

Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău

Facultatea de Litere

**STUDII
ȘI
CERCETĂRI ȘTIINȚIFICE**

**Dossier thématique sous la direction de Liviu Dospinescu
Thematic folder edited by Liviu Dospinescu**

Special issue “Representations of Human Catastrophe in Literature and Performing Arts”

Numéro spécial « Représentation de la catastrophe humaine en littérature et arts de la scène »



STUDII ȘI CERCETĂRI ȘTIINȚIFICE

SERIA *FILOLOGIE*

**Nr. 50
2023**

Copyright 2023, Editura „Alma Mater”, Bacău, România
ISSN 2559 - 3455
ISSN-L 1224 - 841X
All rights reserved

Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău

Facultatea de Litere

**STUDII ȘI CERCETĂRI ȘTIINȚIFICE
SERIA *FILOLOGIE***

*Representations of Human Catastrophe
in Literature and Performing Arts*

*Représentations de la catastrophe humaine
en littérature et arts de la scène*

2023

Editura „Alma Mater”, Bacău

STUDII ȘI CERCETĂRI ȘTIINȚIFICE. SERIA FILOLOGIE
Revistă a Facultății de Litere, Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău

Redactor-șef: Vasile Spiridon

Comitet editorial: Nicoleta Popa Blanariu, Luminița Drugă, Florinela Floria, Adrian Jicu, Violeta Popa, Petronela Savin, Mihaela Hriban

Redactori de număr: Nicoleta Popa Blanariu, Florinela Floria

Coordonatori de număr: Liviu Dospinescu, Nicoleta Popa Blanariu

Comitetul științific

Eugen Simion, Academia Română

Simona Bealcovschi, Université de Montréal, Canada

Florica Bodiștean, Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu” din Arad, România

Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, România

Tatiana Ciocoi, Universitatea de Stat din Moldova, Chișinău, Republica Moldova

Daniel Cristea-Enache, Universitatea București, România

Mircea A. Diaconu, Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava, România

Liviu Dospinescu, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Stelian Dumistrăcel, Institutul de Filologie „A. Philippide” Iași, Filiala Academiei Române

Cristina Florescu, Institutul de Filologie „A. Philippide” Iași, Filiala Academiei Române

Alexandru Gafton, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași, România

Gabriela Haja, Institutul de Filologie „A. Philippide” Iași, Filiala Academiei Române

Luminița Hoarță-Cărăușu, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași, România

Till R. Kuhnle, Université de Limoges, Franța

Asun López-Varela, Universitatea Complutense Madrid, Spania

Doris Mironescu, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași, România

Antonio Patraș, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași, România

Lăcrămioara Petrescu, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași, România

Ștefana Pop-Curșeu, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj, România

Ioan Pop-Curșeu, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj, România

Constantin Schifirneț, Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative, București, România

Geoffrey Sykes, University of New South Wales, “Southern Semiotic Review”, Australia

Ioan Dănilă, Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău, România

Coperta: Liviu Dospinescu, *Theatre in Ruins* (2023)

Adresa redacției: Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău

Facultatea de Litere, str. Spiru Haret, nr. 8, Bacău, România, Tel. / fax: 0234 – 588884

e-mail: studiisicercetari3@yahoo.com

<http://studiisicercetari.ub.ro/>

<https://sites.google.com/site/studiisicercetari/>

CONTENT / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Dossier

Representations of Human Catastrophe in Literature and Performing Arts
Représentations de la catastrophe humaine en littérature et arts de la scène

Prologue

Liviu Dospinescu <i>Enjeux esthétiques et pragmatiques de la représentation de la catastrophe humaine</i>	11
The Critique's Point of View/ Le point de vue du critique	
Yana Meerzon <i>"The Chorus Perishes" – On Esther Bol's Theatre of Catastrophe</i>	29
Nicoleta Popa-Blanariu <i>Entre-deux, identité exilique et tragédie de l'histoire: figures littéraires et stratégies de représentation scénique</i>	55
Călin Ciobotari <i>Catarina and the New Formulas for Expressing the Contemporary Tragedy</i>	75
Konstantza Georgakaki <i>Le rôle du réfugié dans la revue et dans le spectacle musical</i>	83
Eirini Polydorou <i>The Idea of Human Tragedy on Greek Contemporary Stage: Theatre Directors Opening a Political Dialogue</i>	91
Beatrice Lăpădat <i>Regarder, se laisser emporter : la catastrophe visible et tangible dans le théâtre de Romeo Castellucci</i>	119
Noemina Câmpean <i>Existence at the Challenge of the Impossible. Contemporary Theatre as a Symbolic Pound of Flesh</i>	141

The Artist's Point of View/ Le point de vue de l'artiste

Yeşim Özsöy

*Time and Distance in the Face of Catastrophe and Artistic Creation:
A Theatrical Exploration* **155**

Leonidas Papadopoulos

*Pass-Port: the Representations of the "Passage" on the Theatrical
Stage* **165**

Poetical Post-Scriptum/ Post-scriptum poétique

Luis Thenon

Gaza

175

**Contributors' Biographical Notes/
Notes biographiques des contributeurs**

181

Event/ Événement: Federico García Lorca 125

**Elena Vrâncianu, Giulia-Gabriela Cristea-Nechita, Ana-Adelina
Poetelea, Magdalena Chitic**

*Transmedia Echoes of a Spanish Tragedy/ Échos transmédia
d'une tragédie espagnole/ Ecouri transmediale ale unei tragedii
spaniole*

189

Miscellanea

Vasile Spiridon

Adrian Marino. Complexe vindicative

201

Book Reviews/ Compte rendus

*Alex Goldiș, Zoom in/ Zoom out. Lecturi de critică și literatură
contemporană, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023 (Adrian
Jicu)*

209

*Gheorghe Iorga, Sfidarea secundarului, București, Tracus Arte, 2023
(Nicoleta Popa Blanariu)*

212

Dossier

*Representations of Human Catastrophe
in Literature and Performing Arts*

*Représentations de la catastrophe humaine
en littérature et arts de la scène*

Prologue
Prologue

ENJEUX ESTHÉTIQUES ET PRAGMATIQUES DE LA REPRÉSENTATION DE LA CATASTROPHE HUMAINE

Malgré toutes les avancées sociales, technologiques et culturelles de notre époque, l'une des plus riches de l'histoire de l'humanité, notre monde semble en même temps être devenu le théâtre d'événements tragiques qui sont les signes d'une crise profonde de l'humanité. En effet, les deux dernières décennies nous ont confrontés à des drames de notre humanité à très grande échelle, voire à des tragédies dignes d'une « fin d'époque » sinon tout à fait aux portes d'une fin du *monde tel que nous le connaissions avant* : de la tragédie du 11 septembre, en passant par les multiples guerres au Moyen-Orient, les nombreux mouvements d'exilés creusant des traces profondes sur la carte du monde, dont l'exode syrien, un des plus longs et des plus importants en nombre depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale, à la crise pandémique du Covid-19, avec ses vagues de restrictions et son ensemble de perturbations des modes de vie, avec un impact significatif à l'échelle planétaire, jusqu'à, plus récemment, le conflit en Ukraine avec son lot de morts et de destructions, de crimes de guerre et de massacres, et encore avec de nouveaux déplacements de populations, de grandes vagues de réfugiés à travers les frontières, sans oublier les migrations massives en Afrique et dans d'autres parties du monde, provoqués par les géorisques ou par les crises économiques, sociales et politiques ? Et, au moment de la publication de cet ouvrage collectif, comment réagir face aux événements qui sèment la panique en Israël et à Gaza et inquiètent plus que jamais le monde entier ? À cela s'ajoute le grand manque de confiance des gens ordinaires dans le pouvoir de la politique et des politiciens pour mettre un terme à cette ère de désastres à ses débuts. Nous vivons quotidiennement l'expérience d'un monde en détresse, des valeurs humaines qui s'effritent, d'une humanité en perte de repères. Le monde peine à résister sous le poids de tous ces désastres humains, de ces « catastrophes humaines ». Ce numéro spécial est dédié à l'étude de leur représentation en tant qu'expérience bouleversante d'une humanité en crise. Il constitue la première des plusieurs publications dédiées à ce sujet dans le cadre du projet de recherche « La représentation des catastrophes humaines au début du XXI^e siècle comme rite de passage : drame social ou retour à la tragédie ?² » au développement duquel contribue une large équipe de chercheurs et chercheuses à travers le monde, que je tiens à remercier pour leur intérêt pour le sujet, ensuite pour la générosité investie dans nos travaux, en commençant par les Journées d'études « Représentations de la catastrophe humaine au théâtre et dans les arts de la scène » organisées à l'Université du Péloponnèse à Nafplio³.

¹ Université Laval.

² Le projet bénéficie d'une subvention CRSH Savoir du Conseil des recherches en sciences humaines et sociales du Canada.

