturalistic illusion by means of their integration, form and material remain in a state of vital tension” (2016: 75). That Lloyd purifies mimesis of its tarnished reputation urges one to zero in on the “tension” that is the linchpin of the form that messes with theatrical traditions, classical or not, through terms that are thoroughly (corpo)real, which coerces the actor not merely to perform frequently “under the given conditions of bodily pain,” but more substantially, forces it to respond to the performative situation on the spot. This constant state of vigilance can barely be conceived without the actor’s re-actions, the nature of which is made crystal clear by Meyerhold in a definitive (foot)note: “‘mimetic reflexes’ comprise all the movements performed by the separate parts of the actor’s body and the movements of the entire body in space” (2016: 247, fn. 6). This note fills the blanks in Lloyd’s exemplification of the “tension that is allegorised in the early plays by the figure of the clown whose apparently clumsy antics are always enabled by an acrobatic skill that often outshines the graceful motions of the acrobats themselves” (2016: 75). It never occurs to Lloyd, as it never occurred to H. Porter Abbott, that mimesis could mean something more than verisimilitude, something that could signify a rendezvous point for Beckett and the receivers on a spatiotemporal scale, where both parties could meet in respective passages of time by dint of their shared experiences of creating and re-creating the work by virtue of what has been conceptualised and contextualised as V-Effect throughout the present inspection. Disregarding Lessing, Lloyd takes upon himself to manufacture a point that was indispensable to Laocoon: “the plays invariably unfold in exactly the time taken to watch them: they dissolve any distinction between the time of watching and the time of action” (ibid.: 215). The scholar’s negligence of Lessing might also explain why Lloyd abstains from honing in on the author’s prose,36 where the rendezvous in time embraces the prospect of a dormant corporeality that is determined by the receptor’s utterly free-choice whether to put down the book, or to persevere in “the Company Beckett keeps” (1983: 157-71), to fortify the point with Enoch Brater.

The company that Beckett keeps rivets the attention to the distance that Beckett keeps from “Grotowski’s Methods.” While it is only logical to take Beckett’s word in stride and bid farewell to the metamorphosed version of Konstantin Stanislavski’s system, the author’s professed apathy towards Grotowski establishes thought-provoking resonances. Bringing the

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36 This neglect becomes more of a problem, especially when Lloyd’s subject matter—painting—is taken into full consideration.
lineaments of V-Effect more into focus can be helpful when lending an ear to these echoes, simply because the recipient’s—the actor’s—primary *encounter* with Beckett on “page,” more specifically with his prose, is likely to put it in a state of mind to decide and to decide alone. The challenges posed by the initiatory act of reading inexorably transform the mood itself into a resistant one. All the way through the decision-making process, the actor remains *in a state of vital tension* that is more akin to “a state of idle readiness, a passive availability, which makes possible an active acting score” (1975: 37), as Grotowski would explicate. If this focal interlock is granted, then a number of argumentative analogies can cast light on its fulcrum pins: where Grotowski asks of the actor to “sacrifice” for the sake of “total act,” Beckett searches for the actor “who would comply *fully* with his instructions, having the ability to annihilate himself *totally*,”*37* the *modèle idéal*, in a nutshell, that would be the *unmoved mover* of spectators through its *poietic* translation of the *form* into performance in the *hic et nunc* through and through its mimetic reflexes prompted by the given situation. Where Grotowski insists on “a miniature score for each part of the body” (ibid.: 39), Beckett “constructs the score by deconstructing the body with his form to give voice to each and every deconstructed part of the body with his words” (Dinçel 2011: 339-40). Ultimately, where Grotowski persists on “(un)healthy trance,” Beckett conveys the voice of the *unnameable—the tragic—with a *poietic modèle idéal* in mind, one that would *negate* (1984b: 213-23) and *curse* the “first person” (2009a: 336)*38* at one stroke so as to speak of itself always “as of another” (1996: 20) via the mechanics of *the* form that moulds each text into a score in its own right to be acted out neither more nor less than tick-tocks of a (meta)theatrical machine—such that after Beckett, theatre-makers tamper with the mechanism at their own peril.

Tekand breaks open these theoretical-cum-historical doors and responds to one of the most pressing concerns of Beckett Studies with the Studio Players,*39* each of whom would be

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37 Following Deirdre Bair’s account in fn. 34.
38 Unintentionally evoking Derval Tubridy’s beautiful study on the manifestations of *aporia* in Beckett’s *oeuvre*. See (2018, passim; esp. ch.2).
39 How to extract a down to earth “working model” from the author’s cosmos and test it against the mandates of performing Beckett is a question that the field has long been at pains to find a reasonable pedagogical answer. It seems that Nicholas Johnson (2018: 46-68) is the only Beckett scholar, who gave a serious thought to the concrete problematics of acting in connection with the “traumatic” brand around Beckett in performance. The scholar’s sensitivity to acting theories qualifies this extraordinary work as diagnostic, one that both fights fire with fire and impresses on the underlining problems of the practical domain mainly through the pros and cons of Stanislavski, to whom the Anglo-Saxon approaches to acting are heavily indebted. That being said, this also comes to be the mere downside of Johnson’s study in that it stabilises Stanislavski’s position as the spearhead in historical and contemporary theories of acting. The tangents between Johnson’s tacit “model” and the Performative Method support the present viewpoint that attaches priority to the theatre of Tekand for Beckett Studies. So, when Johnson writes that Beckett’s texts “represent a specific task to be performed. The clearest example of this is Beckett’s *Play*, which offers an almost flawless minimal model of the general task of the actor: arrive, get in position, when the light is on speak, when the light is off no longer speak, then repeat,” and then goes on to ask—“Should this be considered traumatic? Should the conflation of the idea of difficulty and the idea of torture be allowed here? Or should *Play* be considered, instead, a kind of challenge or game, a set of parameters for an event, in which merely
ready and willing to illustrate how to respond to the situation on the spot through the absorption of the Performative Method, whose mimetic aesthetics radiate from the absent presence of the author therein. Concordantly, the director’s amalgamation of Beckett with the more discernible traits of Meyerhold and Grotowski turns her method into a pathfinder that aids one to locate the gridlines in terra incognita. And with Beckett’s niche carved out in and beyond the twentieth century theories on acting, Tekand’s exegetical response to the author extends into a veritable toil to transfuse the form into a distinct methodology—a taxing endeavour that falls in step with Beckett’s pronouncement: “I don’t think that Beckett proposes a method for acting or staging. When looking at his own practices, it can be seen that he acts in accordance with different means, a different knowledge about staging. But if we think of Beckett as a playwright, a method in his texts can be found; a circumstance, not only an atmosphere, but a circumstance that reveals a grammar which expresses the same things for spectators and performers at the same time” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 95). The fact that this explication also chimes in with Worth’s appraisal of “method” in Beckett is significant in that it converts the Performative Method into a dual stream of thought running beneath the scholar’s transition zone to broach the poietic issue of moving the Ancient Greek tragic notes in the author’s oeuvre from “page” to “stage.” Tekand hammers the point home by evincing a different type of interest than that of Lloyd towards the Aristotelian qualities of Beckett’s (dramatic) writing, which she ascertains to be the perpetuation of Sophocles’ lineage. “While working on Beckett, it dawned on me that the new fountainhead of make-believe is a reality realised once again with the unities of time, place and action,” says the director, “I was stunned to re-encounter with this in Beckett, because my mind was programmed to think that an idiosyncrasy of this sort, which can readily be called the three-unities, was something enormously conservative and orthodox, one that must be rejected outright” (quoted in Güncür 2009: 91). In lieu of discrediting the Aristotle, as contemporary critical discourse tends to incite the theatre practitioners to behave so, Tekand keeps the ancient dramaturgical design as an ace up her modern sleeve, since, as John T. Kirby upholds, “it is Sophocles whose work is the most closely aligned with the criteria that the Aristotelian system requires and celebrates. It is Sophocles whose plays most nearly attain the kind of philosophical excellence that the Poetics explores” (2012: 423). Simon Goldhill correctly deduces that Sophocles’ tragedies engage with the socio-cultural system in such a way that his “profound concern with the political is expressed in a more disseminated and abstract by participating authentically, the actor will organically produce the state – in themselves and in the audience – that the text is designed to generate?” (ibid.: 59)—he might as well be elaborating on the principal text—Play—that is the propeller behind Tekand’s method.
manner” (2012: 251). The director’s benchmark to give vent to her socio-cultural critique of the system could not have been more appropriate than Sophocles.

It would be plausible to build on these versed views by elucidating the dramaturgical vessel that pumps translational blood to The Oedipus Trilogy. Within this context, Tekand’s steadfast allegiance to Beckett takes precedence over her poetic rewriting of Sophocles’ pieces, each of which are (vocally) reconstructed as the partitions of a metrical composition, of an algorithmic triplet whose “bass-lines perforate the spectating body through the chorus” (2009: 92), as Zeynep Günsür expounds. Recalling that Tekand did generate this variant of V-Effect in the new millennium under conditions, in which the cacophonous imitation of reality, and of daily life in the 1980s and 1990s turned out to be the lesser evil, compels the attention to the director’s poietic licence that emanates from her equation of staging Beckett with the act of translation: “He produces an atmosphere, a literary condition for you. I tried exactly to take this literary attitude, and translate it into the language of performance” (quoted in Dinçel 2012a: 99). In that respect, Tekand’s notes for her production of “Five Short Plays” becomes an exempla, a blueprint for The Oedipus Trilogy penned in the footsteps of Beckett’s “Dante…Bruno. Vico.. Joyce” and his Proust. The director’s expansion of her sociological diagnosis into dramaticules is worthy of notice: “Bad taste and hollow ‘entertainment’ is epidemic…Social ‘memory loss’ has taken its toll…Critical questions and thoughts sound tedious…De facto definitions and codes are much more valuable than ‘reality’…One is bound to insist” on “the conflict between human will power and authority (system) innate to all of these plays…The authority can be everything and anything that interdicts and manipulates human will power…The whistle in Act Without Words I, the goad in Act Without Words II, the light in Play bring an almost divine authority on stage,” where “the actor should not re-enact the dramatis persona by loading it with assumptions; instead, the actor has to undertake the required act in its total simplicity with its total sincerity…It is only in this way one can knit up with the human thought rather than its appearance” (1994: 28, aposiopesis in the original). And once such intimacy with human thought is achieved, the methodological-cum-artistic questions that Kerem Karaboğa attributes to Tekand’s triumph with The Oedipus Trilogy fall on fertile grounds: “How to arrive at a theatrical performance that can alter the blood circulation of people in such a concentrated fashion that touches their nerve endings, that makes them feel ‘hundred percent real,’ whilst the event reveals itself to be ‘hundred percent fabrication’? How can a theatrical spectacle accomplish to be both intellectually provocative and emotionally comprehensive, and move beyond than being a transfer of superficial ideas and emotions?” (2009: 109). Tekand would reply in a tone eager to reconceptualise, recontextualise and to redefine intersemiotic translation with Beckett: “The visual should be translated into the
acoustic…Words are not there to narrate a story; they are there to vocalise the complex nature of the human thought…The text is no less than a musical score” (1994: 28, aposiopesis in the

original). As a matter of course, the enigmatic mindscape of human physis that Sophocles depicts in his Theban tragedies got translated in rapport with the choral soundscape into the performative landscape of The Oedipus Trilogy, where the Studio Players undertook the required act in its total simplicity with their total honesty to play games, in which, to take just a couple of examples, they were stipulated to reach out to death (Iocaste) merely as reaching out to death is; to whimper merely as whimpering is (Oedipus); to drop head in shame (Antigone) merely dropping head in shame is (Figure 4); and to revolt against tyranny (Ismene and Antigone) merely revolting against tyranny is (Figure 5), just the same with “Flo, who says ‘Just sit together as we used to, in the playground at Miss Wade’s,’ in Come and Go. The actor

\[\text{See Figure 3 above.}\]
must really sit ‘just like that,’ on and within the stage…That must embody the parallelism of life / play / stage…Whatever happens to man in life and to the character in the play happens to the actor on stage” (ibid.).

These, then, are the imbricated textures of *The Oedipus Trilogy* that turn the tables on isolated (textually-oriented) analyses of the performances,41 throughout which the director’s strict obedience to the Aristotle’s dramaturgical-cum-philosophical schema rises to prominence to pass the validity check of Steiner, who places maximum weight on “the staging of the myth in a full Aristotelian sense” (1996c: 535). With that being said, Tekand’s transmutation of the lacuna in Aristotle’s design into a sonorous source of visceral energy can scarcely go unnoticed, for by doing so, she exerts to restore to contemporary stage the authentic choral-cum-theatrical event of Ancient Greece, which, as Peter Wilson educes, “was a fundamentally musical event of Ancient Greece, which, as Peter Wilson educes, “was a fundamentally musical

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41 Amidst the works that make up the trilogy, only *Eurydice’s Cry* is available in English in what can be regarded as a “domesticated” translation (2011: 62-129) by Serap Erincin and Mark Ventura. While the effort deserves all the credit for introducing Tekand’s take on Sophocles to a broader public, the careless documentation of the performance leads to grave inconsistencies in the presentation of *Eurydice’s Cry*. Seemingly conscious of these documentative problems, Erincin (2011: 171-83) tenders to resolve them in a separate chapter appeared in a volume dedicated to the contemporary productions of *Antigone*. Unfortunately, without a word on the Performative Method, without dwelling upon *Where is Oedipus?* and *Oedipus in Exile* at all, Erincin’s analysis deplorably staggers between a verbose description of movements and postures adopted through the course of *Eurydice’s Cry*, and a perfunctory zeal at politicising the performance.
experience” (2002: 39). As well as this, the director puts the twofold governing mechanism of probability and necessity into the service of performances through the chorus that intermittently distil the kernels—“Who?” “Why?” “How?” “Speak!” “Think!” “Listen!”—of the games in cadence with the breakneck speed of light soaring on it. In the first place, this modern submission to the ancient criteria of ananke and eikos bodies forth a performative condition, grammar if you prefer, that asks the most divine component of man—nous—to be put in effective use for the facilitation of the communication between the event qua beneficial intellectual-cum-emotional exercise—katharsis—and its receivers. But in the second place, Tekand’s devotion to the rules of probability and necessity transcends the sheer administration of muthos; it a fortiori warrants her to rationalise the work and defend it against criticisms that more likely than not stem from the inner circle of the ensemble. And once she can make the actors believe in her directorial ideas; once she can transform the players into empty Platonic personae “answerable to form” (1991: 215), as Steiner would concur, the Studio Players can make the spectators believe in the work through the panoply of mimesis qua mimesis.

Beckett? He is the syntax regulating the semantics of Tekand’s performative machine that rewires Sophocles.

*The Oedipus Trilogy*44

The tiny hole punctured on the exteriors of the Performative Staging and Acting Method thus magnifies into a holistic angle wide enough to close this chapter with brief notes in hindsight on Şahika Tekand’s virtuoso reworking of Sophocles’ Theban plays as *The Oedipus Trilogy*, by means of which she called life into question with a set of games and took issues with humans’ drift towards turning life into a game. In the eyes of the director, this, as Tulû Ülgen spells out, “is the tragedy that contemporary man overlooks” (2007: 27). On that score, Tekand sees the rudiments of Attic tragedy completely eye to eye with Edith Hall, who deems the genre as “an aesthetic question mark performed in enacted pain” (2010: 2). And this was precisely what the ensemble did with the Oedipus triplet: it posed questions about the system until it could no

43 Cf. Tekand: “You cannot stand in front of these people who work with self-sacrifice and tell them, ‘I want it to be like this and it is going to be like this!’ I can never ever behave in such a spoiled way. I account for every item. Every single word I wrote there…The most substantive point is this: they have every right to intervene with me all along the line. They have every right to intervene with everything. And they do; if I find their interventions believable I accept them, and if I do not find the critique credible I certainly persuade them why this is the case. I guess I am taking advantage of being a teacher at this point; one never gets tired of constantly explaining and convincing” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 95, aposiopesis in the original).
44 See Appendix 2 for the production details of the performances.
longer pose them. Or, to wrap things up with the director herself: “Each tragedy uses the keywords of ‘who?’ ‘what?’ ‘why?’ ‘how?’ Only in the last piece, something different happened; we passed a value judgment for the first time and said ‘Enough!’ in Eurydice’s Cry” (quoted in Günsür 2009: 92).

Executed in a huge construction—(crossword) puzzle box—implicative of a skēnē, a big television screen, a massive computer monitor (sub)divided into twelve transitive boxes embedded in three transitive floors (Figure 6). Where is Oedipus? was the peak point in which

Figure 6. Where is Oedipus? Istanbul 2002. Photo by Ahmet Elhan.

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45 The greater part of the technical information of this closing excursus draws on the director’s notes for the trilogy in the Studio Players’ website. See the relative sections in http://www.studiooyunculari.com/EN/ (Accessed 31 December 2018).
Tekand’s research into the bedrock of theatre begun to yield solid fruits. The performance was organised for the receivers under the precept of playing one simple game right there and right then: solve the puzzle with Oedipus, whose expertise in solving riddles was put on test by the light that preconditioned his movements through the boxes, while the spectators’ (dur)ability in keeping an eye open to the subtext of the theatrical event was put on test by the same light that dispersed the clues of the puzzle in between the epeisodia beforehand for the audience. The director’s performative rearrangement of Oedipus Tyrannus was uncompromising on a host of layers, starting with a clever retort to the digitalisation of the contemporary stage, pressing on with a sharp rejoinder to theatrical practices that spoon-feed the audience taste and imagination, culminating in an aesthetic design that showed the extent to which Aristotle’s treatise could go against the grain of critical discourse that was, and still is, quick to abandon it. The efficient utilisation of the light was the output amplifier of this compound riposte. It sanctioned Tekand not solely to engender a multitude of masks on top of the ones she brought forth with the actors’ facial reconstruction of the tragic mask, but at the same time, it assisted her to translate the “complex” muthos of Oedipus Tyrannus into the “complex” muthos of Where is Oedipus? in an organisation that would have Aristotle’s blessings. The tell-tale sign of this adjustment was the director’s well-calculated reworking of the epeisodia in strict line with the desiderata of ananke and eikos, both of which put forward the muthos of the performance that progressed in the order of the stichomythic episodes with Kreon, Teiresias, Iokaste, the herald, as well as with Laius’ slave; the first two being almost ceaseless obstructive presences here and there of the puzzle box where Oedipus was at grips with moving to and fro, in advance of the peripeteia and anagnorisis scene with the letter that precipitated the catastrophe and prepared the way for the blind man’s bluff with which the performance came to an end in uncanny laughter. What made Where is Oedipus? an exceptional theatrical event was this honest pledge to the Aristotelian decrees of probability and necessity that secured the re-enactment of Tekand’s “complex” performative muthos to get across the spectators without needing them to know Turkish, which, presumably speaking, gave the international audience a head start in focussing on the clues and cracking the codes bit by bit in company with the musicality of the language, as the dramatis personae (dis)appeared in the boxes in compliance with the dictations of the light.

46 It would not be far-fetched to surmise that Stephen Halliwell too would approve Tekand’s regeneration of the “complex” muthos: “The essential requirement for Ar. is that ‘episodes’, whether in tragedy or epic, should be integrated into the design of the plot-structure: 51b 33-5, 55b 13. But, of course, his concept of muthos permits some things to be regarded as more indispensable than others: hence at 55b 23, 59a 35-7, and 59b 30 there are suggestions of episodes as scenes which flesh out or expand or give variety to the main scheme of the action” (1998: 259, fn. 10).
*Oedipus in Exile* was a push in furtherance of the aesthetic bars that *Where is Oedipus?* set in a way that could work out the kinks in acting, despite the degree of maturity the ensemble reached in the craft was palpable in the first production. Choosing to take fewer liberties with

![Figure 7. Oedipus in Exile. Istanbul 2004. Photo by Necdet Kaygun.](image)

*Oedipus at Colonus* and giving comparatively less leads for the audience, Tekand transmuted the *muthos* into an Aristotelian game of trial in which the spectators were the witnesses. Bound to re-act to the interrogator that was the light, the players in *Oedipus in Exile* were placed in cells within another huge construction of two floors representative of the trial in Athens as a whole, upstairs harbouring the border gate, downstairs implicating in the chorus and Theseus, who would guard the *polis* with their verdicts as to who can be permitted entrance to the city from the top left cell (Figure 7). Hall’s accurate consideration that “tragic choruses are always either space defenders or space invaders” (2010: 29) falls in line with the role of the chorus that protected the sacred grove in *Oedipus in Exile* at all costs, with a rotund performance pulsating with alliterations, all of which brought into consonance Oedipus’, Antigone’s and Ismene’s admissions into the *polis*, whilst denying access to Kreon and Polyneices with such keynotes as “Don’t!” “Halt!” and “Get out!” Tekand’s intersemiotic translations—not just of the sacred grove, but also of the fortifications of the *polis*, of the city lights, as well as of the supernatural thunderstorm antecedent to Oedipus’ death—into the theatrical space through the spotlights.
flying over the chorus were robust discoveries in abstraction. They were at their most intense in the spotlights, rapidly firing over the chorus, creating an empty Platonic mask on their faces. Juxtaposed to this was what Alain Badiou would come to call as the “point of saturation” (2005b: 13) that the ensemble reached in stylised acting that sternly (re)strained the players’ reactions to a sundry of movements associated with each personae, which, as a consequence, rendered possible for the audience to decipher the sculptural “attitudes,” for instance, of Kreon and Polyneices, both of whom had their fair shares of curse from Oedipus, who has long relinquished the part of tyrannus to them. The performance, all in all, was a theatrical-cum-choral tour de force in static acting, where Tekand charged the players with the punishing task of transforming themselves into wondrous moving statues that were agile to move only and only within the rigid boundaries of the lit-space of their cells once the light was on. And the Studio Players superlatively executed this task in a game of trial, which was there simply for the purposes of inducing the spectators to think through the capitalist realistic system by entreating them to re-think Oedipus’ ordeal from the day he was born up until his death, which was facsimile with the day he was born, to quote Teiresias from Where is Oedipus?. With Oedipus in Exile, Tekand set the aesthetic bars of their highest calibre in the history of the Studio Players.

Performed as the closing play of the 4th International Theatre Olympics, Eurydice’s Cry was a breath-taking agon between this daunting accomplishment and the lucid “message” that the ensemble gave for the first time in one of their productions. This gave the production an edge apropos to the competitive spirit of Olympics qua Olympics. Restructuring the muthos in a less dominating structure on the verge of collapse, Tekand rescheduled Kreon’s meeting with Teiresias to an earlier time than in the Sophoclean configuration of events in Antigone. The declining authority of the light was coupled with this delicate setting that sufficed for the

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47 In the exact sense that would be true to the eighteenth and nineteenth century constructs of the sculptural ideal that “involved a fixity of stance—an ‘attitude’, a marmoreal appearance” (2013: 520), as was discussed in great detail by Fiona Macintosh.

48 The Platonic undertones of the production, transfigure the chorus of Oedipus in Exile into a latent source of wonder in performance in that it rises to the occasion and animates the “puppets” of the first and seventh books of the Laws. Leslie Kurke forges a convincing link between this and “a much older set of Greek cultural associations that imagines choruses as moving statues and statues as frozen choreuts, all bound together under the sway of wonder (thauma) and desire (eros)” (2013: 124). Yet, where dance forms a major part of Kurke’s contention, the chorus of Oedipus in Exile simply moves with postures like leaning backwards.

49 Cf. Tekand: “I demonstrate how to put an end to the game with the message that ‘We are aware of everything; we know everything and we are not going to be a part of this game anymore’” (quoted in Atmaca 2006).

50 In textual terms, Eurydice’s Cry can be valorised as a dense finale to a dense conversation with Sophocles. And in this context, Tekand’s completion of the trilogy is illustrative of the level of expertise she attained in playwriting. The fact that the director metes out the key phrases of Where is Oedipus? and Oedipus in Exile amongst the play characters of Eurydice’s Cry in conjunction with a range of quotations from Bertolt Brecht to Heiner Müller, from news headlines to law articles not solely turns the trilogy into a meaning-generating machine on a variety of substrates, but more significantly, makes Sophocles the intrinsic building stone of this vibrant intertextual dialogue.
audience to correlate it with the (Turkish) system. In *Eurydice’s Cry*, the game was designed as per the confinement of the actors’ movements to a cryptic matrix that mathematically forbade occurrences at the same time up to a point, after which they became algorithmically intertwined and synchronised. The spectators’ task was to decrypt this matrix—otherwise, the sequence of transformations that Antigone’s death would activate could hardly be gathered. The saturation of static acting was in the throes of over-saturation that brought into being the consecutive robotic transmutations of Ismene, Haimon, Eurydice, and of the chorus into Antigone in a performance that went literally and figuratively at full throttle, which inevitably lead to incomprehensible choral deliveries. Nonetheless, unlike the complaints iterated by the Turkish critics, this does not adduce evidence for a shortcoming inherent in the performance, as it secretly fixated the audience concentration on the ways in which the statues moved in the space designated for them by the light, while “the tense atmosphere of the performance changes from adagio to allegro” (2007: 130), as Dikmen Gürün articulates. On second thought, it would be much more salient to speak of a backlash as a substitute for “critical flaws.” For example: the silent and (im)mobile presence of the titular character, which began to pervade through the stage by turning into its constant source of energy from the moment that she appeared in the *episodesion* with Antigone’s abstract seizure of power via her arrest, reached an apex with Eurydice’s re-action to Haimon’s death with tragic mask stuck on her face (Figure 8). And shortly afterwards came Eurydice’s Cry, during which she burst out in grief-stricken anger, damned everything, and consummated the chain of suicides that Antigone’s death inaugurated. This climax was left high and dry in the production, because by then Kreon was totally metamorphosed into a (sobbing) caricature; a portrayal complied with his screaming and yelling performance almost throughout. On final thought, one cannot help but wonder whether such exaggeration and demonisation of Kreon was necessary, while the stage design was subtly doing the work itself with the aid of the waning authority of the light, while Tekand herself was having her cake and eating it too by concretely and abstractly spilling out her hatred against the system. And there, the eyes looked for the semi-cartoonesque Kreon of *Oedipus in Exile*; beating his chest, cavorting about, making threats, trying to push past the defenders of the sacred grove in purely abstract terms through stylised acting on the spot.

That the “message” of *Eurydice’s Cry* stands at odds with the tragic balance that Sophocles strikes in *Antigone* does not outstrip the virtues of the production, which finished the trilogy with a breathless performance in an attempt to see through the end of a marathon, so to say. And that Tekand found herself in the situation of giving a “message” that substantiates

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51 See the mini-dossier by Haleva et al. in *Tiyatro* (2006: 12-5).
Figure 8. Şahika Tekand as Eurydice in *Euridyce’s Cry*. Istanbul 2006. Photo by Ersen Çörekçi.
readings that hyperbolically politicise her artistic ethos\textsuperscript{52} that, by its nature, is political, is wholly understandable, particularly when one thinks of the present socio-political turmoil in Turkey. Things were much “better” in the country back in 2006, and Eurydice’s cry had a timely effect with which Tekand got the better of the ones who are still in power and owe their positions to the transmogrification that Turkey had been through in the 1980s, where the seeds of the unravelling tyranny have been furtively thrown amidst all the consumption that came with the establishment of the capitalist realistic system.

But at the end of the day, what mattered the most was the theatrical machine that Tekand regenerated and switched it on and off with the Performative Method through the course of The Oedipus Trilogy. The fact that the director brought the triplet to an aesthetic crescendo through the mechanics of her form was a lesson learned from staging Samuel Beckett, whose present absence in the trilogy can be felt without uttering a word about it. Tekand’s responsible response to Beckett taught her to find out the means that would assure the Studio Players to verbalise a responsible response to the form that, too, was in the trilogy, yet in the form of another form, a form that is the brainchild of the Performative Method, which puts flesh on the bones of the author’s legacy and of Katharine Worth’s heritage within the context of the contemporary performances of Attic tragedies.

Tadashi Suzuki would arrive at a comparable point without staging Beckett.\textsuperscript{53} Instead, he would make Beckett the part and parcel of his philosophy, the undercurrent of which will be adequate to chart out a concise trajectory to conclude the ongoing inquiry pithily with Suzuki-san, the progenitor of transforming human-statues into mechanised units in his struggle against the technologised modern theatre that obviously “has no feet” (2015: 67).

\textsuperscript{52} See Erincin (2011: 171-83) who is followed by Silva (2017: 446), and contrast these views with fn. 32 above.

\textsuperscript{53} Exclusive of his direction of Waiting for Godot for NHK TV in 1969.
Chapter 5

Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT)

Underlying Dynamics of the Socio-Cultural Milieu in Japan before SCOT

The reason why this chapter furnishes an occasion for a closure not just to this part, but also to the present study in toto, resides in the ways in which Shingeki, namely, the new (realistic) drama of Japan,\(^1\) mirrors the socio-cultural climate of a nation in the thick of its rapid metamorphosis into an economic, industrial, as well as a technological powerhouse while it was still going through the aftershock of the Second World War. Fernand Braudel, for one, esteems the country’s post-war accomplishment as a “miracle (the second in its history)” that was realised in the wake of “an unprecedented collapse,” where “it lost all that had been built up since the Meiji era (1868), which had made Japan such an extraordinary anomaly in the Far East in the first part of the twentieth century” (1993: 294); in the meantime, Eric Hobsbawm throws light on one of the most weighty consequences of this “glitch” that turned Japan into “the most formidable power in the Far East” (1995: 36) in the pre-war period. In any case, Japan’s quick post-war recovery and its ensuing reversal of almost all of its material losses in the Second World War suggests itself to be a wonderful incident.