³ Mes remerciements vont à Angeliki Spiropoulou, directrice du Département d'études théâtrales de l'Université du Péloponnèse pour l'accueil de notre événement au sein des activités d'été du département, et tout spécialement à Christina Zóniou, membre titulaire du corps

*

Un grand questionnement se trouve à l'origine de cette recherche, et ce, en lien avec les théories de l'anthropologue de la culture Victor Turner, connu pour ses travaux sur le *rituel* et *drame social* en tant que performance interactive – entre l'événement (réel), le *spectacle* (théâtre), les *spectateurs* et la *culture* – pouvant reconstituer la *Communauté* et lui apporter le *remède* aux crises sociales qu'elle traverse. Victor Turner définit le drame social comme « une séquence d'interactions sociales de type conflictuel, compétitif ou agonistique⁴ » et c'est dans cet esprit que s'inscrirait un théâtre de la catastrophe qui concerne et implique la communauté dans une performance ritualisée apte à offrir des mesures correctives, voire curatives, enfin un *remède social*. Mais il pourrait aussi s'inscrire dans un retour à la tragédie, moins enclin à engager l'individu dans la reconstitution du corps social ; ce théâtre a déjà connu sa gloire.

La représentation de la catastrophe humaine est-elle capable d'apporter un remède social et, si oui, comment ? Comment cette représentation se rapporte-t-elle à la réalité ? Quelle position prend-elle sur scène contre l'inaction, sociale ou politique, de la réalité qu'elle représente ou dont elle s'inspire ? Quelles sont les stratégies par lesquelles ce théâtre arrive à *re-présenter* le « réel », à faire *re-surgir* les *vécus* de l'expérience sous un autre jour, plus sensible, et à finalement apporter le remède capable de reconstituer le corps social ? À l'état actuel de nos recherches, il n'existe pas d'étude étendue à ces questions et intuitions sur les représentations de la catastrophe humaine au XXI^e siècle, ni sur leur éventuelle valeur thérapeutique ou rituelle, mis à part ce que nous avons pu déterminer à l'occasion d'un autre de nos projets de recherche sur le théâtre de l'exode syrien⁵. Nous retrouvons aussi certains repères dans la thèse d'Émilie Martz-Kuhn qui « tente de révéler les mouvements – esthétiques, perceptifs et thématiques – qui animent ces écritures hétérogènes⁶ » ; son étude de cas compte trois spectacles sur le motif du génocide des années '90, qui illustrent cette notion sensible de « catastrophe humaine » au cœur de notre recherche. Afin de faciliter la lecture de ce numéro spécial qui porte sur ses représentations, dans ce qui suit nous tenterons d'offrir quelques repères de plus sur la notion.

Catastrophe – essai de définition

Pour « catastrophe », l'un des mots-clés du présent projet, nous partons de la définition suivante du *Centre national des ressources textuelles et lexicales* : « empr. au lat. *catastrophā*, “coup de théâtre”, attesté au sens de “dénouement (d'une tragédie ou d'une comédie)” [...] et lui-même empr. au gr. *καταστροφή*, “bouleversement” et

enseignant spécialisé du Département d'études théâtrales, qui a soutenu toutes nos démarches dans l'organisation de cet événement.

⁴ Ma traduction : « *a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type* », Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, New York, PAJ Publications, 1988, p. 33.

⁵ « L'exode syrien dans le théâtre du réel : vers une forme de ritualité sociale », subvention CRSH Développement Savoie, 2017-2020.

⁶ Émilie Martz-Kuhn, sur les « Écritures scéniques de la catastrophe humaine dans le théâtre contemporain », Québec, Université Laval, 2013, p. iii.

“fin, dénouement”⁷ ». Le terme est intrinsèquement lié au théâtre, voire au tragique, à travers ce que prévoit Aristote dans sa *Poétique* où il a souligné l’idée d’un revirement ou renversement de la situation dans la tragédie puisqu’il faut « **qu’elle [la fable] passe** non pas du malheur au bonheur, mais, au contraire, **du bonheur au malheur**⁸ » et qu’elle incarne ainsi l’événement pathétique, soit « **une action destructive ou douloureuse** [c’est moi qui souligne] ; par exemple, les morts qui ont lieu manifestement, les souffrances, les blessures et toutes les autres choses de ce genre⁹ ». Enfin, selon Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, « [d]e terminale, la catastrophe tend à devenir inaugurale¹⁰ », ce qui nous amène donc à l’entendre comme étant le focus de la dramaturgie, ce qui appuie notre approche en regard de celle prônée par les principes aristotéliens qui voient la catastrophe comme mécanisme déclencheur du tragique.

Notre projet considère la catastrophe comme sujet du réel, nous obligeant à nous y rapporter de façon plus directe à travers et sur le plan de sa réalité. En ce sens, tel que le remarque Françoise Lauwaert, « il y a catastrophe quand à la douleur de vivre “ordinaire” [...] s’ajoute le heurt violent de l’histoire¹¹ ». À cette perspective, s’ajoute, dans le cadre du présent projet de recherche, celle de Leonidas Papadopoulos à travers une fine analyse de la liminalité des figures de l’exode et du motif de la « traversée de l’Égée » dans la tragédie grecque¹². Cette approche permet de faire des liens avec les figures liminales de la réalité même de la crise des réfugiés, de nos jours.

Par ailleurs, la monographie d’Eleni Varapoulou et Marianne McDonald (2000) sur l’œuvre de Theodoros Terzopoulos nous servira de point de départ pour comprendre l’aspect rituel de son théâtre nous permettant également de les appliquer à l’analyse de la représentation dans le « théâtre de la catastrophe humaine ». Dans la mise en scène des tragédies grecques (et pas seulement), Terzopoulos emploie une méthode qu’il intitule « le retour de Dionysos ». Varapoulou rapporte qu’il s’agit d’un théâtre de la violence, déployée en tant que « VIOLENCE PHYSIQUE et VIOLENCE RITUELLE¹³ » [majuscules de l’auteure]. La deuxième est liée au fait que « [l]e théâtre de Terzopoulos proclame le retour de la terreur religieuse, du moins

⁷ Voir « catastrophe », CNRTL, « Portail lexical », *Centre national des ressources textuelles et lexicales*, Nancy [en ligne]. <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/catastrophe> (consulté le 5 décembre 2023).

⁸ Aristote, « Chapitre XIII : Des qualités de la fable par rapport aux personnes – Du dénouement », § IV, *Poétique*, traduction d’après les dernières recensions du texte par Ch. Émile Ruelle, Librairie Garnier Frères, coll. « Chefs d’œuvres de la littérature grecque », 1922, [en ligne]. <https://remacle.org/bloodwolf/philosophes/Aristote/poetiquefr.htm> (Consulté le 17 décembre 2023).

⁹ Aristote, *Idem*. § XI.

¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Sarrazac (dir.), *La catastrophe sur la scène moderne et contemporaine*, Louvain La Neuve, Centre d’études théâtrales, 2002, p. 8.

¹¹ Françoise Lauwaert, « Introduction », *Civilisations*, n° 56, p. 8.

¹² Voir Leonidas Papadopoulos, *Sea Journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy*, thèse de doctorat, Londres, King’s College London, 2015, [en ligne].

https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/57627966/2016_Papadopoulos_Leonidas_1253_103_thesis.pdf (Consulté le 10 décembre 2023).

¹³ Ma traduction : « PHYSICAL VIOLENCE and RITUAL VIOLENCE », Eleni Varapoulou, « Prologue », dans Eleni Varapoulou et Marianne McDonald, *Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis Theatre: History, Methodology and Comments*, Athens, Agra Publications, 2000, p. 9.

métaphoriquement, puisqu'il tente d'invoquer le rituel et la sainteté¹⁴. » Marianne McDonald, quant à elle, signale que « [l]e groupe de Terzopoulos utilise les rituels qui permettent au corps de parachever sa totalité : ses mémoires tirés de son passé, l'immédiateté du présent et les espoirs et les peurs pour le futur¹⁵. » Cela projette l'humanité dans un *fatum* tragique, mais cela atteste également d'une prise de conscience face à une longue et sous-entendue histoire d'échecs, de catastrophes et de crises. Si, dans le premier cas, ce théâtre pourrait correspondre plutôt à un retour à la tragédie et à l'expérience cathartique héritée de la tradition grecque antique, la prise de conscience dans le deuxième cas semble placer l'expérience théâtrale dans l'espace de la modernité et suggérer déjà la présence des fondements du *rituel* et *drame social* de Victor Turner. Enfin, pour établir dans quelle mesure les représentations de la catastrophe humaine suivraient un modèle ou l'autre, nous devons attendre la fin des travaux de ce projet de recherche et, en attendant, nous tâcherons d'abord de déterminer un plus grand nombre de figures de la catastrophe humaine, les formes et fonctions de ses représentations.

Sur une note plus pragmatique – qui correspond aux objectifs de ce numéro spécial, qui sont de nous permettre à mieux comprendre la nature de ces représentations –, la notion de catastrophe *humaine* prend son sens dans le fait de désigner une catastrophe dont les victimes sont des êtres humains ; ou encore elle peut aussi désigner une catastrophe naturelle dont les effets sur la population sont imputables au facteur humain, précisément du fait du manque de préparation et de moyens et de l'incapacité à fournir le soutien nécessaire en cas d'urgence. Ainsi, une catastrophe naturelle pourrait mettre en évidence des causes naturelles pour le grand nombre de victimes faites parmi les êtres humains, mais aussi la responsabilité des êtres humains eux-mêmes, chaque fois qu'il s'avère que les institutions gouvernementales, les décideurs et les dirigeants politiques ont manqué de mettre en place des politiques de sécurité, des procédures d'urgence et de soutien adéquates.

Au théâtre et dans les arts du spectacle, ce sont à la fois les situations de crise actuelles et les échos du passé ou les reflets de la mythologie qui inspirent de nombreuses productions en termes de « représentation de la catastrophe humaine ». Ces expressions artistiques tendent à se constituer en une réponse collective et semblent agir comme des anticorps du *corps social*, de l'*être collectif* de l'humanité tout entière, face à une série d'événements qui, plus que jamais, semblent la menacer sérieusement aujourd'hui. C'est dans ces conditions que nous avons remarqué que le milieu artistique et la scène théâtrale, miroirs de nos sociétés et de notre humanité, s'empressent de nous le refléter.

Questions et objectifs de recherche

Le projet de recherche « La représentation des catastrophes humaines au début du XXI^e siècle comme rite de passage : *drame social* ou retour à la tragédie ? » agit à

¹⁴ Ma traduction : « Terzopoulos' theatre proclaims the return of religious terror, metaphorically speaking at least, since it attempts to invoke ritual and sanctity. », *idem*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Ma traduction : « Terzopoulos' group utilizes rituals which allow the body to achieve its totality: its memories from the past, the immediacy of the present, and hopes and fears for the future. », Marianne McDonald, « Introduction », dans Eleni Varapoulou et Marianne McDonald, *Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis Theatre: History, Methodology and Comments*, Athens, Agra Publications, 2000, p. 16.

travers une série de rencontres informelles avec des chercheurs universitaires et des artistes de théâtre du monde entier, ainsi qu'à travers une série de publications qui diffuseront leurs discussions. Ainsi, cette première publication appelle à comprendre la manière dont le théâtre et les autres arts du spectacle se rapportent à la catastrophe humaine en tant que phénomène réel ou expression métaphorique, ainsi que les manières dont celles-ci sont représentées sur la scène. Les contributions rassemblées dans cet ouvrage portent sur la théâtralité et l'esthétique des « représentations de la catastrophe humaine » telles qu'on les voit se manifester dans les productions théâtrales récentes et dans d'autres formes d'arts du spectacle. Pour cette première publication, les questions de recherche auxquelles les participants sont invités à répondre sont limitées aux trois suivantes :

- *Comment la « catastrophe humaine » est-elle (re)présentée ?*
- *Qu'est-ce qui nous permet exactement de l'appeler « humaine » ?*
- *Quelles sont les fonctions esthétiques et symboliques de ces représentations ?*

Nous nous intéressons donc particulièrement aux moyens de représentation de la « catastrophe humaine », notamment à leurs formes et fonctions. Les contributeurs à ce premier ouvrage (d'une série de plusieurs qui marqueront les avancées de ce projet de recherche) partagent, pour la plupart, leurs connaissances et leur compréhension de ces expressions artistiques sous forme d'*études de cas*, puisque l'intérêt principal du projet est de rassembler un corpus d'œuvres sur les formes d'expression et le contenu des représentations de la catastrophe humaine, en particulier dans le théâtre et les arts du spectacle. Toutefois, comme le projet est ouvert aussi à des œuvres d'autres domaines artistiques que les arts de la scène, comme le cinéma, l'art visuel et même la littérature, nous avons reçu avec grand intérêt et décidé de publier un poème en tant qu'œuvre de création capable de compléter l'expérience de la recherche sur la « représentation de la catastrophe humaine » et de laisser le pouvoir de la parole poétique l'exposer en une volée d'images visuelles puissantes.

L'un des objectifs de cet ouvrage fut d'encourager l'approche descriptive des expressions artistiques de la « catastrophe humaine » et l'analyse de ses thèmes et motifs. Pour des fins didactiques, nous avons encouragé, là où cela était possible, l'utilisation de supports visuels, tels que des images de production et des liens vers des fichiers vidéo. Nous avons accueilli également des communications proposant des approches plus théoriques visant à mettre en évidence des catégories de représentation de la catastrophe humaine, le genre des œuvres artistiques dans lesquelles elles apparaissent, ou encore l'impact des mythes anciens, etc., tout en les illustrant à travers des productions contemporaines de théâtre et autres arts du spectacle, mais aussi à travers leur dimension littéraire, du texte dramatique.

Les contributions au dossier

Ce volume collectif accueille des travaux proposés tant par des chercheurs que par des créateurs, dont les intérêts tournent autour des arts du spectacle, des études théâtrales, des études culturelles, des études cinématographiques et littéraires, de l'anthropologie, etc., et dont la sensibilité face à l'aspect humain du sujet s'avère être un facteur déterminant dans la participation à ce projet de recherche et à son développement. Nous tenons à tous les remercier pour leur implication et contribution généreuse.

*

La première partie de notre ouvrage collectif, « Le point de vue de la critique », est ouverte par l'article de **Yana Meerzon**, « *Le chœur se meurt* – sur le théâtre de la catastrophe d'Esther Bol¹⁶ ». L'auteure nous propose une étude de cas sur le « théâtre de la catastrophe », dont l'acception est héritée de la vision d'Adrian Curtin (2019) et de François Laplantine (2022). Pour l'illustrer, l'auteure choisit l'œuvre d'Esther Bol, pseudonyme d'Asya Voloshina, l'une des dramaturges russes contemporaines les plus engagées, qui a décidé de rompre les liens avec son pays après l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie en 2022. Meerzon montre que le théâtre de la catastrophe d'Esther Bol propose une forme d'enquête artistique sur les causes et les conséquences de la destruction massive et de la mort, en documentant en même temps les processus sociaux, politiques et éthiques qui s'y rattachent. L'auteure choisit de développer son étude de cas sur les trois pièces suivantes : *Antigone – réduction* (2013), *Le chœur se meurt* (2017) et *Crime/#ToujoursArmerl'Ukraine* (2022)¹⁷. À travers leur examen critique, Meerzon nous fait découvrir des formes dramaturgiques inédites qui capitalisent toutes sur le sentiment d'horreur devant la mort et la cruauté des attaques en masse dans la guerre en Ukraine et sur l'irréversible sentiment de culpabilité ressenti par le spectateur devant la catastrophe se déroulant, en représentation, devant ses yeux. Yana Meerzon montre encore comment Esther Bol utilise le théâtre grec antique pour en tirer la figure d'un *chœur conceptuel* composé de « citoyens globaux », impliqués dans la guerre en Ukraine, mais aussi au niveau de la censure gouvernementale, des questions liées au totalitarisme, à la moralité, ainsi qu'au devoir et aux responsabilités communautaires. Tous ces aspects semblent bien faire partie de l'univers de la catastrophe et nourrir tant sa représentation en scène que la réflexion chez le spectateur.

*

L'article de **Nicoleta Popa Blanariu**, « Entre-deux, identité exilique et tragédie de l'histoire : figures littéraires et stratégies de représentation scénique » propose une discussion approfondie d'aspects et de stratégies de la représentation de la catastrophe humaine à partir du champ de la mythologie et de la littérature classique, avec des extensions vers le champ du théâtre contemporain. Cherchant à en apprécier les conséquences dans la vie des communautés, l'auteure aborde l'analyse des figures de l'exil et de l'exilé, notamment d'un point de vue culturel. Elle les surprend, plus précisément, en tant que figures de l'*entre-deux* à travers l'analyse des motifs de l'espace originel, de l'espace d'asile et de l'identité de l'exilé, sans oublier d'intégrer à la discussion les aspects de la subjectivité, des vécus qui s'y rattachent. Un corpus de plusieurs œuvres littéraires et théâtrales de l'antiquité grecque et romaine et leur écho dans des œuvres contemporaines permettent cet examen critique complexe, contribuant à éclairer le sujet des représentations de la catastrophe humaine à la lumière d'une lecture à la fois littéraire et anthropologique. Ainsi, des thèmes comme l'exil, la migration, la guerre, le droit d'asile, mais aussi comme ceux de la discrimination de genre et les droits des femmes, les persécutions religieuses et ethniques sont abordés dans l'article. Leur illustration se fait particulièrement sur la

¹⁶ Ma traduction du titre original en anglais : « The Chorus Perishes – On Esther Bol's Theatre of Catastrophe ».