Even so, it would not be hundred percent fair to give all the credit to Japan in this wondrous episode. As the country was rising from the ashes beneath the Rising Sun, the United States of America helped it a lot, commencing with the appointment of a Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP) to the Occupied Japan (1945-1952). What becomes more of an issue is the nature of this American aid, that, in addition to being so generous, has also been tremendously considerate about the societal underpinnings by means of which Japan “achieved its Industrial Revolution, with all its attendant changes of activity, without any revolutionary breaks in the structure of the society” (1993: 293), to quote Braudel, who goes on to emphasise that “the US occupation authorities eventually allowed the [feudal] trusts to be re-established more or less as before [the Meiji Period]” (ibid.: 295, brackets added). The fact that the USA was not backward in coming forward, and imposed all the economic embargos

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\(^1\) Introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century in strong opposition to Kyugeki, that is, the old theatre of nō and kabuki. Shingeki prevailed over the Japanese stage up until the 1960s and 1970s with productions (mostly) imitative of Western drama. Uchino (2009: 1-28) has a neat overview on the rise and fall of Shingeki that unsurprisingly set great store by psychological and social realism of Konstantin Stanislavski’s acting method, and was markedly drawn to the works of Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov, the majority of which function as templates to test the pro et contra of these two types of realism in performance.
and sanctions on Japan during the early phases of this Second Industrial Revolution, in which it was highly unlikely for the country to build a strong defensive budget, did not impede Japan from reaching prosperity in the long run, when American interests ultimately shifted from the Far East to the South East. Hobsbawm is more open about the geographical locations on target and the stimuli behind this American generosity: “How fast would the Japanese economy have recovered, if the USA had not found itself building up Japan as the industrial base for the Korean War and again the Vietnam War after 1965? America funded the doubling of Japan's manufacturing output between 1949 and 1953, and it is no accident that 1966-70 were the years of peak Japanese growth” (1995: 276).

Thus, it would be a grave mistake to assign to the USA the part of a benevolent autocrat who was trying to make up for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In that regard, one cannot help but tease out the underwriting tenets of America’s tolerance towards the social decencies that guaranteed the realisation of the Second Industrial Revolution without doing any ostensive harms to the glues that held the Japanese society together prior to the Meiji Era. Irrespective of its devotion to the leftist credos that the movement imported from Russia, Shingeki was a sitting duck—waiting there to be morphed into a socially transformative weapon throughout the psychological warfare waged on the socio-cultural field. Having pointed out that “SCAP certainly pursued political goals within the modern theater and saw shingeki as an ‘antidote’ to feudalistic kabuki,” David Jortner gets to the root of the matter: “Occupation officials also saw the modern theater as a locus for the production of ‘American’ theater and a place to promote ‘Americanism.’ For the Occupation authorities, the goal of the stage was not to only use shingeki as a propaganda medium, but also to refine the Japanese theater along Western (i.e., American) realistic lines” (2009: 260). Jortner’s explication operates as a backdrop to the poignant remarks that Fraudel passes vis-à-vis the state of affairs in the 1960s, which “was far more catastrophic,” specifically in that it led to irredeemable changes in Japanese society, by rendering individuals “‘bi-civilized’, wearing Western clothes in the street but in the evening reverting to traditional Japanese costumes and habits” (1993: 297). And in that sense, Jortner’s citation from a reputed Japanese critic—Okuno Takeo—touches a sore spot indeed: “‘shingeki became the center, not only of the theater world, but of Japanese culture as a whole’” (2009: 261).

Nor would it be feasible to take America to be the villain in Japan’s post-war success story. Truth be told, albeit in crudo, the cards were being reshuffled in the aftermath of the catastrophe, and the USA was doing its bit by laying the foundations of a “seamless system”

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2 See the essays in Caprio and Sugita (2007) for a plethora of views on these prohibitions that made a labour-abundant country out of Japan, while the nation itself relied heavily on outside financial sources.
(Fisher) against the one advocated by the USSR throughout the *global* psychological warfare
that is known as the Cold War. And Japan, like many other countries, was caught in the
crossfire, though, unlike many other countries, it was afflicted maybe the most with this in-
between sociological condition. The summit of this socio-cultural limbo was the protests
against the renewal of Japan-US Mutual Security Treaty (Anpo) in 1960,\(^3\) when, to use the
words of Paul Allain, “Japan's Hobson's Choice fell broadly along the lines of either cultivating
their alliance with America (and consequently continuing to accept US military bases and,
potentially, nuclear weapons on Japanese soil) or the building of allegiances with the Soviet
Union. Many students and younger activists advocated non-alignment outside these Cold War
polarities” (2002: 13). That *Shingeki* had its share of manipulation and miraculously survived
SCAP’s ceaseless efforts to commercialise it thanks to its leftist pedigree,\(^4\) gave the “new”
drama with a self-reflexive opportunity wherewith to refurbish its realist aesthetics in the light
of the accompanying challenges of the blossoming *angura*, that is to say, the Underground, or
Little Theatre Movement.\(^5\)

As a matter of course, the *de facto* *Shingeki* presence in the Anpo demonstrations had
been more than meaningful, since it *prima facie* implied a common goal for these two theatre
movements: to act as a joint socio-cultural defensive force against the impending capitalist
realism of the 1980s. With that being said, Tadashi Uchino’s words attain extra weight: “Major
*Shingeki* practitioners were seldom interested in newly discovered and/or invented Japanese
‘tradition’; most of them were still stuck to the idea of ‘Japanizing’ what they had decided was
Western modern theatre tradition” (2009: 41). And Allain is surely right to liken the Anpo clash
to “a symbolic as well as actual battle, representing distinctly polarised values, much as the fall
of the Berlin Wall in 1989 symbolised for many the end of a system of beliefs and the embrace
of capitalism,” before hammering home his point: “For theatre artists, it meant a breach with
the *shingeki* movement. In its direct lifting of socialist realist principles from the Russian
context, *shingeki* had always been associated with left-wing politics which had now proved
wanting. The younger artists sought alternatives because the ‘new theatre’ seemed old –
redundant, ideologically outmoded and ineffective” (2002: 14). One can plausibly single out

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\(^3\) The treaty was first signed in 1954, renewed once more in 1970 with revisions and remains in force to this day. 
See Saruya (2012) for a thorough interrogation of the upheaval that the Anpo conflict stirred in Japan. And contrast this common
knowledge with the declaration that “the U.S. would continue to serve as a ghostwriter for Japanese political, cultural, and economic life, no
matter how wealthy the country would become due to reduced military expenditures. Renewal of the Treaty served as a continuing reminder that Japan lost the War and gave the tacit message that Japan could not take care of itself. The Treaty has not been amended or renewed since 1960” (Martin
2000: 84, fn.1).


\(^5\) Or simply post-*Shingeki*, as was endorsed and studied comprehensively by Sas in (2011), that, in its entirety, can be read with critical relish as a supplement to Senda (1997) in which he documents the chief Japanese theatrical productions of the 1970s and 1980s.
“alternatives” as the key phrase here, for Allain is talking about a time-frame in which the underlying dynamics of the socio-cultural milieu in Japan appeared to permit for an alternative, even if Uchino weighs in with a comment that not merely validates Fraudel’s bitter opinion, but more importantly, shows how things were on a knife edge: “Japan as a whole was experiencing drastic social and economic changes. People became ‘tamed’ citizens or shomin, a word which came to mean, at least in some quarters, the newly emerging bourgeois class especially in cities like Tokyo” (2009: 41). Be that as it may, the prospect of an alternative was still on the table due to the decentralisation of Shingeki that went very much hand in hand with the capital’s swift transmogrification into a global centre of capital, business, entertainment, and unavoidably of consumption.

This is the Japanese side of the same process that Turkey underwent over the course of the 1980s, where the case of Istanbul was emblematic and symptomatic at once. The city itself, as Nurdan Gürbilek portrays, “became the symbol of another modernization with its five-star hotels, huge shopping malls and office towers, its stock market and giant advertising billboards: a utopia of business independent of the state, a utopia of the ideal of unlimited consumerism and the free circulation of money” (2011: 72). Gürbilek might as well be depicting the dystopic cityscape of Blade Runner on a mini scale, and her portrayal is a beautiful match for the colossal neon lights that were already preponderating over the global Tokyo back in the 1970s, where the capital was getting bigger and bigger. Within this socio-cultural environment, it was only natural for angura to withdraw from the scene and go underground until the movement was engulfed by capitalist realism in the “populist decade” (Clogg). Hence, “the expression ‘Angura Little Theatre’ gradually lost its Angura: the sympathy towards the ‘underground’ of the previous generation was almost non-existent. At the same time, in the 1980s’ theatre culture, Angura experienced an enormous amount of popularization” (2009: 14), to summate the situation with Uchino, for whom it was one and the same with a “dystopia.”

**SCOT**

Tadashi Suzuki was amongst too many artists of the angura movement, who progressed “from the radical fringes of Japanese theatre into the mainstream” (2002: 42), to cite Paul Allain, who backs his point up with Tadashi Uchino. Still, there is something extraordinary about Suzuki that entitles him to be a “living legend,” as his epithet goes. Robert Wilson encapsulated this façade famously long ago by deeming Suzuki’s praxis as a “theatre that you have to rethink”

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6 Who first dwelled upon this topic in (2000: 85-96).
(SCOT 1992: 82). It is the urgency of this laconic assertion that concurrently makes the case of Suzuki, his theatrical practice and its concomitant philosophy even more pertinent to the present-day stage and to its affiliated scholarly discourse. And to be able to probe properly into what Yukihiro Goto delicately pinpoints as “the theatrical fusion of Suzuki Tadashi” (1989: 103-23), it is, first and foremost, necessary to unfold both the governing factors surrounding the master’s distinctive manner of “inaugurating an age of decentralization” (Carruthers and Yasunari 2004: ch.2), and its outcomes thereof.

So Ian Carruthers bestows a pioneering role upon Suzuki within the domestic niceties of angura. This is an appropriate description that opens up a methodological avenue to “rethink” the far-reaching implications of Suzuki’s decision to relocate his Waseda Little Theatre (hereafter WLT) from Tokyo to the mountainous Toga-mura in 1976 (Figure 1), following its inception a decade ago as a branch of Waseda Free Stage (hereafter WFS). The adumbrations are overarching in word and deed, for the move itself was carried out under the name of “a defiant public statement criticizing the social and cultural centralization of the country around the capital” (2015: 86), as Suzuki explains. His timbre requests the attention to be transfixed on this socio-cultural critique, underneath his artistic vision that had thitherto and hitherto driven his directorial praxis. On that note, names of the troupes drop subtle hints that can suffice to map out a succinct trajectory of the vast distance that Suzuki covered in his career, which spans more than half of a century now. Further on that note, Carruthers supplies the missing link that completes the picture: “For publicity purposes the company name was changed in September 1984 to the Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT)” (2004: 53). As it is,

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7 Cf. Suzuki, who divulges the main reason for this move, which, in turn, discloses the urge to find a suitable theatrical space for his practice: “Only the three styles I chose seemed to avoid these difficulties. I knew that I could neither rent nor borrow a temple or castle, which left only the possibility of using a farmhouse for a theatre. When I had reached this stage in my thinking, I learned that it might be possible to borrow a suitable house at Toga-mura. Not wanting to pass up such a chance, I paid a visit to the village. I remember the day very well. It was February 12, 1976. The place was buried deep in heavy snow, and the drifts were blowing badly. There were five old farmhouses there which had been moved and were no longer in use. I made arrangements on the spot to borrow one of them” (1986: 73).

8 Which was an offshoot of the titular student drama society of the Waseda University, where Suzuki’s theatrical activities began in 1958 along with his collaboration with the prominent playwright Minoru Betsuyaku, who parted ways with him in 1969. Both co-founded with Betsuyaku, the two groups also pass in the Suzuki literature as Waseda Shōgekijō and Waseda Jiyū Butai (est. 1961) respectively. The rupture between these two spearheads of angura gives tender clues about the direction towards where Suzuki was heading in his formative years. Tanaka (2008: 257) ascribes Betsuyaku’s leave to a dissatisfaction with “Suzuki’s directorial method,” in the meanwhile Allain is more specific: “The foregrounding of the performer led to Suzuki’s break with Betsuyaku in August 1969” (2002: 19). Suzuki’s early period is very well documented in (SCOT 1992, passim), and is accordingly well canvassed by Carruthers and Yasunari in (2004, passim), and by Allain himself in (2002, passim). See also, Sas (2011, passim; esp. pt.1, ch.1) for a substantial analysis of Betsuyaku’s position within the post-Shingeki movement.

9 And obviously encompasses an intensively scrutinised massive repertoire of productions ranging from the Western classics to the traditional kabuki and nō plays, and from commercial pieces to musicals. See, for instance, McDonald (1992: ch.1-3) and Fischer-Lichte (1997: 158-68; 2014b: ch.7) as appendices to the studies by Allain (2002) and Carruthers and Yasunari (2004).
Figure 1. Winter in Toga. Photo by Kishin Shinoyama.
SCOT proves to be the direct heir of a university movement—WFS—that, at the dawn of a second distressing Anpo defeat (1970), downsized into an underground activity—WLT—that, in its full flight from the centre, came to identify itself with a settlement on the brink of extinction. Suzuki outlines the high stakes at hand: “If the village of Toga ceases to exist our work there must also end. Such is the interdependent relationship between company and village in a region like ours” (2015: 97).

Within this context, the director’s estimation of “Toga-mura as a kind of last resort” (1986: 94) turns the settlement into a socio-cultural epitome of a communal struggle to survive against the odds of the system. Thence, SCOT becomes more than a company name; it stands for the entire community and as such takes precedence over WLT and WFS, let alone various affiliations that Suzuki has or had with, say, Japan Performing Arts Centre (JPAC), Acting Company Mito (ACM), Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre (SPAC), and so forth. The information provided by Carruthers takes on a new significance now when it is thought in conjunction with Suzuki’s total commitment to Toga: “If the village is really in danger of disappearing, I must do my best to help solve these problems—which are indeed national problems—with the same energy I pour into my theatre productions. With this mindset, I can accomplish something of real, integral value” (2015: 98). Whilst promoting Toga in “the populist decade,” meantime his own evolution into one of “the mainstream priests of high art” (Carruthers and Yasunari 2004: 66) was well underway, it would be infeasible for Suzuki to avoid popularisation and commercialisation for a good cause: “The salient point here is that in a highly capitalistic society like Japan, every individual and organization must operate within the commercial system. There are people who imagine it might be possible to survive without doing so, but such conjecture makes little practical sense” (2015: 89). The realistic tone of the director settles the matters once and for all: co-operation with the system within the system was the sole solution.