¹⁷ Ma traduction des titres fournis en anglais dans l'article de Yana Meerzon : *Antigone – Reduction*, *The Chorus Perishes* et *Crime/#alwaysArmeUkraine*.

dramaturgie des *Suppliantes* d'Eschyle et sur sa mise en scène, en 1995, par Silviu Purcărete, mais aussi à travers le spectacle de danse-théâtre *L'exil au pays de l'oubli* (2009) réalisé par Andreea Tănăsescu d'après des textes de Benjamin Fondane, ou encore à travers la dramaturgie de la pièce *Les Syriennes des mers* de Lilia Bitar. Très intéressante nous a semblé la discussion des éléments symboliques de l'eau et de la terre qui investissent les rituels d'intégration, comme celui des Danaïdes, lors de leur exil à Argos. En étroit lien avec ces éléments de la représentation nous retrouvons les notions et surtout les figures de représentation du « sacrifice » ou, du moins, de la « renonciation ». L'univers anthropologique renvoie aux « mythes de l'autochtonie » (Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1958), tel que rapportés par l'auteure. Enfin, tel que l'annonce Nicoleta Popa Blanariu, l'article n'a pas la prétention d'épuiser le sujet et, au-delà des études de cas offerts ici, il lance également les repères des développements futurs dans le cadre de notre projet de recherche, ainsi que les contributions à venir dans nos prochaines publications.

*

Dans son article, « *Catarina* et les nouvelles formes d'expression de la tragédie contemporaine », **Călin Ciobotari** fait une incursion dans la réception du spectacle *Catarina et la beauté de tuer des fascistes*¹⁸ (2020) de Tiago Rodrigues. Il analyse la manière dont cette production problématise, par des moyens particuliers, le thème des « catastrophes subtiles », ainsi que la capacité du spectateur contemporain à expérimenter intellectuellement des formules nouvelles et inconfortables du tragique. Ce travail est intéressant pour le présent projet de recherche non seulement parce qu'il décrit et évalue l'idée de la catastrophe, mais parce qu'il prend aussi en discussion « l'impasse tragique, les dilemmes éthiques marécageux, les impasses existentielles auxquelles nous semblons être parvenus¹⁹ », ayant ainsi reflété tout un univers de désastres. Qui plus est, les aspects du spectacle pris en discussion dans l'étude de cas « emballent la représentation de la catastrophe qui guette dans l'ombre²⁰ », dans le sens où les contours de la catastrophe sont vus ici par Călin Ciobotari comme les signes d'une tragédie à venir, sous l'emprise de divinités, plus abstraites, de nos temps présents. Ces dernières revendiqueraient leur droit à l'existence parmi les mortels désemparés d'aujourd'hui, vus comme « [...] des témoins impuissants de l'effondrement d'un monde qu'ils croyaient sûr, fondé sur des valeurs indestructibles, comme la culture, la morale ou la civilisation²¹. » Ce qui vient ajouter une note très subtile et fort intéressante à ces constats, c'est l'étrange sentiment vécu par Călin Ciobotari à la fin du spectacle, lorsque le bruit des applaudissements, d'ailleurs très généreux pour saluer le grand art de la scène, évoque le bruit des coups de feu d'aujourd'hui ou à venir, dans un monde qui n'est plus le même... En ce sens,

¹⁸ Version française du titre en anglais fourni dans l'article de Călin Ciobotari: *Catarina and The Beauty of Killing Fascists*.

¹⁹ Ma traduction : "It announces, describes, and represents the catastrophe, the tragic impasse, the marshy ethical dilemmas, the existential dead-ends we seem to have reached or that we will soon arrive to." ; voir l'article de Călin Ciobotari.

²⁰ Ma traduction : "[...] package the representation of the catastrophe that lies in wait in the shadows", Călin Ciobotari, *op. cit.*

²¹ Ma traduction : « [...] distraught mortals, helplessly witnessing the collapse of a world they thought was safe, founded on indestructible foundations, the foundations of culture, of spirit, of civilization. »; Călin Ciobotari, *op. cit.*

pour Ciobotari, ce spectacle semble avoir le pouvoir de tirer un signal d'alarme pour le spectateur, en fait pour de larges communautés. L'auteur se demande d'ailleurs si la production est politique et il offre tout un spectre de réponses, en déclinant tant les possibilités qu'*elle le soit*, que celles qu'*elle ne le soit pas*. En fin de compte, Ciobotari nous aide à comprendre que Rodrigues pose l'action et met en scène ses personnages presque avec un regard rempli de compassion, comme si les personnages étaient d'entrée de jeu les victimes de quelque chose de plus grand qu'eux ; de surcroît, il nous a semblé que cette même compassion se réverbère plus loin, à travers son transfert jusque dans l'espace public, en tant que représentant de l'ensemble ou d'une partie de la société, voire de l'humanité. Et c'est dans ces liens qu'on pourrait trouver le déploiement de ce rituel social que prend en compte notre projet et qu'il sera sans doute utile d'explorer, dans la suite des travaux, aussi dans le spectacle de Rodrigues.

*

L'article de **Konstantza Georgakaki**, « Le rôle du réfugié dans la revue et dans le spectacle musical », pose un regard d'inspiration sociologique sur la catastrophe humaine dans le théâtre grec du XXe siècle. Elle choisit de discuter l'apparition dans le théâtre de revue, du rôle du réfugié, notamment de la réfugiée, dans le contexte du sujet très sensible du pogrome grec de 1922 et de la vague de réfugiés des Grecs de Smyrne en Grèce. La perspective offerte par l'article est inattendue puisque ce qui serait *a priori* vu comme un sujet « sérieux » est placé sous le signe du comique et du grand divertissement qui animent le théâtre de revue. La figure du réfugié passerait ainsi mieux par sa version féminine, surtout lorsqu'elle est dotée de tous les charmes d'une femme fatale à l'orientale. En prenant cette représentation de la réfugiée smyrniote comme élément de dédramatisation, pour faire ainsi oublier les plaies sur le corps et l'âme de la patrie, Georgakaki ouvre la discussion sur une fonction sociale inattendue de ces représentations. Elle nous les révèle à travers leur pouvoir de faciliter l'intégration des réfugiés ou leur acceptation par la société. L'article pose quelques repères historiques de la représentation de la femme réfugiée, issue des mouvements migratoires liés aux pogromes du XXe siècle, et la présente comme une *contre-figure* de la catastrophe humaine représentée par ces événements de l'histoire de la Grèce des temps modernes. Ainsi, le genre de la revue se trouve dans la posture plutôt inédite de sensibiliser son public à des sujets aussi sérieux que ceux des catastrophes humaines qu'ont représenté les pogromes grecs. En effet, l'histoire des déplacements forcés de populations du XXe siècle trouve dans la figure de la réfugiée un véhicule pour projeter une fierté grecque renouvelée, alors qu'en général, même de nos jours, les productions théâtrales semblent avoir du mal à mettre en scène de façon très sérieuse ces événements pour véritablement en relever le drame ; tel que l'explique l'auteur de l'article, l'offrir au public sous une forme dramatique plus sérieuse ne semble pas convaincre les publics, tandis que la revue réussit au moins à en faire parler, souvent le sourire aux lèvres. D'ailleurs, Konstantza Georgakaki questionne ces approches dans le théâtre grec se demandant si l'humour n'est pas une manière plus efficace de traiter la problématique et peut-être même aussi de panser les plaies de l'histoire. Son article finit sur une note brechtienne et avec la promesse de développements ultérieurs sur les représentations de la catastrophe et sur ses figures humaines dans le théâtre de revue, la comédie et la comédie musicale et dans l'espoir de relever un traitement tout particulier de leur fonction sociale.

*

Dans son article « Regarder, se laisser emporter : la catastrophe visible et tangible dans le théâtre de Romeo Castellucci », **Beatrice Lăpădat** nous offre une approche complexe de la catastrophe humaine, où l'aspect sémiotique se mélange à une analyse de l'univers des sensations. En effet, dans son théâtre, Romeo Castellucci invite le public à (com)prendre l'acte théâtral comme un moyen de poser un certain *regard* sur la catastrophe et de possiblement déterminer un *changement* dans le "statu quo", comme le suggère Lăpădat. Le metteur en scène a une façon particulière de traiter la catastrophe, qui résiderait particulièrement dans le fait d'en « adapter » les références historiques ; en ce sens, l'auteure explique que, dans le travail dramaturgique, ces références sont filtrées jusqu'à rendre l'événement en question difficile à reconnaître. De surcroît, vu ses travaux sur les figures de la violence au théâtre²², l'auteure voit chez Castellucci l'emploi d'un jeu de codes de la violence qui élimine l'élément de choc et cherche à forger une représentation de la catastrophe dans une véritable approche esthétique. Par ailleurs il en offrirait une expérience sensorielle permettant au public d'en apprécier la portée et le sens de façon plus synthétique, universelle. Ainsi, le théâtre de Romeo Castellucci ferait tant prendre conscience que *transporter* le spectateur dans l'univers de sens et de sensations de la catastrophe. Pour le démontrer, Beatrice Lăpădat aborde trois œuvres scéniques du metteur en scène: le cycle *Tragedia Endogonia, Inferno* et *Bros*. Elle nous y présente une sorte de technique de montage qui génère des effets sensoriels qui évoquent le sens de la catastrophe ou qui inspirent les émotions indéfinies face à l'ambiguïté de l'événement catastrophique. L'analyse de l'auteure couvre les aspects visuels-performatifs de certaines manifestations de ou en lien avec la catastrophe ; on en fournit et discute une large palette permettant de couvrir toute une diversité de sensorialités qui se rattachent à la thématique de la catastrophe et à ses effets de perception. La « chute » en est un qui bénéficie chez Castellucci d'un traitement particulier, comme le souligne l'auteure. Enfin, nous ne pouvons pas nous empêcher d'y remarquer et de mettre en valeur la charge sémantique et l'aspect visuel de la « chute » qui accompagne la notion de « catastrophe » : il suffit d'y saisir le sens d'un « revirement » ou « renversement » que lui attribue l'étymologie²³.

*

Eirini Polydorou se penche sur « L'idée de la tragédie humaine sur la scène grecque contemporaine – un dialogue politique des metteurs en scène ». Dans son article, elle se propose d'examiner trois manières distinctes de représenter la catastrophe humaine dans le théâtre grec contemporain, plus précisément à travers trois études de cas, soit : *Iraq – Neuf parts de désir*²⁴ (2017 et 2023) de Heather Raffo,

²² Dans « Les manifestations de la violence comme retour au rituel dans les spectacles de Jan Fabre », thèse de doctorat (en cours), au programme de Doctorat en littérature et arts de la scène et de l'écran, Université Laval, Québec.

²³ Ces nuances sont plus palpables dans cette autre définition du terme : « Catastrophe, nom féminin, xvi^e siècle, au sens de "fin, dénouement". Emprunté du latin *catastrophā*, lui-même du grec *katastrophē*, "renversement" et "fin, dénouement (d'une pièce de théâtre)" », dans le *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, [en ligne]. <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9C1095> (Consulté le 17 décembre 2023).

²⁴ Ma traduction du titre fourni en anglais dans l'article d'Eirini Polydorou : *Iraq – Nine Parts of Desire*.

l'opéra *Carmen* (2018) de Georges Bizet à l'Opéra National de Grèce et *Vu du pont*²⁵ (2018) d'Arthur Miller au Théâtre National de Grèce. L'auteure explique que ces trois pièces ont été choisies parce qu'elles présentent différents types de tragédies humaines et par des moyens différents, mais aussi parce qu'elles ont été montées pratiquement au même moment historique et au même endroit (à Athènes) ou pour le même public. La représentation de la catastrophe humaine était en réalité pour tous les metteurs en scène un des objectifs ou aspects recherchés. Afin de déterminer comment ils contribuent à la représentation de la catastrophe humaine, Polydorou analyse les trois spectacles à travers les mêmes critères ; parmi eux, nous avons trouvé parmi les plus intéressants la discussion des possibles défis de la production et celle de la perception de la pièce par le grand public. L'approche de Polydorou nous aide à comprendre comment la tragédie humaine a été placée à la croisée de l'univers de la scène et de la vie réelle, ainsi qu'à travers quels moyens et avec quelles valeurs symboliques. En effet, l'auteure prend d'abord la peine d'exposer en détail, pour chacune des productions, la scénographie, les costumes et le jeu d'acteur, ensuite elle analyse le rapport à l'actualité et à la société. La fin de cet examen critique arrive avec la conclusion que la scène était dans les trois cas de figure délibérément, de manière créative, au service du débat politique. Eirini Polydorou a le mérite de nuancer son propos et nous permettre de saisir les différences entre les différentes figures de la catastrophe humaine tant dans leur traitement par les trois metteurs en scène que dans leur réception. D'ailleurs, l'article met de façon très inspirée en relation la représentation de la catastrophe humaine avec des aspects socio-politiques et économiques de l'expérience du spectateur.

*

Noemina Câmpean présente l'article « L'existence au défi de l'impossible. Le théâtre contemporain comme livre de chair symbolique ». L'article commence par interroger le statut de la victime dans la chaîne des violences sur la scène de théâtre et son rapport à la catastrophe humaine dans la tragédie grecque. Elle se propose ainsi d'évaluer comment les metteurs en scène européens contemporains gèrent la condition nue de la violence et toutes les relations qu'elle peut entretenir en tant qu'expression du pouvoir dans un large spectre de déclinaisons. Trois études de cas sont proposées à partir d'œuvres de Milo Rau, de Tiago Rodrigues et de Pippo Delbono. Leur discussion se fait en lien avec des concepts tirés de l'enseignement clinique de Lacan, tels que : angoisse, livre de chair, objet (a), lien social, la triade le réel, le symbolique, l'imaginaire, etc. Par ailleurs, pour révéler les conséquences de la catastrophe, notamment d'un point de vue psychanalytique, Câmpean développe plusieurs directions sur des aspects tels que le jeu entre destruction et création, l'intervention brutale dans le texte de l'auteur, le mélange inhabituel d'objets et de musique reflétant le tragique quotidien, les fragments de rêves, ou encore le personnage en tant que victime objectifiée. À travers l'analyse des spectacles de Milo Rau, Noemina Câmpean nous montre comment le metteur en scène suisse se sert de la forme du théâtre documentaire pour incorporer des matériaux hétérogènes et examiner ainsi « intra-esthétiquement » l'apparition fascinante de la violence et des lamentations. Dans l'analyse des créations de Tiago Rodrigues sur la catastrophe, elle note que celles-ci inspirent l'affection et l'empathie, en transitant le chaos, la crise, la

²⁵ Version française du titre fourni en anglais dans l'article d'Eirini Polydorou : *A View from the Bridge*.

famine, la violence, la mort d'enfants innocents, le chagrin sans paroles de la mère... jusqu'à un monde nouveau de changement et de paix, où il est impossible d'entièrement supprimer la violence et la douleur. Enfin, dans l'analyse de l'œuvre de Pippo Delbono, l'auteur remarque son théâtre du corps qui écrit son propre texte, organique, qui passe à travers la conscience extrême de la fragilité qui y est inscrite dans une poésie de l'inconscient. Les trois études de cas restent près du champ d'exploration de la psychanalyse, l'auteure se proposant d'examiner, dans le théâtre contemporain, les représentations de la catastrophe humaine qui révèlent l'existence de l'individu au défi de l'impossible et de l'incompréhensible et ses réactions, que ce soit à travers un discours rempli de mots ou à travers un sans mots.

*

La deuxième partie du dossier, « Le point de vue de l'artiste », s'ouvre avec la contribution de **Yeşim Özsöy** : « Temps et distance devant la catastrophe et création artistique : une exploration théâtrale²⁶ ». L'auteure y discute l'importance qu'ont le temps et l'espace (la distance) dans sa perception des catastrophes humaines mais aussi dans la création et la présentation d'œuvres théâtrales issues de son expérience personnelle en tant qu'écrivaine et metteuse en scène. Yeşim Özsöy oriente ses discussions sur quatre de ses productions théâtrales et performatives. *Veil enfant*²⁷ (2016) porte sur la vie de quatre enfants qui ont perdu la vie à cause de la guerre, de la migration, du terrorisme et de la violence. *Le dernier monde*²⁸ (2006) porte sur la catastrophe du 11 septembre 2001, lorsque l'auteure se trouve elle-même à New York. Mais la pièce fut écrite à une double distance, soit quatre ans plus tard et de retour à Istanbul, sa ville d'origine ; enfin, elle porte sur le crash d'un avion à la suite duquel trois personnages sont suspendus en plein air, sans pouvoir définir où ils se trouvent. *Témoignages d'Istanbul*²⁹ (2014) est un projet performatif consacré aux manifestations d'Istanbul autour du parc de Gezi. Özsöy y a édité et mis en scène les témoignages de quatre écrivains qui ont tous vécu les événements, mais qui les racontent chacun à sa manière. *Aksak* ou *Delirium*³⁰ (titre non encore défini) est une création en cours qui traite de l'anormalité (cf. *aksak*, terme turc qui a aussi le sens d'irrégularité), du rythme syncopé de la vie ; parmi les motifs clés de la pièce nous retrouvons celui de la « chute » qui, tel que nous l'avons déjà signalé, fait parti de l'univers sémantique de la catastrophe. Enfin, ces thèmes et motifs sont intégrés à la réalité du XXIe siècle qui est vue comme celle d'une expérience de vie au bord de la folie dans un monde numérique extrême, viral et post-vérité.

*

Leonidas Papadopoulos nous offre un deuxième point de vue artistique dans son article « *Passe-Port* : les représentations du "passage" sur la scène théâtrale³¹ »

²⁶ Ma traduction du titre original en anglais: « *Time and Distance in the Face of Catastrophe and Artistic Creation: A Theatrical Exploration* ».

²⁷ Ma traduction du titre fourni par l'auteur en anglais : *Old Child*.

²⁸ Ma traduction du titre fourni par l'auteur en anglais : *Last World*.