Toga’s transformation from an “empty” (1986) and “lonely” (2015) village into the host of Japan’s first international theatre festival in 1982 happens to be the apex of Suzuki’s endeavour, since the organisation “soon acquired world-wide acclaim and helped build local and national support” (2002: 22), as Allain records. It is noteworthy to keep in mind that Uchino’s sharpest criticism is aimed at the long-term results of the festival which ultimately bred “a localized/Japanized version of postmodernism” to be commodified: “In the very gesture of opening up towards the ‘other’ and the ‘foreign’ instigated by the Toga Festival, Japan’s 1980s’ theatre culture closed down around itself” (2009: 55). This animadversion tallies with

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10 The Toga International Festival continued to be held up to 1999 before taking its current name of Toga Summer Festival.
the scholar’s reservations about the *angura* artists of the 1980s, who turned their back on the “underground” features of the movement in the cause of popularisation. The name change from WLT to SCOT strikes obscure notes here: it can either be construed as Suzuki’s exertion to distinguish his practice from a movement that was in decline; can be interpreted as a sign of his dedication to Toga, or can be taken as a token of the promotion campaign of an alternative “to realism and that it is possible to make theatre of high artistic value in an underfunded capitalist ‘dystopia’” (2002: 190-1), to verbalise with Allain. Whilst the scholar’s usage of realism is undoubtedly aesthetic, one may as well read it in socio-cultural terms, inasmuch as Suzuki’s proviso that “theatre functions as a model for the whole cultural mechanism” (1986: 68) holds water.

The director detected the rifts of the Japanese socio-cultural climate via the dysfunctional *Shingeki* and decamped from Tokyo in an effort to decentralise the capital, if not *the* capital, which he was in dire need of in order to centralise Toga: “Being incurably ambitious, I’d like nothing more than making Toga a headquarters from which I could expand my theatrical vision to New York, Paris or even the North Pole” (2015: 88). And in due course he did. Toga occupies the centre of contemporary theatre for so long now, attracting more and more enthusiasts who are keen to learn (buy?) the Suzuki Method at first-hand through the director alongside the SCOT veterans. The irony is that, as Uchino chips in, “*Shingeki never became a mainstream cultural product*” (2009: 41), whereas Suzuki himself became an acclaimed Japanese trademark integrated into the capitalist realistic system through and through the alternative he marvellously effectuated with the Toga community. To that Suzuki would add: “If theatre that reaches new pinnacles artistically also garners the attention of academic or commercial interests, more power to it!” (2015: 89). And there is absolutely no harm in that. There simply was “no alternative;” neither in the 1980s, nor in the 1970s, where Suzuki was already at the centre of Japanese theatrical system and making his way to the global centre like a Trojan horse with his signature production of Euripides’ *Trojan Women* (1974), or his *Bacchae* (1978) for that matter (Figure 2), each of which were intrepid aesthetic statements made on the aforesaid Japanese sociological limbo state on the part of humanity.

What has been sketched out so far is not intended to be another critique of Suzuki from the vantage point of capitalist realism. On the contrary: it looks upon Suzuki himself “as a kind of last resort,” just as he looked upon Toga erstwhile. Suzuki might be “a shrewd businessman and a devout Romantic visionary” (1997: 120), as Allain called him once. But he *is* a certifying

11 Allain nicely gauges the global degree to which the Suzuki Method extends: “It is impossible to quantify the extent of engagement with Suzuki’s training world-wide beyond noting that it surfaces in the work of practitioners across continents and countries, from Argentina through to Denmark” (2002: 95).
Figure 2. Shiraishi Kayoko as Agave in the *Bacchae*. Tokyo 1978. Photo by Tadashi Suzuki.
authority, who would confirm that the efforts that Theodoros Terzopoulos and Şahika Tekand put into the contemporary stage are not futile. The master articulates his views in a vein reminiscent, by and large, of Tekand’s game concept: “For me, this ‘play’ is not simply an attempt to amuse oneself or others, but a way to make people think critically of the world and struggle to ponder the ways we might improve it,” he says; “the actor uses this same sense of play to focus on a fiction and then strives, always risking failure, toward discovering a collective epiphany with the audience,” to nail down the issue: “Unfortunately, most theatre-makers today perceive ‘play’ as a form of entertainment, and so their efforts rather attempt to avoid risk and vulnerability” (2015: 101-2). These risks might entail contaminating Greekness with Turkishness in Epidaurus, not to mention contaminating Greekness with a “Japanising” Bacchae in Delphi; or might include doing theatre in a two-storey basement and rehearsing in rented warehouses that can take up the constructions of the productions, most of which are at least two floors themselves.

The Suzuki Method

That said, taking risks is just a small aspect that brings Theodoros Terzopoulos and Şahika Tekand in line with Tadashi Suzuki. At the end of the day, both directors would unite under the aegis of what the sensei philosophises as “animal energy” against the technologised present-day stage that revolves around “non-animal energy,” which is basically synonymous with “inert energy” (1986: 30), and owes great debt to “the so-called IT revolution” (2015: 141). Furthermore, this notional consolidation of forces is tripled by the registers in which the Biodynamic Method and the Performative Staging and Acting Method are delivered in tandem.

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12 And even a “despot” to top it all, as his reputation around the globe would have it. Nonetheless, this image of Suzuki must be handled with care and it always needs to be bracketed with the manners in which he forefronts the necessity of rules and leadership when it comes down to the lifelong maintenance of a theatre company that, in return, would ensure the troupe to realise its social and artistic objectives: “The group cannot move a muscle if there is no clear goal. Now, to determine just what the goal of drama is, that is the role of the director, as the leader of the group. And the goal he decides on must be shared collectively by the members of the group. Everything depends on whether the group leader is able to clearly define a goal or not. Since ancient Greek times this goal has essentially been to seek a change in society” (2015: 160). That, however, Suzuki defines the goal and wants to set the record straight most noticeably in rehearsals does not necessarily make him a despotic director. Quite the opposite: this strong personality more often than not asserts himself as an obstacle for the actors during the course of the rehearsals. Allain accentuates this point through the testimony of Tom Nelis: “What he wanted was survival instinct. For me to sense and draw on my own will to get through the exercise. He was the obstacle. I never understood that the obstacle was really the driving force in work. I had it the other way round, that intention is everything” (quoted in Allain 2002: 124).

13 He, too, is notorious for his “despotic” persona and would totally agree with Suzuki, insofar as the rules, “leadership” and the rehearsals of Attis Theatre are taken into consideration.

14 By telling contrast, she deploys rules to heighten the creativity of the Studio Players in a different mode that is not primarily concerned with “leadership.” Whence her relentless stress on being an ensemble above everything else.
with “Suzuki’s chosen mode of performing,” that, as Paul Allain fleshes out, “is energised, forward-facing and combative. The performer is exposed and vulnerable on stage in this highly charged state,” before staking out that “the concept of animal energy recognises an essential characteristic of performing – the need for the performer to survive on stage rather than ‘die’” (2002: 5). Allain’s figurative depiction can be taken a step ahead by thinking it side by side with the status quo of the contemporary stage that swarms with examples which illustrate how “one can strangle theatre with too much technological sophistication as well as with too much commercialism” (2010: 68), to put it with Marianne McDonald.

As it stands in this disclosure, the respective methodologies of Terzopoulos, Tekand and Suzuki not only carve out a space for theatre qua theatre to breathe in the digitalised twenty-first century stage, but above all, thrust these three directors to the front-line as technology entrenches upon the art of theatre, to paraphrase Jerzy Grotowski. The question that how can the actor qua human being exist in the hic et nunc, without being digitalised, intermedialised and commercialised is a matter of survival for theatre, insomuch its unique status pivots around human presence by way of which theatre comes into existence in the first place; or, in the words of Suzuki: “It is the actor’s live human energy, what I like to call ‘animal energy,’ that has sustained the social and cultural survival of theatre for thousands of years” (2015: 34). This defining characteristic has long fallen from grace within the terrain of Theatre Studies, such that Günther Anders’ iteration of his anxieties in the 1960s—“nowadays, there is nothing more precarious than accusing someone of being an anti-technologist that can instantly render one invalid” (1961: 3, emphases in the original)—took a turn for the worse. Today, raising contentious concerns over technologisation of theatrical art by virtue of Ancient Greek tragedies can immediately render one into an ineffective dinosaur at best, or a hopeless idealist at worst, in the eyes of the sponsors of “cutting-edge” research within the realm of Arts and Humanities in general, and within the field of Theatre Studies in particular.

It is precisely under these circumstances that holding the line becomes an obligation, so does continuing to fight this rear-guard action with Suzuki, who, in point of fact, is the one that McDonald snipes at in her reprimand: “Suzuki now seems to be selling Orientalism to the West, and reverse Orientalism to Japan, using all he can of modern technology (sound and light projection) and modern pop music to help him with his sale” (2010: 67). What made McDonald develop this somewhat antagonistic attitude towards a director that she used to be fond of is hard to tell for the time being. But her critique has a point and gives vent to the dormant perils that lurk about the practice of a theatre-maker, whose modus operandi is centred on “pushing

15 Cf., for example, McDonald (1992: ch.1-3) and the praises she lavishes on Suzuki in the relevant parts of (2003).
forward without doubt, despite the fact that we will never achieve what we set out to do. This is the essential, existential paradox that lies at the heart of the artist’s life” (2015: 102). McDonald calls this artistic enigma into question and rephrases Suzuki for good reason: “But one has to wonder when a director’s creativity becomes what it has been fighting against, becomes rigid, a new conservatism, with endless repetition” (2010: 68). That being so, one has to wonder too whether repetition does not take the shape of a stylistic device in the theatre of Suzuki that hinges on a recurrent worldview—“All the world’s a hospital, and all the men and women are merely inmates” (2015: 117)—and uses (classical) texts as mere pretexts to project this conception onto the contemporary stage. What is more, while voicing a variant of Tadashi Uchino’s criticism through Allain, McDonald appears to be hesitant to lend an ear what the latter has to say on the Suzuki Method: “The personal title given this training indicates Suzuki’s entrepreneurial spirit but also to the fact that he is the foremost articulator of its ethos” (2002: 96). Allain’s evaluation serves as a significant caveat when it comes to doing critical justice to a director who is in perpetual state of research and is more than cognisant of the in-built commercial tensions around his theatrical enterprise, and, by extension, around his

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16 This, in fact, is a much more eloquent way of saying what the figurehead of Performance Studies described the performative practice subsequent to the 1970s thus: “A long neomedieval period has begun. Or, if one is looking for historical analogies, perhaps neo-Hellenistic is more precise” (Schechner 1993: 19) on the shaky grounds that the terminology of avant-garde “really doesn’t mean anything today.” Its penchant for reproducing the commonplace periodisation of the history of theatre aside, the wholesale of this contention rests on the idea that vanguards of the 1970s—Ariane Mnouchkine, Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, Pina Bausch, and so on—have now become “classics.” This is something inexorable and it can be augmented to interject Suzuki into this constellation so as to strengthen the hands of such contestation, which, either tactically cloaks, or curiously takes no account of the “historical” fact that the “avant-gardes” of the twenty-century theatre too have established themselves as “classics” in their lifetimes. This is exactly the case with the chain reaction that Konstantin Stanislavski’s “system-actor” triggered in the Western theatrical circles of the early twentieth century, and paved the way for Vsevolod Meyerhold’s “biomechanic actor,” Bertolt Brecht’s “epic actor” and Grotowski’s “holy actor” in seriatsim under the auspices of Antonin Artaud. In this context, Suzuki is no exception. He also became a “classic” in his lifetime not just with his productions, but at the same time with his Method that carries notable vestiges of these prior methodologies. Having said that, Suzuki, who was dubbed as “the Japanese Grotowski” (1982: 89-90) as early as the 1970s, shines light on the supposedly dark “neomedieval period” of theatre in two outstanding manners: on the one hand, by starting from the point where Grotowski abandoned “poor theatre” he demonstrates the length to which the former’s (para)theatrical phase could have gone if he opted to perform in front of wide audiences; and on the other, Suzuki’s retreat to Toga is equal to the conceptualisation of his individual Method that, in essence, gives the “American Stanislavski System” a taste of its own medicine by weighing the pros and cons of Stanislavski in accordance with the theatrical forms of nō and kabuki, thereby giving rise to a transcultural theatrical event in the sense that Alain Badiou would use the term. Just like Suzuki designates An Actor Prepares “as one of the most illuminating books ever written on acting” (2015: 35), he proves to be one of the most prolific commentators of the treatise as well: “This mutant [Americanised] form of the Stanislavski Method skips a critical stage in the creation of a role. Somehow, in incorporating the Method into practice, a step was lost: the step where the actor must use his or her imaginative work to create a fictional space and experience emotions unique to the act of being onstage” (ibid.: 36, emphases in the original, brackets added). The light that Suzuki cast on the “neomedieval period” together with Mnouchkine, Brook, Wilson, Bausch and many others must have been so bright that it compelled the instigator of the debate to admit defeat and attach the director’s name to “a very big cohort” that he would begin with Meyerhold after this opening concession: “For a long time I bemoaned the ‘death of theatre,’ predicting that theatre would be the ‘string-quartet of the 21st century.’ Well the 21st century is here, and so is theatre. I was wrong. Recently I have seen some powerful theatre. The experimentalists have won many of the battles over the ‘future of theatre’” (Schechner 2000: 5).
working methodology: “People not in my company study the Suzuki Method somewhere beyond my reach. Then, somewhere in the course of practicing under the name of the Suzuki Method, they end up doing all sorts of strange things” (2015: 176). Herein lies the moot point of McDonald’s reproach that evidently overlooks the progression in Suzuki’s thinking, which simultaneously safeguards itself against the hazards of orthodoxy and persists on enabling for the interaction between non-animal energy—“sound and light projection”—and animal energy as a repercussion of his Method that is contingent on repetition; an interplay that McDonald herself was amidst the first to appreciate.

This is why Suzuki insists on strenuous “stomping to the same constant rhythm; and then, after collapsing on the floor to lie still, getting up again to music like a marionette, by extending a calm strength throughout the body” (SCOT 1992: 19) as the part and parcel of his training, which culminates in the construction of a “grammar of the feet” by dint of an ever-changing series of complex physical exercises—oftentimes syncopated with varied tempos and sections of Pérez Parado’s Voodoo Suite—to “be assimilated into the body as a second instinct, just as one cannot enjoy a lively conversation as long as one is always conscious of grammar in speaking. These techniques should be mastered, studied, until they serve as an ‘operational hypothesis,’ so that the actors may truly feel themselves ‘fictional’ on stage” (2002: 163). Correlatively, this is why the director puts his dibs on “stamping the foot” as his own methodological stamp with which he seals the present-day stage: “In stamping, we come to understand that the body establishes its relation to the ground through the feet, that the ground and the body are not two separate entities. We are a part of the ground. Our very beings will

17 A year after McDonald’s publication of her essay, Suzuki would go on to flag up the same problem in a symposium on the Suzuki Method of Actor Training in 2011: “If you simply incorporate the movements used in the Suzuki Method in a performance, it’s nonsense. In the end, of course, you can do whatever you want with my method, even modify the exercises if you like. But the objective must always be to make the actor better, not to adhere to a doctrine. If you don’t bear that in mind, training just turns into dogma, nothing more than just sticking slavishly to the teaching, a theory of sorts applied indiscriminately to anyone at all” (2015: 180). It is important to take cognisance of the ways in which Suzuki reverberates his assessment of Stanislavski’s Anglo-Saxon reception here: “As his [Stanislavski’s] theory spread, a dogma materialized which misconstrued his teachings. Good acting became based on the degree to which the actor could embody a character in everyday life—how deeply he [sic] could ‘ground’ himself in reality” (ibid.: 37, brackets added).