²⁹ Ma traduction du titre fourni par l'auteur en anglais : *Istanbul Testimonials*.

³⁰ Ma traduction du titre fourni par l'auteure en turc : *Aksak* (le terme turc est utilisé avec le sens d'anormalité, irrégularité) ou *Delirium*, en processus de création au moment de la publication de l'article.

³¹ Ma traduction du titre original de la création en anglais : « *Pass-Port: The representations of the "passage" on the theatrical stage* ».

où il examine l'approche méthodologique et l'univers des représentations de la catastrophe humaine dans sa création éponyme, mise en scène en novembre 2022 au théâtre Argo d'Athènes. Il s'agit d'une production théâtrale qui est issue de sa recherche-crédation doctorale au King's College London³². L'article s'inscrit dans l'esprit d'une *recherche à partir de la création*, l'auteur y explorant l'élément de « l'errance » à l'intérieur de son projet de recherche-crédation dont les objectifs, tant sur le plan théorique que sur le plan pratique, sont d'intégrer la problématique de l'immigration et des réfugiés. Leonidas Papadopoulos révèle ainsi la dynamique que cette problématique façonne dans les sociétés du futur à travers l'idée de l'errance des mortels, des héros et des dieux de la tragédie grecque antique. La démarche dramaturgique et les choix de mise en scène du spectacle *Passe-Port* sont mis au service de deux espaces dramatiques importants pour la représentation de la catastrophe, soit : la *mer*, comme lieu de dynamiques et de symbolismes à interprétations multiples, et la *côte*, comme espace liminal et frontière entre espace de vie et espace de la mort, entre *nostos* et nostalgie. À travers la discussion de la question de la liminalité, Papadopoulos anticipe les développements à venir à l'intérieur de notre projet puisqu'il porte sur un aspect de la problématique qui fera l'objet d'une prochaine publication. Il s'agit du rite de passage en tant que possible forme ou modèle de représentation de la catastrophe humaine, mais aussi en tant que figure et motif du rituel social que nous voyons, dans la lignée de Victor Turner, capable de s'activer dans la relation avec le corps social constitué par les spectateurs, nécessaire dans le rétablissement de l'ordre du monde après la catastrophe. Cela fera l'objet d'une prochaine discussion dans le cadre de ce projet.

*

Notre ouvrage collectif se termine avec un « Postscriptum artistique » qui accueille le poème « Gaza » de **Luis Thenon**. Il s'agit plutôt d'un ciné-poème qui porte sur une des catastrophes humaines les plus récentes de notre temps et qui excelle par l'aspect visuel performatif du texte. Si nous avons choisi de le publier à l'intérieur d'un ouvrage *a priori* scientifique, c'est pour présenter un exemple bien *vivant* de l'idée de *représentation* de la catastrophe humaine dans le champ littéraire³³. Car, si pour les arts de la scène, les arts visuels et le cinéma on découvre la représentation à travers un univers sensoriel, notamment visuel, dans le cas de la poésie, nous le faisons par l'*intermédiaire* de la parole. Or, la particularité de la parole poétique de Thenon est qu'elle est chargée d'un univers sensoriel exceptionnel, très puissant et capable de plonger le lecteur dans une expérience de réception unique en termes de vision imaginaire, mais aussi de vécus. En effet, dans « Gaza », la parole s'approche de la qualité de l'image et l'absence de ponctuation ainsi que l'abolition de la syntaxe la forgent dans cette dynamique de l'extrême, aux rythmes alertes, les nerfs à vif, à bout de souffle. « Gaza » transfère au lecteur la respiration haletante qui accompagne l'expérience extrême du sujet jeté au milieu de la catastrophe. Si le sens global de la

³² Leonidas Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*

³³ En même temps, nous compensons l'absence de la dimension recherche en ajoutant ici une extension et un point de vue critique sur la contribution poétique de Luis Thenon. Une brève description de la forme et des fonctions particulières de son poème permettra de comprendre la manière dont il arrive à se constituer en une si forte représentation de la catastrophe humaine par l'expression verbale seule.

« catastrophe humaine », dans ce poème, est immanquablement celui de l'obscurité la plus totale d'un cercle de l'enfer de Dante (cf. « atteindre le fond du point le plus obscur/ dans le neuvième cercle »), la morale qui se dégage à la fin est que « nous ne sommes qu'une répétition intermittente », sans doute de la même erreur, celle de notre humanité défaillante. Mais entre le sens et la morale s'installe l'image-catastrophe qui constitue la chair du poème, son tissu vivant, sa pulsion de vie à l'intérieur du paysage mortifère qu'il visite ; pour n'en donner qu'un exemple parmi tant d'autres :

[...] il y a une fumée qui flotte entre les ruines
entre les pierres une fumée noire comme une grenade
une fenêtre brisée
une porte sans murs seulement une porte debout
ou l'image finale de la défaite
la ville n'existe plus
cette paire de chaussures alignées
de petites chaussures alignées
juste une paire de chaussures au milieu des débris
pourquoi la parole
pourquoi la mémoire sans fin [...]

Outre le cri et les vécus qu'ils portent intrinsèquement, les vers de Thenon ressemblent à des didascalies filmiques vivantes : ils rassemblent des paroles qui portent en elles tout une imagerie en train de prendre forme et vie au moment même de leur énonciation. Autrement dit, nous faisons l'expérience d'un ciné-poème, une forme d'écriture *cinématique*, qui cherche à simuler et à placer le lecteur dans une expérience *cinématographique*. Comme le pose Pierre Alfieri, il s'agit de « textes intrinsèquement cinématiques », plus précisément « une façon d'inscrire les mots et d'en rythmer la lecture qui appartienne au cinéma et à nul autre médium³⁴ ». Rappelons que le genre trouve ses racines, il y a près d'un siècle déjà, dans la pensée de Benjamin Fondane³⁵ et d'autres représentants du surréalisme. Pour lui, tel que le rapporte Nadja Cohen, les *ciné-poèmes* sont « destinés à être “consumés” par l'acte de la lecture qui aura permis au lecteur de tourner mentalement, sur l'écran de son imagination, le film dont le “ciné-poème” ne lui a fourni que le canevas³⁶ ». Dans le même esprit que celui de « “consumer” par l'acte de lecture » l'image *ad-hoc* de la catastrophe ou, mieux, l'*image-catastrophe* – nous invitons le lecteur à plonger dans l'expérience sensorielle particulière de la création du poète Luis Thenon, offerte à titre d'exemple d'expression littéraire de la représentation de la catastrophe humaine.

³⁴ Pierre Alfieri, « Qu'est-ce qu'un cinépoème ? », *Revue critique de fiction française contemporaine*, 7/ 2013, mis en ligne le 15 décembre 2013 [en ligne],

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/fiction.9264> (consulté le 5 décembre 2023).

³⁵ Voir Benjamin Fondane, *Écrits pour le cinéma. Le muet et le parlant – textes réunis et présentés par Michel Carassou, Olivier Salazar-Ferrer et Ramona Fotiade*, Paris, Verdier Poche, 2007.

³⁶ Nadja Cohen, « Benjamin Fondane : Le ciné-poème contre la littérature ? », *La Part de l'œil*, n° 25-26, 2011, pp. 255-258 [en ligne], <https://nadjacohen.wordpress.com/2012/11/21/benjamin-fondane-le-cine-poeme-contre-la-litterature/> (consulté le 5 décembre 2023).

Pour aller plus loin

Comme nous l'avons vu, bien que l'objectif principal de cette publication fût d'aborder la représentation de la catastrophe humaine dans une approche descriptive, l'aspect *rituel et drame social* résonne dans le substrat de la pensée de plusieurs auteurs du présent ouvrage. Călin Ciobotari parle du rituel de mise à mort, du « sentiment de pratiques rituelles anciennes », voir de rites dérivés, de célébration du « moment de gloire », sans doute autour du meurtre commis, dans le spectacle *Catarina et la beauté de tuer des fascistes*. Nicoleta Popa Blanariu quant à elle parle des rituels de séparation et d'intégration des Danaïdes, lors de leur exil à Argos, avec les motifs du « sacrifice » et de la « renonciation » aux liens avec la terre natale. Eirini Polydorou s'attache au « sentiment dramatique d'un rituel » dans les moments du spectacle *Irak – 9 parts de désir* lorsque les actrices narrent, à voix basse et calme, un désastre nucléaire. Beatrice Lăpădat offre quelques indices intéressants sur des rituels de transition/ transformation et sacrificiels en lien avec des figures de la violence dans les spectacles de Romeo Castelluci. Enfin, Leonidas Papadopoulos discute le rite de passage dans le théâtre grec antique, lié à la transition ou à la séparation. Mais nous avons également pu trouver des traces ou échos de l'aspect rituel dans l'article de Yana Meerzon, certainement dans la manière dont le chœur se trouve investi d'une fonction rituelle dans les pièces d'Esther Bol qui a elle-même un très profond sens du rituel hérité du théâtre grec antique. Konstantza Georgakaki présente le rôle de la réfugiée tel qu'il est apparu dans l'histoire du théâtre grec, dans le contexte du pogrome du dernier siècle en tant que figure stéréotypée, sexualisée. La figure est pratiquement intégrée à un rituel érotique qui semble lui assurer – ne serait-ce qu'auprès du public des revues, qui apprécie sa présence – une transition plus douce de la terre natale (Smyrne ou Constantinople) à la terre-mère retrouvée, Athènes. Enfin, chez Noemina Câmpean, c'est l'approche de l'article centrée sur *le* sujet, sur son expérience *individuelle* de la souffrance et, finalement, l'orientation psychanalytique sur la parole révélatrice des contenus de sens de l'inconscient qui expliquent l'absence d'ancrage dans la sphère anthropologique du rituel. Ajoutons que notre intérêt pour l'aspect rituel réside dans sa manifestation avec un impact auprès des spectateurs qui pourraient, dans certaines conditions qui restent à déterminer, former l'image puissante et inspirante d'un corps social devant la catastrophe. En tant que tel, il aurait la capacité de préfigurer, voire de mener à la constitution de la *communitas* de Turner, vue comme une entité anti-structure : « L'anti-structure est ce qu'il [Victor Turner] appelle la *communitas*, une révolte liminale et existentielle contre la structure qui cherche la catharsis à partir de l'immunisation de la vie et de l'expérience qu'impose la structure.³⁷ »