18 Cf. Allain: “Repetition in training helps the performer learn the necessity of facing daily challenges and encourages engagement with fine detail. In performance, it might help the audience observe more closely, as similar material is tackled from diverse angles and is dislocated to new contexts” (2002: 138); and cf. Allain again, where he bolsters his analysis of Suzuki’s Clytemnestra (1983) with McDonald herself: “Sound and light are perfect vehicles for creating a rushing vortex of moods and impressions on stage, depicting a world gone mad. Suzuki utilised them fully in this production. When the performance was shown outdoors, McDonald describes how Clytemnestra’s shadow at the end was ‘projected against the backdrop of a tall tree in the Toga presentation (and against Parnassus when the play is performed in Delphi)”’ (ibid.: 167).

19 See Brandon (1978: 29-42) for an early account on Suzuki’s training in WLT. See also, Carruthers and Yasunari (2004: ch.3) in which the scholarly appraisals of the training from Brandon to Allain are discussed in systematic detail. Also crucial to look at is Suzuki (2015, passim), where the director himself elaborates on the allusions of the fresh set of exercises through which he continues to fine-tune the Suzuki Method in concordance with his research.
return to the earth when we die” (2015: 69). Concordantly, moreover, this is why Suzuki lays
claims on universality via “the lower half of our body through which the physical sensibility
common to all races is consciously expressed; to be more specific, the feet. The feet are the last
remaining part of the human body which has kept, literally, in touch with the earth, the very
supporting base of all human activities” (SCOT 1992: 19). And finally, this is why the director
cautiously underlines that his “training alone will not automatically bring an actor to the top of
his [sic] or her art. This depends on whether the actor understands the training philosophy
deeply enough to use it as a springboard into performance, and whether he or she possesses an
actor’s spiritual disposition” (2015: 60-1).20

Within this frame of mind, the training occurs to be a true test of psychophysical
endurance, or in Suzuki’s words, “a process of education, of initiation” (1986: 59) into SCOT
which “is bound together by a kind of volunteer spirit that would normally characterize a
religious group” (2015: 89).21 Invoking the archaic practice of going through a rite of passage
is tantamount to the ways in which Suzuki dovetails nō and kabuki with Ancient Greek tragedies
as superlative forms of theatrical events brought to life through animal energy to be acted out
before a real presence in the metaphysical fashion that George Steiner affirms “the intuition
that where God’s presence is no longer a tenable supposition and where His absence is no longer
a felt, indeed overwhelming weight, certain dimensions of thought and creativity are no longer
attainable” (1991: 229). Suzuki, on his part, would harken back to the spatial dynamics of
theatre wherein nō, kabuki and Attic tragedies were performed22 to posit, in a manner that also
salutes Jean-Pierre Vernant’s notion of “presentification,” that “we need to discover a unique
way of using energy to compensate for being unable to feel god’s presence. To make the fiction

20 This last point puts Suzuki on a par with Grotowski, for whom the actor’s “disposition” would be the equivalent
of its “sacrifice” for the sake of a total act in the presence of a “spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who
really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyse himself [sic]” (1975: 40). That being said,
where Grotowski would slowly but surely grow indifferent to the spectator throughout his research, Suzuki would
 elevate reception to the utmost pedestal of his thinking in manners that attest to the director’s capitalist realistic
materialism: “The bottom line in theatre is whether your audience is increasing or not, even if only slightly. Even
one or two at a time is enough. What also matters is whether patrons from the previous time come back or not. On
that point, SCOT is remarkable. The supporters who really appreciate the message—I mean the Suzuki aficionados
who endorse the message of Suzuki drama—they’re a very distinct group. They have a distinct intellectual level
and outlook on the world. That’s my goal: to match their level” (2015: 171-2).
21 Allain has correctly called notice to the delicacies intrinsic to the troupe in that respect: “The problem is not that
they [the actors] have been trained in a specific body use, for the principles espoused in the training can be widely
applicable. Rather it is the close-knit company life and the humble relationship to the director from which it is hard
disengage. Several performers have described how difficult it was to leave SCOT and some did so unannounced
or overnight in order to avoid confrontation with Suzuki” (2002: 52, brackets added).
22 Cf. Suzuki: “The actors’ bodies were oriented toward a center point in the theatre where the god was seated
Acting, therefore, was described as the act of facing god. The spectators, sensing the collective illusion of god,
could enjoy this interactive dialogue. Just as there was usually a seat for the priest of Dionysus in the classical
Greek amphitheatre, the Noh theatre has a shinjindōkyo, where the shogun and the Shinto god would sit together.
In the Kabuki tradition, theatres are traditionally built with a yagura tower on the roof, from which the gods could
c descend and give permission for a performance to take place” (2015: 23).
of god palpable in performance, one must call forth a caliber of energy that evokes divine spirit” (2015: 28). Here, it is imperative not to miss out the perceptual salience of “stamping” to Suzuki’s “holy” defence of theatre *qua* theatre against technologisation on the heels of Grotowski, Terzopoulos, Tekand, or anyone else who would feel at home with Allain’s cardinal note: “It is the performer who will remain at the centre of the performance process” (2002: 54). Within the framework of the Method, “stamping” happens to be the *sine qua non* of creating a fiction whereby to summon the divine presence to modern stage whose “feet are somehow not on the ground” (2015: 83).

Likewise, it is vital not to lose the sight of Suzuki’s transcultural input to the discussions in and beyond the tragic. Drawing on the fact that “the ancient Japanese stages were built on graves or mounds where the souls of the dead were considered to dwell” (SCOT 1992: 19), the director proffers a thought-provoking exegesis: “The traditional *roppō* movement, literally to ‘stamp in the six directions’ can be interpreted to mean gesturing to the spirits, arousing their spiritual energy, confronting it and taking it onto oneself” (2015: 72), and presses this point further: “The illusion that the energy of the spirits can be felt through the feet to activate our own bodies is a most natural and valuable illusion for human beings. Noh is well blessed because it has cherished this idea right to the present. Graves and mounds can be regarded as wombs from which we have been born. In that sense the earth is a ‘Mother’ herself” (SCOT 1992: 19). As is, the act of “stamping” denotes an ontological *Gestus* in the theatre of Suzuki that, after all is said done, paints the cycle of life in earthy light in such a way that it forms a counterpart to the “blinding light of the bomb that the world saw in shock for the first time, just like the bomb itself saw the light of day” (1961: 253), as Anders would concur. Suzuki’s theatre is an aesthetic response to this bomb that has fallen on womb. It elicits wonder on stage by translating it into a platform to delineate the cycle of life as an endless cycle of violence through the course of mankind’s triumph over nature by means of technological advancements that still hold sway over the “grammar of civilisations,” to call the original title of Fernand Braudel’s influential work (1993) into play. Monitoring the orbit of human life from womb to tomb, Suzuki pauses at the decisive moment of the bomb, or better, a myriad of bombs, to inscribe the shell-shock into his theatre to freeze everything there in a way evocative

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23 Expanding on Richard Stayton after Suzuki’s reworking of Euripides’ *Trojan Women*: “He remembers planes flying low over the roof, some with red suns on their wings, some with stars…Seven-year-old Tadashi Suzuki was ‘very much afraid’. Below lay the port, where the planes would dive. He remembers the shrieks of the bombs, their *sizzling* misses in the harbour and animal roars when scoring hits. But most of all he remembers the women trying to protect the children. The wooden houses with paper walls could ignite from a single splinter of the shrapnel. The helpless anguish on his mother’s face as she shielded him left a wound deeper than shrapnel could leave. It’s the memories and the need to exorcise the emotional wounds of that childhood that lie at the heart of Suzuki’s radical interpretation” (quoted in Carruthers and Yasunari 2004: 153, apostopesis in the original).
of a mie posture in kabuki that “punctuates movement and momentarily frames a character in a heightened pose” (2002: 117), as Allain reminds. This performative mode harks nowhere but back to such cruxes of training as “standing” and “sitting” statues, both of which repetitively incarnate the fallouts of the moment in absolute stillness throughout the productions of SCOT.

As a matter of fact, Suzuki would replace the “grammar of civilisations” with a “grammar of the feet” on the fulcrum that theatre operates as a paradigm for the entire cultural mechanism so as to be able to get down to the nuts and bolts of the problem: “Most people would automatically consider the society reliant on non-animal energy to be the more civilized. For me, however, a civilized society is not necessarily a cultured one” (2015: 63). Arguably, therefore, a theatre needy of non-animal energy can scarcely be something more than a “showcase” for the state-of-the-art in “applications” of high technology to performance. These are the blunt facts of the present-day stage, where they are backed up by the up-to-the-minute academic brand “practice-as-research,” where they are also slyly camouflaged. According to Allain, “the development of multimedia and digital technologies is a vivid challenge to notions of Suzuki’s such as animal energy” (2002: 54). In the theatre of Suzuki, feet are the factual barometers of the craft of acting, and the Method itself is an equally blunt way of saying facts to the actor’s face: “The Suzuki Method merely establishes a bare minimum of training that must be accomplished in order to make a performance that can move an audience spiritually through the expressivity of the human body and voice,” maintains the director, “my own system of training is, in fact, intended to define such a standard, and says if you are unable to master the requisite minimum skills, you simply won’t be able to move an audience—not in the manner I explained earlier” (2015: 168). And Allain himself offers the corroborating evidence to wrap this section up with an elucidation on the protean idiosyncrasy of animal energy for theatre: “Suzuki has demonstrated that it is possible not to drown the performer in non-animal technologies, while making powerful performances in large spaces. Through the body he presents alternatives to intensifying mechanisation. If we wish to keep the theatre alive in this century we should hold on to this capability” (2002: 54).

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24 Cf. Suzuki once again: “A performance begins when the actor's feet touch the ground, a wooden floor, a surface, when he [sic] first has the sensation of putting down roots; it begins in another sense when he lifts himself lightly from that spot. The actor composes himself on the basis of his sense of contact with the ground, by the way in which his body makes contact with the floor. The performer indeed proves with his feet that he is an actor” (1986: 8, emphasis in the original).
The Mimetic Aesthetics of the Suzuki Method

The preceding defence of theatre *qua* theatre against digitalisation of the modern stage took great pains not to give in to the temptation to delve deeper into the aesthetic subtext of Tadashi Suzuki’s methodology. Now that adequate grounds for a counter-strike have been gained, it would be apt to advance upon contemporary critical discourse with the yardstick with which the director leads the charge on behalf of Theodoros Terzopoulos and Şahika Tekand; on behalf, all in all, of the present foray into the fundamentals of theatre: “The art of stage performance cannot be judged by how closely the actors can imitate or recreate ordinary, everyday life on the stage. An actor uses his [sic] words and gestures to try to convince his audience of something profoundly true. It is this attempt that should be judged” (1986: 5).

The benchmark, in a word, is facsimile with the end goal of the Suzuki Method, which is nothing short of a “diagnosis—that is, it is a training that shows you where your faults are. It’s not the sort of training that tells you, ‘If you do x, y, z you can get better.’ It only tells you, to begin with, that you have this certain shortcoming, this sort of ‘illness’” (2015: 179). On that score, Suzuki’s touchstone provides an accurate prognosis of the present-day critical discourse around the present-day stage. It not merely cements his critique of a theatre hooked on non-animal energy, but reveals, more acutely, that the former *sensu strictu* does its worst to expel mimesis from the latter as a concept supposed to represent solely an imitation of quotidian life, as well as of reality, and it can hardly be taken to mean something more than these. Whereas the art of theatre dictates mimesis at the outset, notably in the sense that it can barely be conceived of without the actors’ *convincing* execution of an *intense truth* in a *fabricated* world in the *here* and *now*, as the director himself makes it crystal clear; though, most probably without having mimesis *qua* mimesis on his mind *imprimis*. Diagnosing, all the same, the sickness of the contemporary scholarly discourse on mimesis *qua* make-believe, and *qua* world-making no less, Suzuki’s methodology conjures up a gratifying component of *katharsis*: it, one way or another, endows the anti-mimetic minded theatre scholars with a chance to “rethink” their positions on mimesis *qua* mimesis in view of his directorial practice. But it would be up to those scholars themselves to find the remedy, for Suzuki himself propounds no cure. He distributes, after all, an array of examinations, symptom detectors if you prefer, like an X-Ray, CT scan or a PET scan;²⁵ each requiring different sorts of competence to take in the results and

²⁵ Cf. Suzuki one more time: “Now a shadow is usually comparatively easy to spot because it shows up clearly on an X-Ray. But when it comes to a PET scan or a CT scan, you need a much more experienced person to interpret it. That’s why, at least with the basic set of exercises I handed out, I included only those exercises I thought nearly everyone would be able to interpret” (2015: 178).
be open to come to terms with what Stephen Halliwell would likely to call as “the rewards of mimesis” (2002: ch.6).

In that respect, the meditative texture of the present examination is completely on the same page with Suzuki’s line of reasoning. At this juncture, the congruence between the two methodologies allows for a recapitulative gloss, even though it heaves in sight most clinically in the first part, where the problematics of degrading mimesis into imitation and representation (of reality, and of life) was plainly laid bare to be complicated with a range of arguments on the exigency of a poetics of (intersemiotic) translation-cum-reworking attuned to an ideational dramaturgy—a convolution which facilitated a swift, climactic finale. The same procedure was at play in the second part, where the uneasy correlation between philosophy and tragedy was conveniently unpicked to be densified with a muster call on the poetics of the tragic that similarly gave way to a condensed finish, only to start the identic process yet again by conducting a simple series of biopsies on the socio-cultural climes to which Terzopoulos and Tekand responded with their compound anti-realistic staging praxes that, by the same token, brought these chapters to a charged close. Passed the halfway point of the corresponding line of inquiry, the third part of the current inspection is soon to come to an end with Suzuki himself, to fulfil a cycle of prognoses for scholars with variable areas of expertise to explicate whether its variable layers of findings cohere.