La *communitas* est donc cette force transformatrice et réparatrice à l'intérieur d'une société, qui apparaît dans sa phase de déstructuration, lorsque le renouvellement est enfin possible et qu'on est capable d'y engendrer des changements culturels importants pour configurer la structure sociale à venir. Enfin, la *communitas* est plus

³⁷ Ma traduction : « *Anti-structure is what he [Victor Turner] calls communitas, a liminal and existential revolt against structure that seeks catharsis from the immunization of life and experience that structure imposes.* », Daniel Tutt, « Religion and Communitas: Structure and Anti-Structure », Blog de Daniel Tutt, 20 mars 2015, [online]. <https://danieltutt.com/2015/03/20/religion-and-communitas-structure-and-anti-structure/> (Consulté le 17 décembre 2023).

près de l'art et du sacré et de leur feu créateur ; c'est une force sociale en tout temps *du présent*, toujours en train de reconfigurer les fondements sociétaux et elle est cette force vive qu'exige toute reconstruction en mode et dans un monde *post-catastrophe*. Ce sont, là, des éléments qui articuleront la discussion de la représentation de la catastrophe humaine dans la phase deux de notre projet, liée à la question rituelle et qui fera l'objet d'une autre publication.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Académie Française, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, [en ligne].
<https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9C1095> (Consulté le 17 décembre 2023).
- Alfieri, Pierre « Qu'est-ce qu'un cinépoème ? », *Revue critique de fiction française contemporaine*, 7/ 2013, mis en ligne le 15 décembre 2013, [en ligne].
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/fiction.9264> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2023).
- CNRTL, « Portail lexical », *Centre national des ressources textuelles et lexicales*, Nancy, [en ligne]. <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/catastrophe> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2023).
- Cohen, Nadja, « Benjamin Fondane : Le ciné-poème contre la littérature ? », *La Part de l'œil*, nos. 25-26, 2011, pp. 255-258, [en ligne].
<https://nadjacohen.wordpress.com/2012/11/21/benjamin-fondane-le-cine-poeme-contre-la-litterature/> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2023).
- Fondane, Benjamin, *Écrits pour le cinéma. Le muet et le parlant*, textes réunis et présentés par Michel Carassou, Olivier Salazar-Ferrer et Ramona Fotiade, Paris, Verdier Poche, 2007.
- Martz-Kuhn, Émilie, « Écritures scéniques de la catastrophe humaine dans le théâtre contemporain. Étude de cas et recherche-crédation », Québec, Université Laval, 2013.
- Lauwaert, Françoise, « Introduction », *Civilisations*, n° 56, 2007, pp. 7-20.
- Papadopoulos, Leonidas, *Sea Journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy*, thèse de doctorat, Londres, King's College London, 2015, [en ligne].
https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/57627966/2016_Papadopoulos_Leonidas_1253103_thesis.pdf (Consulté le 10 décembre 2023).
- Sarrazac, Jean-Pierre (dir.), *La catastrophe sur la scène moderne et contemporaine*, Louvain La Neuve, Centre d'études théâtrales, 2002.
- Turner, Victor, *The Anthropology of Performance*, New York: PAJ Publications, 1988.
- Varapoulou, Eleni et Marianne McDonald, *Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis Theatre: History, Methodology and Comments*, Athens, Agra Publications, 2000.

The Critique's Point of View
Le point de vue du critique

“THE CHORUS PERISHES” – ON ESTHER BOL’S THEATRE OF CATASTROPHE

In his book *Death in Modern Theatre* (2019), Adrian Curtin discusses how representation of death changed in modern theatre after two catastrophic events of the mid-20th century – the Holocaust of the Jewish people and the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan. One such change relates to the devaluing of a human life. As warranted by wars, climate disasters, and other global crises, catastrophe makes death trivial, a mere fact of our existence, and so constantly recapped and heavily mediatized, catastrophe makes it impossible for us to grieve properly. Theatre of catastrophe, I argue, focuses its artistic investigation on the causes and consequences of mass destruction and death, it also documents social, political, and ethical processes that caused them. Yet, it often uses devices of sensationalism, melodrama, and affect to depict and transmit the sense of immediacy and disaster that catastrophe carries. The work of Esther Bol, Russian contemporary playwright, with a clear antiwar and pro-Ukrainian position, constitutes my case study. It allows me to examine how in the theatre of catastrophe the fate of many takes over the fate of one, and how this art form capitalizes on the sense of horror as experienced by the victims of mass death and on the sense of irredeemable guilt that a bystander feels, when watching the catastrophe unfolding in front of their eyes.

Key-words: *Theatre of catastrophe, Greek tragedy, dark catharsis, Esther Bol /Asya Voloshina, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Antigone*

In his book *Death in Modern Theatre* (2019), Adrian Curtin discusses how representation of death changed in modern theatre after two catastrophic events of the mid-20th century – the Holocaust of the Jewish people and the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan; the events that occupy a very special place “within the twentieth century’s catalogue of horrors involving mass death”². One such change relates to devaluing of a human life. As warranted by wars, climate disasters, and other global crises, catastrophe makes death trivial, a mere fact of our existence, and so it causes “deindividuation, lack of agency, incomprehensibility, meaninglessness, death-in-life, and extinction” of human species³. Constantly recapped and heavily mediatized, catastrophe makes it impossible for us to grieve properly. “We read about lives lost and are often given the numbers, but these stories are repeated every day, and the repetition appears endless, irremediable,” Judith Butler wrote famously⁴.

¹ University of Ottawa.

² Adrian Curtin, *Death in Modern Theatre*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2019, p. 135.

³ S.M. Gilbert, *Death’s Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2006, p. 137.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, New York, Verso, 2009, p. 13.

And so, we have to ask, what would it take not only to apprehend the precarious character of lives lost in war, but to have that apprehension coincide with an ethical and political opposition to the losses war entails? Among the questions that follow from this situation are: How is affect produced by this structure of the frame? And what is the relation of affect to ethical and political judgment and practice?⁵

Theatre of catastrophe, I would like to demonstrate in this article, turns to these questions directly. Not only it often focuses its artistic investigation on the causes and consequences of mass destruction and death⁶, it also engages with the questions that Judith Butler puts forward. As a particular artistic frame to evoke catastrophe and its consequences for its audiences, this theatre aims to document social, political, and ethical processes that caused the catastrophe and it uses devices of sensationalism, melodrama, and affect to depict and transmit the sense of immediacy and disaster that catastrophe carries.

Yet, Annette Becker, a renowned historian of the First World War, insists on a clear distinction between tragedy and catastrophe. “In a tragedy, – she explains – we are equal in relation to each other [...], whereas in a catastrophe, as with the Shoah, there is no equality between those who kill and those who are killed”⁷. Tragedy carries a sense of something noble, but catastrophe is defined by “the horror of mass death, [which] is not the same as mass murder”⁸. That is why when it comes to the soldiers who perished on the war fronts, we tend to produce “the respect for the war grave” and to “re-humanize the dead”; with the catastrophes of mass death, like Holocaust, there are no graves left. “Everything is done to hide the traces,” to erase “all tangible signs of death,” to show no respect to the dead, and not to bury them⁹.