Regardless of the fact that Plato and Aristotle have, for the most part, been the major philosophers to whom the diagnosis itself over and over again turned for argumentative stimulus, the muse behind its structural arrangement is a name dear to Suzuki: Zeami, from whom he “steals” a term to underscore that his notion of acting “struggles to create a kind of eternal flower or continuity—a style that weaves the physicality of contemporary reality with those that inspired classic theatre like Noh and Kabuki” (2015: 53). The tripartite structure, conversely, touches base with Zeami in the principle of jo-ha-kyū (introduction-complication-denouement), and takes his words to heart in such a pitch that can beam one up to the nucleus of Suzuki’s praxis: “Fulfilment is related to the process of jo, ha and kyū. This is true because there is in the composition of the word Fulfilment itself a suggestion of the process that involves a sense of completion. If this natural process toward completion is not carried out, no feelings of Fulfilment can arise” (1984: 37). Being utterly mindful of the charming undertones that puts flesh on the bones of Aristotle’s tortuous views on the perplexed affinity between techne and physis, zooming in on the last portion of Zeami, one might as well leave it up to Suzuki to

26 As was demonstrated in the first chapter, the Aristotle’s juxtaposition of art with nature is a delicate one and requires to be paired with the twofold decree of art’s imitation-cum-perfection of nature. This coupling suggests (contra Halliwell) theatre techne sui generis to build on (pace Philip Lacoue-Labarthe) nature, as a corollary of the (f)actual presence of the all-inclusive poiesis and its cognates, which lend considerable assistance to resolve
shed light on the manners in which this completeness can flourish by way of “yūgen, of stillness in a performance, or of the vision beyond sight” (1986: 71-2). Although this explanation speaks for itself, lending an ear to Ian Carruthers’ enucleation unpacks how the director conceptualises and contextualises yūgen for the contemporary stage: “Suzuki describes the actor in this state as like a racing car at the starting line (or a Boeing 747 on the runway just before take-off): engines are revving at high speed but brakes are on,” he expounds, “the actor's stillness is really a state of highly energized ‘restrained motion.’ Two equal energies – one driving forward, one restraining – are balancing out. In this sort of theatre, any series of movements is a balancing act between a force which drives forward and a force which holds back. Nowhere on stage is this tension completely relaxed” (2004: 80). Carruthers puts his finger on the right point by pinning the overtone of the theatre of Suzuki down to stillness and invites Jean-Luc Nancy to participate in the dialogue to broaden its available scope with a keystone that coalesces corpus and tension into one: “A body is a tone. I don’t say anything here that an anatomist couldn’t agree with: a body is a tonus. When the body is no longer alive, has no more tonus, it either passes into rigor mortis (cadaverous rigidity), or into the inconsistency of rotting. Being a body is being a certain tone, a certain tension” (2008: 134, emphasis in the original). Clinching the philosophical argument on the indispensability of an (un)moved body to move the audience while breathing life on the classics, Nancy’s cogent parameters are wholly in sync with Suzuki’s “sum of interior angles” (Carruthers and Yasunari 2004: ch.3). This viewpoint assists to qualify stillness as the exterior ex-pression of a surging internal e-motion, deriving from “the feeling that the feet are planted firmly on the ground” (1992: 19), to spell out its resistant quality with the director himself. If this qualification by way of argumentation is granted, then siting stillness the bulk of the complexities in Aristotle’s thinking on theatre qua theatre. Setting this reminder apart, what rises to prominence in this comparable context is Aristotle’s pregnant remark (1449a14-15) that comes right after his ascription of the birth of tragedy to the leaders—performers—of the dithyramb, and that of comedy to the leaders—performers—of the phallic songs in Poetics: “καὶ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς μεταβαλοῦσα ἡ τραγῳδία ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ διέγερ τὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν / And after going through many changes tragedy ceased to evolve, since it had achieved its own nature” (Halliwell 1995: 42-3, emphasis added). Halliwell does not comment on this endpoint ambiguity anywhere in his writings. But especially here, this last segment calls for a comparative reading with Zeami, who is unequivocally talking of the performances of nō (that can perfectly stand for tragedy) and kabuki (that can perfectly stand for comedy) plays. Apparently for Aristotle, the natural procedure is completed with the “saturation” of the performative event into drama, not vice versa. As an upshot, nature of tragedy naturally becomes drama in Aristotle’s system of thought. The chances are that Alain Badiou would rush to take this prioritisation as a vindication of his Platonic deliberations on theatre, without taking into account opsis that would (willy-nilly) return theatre to performance—to its “original” nature—to downgrade his anti-Aristotelianism. Anyhow, the “theoretical” demarcation line between the two theatrical traditions (the Eastern and Western) is particularly obvious. Yet, the nature of theatre is performance—the means to improve it. Suzuki straightens out the kinks around the debate: “From a historical perspective, it is clear that actors—this group of people who specialize in expressing with their bodies and voices—came first, and that texts emerged as a way of giving the public access to them. In other words, written plays were originally created to contextualize an actor’s performance, not the other way around” (2015: 140). And on this point, everyone would see things eye to eye with Suzuki.
as the “vital substratum of performative nourishment” at the kernel of Suzuki’s theatre would most certainly touch a chord with the director, who gears his staging practice towards the aesthetic pronouncement of a truth, the truth through electrified human beings, all of which prove to be the organic instruments of a number of mimetic implementations on a scale of world-making to embodiment.

Though the penultimate paragraph of the previous exploration of his Method has already heralded the nature of the profound truth that weighs on the director’s mind, it is still compulsory to crystallise the points at stake with Yukihiro Goto, who predicates Suzuki’s dramaturgy on “two kinds of compositional devices common to Japanese literature: honkadori and sekai. Honkadori (literally, ‘taking a foundation poem’ [and varying {-tori, -dori} it]) is a technique of classical poetry; sekai (literally, ‘world’) is basic to traditional drama” (1989: 108, brackets and braces added). Goto’s taxonomy gives way to a higher ground that affords a finer view of the lie of the land with respect to the director’s transcultural treatment of the “pure tragic axiom” that is embedded in Euripides, who “surveyed humankind from the watchtower of his own era” (2015: 114). Suzuki, pro se, would contemplate on mankind’s wager on nature from Toga-mura with Samuel Beckett to rewrite the idea per se by concentrating on one of the countless tragic paradeigmata that the author sprinkled across his oeuvre. Reiterating his still truism—“When we die, we return to the earth. So we have no reason to struggle with nature” (1986: 86)—the director recourses to the absolutely tragic postulate as honka and modulates (-dori, -tori) it to a different key that is central to Beckett—“We are all born mad. Some remain so” (1978: 80)—against the background of his recurring notion that “All the sekai is a mental asylum,” the “vicinity” of which has “no more nature” (1972: 16), with which the author would chime in. Where there is no place for humankind to return after death, being on earth amounts to an incurable limbo condition in which “some” sums up humanity in and of itself. And, as Suzuki reckons in a stimulating tête-à-tête with Beckett regarding acting, “words are now addressed principally to the self, resounding only in the speaker’s head” (2015: 27), on which Hamm and Nagg would re-actively eavesdrop: “Something dripping in my head, ever since the fontanelles. (Stifled hilarity of Nagg.) Splash, splash, always on the same spot” (1972: 35). Additionally, and all the more significantly, without forgetting that this liminal predicament is identical with the in-between situation within which the Japanese society was enmeshed before crossing the Rubicon and being drastically “modernised” in the long haul, Suzuki translates the facts into expressive nails and employs his stomping-cum-stamping Method as the hammer

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27 Reprising the title of François Jullien’s monumental work on “departing from happiness” (2007) in a Chinese context.

28 Undated entries from Suzuki’s Toga diary testifies to his socio-cultural concerns: “Standing here in this spot, with its population fast disappearing, one can feel the stresses and strains of Japanese society as it moves into the
which pounds them through the bones of mankind’s skull, whilst each stroke echoes the 
*Bacchae*, 506: “οὐκ οἶσθ’ ὃ τι ζῆς, οὐδ’ ὃ δρᾶς, οὐδ’ ὃστις ἐλ.” / You do not know what your life 
is or what you are doing or who you are” (Kovacs 2003: 58-9). The director himself enhances 
the connotations of this Euripidean adage with a blatant announcement: “The kind of message 
I’m trying to get across is one that criticizes the Japanese mentality and/or spiritual state. Yet 
my message is not just for the Japanese alone” (2015: 165). In the absolutely tragic and mimetic 
world of Suzuki, where a special fondness for Euripides is patent, “Beckett metaphorically 
dances with the Shinto goddess Ame Uzume no Kami [sic] on her overturned tub” (2002: 20), 
as Paul Allain vibrantly puts it.

While this long chain of reflections throws the translational-cum-ontological facet of 
Suzuki’s animally-energised rewriting of Euripides into sharp relief, it is worth being wary of 
the issue that Goto’s preference to subsume this dramaturgy under the heading of “adaptation” 
(1989: 108) sits well with the director’s choice to keep the nomenclature of translation at bay.29 
Because Suzuki is in charge of the current venture, and because sheer precision in conceptual 
vocabulary has been of essence all the way through the ongoing investigation from the archaic 
period to the uppermost critical ground just obtained with Goto, it would be apposite to swap 
(intersemiotic) translation for (ontological) reworking as per the stratagem held in reserve for 
such forthright cases.30 The textual intricacies of Suzuki’s inventive *imitatio* of Ancient Greek 
tragedies notwithstanding, Kerem Karaboğa sets a captivating angle to hone in on the director’s 
mise-en-scène by means of which “he goes against the grain of going back to a playwright’s 
world” to “create, instead, a progressively emancipating semantic fracture between the contents 
of the text and his directorial vision to the point that the fissure itself evolves into his sovereign 


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29 Goto’s delineation of Suzuki’s practice as “theatrical fusion” finds a robust resonance in Suzuki’s words: “I 
ever try to ‘translate’ the texts of Greek tragedy using Noh and Kabuki techniques. Nor do I merely replace the 
Greek setting with a Japanese one. If there are parts of my work that closely resemble the stage artistry of classic styles like Noh, Kabuki and ballet, it is because the physical sensibilities of these styles have been fused into a 
contemporary amalgam” (1986: 112).

30 And Suzuki’s case does not make things any easier, since it coerces one to devise a diverse strategy to go beyond 
coming up with yet another textually-oriented approach to the study of his productions, where he “ecologically and economically recycle previous materials” (2002: 187), to hearken to Allain, who sides with “adaptation” in a 
manner suggestive that of Fiona Macintosh, who, on her part, calls notice to the nuance that the director takes all 
the liberties he can with Euripides and “the result is that deviations from the Greek originals abound in Suzuki's 
versions, and that the performance text itself is not fixed. In the case of the *Bacchae*, which was first seen in Tokyo 
in 1978, there are numerous versions” (1997: 313). The conversation between the two scholars is strengthened by 
the former: “In 1990, *The Bacchae* spawned *Dionysus*, which was initially staged by the Acting Company of Mito 
as their première production” (2002: 162). This rewarding scholarly exchange can be reinforced with a glance at 
Suzuki’s *Elektra* (1995), where Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s eponymous libretto was the axis around which 
Euripides (and Sophocles, if secretly) danced to the transposed rhythms of *nō* and *kabuki* up to the time when the 
director revamped the production for Ansan Arts Center and Arko Arts Theatre of Korea in 2008 to be followed 
by international tours throughout which the transfused Attic tragic dance lasted in kaleidoscopic performative 
veins. Suzuki’s rewritings of the *Bacchae* and *Elektra* are exhaustively studied alongside of their productions in a 
sequence by McDonald (1992: ch.3); Carruthers and Yasunari (2004: ch.6), and Tomatsuri (2007: 71-82).
text, which is nothing but an internal, yet mutually felt transcendental cosmos” (2003: 36). Karaboğa’s perceptive perspective calls to mind the ways in which Beckett’s oeuvre boils down to a single narrative on going on through repetition with a slew of variations on the same “sad tale” (1984: 287), exactly the ways in which the theatre of Suzuki scales the planet back to an asylum to “ceaselessly scrutinize the mental epidemics that impede the sublime potential of human race” (2015: 118). The aesthetic kinship between the two figures is such that the director too tears the certain tones of the corpus into pieces and lends a fresh impetus to Nancy with Beckett: “Body is certitude shattered and blown to bits” (2008: 5). In consequence, he too breaks aesthetic paradigms into miniatures to disperse them around his universe qua text, which “Suzuki does by no means ‘write’; rather, he strives to ‘draw’ through the sparkles emanating from a calm water, in lieu of signs exploding and showering all over the stage like fireworks” (2003: 36),31 to bid farewell to the beloved intersemiotic translation with Karaboğa for the purposes of bestowing privilege on the director’s ontological reworking of the tragic with Beckett, where Euripides happens to be only an ideational catalyst.

That the author contestably shines out as the brighter glitter that stems from the director’s tranquil body of water does not save Beckett from being lost like Euripides in the midst of the copious glows of Suzuki’s theatre, in spite of his ostensible performative advantages over the Attic tragedian. “Grammar of the feet” comes to be a case in point, where Suzuki can be said to inject such elusive punctuation marks innate to Beckett’s (corpo)real syntax as “laborious walk” (of Krapp) and “rhythmic tread” (of May) into his own transcultural theatre to merge them with the ingredients of nō and kabuki under the cluster of “footwork” with the latent aim of constructing his tragic semantics.32 The multifarious visage of Suzuki’s Method, without a doubt, makes it an extremely punishing cerebral exercise to wend one’s way into the fountainhead of this body whose still waters do run deep, so to say. It can further be said that Suzuki demands an exegetical perseverance from scholars akin to the one he asks of the actors throughout training and onwards, where “person’s intellectual capacity now comes into play—matters of sensibility or their ability to interpret text—their aesthetic sense” (2015: 173). The director’s words are instructive and point the spotlight on Karaboğa’s prescient

31 The scholar drops this superb subject here. But it can be magnified with a gesture towards Greetings from the Edge of the Earth (1991), where Suzuki did use fireworks and did manage to “draw” his world with the sparks reflecting on the lake around which the main stage of SCOT is built. The director continued to revive this production on and off for the Toga Summer Festival, the most recent revival being in 2012.

32 Diverging from Tajiri and Tanaka (2009: 145-6) to keep aloof from the intimations of “postmodernism” and alter the textual focus therein to a corporeal focal point all at once: “In his deconstructive stage work, even Beckett’s play can be reduced to a tiny constituent of Suzuki’s world. Therefore, one may find fragments of Beckett’s work loosely quoted in Suzuki’s works.” There is no harm in being more specific and note that Suzuki sequentially “quoted” Waiting for Godot, Cascando and Endgame in On Dramatic Passions II: The Shiraishi Kayoko Show (1970), Greetings from the Edge of the Earth (1991), as well as in The Chronicle of Macbeth (1992).
construal of Suzuki’s world as a serene corpus of water that sets a contextual snare, in which “performance analysis that is dependent on semiotic or literary frames of reference is inappropriate” (2002: 31), as Allain vindicates him. Reading these versed opinions in connection with the director’s instruction turns his methodology into an ideal place to trace Beckett’s legacy for contemporary performances of Attic tragedies; a proving ground if you will, to measure the discursive aptitude for good measure under the tutelage of Suzuki.

**Dionysus and Elektra**

Having laid out the rationale for a trail-making test, it will now be provocative to conclude this chapter, and, by extrapolation, the present voyage by bringing mimetic differentials of Tadashi Suzuki’s *Dionysus* and *Elektra* into play with a view to hold a candle to the contemporary critical discourse on mimesis with the “dazzling light” (1984b: 43) of Samuel Beckett, which springs from the director’s still body of water silently running through these thoroughly studied productions. Writing within the exclusive scaffold of *Dionysus*, Erika Fischer-Lichte crowns these studies with an all-encompassing view from her crow’s nest and espies the director’s “interweaving of utterly diverse performance cultures” as “the ‘magic’ and ‘miracle’ of Suzuki’s theatre and, in particular, of *The Bacchae/Dionysus* productions. It is a case of coincidentia oppositorum: the pessimism concerning history as an ever-recurring power struggle between different forces leading to the ‘dismemberment’ of the communal and the individual human body coincides with the optimism of a utopian vision of the ‘restoration to wholeness’ to be realized in the performance” (2014b: 182).

Fischer-Lichte’s observation holds valid for the warmly received Istanbul performances of *Dionysus* and can be stretched to cover the harmoniously heartfelt received performances of *Elektra*. With the benefit of hindsight, it would be safe to note that the critical merit of Suzuki’s transcultural bravura was to establish an exemplum for the Turkish theatre(goers) from the moment that the spectators were introduced to this spellbinding theatre, which synchronously builds on the premise that “when a tradition can be successfully broken, the profundities of the nō [and kabuki] can become all the more apparent” (1986: 73, brackets added) and makes the most of “discovering how certain traditional aspects of Japanese performance might be utilized globally in the contemporary theatre—an effort to perpetuate a tradition by transforming it” (2015: 152). The windows of time amidst *Dionysus* (1998), *Elektra*

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33 See Appendix 3 for the production details of the performances.
34 See, amongst many, Allain (2002: ch.5, esp. 162-4); Carruthers and Yasunari (2004: ch.6) for *Dionysus*, and Kim (2009: 472-4) and (2013: 207-22) for *Elektra*.  
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(2010), as well as the present are wide-open to reap the harvest and observe that contemporary Turkish theatre is still at pains to come to grips with interweaving its own traditional forms, like Karagöz (the Turkish Shadow Play) and its “live” companion Ortaoyunu (the Middle Play) with miscellaneous performance cultures to find a “voice” indigenous to Turkey that can speak to the globe. To make matters worse, being one of the most potent means of social criticism through satire in the Ottoman Period, Karagöz, for instance, bit by bit shrank into a form of mere children’s theatre. And with the shambolic cultural policies of the neo-Ottoman AKP, one witnesses the “preservation” of a tradition from another re-transformative vista. The moral Suzuki points to, and the manners in which he read(s) between the sociological lines of Togamura shoulder to shoulder with the community “as a textbook example of Japan’s post-World War II urban exodus” (ibid.: 89) have a lot to say on the chronic “identity crisis” of modern Turkish theatre that, at any rate, turns out to be a mimesis of Turkey’s socio-cultural mechanism in the sense that it holds a mirror to its immanent (dys)functionalities, in the way that (l)imitations of Shingeki and the emergent angura puts the changing dynamics of Japan in a sociological nutshell.

Nevertheless, lessons to be learned from Suzuki-san are not confined to socio-cultural plane alone. The compelling parallel that Fischer-Lichte draws between sparagmos and the director’s aspiration for integrity (in the full ethical sense of the word) in performance sets the preliminary stage for putting the lid on this long-standing transdisciplinary introspection not with an eye to reconstruct the already de-/re-constructed Dionysus and Elektra, but with a move towards stitching together the landmark pieces of a methodological re-treatment of an aesthetic idea under the rubric of stillness—the lineament of the magical “wholeness” in question that Fischer-Lichte surprisingly takes practically no note of in her noteworthy analysis.

For this reason, Paul Allain’s splendid title—The Art of Stillness—re-sets the conclusive scene for zeroing in on the aesthetic proximity between Suzuki and Beckett under the fabric of mimesis. Without going too far to locate Beckett at the wellspring of the director’s marvellous body, yet sensibly combining stillness with an a priori and an a posteriori silence makes inroads into the Suzuki Method under the guidance of Mary Bryden’s identically erudite designation—“Beckett and the Dynamic Still”—where she takes special heed of feet in the author’s cosmos to opine that “if movement must be sought, stillness must inevitably lie in wait. Implicit in the mobility is the immobility, and vice versa” (2004: 184). Bryden’s insight into

35 For a broader perusal and bibliography on the transmutations of Karagöz within the frame of Turkish Westernisation, see Dinçel (2010: 85-114).
36 Virtually every source cited in relation to Suzuki throughout the present chapter mentions in passing this immediacy, which did not go unnoticed in Beckett Studies as well. See, in addition to the joint article in fn.32, Tanaka (2003: 47-59).
the footfalls of the author’s ghostly personae sets the undercurrent which flows through the reciprocal aesthetics of Beckett and Suzuki, both of whom have been responsive to nō in ways peculiar to them. The latter classifies it as “the art of walking” (2015: 65); whereas the former’s well-sifted absorption of nō through William Butler Yeats gives sufficient reasons to contend that he was presumably familiar with the Japanese correspondent of Friedrich Hölderlin’s caesura—“the counterrhythmic rupture” (1988: 102)—which is to say that mimesis of the tragic: ma. Luciana Galliano clarifies the term within the singular framework of music: “Ma is that element of implicit potential in all concepts of separation (spatial, temporal, emotional, or whatsoever) whereby the space between becomes a ‘journey between’” (2002: 14), while Mariko Hori Tanaka helps to foster this link by convincingly interlacing Attic tragedies first with nō, then with Beckett to anchor him in performance against the philosophical setting of Zeami: “When Rieko Suzuki performed Footfalls, she adopted the sliding walk of Noh and had ma in mind. She focused on this physical preparation for every footstep she made” (2012: 109). This is a very significant comment that aids in cracking the Beckettian codes of Dionysus and Elektra in which another Suzuki can be seen in concrete action when adorning Euripides with the author’s tragic footprints, most of which bear the stamp of a Clov whose “staggering walk” is put in the wheel-chair of a Hamm to puncture the performative moments with ma that is manifest in manifold shapes of pauses, silences, as well as forms of complete stillness. Why nobody writing, and writing with brilliant scholarly vigour if anything, on Suzuki (in general, on top of it) took notice of this imprint is a mystery. But it can easily be resolved in two steps, the first of which is hidden in the director’s words that regrettably do not give Beckett his due on this font: “The modern theatre does nothing to promote the expressiveness of the feet; the feet are merely used as they are in ordinary life. In Noh, where ghosts serve as the protagonists, the art of the foot exists, but in the modern theatre, which purports to show living beings, there is none” (2015: 67). And the second is tied to the manners through which the image of wheelchair overrides the author’s “syntax” of the feet on which his tragic corpus stands still in “a certain tonus” (Nancy) to survive being a corpus. Yet, from Allain (2002) to the more attentive Ian Carruthers (2004) bar none, Beckett is taken to be “a literary frame of reference;” an “absurdist” if you like, with little to bequeath on the poietic afterlife of tragedy. Then again, his footmark is a hallmark that permeates through Suzuki’s reworking of the tragic in the mental hospitals of Dionysus and Elektra.

The Woman’s Voice—“the motion alone is not enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall” (1984b: 241)—in Footfalls gently gravitates this exegesis towards mimesis.

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37 See Okamuro (2008: 165-77), where she exchanges fruitful ideas with such precursors of the survey as the truly missed Katharine Worth and Takahashi Yasunari.
Beckett gives an initial idea of what is at work through his V-Effect: “Sole sound in the silence of your footfalls” (1996: 9). Recalling that Suzuki assimilates his grammar into the body as an “operational hypothesis” allows ample room for this spectral alliteration to abide in *Dionysus* and *Elektra* as a given, that, by definition, rivets the attention one last time on training, during when the director moulds the *corpus* with music to cultivate a collective sense of *ma* mainly with an exercise\(^{38}\) that he designed to frame the choreography of the *Bacchae* and interpolated into the resultant *Dionysus: tenteketen*; to be more punctual, the slow *ten tekka ten*, the slow-motion walk with statues; or to put pithily: the “Voodoo” with a nod to Pérez Parado’s *Voodoo Suite*, whose assorted percussions with alternating tempos the training, on the whole, exploits with stomps, stops, glides, and slides—so much so that one would be justified to consider one of its lower-key versions driven by uncanny drums, cowbells, as well as soothing trumpets and saxophones as the quasi-official soundtrack of SCOT. Here is one of those fortunate instances, where even a typo—“Tenteken”\(^{39}\)—can be useful to enrich the phonetics of Suzuki’s alliterative injection of the percussive sounds into the name of the exercise, which blankets Beckett’s “some soft thing softly stirring soon to stir no more” (1996: 12) with a contour that resonates with the sonorous soundscape prefigured by Aeschylus’ *Edonians* in which the chorus ecstatically rejoices over Dionysus’ arrival in Thrace.\(^{40}\) Dionysus, to be sure, was absent in Suzuki’s reworking; its wax-like priests were there as a substitute, entering the stage with the Beckettian “Voodoo” to be conjoined by the Maenads in the form of ‘“Moving statues’ to the *Bugaku* beat of *Nasori*, swiftly adopting new and individual poses in the irregular beat of the big drum” (2004: 176), as Carruthers recounts their choreographic function within the overall dynamics of the production. Reinstating the archaic notion of mimesis in the contemporary stage, the director draws a tell-tale picture, where, to reutilise the haunted maxim of Herbert Blau, he lights a candle and curses the darkness with the Bacchantes (Figure 3) in *Dionysus*, only to amplify the performative soundscape with the animal-energy propelled percussions of Midori Takada with which the titular persona makes her entrance in *Elektra* (Figure 4), while the chorus shot out of an *Endgame* swirls around her like a whirlpool within which mimesis *qua* mimesis was swallowed and spat out as imitation (of daily life) and representation (of reality).

\(^{38}\) Following Carruthers (2004: 84-6), who is sensitive to *ma* and Zeami than Allain (2002: 110-1). Cf. the nub of the exercise: “Actors stand in two lines facing each other on opposite sides of the stage, keeping a strong focus on a point on the wall directly in front of them. They are required to approach their point of focus in a slow walk across stage, through the line of the other group. Although the task looks simple, it is hard in practice, for obeying the rules of the discipline challenges physics, in particular the tendency to ‘bob’ slightly as the center of gravity shifts from one hip to the other” (Carruthers and Yasunari 2004: 85).


\(^{40}\) Cf. Aeschylus: “The twang shrills; and unseen, unknown bull-voiced mimes in answer bellow fearfully, while the timbrel’s echo, like that of subterranean thunder, rolls along inspiring a mighty terror” (Smyth 1976: 400).
Figure 3. *Dionysus*. Istanbul 1998. Courtesy of IKSV.

Figure 4. *Elektra*. Istanbul 2010. Photo by Ilgin Erarslan Yanmaz.
At this turning point, it is obligatory to remember, with Tadashi Uchino, that the gamut of Suzuki’s research behind his methodology “was realized both physically and theoretically in the body of Shiraishi Kayoko” (2009: 114), who left the company in 1990. The fact that Marianne McDonald’s discomfort with Suzuki appears to have begun in the mid-1990s does not come as a surprise in that regard, because the actor’s departure from the troupe raised, back in the day, a fundamental issue that is aptly vocalised by Carruthers: “the question remaining was whether his Method could produce another Shiraishi” (2004: 56). The problem that McDonald has with Suzuki’s first take on Elektra in 1995 is a solid indicator of this point. Before squaring accounts with Suzuki on his deployment of “sound and light projection” in later productions, she starts to build pressure with Takada, “who performed with his [sic] percussion on the stage, rather like the instruments and musicians in Noh drama being visible as actors performed the drama. Music and dance seemed to be attempting to replace the acting talents of Shiraishi” (2010: 65). McDonald, now in a very telling sense, acquits Suzuki of the charges that she herself laid on him, which, far from adding up to her critique, downplay the importance of her invaluable point that is also shared by Allain: “Shiraishi left SCOT in 1990 and an actor of equal stature has not yet emerged to replace her” (2002: 36). One can only be sorry for not having the precedence of actually seeing Shiraishi in a Suzuki production, since both scholars are making a sturdy aesthetic statement that indisputably warrants the actor herself as the embodiment of the director’s model par excellence. Still, reminiscing about Ellen Lauren’s performance in Dionysus, particularly when she stood still with Pentheus’ head, some counter-claims can be made. It would certainly not be an overstatement to retain that with Lauren the time itself also stood still, for experiencing the tragic moment in her performance has the potential to remain fresh in one’s memory even after two decades: there was an empty persona on stage half-sitting in cold blood, confronting the audience with a trophy of an ecstatic murder masterminded in hot blood by Dionysus (Figure 5). The tragic, whatever it is, was brought into completion in Lauren’s prolonged silence and stillness, precipitating her explosion of energy with the recognition scene in which she ascended higher and higher in grief and descended deeper and deeper in pathos to throw herself onto what she was made to believe by Dionysus to be the remnant(s) of Pentheus, who would be called from the “dead” by Suzuki for the “real” killing to take place.

41 See Figure 2 above.
42 Cf. McDonald in more direct terms: “There was never an actress to adequately replace Shiraishi, so the revivals, I would claim, trace Suzuki’s own gradual decline. He became almost a parody of himself with people in wheelchairs and quotations from other plays he had worked upon” (2010: 63).
43 Now cf. Allain, writing in the same direct terms on Suzuki’s Trojan Women: “What began as an experiment with Japanese theatre forms developed into a world-class piece of theatre, realised through Shiraishi’s metamorphoses” (2002: 155).
With this visceral experience in mind, one comes to read the Shiraishi *krisis* from the same page with Carruthers: “With Ellen Lauren in 1990 he [Suzuki] was finally able to claim that his method was capable of producing someone – an American no less – to match Shiraishi’s prodigious skills” (2004: 160, brackets added). This counter-statement now needs to be sited next to Allain’s accent on Shiraishi, who “was considered to have embodied Suzuki’s vision much as Ryszard Cieslak exemplified Grotowski’s” (2002: 6). Allain’s stress falls on a point that was emphasised again and again in the course of the current inquiry to highlight the mimetic silhouette behind the modernist theatre: from Konstantin Stanislavski to Jerzy Grotowski, mimesis comes out into the open *qua* mimesis with the actor’s embodiment of an ideal model. Encountering with this absolute form of mimesis in the absolutely tragic theatre of Suzuki comes as no wonder. Yet, the ways in which the director turns the tables on Stanislavski’s method to infuse it into his *nō* and *kabuki* incited training make this case exceptional; a trait that Allain casts a cloud over by regarding Shiraishi as “initially untrained” (ibid.: 2), whilst “the long-time star of Suzuki Tadashi’s troupe and one of the greatest actresses of post-*shingeki*, was trained in *shingeki*” (2009: 225, fn. 8), as Miryam Sas clears the air around the manners through which Stanislavski is nested in the director’s method to be (trans)fused. Proceeding

![Figure 5. Ellen Lauren as Agave in *Dionysus*. Istanbul 1998. Courtesy of IKSV.](image-url)
warily on the assumption that Lauren eo ipso was trained in Stanislavski, one can look under
the hood to ascertain that the director transforms an overtly (mis)used model into a covert
building block of his Method, which is no more than a paradeigma that he realised with
Shiraishi and apparently had no difficulty in realising it again with Lauren, “whom Suzuki
introduced to us as the best teacher of his method” (2002: 98), as Allain himself substantiates
when reporting his “first direct experience” of training, which, in actual fact, is conceptualised
as “a strategy for cozening the audience in an infinite variety of ways” (2015: 60), to put an end
to the discussion with Suzuki.

While the Shiraishi-Lauren nexus unearths the mimetic flavour for Suzuki’s theatre
for good, it would be optimistic to expect from Allain, who is also highly appreciative of
Lauren, to savour it as an aesthetic asset, one that was felt in every nook and cranny of Dionysus
and Elektra. Having noted how for the director “performing bears no relation to imitation. The
theatrical matter is the performer's struggle with his or her own physical and mental being, and
imitation eschews this challenge,” Allain hashes over: “the sense of feeling ‘fictional’ that
Suzuki described refers more to a heightened or raised consciousness than mimetic impulses,
as the performer transcends physical limitations and taps into surprising or unexpected energy
reserves and potential” (2002: 122). Meticulously bending his study towards the gist of Suzuki’s
theatrical practice, the scholar passes the binding verdict that contributes to the downfall of
contemporary critical discourse on mimesis. And because he is quick to dispense with the
manners in which training and mimesis interlock with each other in performance, Suzuki must
be called on to restate: “The point is not to try to use the energy of the training to create an
everyday imitation, but to mimic everyday activities using the same energy as you do in the
training” (2015: 176). It would correspondingly be wishful thinking to surmise that Allain’s
stance on mimesis would have been any different had he opted to stop by such stations of
Suzuki’s dramaturgy as honkadori and sekai when admirably repositioning “one small aspect
of Japanese performance within a Western context, without falling into the most worrying etic
and superior or patronising perspectives of interculturalism. Suzuki’s work is Western, while it
is also Japanese” (2002: 32-3). It is from this last bifocal lens that mimesis transculturally
radiates in Suzuki’s theatre qua world-making; qua make-believe; qua embodiment of a
Platonic paradeigma in the form of an Aristotelian unmoved mover—qua re-enactment of a
Zeami prompted yūgen, though, each of these conceptions of mimesis would cause Allain’s
eyebrows to raise, most likely in the same fashion that he would cast suspicions on
comprehending Beckett as a living idea that brings all these discursively broken pieces of
mimesis together in stillness.
That, in the final analysis, Suzuki gives a twist to *theatrum mundi* with Beckett rules out each and every discursive fortitude to banish mimesis from the contemporary stage, to which the director appeals, when staging his worldview that holds cosmos as a mental hospital.

Setting the same procedure of stillness into motion, the director also gives the reins to Takada in *Elektra*, as he did in 1995, to set the pace of the performance with her percussions to distil the tantalising archaic notions of mimesis into a modern asylum. This time it was Yoo Jeong Byun, who froze the tragic moment in stillness (Figure 6) in yet another narrative on being on earth to cope with its inexplicable wonders. The actor herself was simmering with an e-motion that Suzuki concisely elucidates: “The only emotion truly connected with acting is the exhilaration and amazement derived from the complete concentration to live in this fiction” (2015: 38). The circle on which Byun stood in sustained silence and stillness replicated the image emblematised on the wheelchairs of Beckett. The idea of the “tragic” was brought into completion yet again to erupt into an ecstatic dance orchestrated by the intimidating music of Takada. As Byun’s dance reworked Elektra’s joy over Clytemnestra’s death to the greatest detail until her animal energy was depleted, she embodied the portrait that Suzuki draws from his serene body of water: a picture that, in the last instance, authenticates mimesis as a conceptual and performative constant of the present-day stage.

Figure 6. Yoo Jeong Byun as Elektra in *Elektra*, Istanbul 2010. Photo by Ilgın Erarslan Yanmaz.
Conclusion

The Lay of the Land

The present investigation has a strange background and moved along the lines of an equally curious orbit: it was launched as a project within the domain of Translation Studies; was carried out in its true dwelling place—Theatre Studies—and derived the greatest benefit from Classics in the process. Essentially, however, it was an undercover mission in Beckett Studies.

As could be discerned from the underlying timbre of its various phases, the study itself was intended to be a showdown. This, in a sense, was an obligation; born, first and foremost, out of a personal reflection on the ways in which Theatre Studies handles its basic conceptual vocabulary, especially when it comes to the survival of one of its foundational aesthetic materials—Attic tragedy—on the contemporary stage, as well as to the ontological kinship amidst these ancient artefacts and the modern theatre of Samuel Beckett. This is why the cardinal parts were assigned to theatre in general, and to its human ingredient in particular, in connecting the dots amongst the aforesaid transdisciplinary constellation. This also explains why Theatre Studies was cherished throughout on the firm belief that it harbours effective names (i.e. Denis Diderot, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Friedrich Hölderlin) in its history, and has powerful tools—mimesis and katharsis, above all—at its disposal to construct a (translational) methodology that can speak across disciplines in Humanities and beyond, without necessarily playing to the crowd, or assimilating theatre into other fields of studies. It is for this reason that pleasing the public eye by trying to find a compromise with, say, textually-oriented strategies for performance analyses and technologically-minded approaches to theatre have never been of primary interest to the undertaken inquiry. These and related matters were simply called upon to make a point. After all, reconciliation would more or less be identical with reproducing the same questionable meanings and terms within the dominant discourse surrounding theatre under the banners of “interculturalism,” “interdisciplinarity,” “adaptation,” “postdramatic,” “postmodernism,” to name but a few.

Although this pithy section has no tendency or whatsoever to arrive at a clear-cut conclusion on an intricate subject such as the one tackled, glancing at the transdisciplinary trajectory with which the interrogation proceeded allows for a couple of inferences. As it turns out, the abovementioned robust trust in Theatre Studies is doomed to be a naïve one, unless the formidable perspectives of Classics are brought into play to remind the scholars of theatre of the dormant (methodological) potential of their discipline, which, truth be told, is under the
sway of contemporary critical discourse, where mimesis bears the brunt of anti-realistic conceptions of art, whereas such and such artistic ideas are executed via such and such forms of mimesis at the end of the day, arguably with their (intersemiotic) translation(s) into the performative media. Thus, confronting this discourse with the full philosophical spectrum of mimesis in the company of Ancient Greek tragedies not only leads to a sudden collapse of the overconfident discursive contentions, but more importantly, reveals a chronic inclination to take the easy way out of the “ancient quarrel” either siding with Plato or with Aristotle—a bent that manifests itself in the shape of a disciplinary constraint that impedes excellent scholars with brilliant insights from probing deeper into the respective systems of thought of these philosophers, let alone going beyond them to the deceptively darker recesses of the archaic period. After all is said and done, the problem comes down to be one and the same with doing criticism without actually having a total grasp of the aesthetic lexicon. The accurate calibration of Classics vis-à-vis the diffusion of theatrical terminology in and around performance remains a constant reminder of the stakes at hand for Theatre Studies.

The discipline, on its part, would certainly not leave the favour unreciprocated, insofar as it becomes more sensitive to the lineaments of its aesthetic and notional nomenclature. Whilst meditating on the issues of mimesis, translation, tragedy and the tragic from antiquity to modernity with a view to observe the manners through which they are nested in the exempla of Theodoros Terzopoulos, Şahika Tekand and Tadashi Suzuki, katharsis rose to the surface as an emergent problematic, one that is perhaps more alarmingly treated than mimesis in Theatre Studies. The current examination exercised due care to monitor the situation of katharsis remotely and restrained itself from striding through the kathartic territory. Nevertheless, the increasing level of alertness on the veins in which mimesis and katharsis interlock within the comprehensive frame of tragedy, the idea of the “tragic” and acting in-between calls for a foray into that terrain. It is to that journey one must prepare now with the same self-reflexive impetus that triggered this study in the first place.
Appendix 1

The Persians and Prometheus Bound

The Persians. Co-production of Attis Theatre, International Istanbul Theatre Festival, Athens-Epidaurus Festival, and the 4th International Theatre Olympics. The Persians after Aeschylus; Translations by Helene Varopoulou and Gungör Dilmen; Directed by Theodoros Terzopoulos; Space and Costume Design by Giorgos Patsas; Music by Takis Vellianitis; Props’ Design by Charalampos Terzopoulos; Light Design by Theodoros Terzopoulos and Konstantinos Bethanis; Cast: Meletis Ilias, Devrim Nas, Yiğit Öüşener, Antonis Myriagkos, Savvas Stroumpos, Nikiforos Vlassis, Kerem Karaboğa, Miltiadis Fiorentzis, Erol Babaoglu, Dimitris Zografakis, Pavlos Stavropoulos, Caner Candarlı, Güven İnçe, Ferdi Yıldız; Singer: Ferdi Yıldız. First Performance(s): May 11, 12, 2006, Byzantine Church of Hagia Irene, Istanbul, Turkey; Second Performance(s): June 30, July 1, 2006, Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, Greece. The presented account on the critical reception of The Persians was mainly based on the Istanbul performances of the piece, its video-recording, and partially on some of the reviews of the Epidaurus performances.

Prometheus Bound. Co-production of Attis theatre, Athens Festival, Istanbul Cultural Capital of Europe 2010 and Essen Cultural Capital of Europe 2010. Prometheus Bound after Aeschylus, Directed by Theodoros Terzopoulos; Space made by Jannis Kounellis; Translations by Helene Varopoulou, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Heiner Müller; Stage Design by Jannis Kounellis; Technical Advisor / Stage Design Implementation by Eduard Winklhofer; Music by Takis Vellianitis; Costume Design by Theodoros Terzopoulos; Assistant Director Magda Korpi; Light Design by Theodoros Terzopoulos, Konstantinos Bethanis; Production Manager Maria Vogiantzi; Cast: Yetkin Dikinciler, Sophia Michopoulou, Götz Argus, Sophia Hill, Kerem Karaboğa, Statis Grapsas, Devrim Nas, Christian Holdt, Antonis Myriagkos, Laurens Walter, Maximillian Löwenstein, Umut Kircali, Nazmi Sinan Mihçi, Savvas Stroumpos, Andree-Östen Solvik, Alexandros Tountas. First Performance(s): July 9, 10, 2010, Old Oil Mill of Elefsina, Greece; Second Performance(s): July 26, 27, 2010, Rumeli Fortress, Istanbul, Turkey; Third Performance(s): August 5, 6, 7, 2010, Zeche Zollverein Essen, Germany. The presented account on the critical reception of Prometheus Bound was based on the Istanbul performances of the piece and on its video-recording.
Appendix 2

The Oedipus Trilogy

*Where is Oedipus?* Co-production of the Studio Players, International Istanbul Theatre Festival and the European Cultural Centre of Delphi. Rewritten after Sophocles by Şahika Tekand; Directed by Şahika Tekand; Stage, Costume and Light Design by Esat Tekand; Cast: Şahika Tekand, Cem Bender, Ulushan Ulusman, Ulgar Manzakoğlu, Sevtap İnşel, Ridade Tuncel Sarıcan, Arda Kurşunoğlu, Ozan Gözel, Özge Dayan, Nilgün Kurtar, Ahmet Sarıcan, Hakan Turutoğlu, Erdem Topuz, Nedim Zakuto, Özlem Özhabeş, Serap Daştan. Light-Players: Utku Gündüz, Gamze Peker. The presented account on (the critical reception of) *Where is Oedipus?* was based on the first performances of the production that took place on 22-23 May, 2002 in Harbiye Muhsin Ertuğrul Stage, Istanbul. The video-recording of the performances has also been consulted as a memory-aid.

*Oedipus in Exile.* Co-production of the Studio Players, International Istanbul Theatre Festival and the European Cultural Centre of Delphi. Rewritten after Sophocles by Şahika Tekand; Directed by Şahika Tekand; Stage and Costume Design by Esat Tekand; Light Design by Şahika Tekand and Esat Tekand; Cast: Şerif Erol, Cem Bender, Kerem Karaboğa, Ulushan Ulusman, Arda Kurşunoğlu, Ridade Tuncel Sarıcan, Ahmet Sarıcan, Ozan Gözel, Nedim Zakuto, Nilgün Kurtar, Özlem Özhabeş, Hakan Turutoğlu, Tulú Ülgen, Dilek Atik Meriç, Ali Soyer, Deniz Karaoğlu, Umut Kircali, Özlem Bekâr, Zeynep Papuççuoğlu, Korhan Soydan. Light-Players: Utku Gündüz, Gülşah Karahasan, Şirin Parkan. The presented account on (the critical reception of) *Oedipus in Exile* was based on the first performances of the production that took place on 22-23 May, 2004 in Enka Auditorium, Istanbul. The video-recording of the performances has also been consulted as a memory-aid.

*Eurydice’s Cry.* Co-production of the Studio Players, International Istanbul Theatre Festival and the 4th International Theatre Olympics. Rewritten after Sophocles by Şahika Tekand; Directed by Şahika Tekand; Stage and Costume Design by Esat Tekand; Light Design by Şahika Tekand; Cast: Şahika Tekand, Şerif Erol, Cem Bender, Ridade Tuncel Sarıcan, Özlem Özhabeş, Ulushan Ulusman, Gizem Bilgen, Tuba Büyükgüngör, Ayse Draz, Faik Ergin, Ozan Gözel, Ayçin İnci, Gülşah Karahasan, Deniz Karaoğlu, Umut Kircali, İlksen Gözde Olgun,
Zeynep Papuççuoğlu, Murat Polat, Ahmet Sarıcan, Korhan Soydan, Hakan Turutoğlu, Tulû Ülgen. Light-Players: Nilgün Kurtar, Ayşegül Cengiz Akman. The presented account on (the critical reception of) *Eurydice’s Cry* was based on the first performance of the production that took place on 6 June, 2006 in Atatürk Cultural Centre, Istanbul. The video-recording of the performance has also been consulted as a memory-aid.
Appendix 3

Dionysus and Elektra

Dionysus. Production of Suzuki Company of Toga. First performed on 23 March 1990 in Mito as the opening production of the Acting Company of Mito, and on tour intermittently ever since with different (international) casts. Composed after Euripides’ Bachhae by Tadashi Suzuki; Directed by Tadashi Suzuki; Costume Design by Takako Okomato, Yoshiko Fukami; Light Design by Makoto Niwa, Masayuki Higuchi; Cast (as of the performances for the 10th Istanbul International Theatre Festival): Kosuke Tsutamori, Yoichi Takemori, Ellen Lauren, Ichiro Nakamaya, Michitomo Shiohara, Toshihiro Sakato, Keita Mishima, Itaru Okano, Shiro Suzuki, Momoyo Tateno, Chisako Aiba. The presented account on (the critical reception of) Dionysus was based on the Istanbul performances that took place on 2-3 June 1998 in Atatürk Cultural Centre. The video-recording of the performances has also been consulted as a memory-aid.

Elektra. Co-production of Suzuki Company of Toga, Ansan Arts Center and Arko Arts Theatre of Korea. First performances: October 2, 4 in Ansan Arts Center, Ansan; October 10, 11, 2008 Arko Arts Theatre, Seoul. The production is on tour ever since with different casts. After Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Euripides. Directed by Tadashi Suzuki; Costume Design by Orie Horiuchi; Music, Composed and Performed by Midori Takada; Painting by Takako Tomura; Cast (as of the performances for the 17th Istanbul International Theatre Festival): Chieko Naito, Yoo Jeong Byun, Min Seon Kim, Sung Won Lee, Masaharu Kato, Daisuke Ueta, Yasuhiro Fujimoto, Haruo Ishikawa. The presented account on (the critical reception of) Elektra was based on the Istanbul performances of the production that took place on 26-27 May 2010 in Harbiye Muhsin Ertuğrul Stage. The video-recording of the performances has also been consulted as a memory-aid.
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