Theatre of catastrophe seems to capitalize on this sense of horror as experienced by the victims of mass death and on the sense of irredeemable guilt that a bystander feels, when watching the catastrophe unfolding in front of their eyes. And so, spectacle and agitation often become leading artistic devices that the theatre of catastrophe employs; they create and uphold the feelings of sensationalism, which then turn into substitute to catharsis. Instead of recognition and reversal that follow the fall of a tragic protagonist in a classical tragedy, theatre of catastrophe aims to document an immediate impact of the disaster, i.e. its sensationalist aspect, but not its consequences. Like a journalistic reportage or a social media posting, theatre of catastrophe relies on commotion and spectacle, and thus like journalism it also faces the questions of effectiveness¹⁰. Studying theatre of catastrophe, one might want to ask: Are sensationalism and alarmism truly effective in dealing with catastrophe? What is the real time of the catastrophe? Is it just one’s present moment, with the

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Adrian Curtin, *Death in Modern Theatre*, op. cit., p. 143.

⁷ Annette Becker, « Catastrophe vs. Tragedy » in *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire*, 118 | 2014, [online]. <http://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/1094> (accessed December 16, 2023)

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Andrew Weaver, “The ‘Gulf Stream’ Will not Collapse in 2025: What the Alarmist Headlines got Wrong,” in *The Conversation*, August 3, 2023, [online]. <https://theconversation.com/the-gulf-stream-will-not-collapse-in-2025-what-the-alarmist-headlines-got-wrong-210773> (accessed December 16, 2023).

victims rarely looking into what brought the catastrophe and what might happen after it? And finally, can theatre of catastrophe be redemptive, as to indicate to its audiences a way out of the calamity?

The work of Esther Bol¹¹, Russian contemporary playwright, with a clear antiwar and pro-Ukrainian position, constitutes my case study to examine how in the theatre of catastrophe Chorus devours individual, so in its meaning and significance the fate of many takes over the fate of one.

Esther Bol's Theatre of Catastrophe

In his book *Theatre de la catastrophe*, Francois Laplantine identifies four dimensions of a catastrophe be it a human made disaster or an environmental one. They are 1) temporal dimension, 2) an event of a cosmic power, something that can be recognized as disastrous with no ambiguity to what its reasons or consequences can be, 3) surprise that causes disappointment – the suffering submerged within the action, which is also confused, interrupted, destroyed”, but also confrontation between “an experience of the undoing and the failure”¹², and 4) catastrophe as a disastrous event in the off-stage as a leading device of a new tragic narrative: “catastrophe always instigates creation of a narrative, a set of images, or a theatrical production”¹³. Greek tragedy, as Laplantine reminds us, speaks from this place of *katastrophé* – the space of destruction, apocalypse, and complete defeat. This is the action of its closing act: “the bad news announced by a messenger at the beginning of the play will come true. We cannot escape an inexorable destiny”¹⁴. Yet, *catharsis* as a dramaturgical ingredient of Greek tragedy seems to be ruled out in the theatre of catastrophe; thus, making affinities between theatre of the catastrophe and Greek tragedy problematic. Esther Bol's theatre has a special power to document and transmit the effect and the time of the catastrophe. For her, today's tragedy cannot be compared to the Greek one. Today's theatre, Bol strongly believes, searches for its unique forms of catharsis; and so, when it wishes to speak in tragic terms it must focus on lives fully ruined and destroyed. It must reject melodrama of the everyday to seek existential and metaphorical terms to speak of the catastrophe¹⁵; and thus, it must put a Chorus character (not individual protagonist) in the centre of its conflict. Like in a Greek tragedy, Chorus of the catastrophe stands for the voice of people – specifically, it serves as a mouthpiece of the victims and of the dead. Language plays a leading part in the theatre of catastrophe, with lamentations, incantations and rhythmized speeches/songs of Chorus gesturing toward mass death. To present catastrophe as an act of devaluation of a single life, Esther Bol turns to the character of tragic Chorus:

¹¹ Esther Bol is a penname of the Russian playwright Asya Voloshina. I use the name Esther Bol in the body of this article, but when it comes to citations and bibliography, I cite her plays and interviews which she published before this change took place – in the summer of 2022 and because of the artist's decision to cease her ties with Russia.

¹² François Laplantine, *Théâtre de la catastrophe : expérience des situations extrêmes et création artistique*, Paris, Le Pommier, 2022, p. 7.

¹³ “*Une catastrophe suscite toujours une mise en récit, une mise en images, une mise en scène*”, François Laplantine, *ibidem*.

¹⁴ “*La mauvaise nouvelle annoncée par un messenger au début de la pièce se réalisera. Nous ne pouvons pas échapper à un destin inexorable.*”, François Laplantine, *ibidem*.

¹⁵ Asya Voloshina, “Personal Correspondence with the Author,” July-August, 2022.

in her work, I will show next, “when the Chorus speaks, the voices of individuals who make it dissolve; the Chorus devours its members”¹⁶.

B

o
r
n

i
n

1
9
8
5

,

E
s
t
h
e
r

B
o
l

g
r
a
d
u
a
t
e
d

f
r
o
m

The book of four plays – *The Chorus Perishes. Four Plays about Russia*¹⁷ – presents Esther Bol as one of the most politically outspoken Russian playwrights, who finds it impossible to live in Russia today. To her, it is hard to write about love, art, the artist’s purpose, or responsibility, as well as powerlessness of the intellectual today.

R

¹⁶ Esther Bol, *Conversation with the Author*, Zoom, November 10, 2023.

¹⁷ Asya Voloshina, *Gibnet khor. Chetyre piesy o Rossii*, St. Petersburg, Seans, 2018.

s
i
a
n



IMAGE 1 – Esther Bol. Personal photo.

I left Russia right after the war in Ukraine started. I loved Russia for 37 years, until February 24, 2022. With the first attack on Ukraine, my heart was burned out. [...] Before the war, I thought I could do more good in Russia. With my anti-totalitarian plays, some direct statements in interviews, going to rallies. On February 24, it became clear that this was an illusion.¹⁸

To Esther Bol, it is essential to speak about the will of humans, both in the sense of ‘freedom’ and in the sense of ‘daring’: “‘When they take away our will, they take away our freedom, and vice versa: when they take away our freedom, they take away our will.’ [...] This is what they have done to my country [Russia - YM]. This is what has brought about the catastrophe we are witnessing right now”¹⁹. As she further clarifies, “all claims to power, authority, pressure, external violence, repressive apparatuses and mechanisms metaphysically refer to the fact that without freedom there is no audacity, and vice versa – without daring there is no freedom”²⁰. Bol’s interest in epic dramatic forms, her work on Chorus and her critique of the state oppression, violence and civil war mobilize her fight against Putin’s totalitarianism and militarization of the country. With the productions of her plays being banned in Russia and to signal “the totality of the catastrophe, the insurmountable nature of the rupture and the impossibility of any form of return”²¹, her 2022 play *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine* is the writer’s direct response to the war in Ukraine; it is a new type of tragedy – the tragedy of catastrophe “with the dark catharsis”²².

Case study one – *Antigona: Reduction*

I begin my study of the evolution of the function and the place of Chorus in Esther Bol’s theatre of catastrophe with her 2013 play *Antigona: Reduction*²³. One of the most influential tragedies of the Western theatre canon, Sophocles’ *Antigone* has served politically aware artists as an instrument of resistance and protest to the oppressive regimes for centuries. Esther Bol builds on this tradition. Subtitled ‘a political satire with elements of poetry and reduction’, her *Antigona: Reduction* recasts Sophocles’ title character, Antigone, from an existential tragic figure to a political rebel, whose actions of protest become inevitably and ironically performative in the highly mediatized culture of social media influencers, business moguls, and performative post-truth.

¹⁸ Voloshina in Alik Spiridonov, “«Udar po Ukraine vyzheg mne cerdce». Rossiiskii dramaturg o trebovanii ubrat’ svoe imya z afish,” in *VotTak*, April 9, 2022, [online]. <https://vot-tak.tv/novosti/09-04-2022-udar-po-ukraine> (accessed December 16, 2023).

¹⁹ Bol in Yana Meerzon, “‘On the Rightlessness for Compassion or How to Redeem an Unredeemable Guilt’. [Asya Voloshina]/Esther Bol and Yana Meerzon: Dialogue,” in *Critical Stages*, 2022 (26), [online]. <https://www.critical-stages.org/26/on-the-rightlessness-for-compassion-or-how-to-redeem-an-unredeemable-guilt/> (accessed December 16, 2023).

²⁰ Bol in Yana Meerzon, 2022, *op. cit.*

²¹ Note of Intent. *Le musée des histoires (non) imaginées*, [online]. <https://www.sensinterdits.org/en/le-musee-des-histoires-non-imaginees-2/> (accessed December 16, 2023).

²² Bol in Meerzon, Yana, 2022, *op. cit.*

²³ Original title is *Antigona: Redukciia*.

Written in 2013, a year after Vladimir Putin's return to power as Russia's president, *Antigona: Reduction* documents a so-called 'point of no return' in the modern history of Russia and predicts the horrific events of the post 2014 to come. The year 2012 signaled the end of the political and economic reforms in modernization put forward by Medvedev's government and the country's slide towards a right-wing nationalist agenda, which in 2014 resulted in the annexation of Crimea and in 2022 in a full-scale war in Ukraine. 2012 also happened to be one of the most intense years in the modern history of Russia's public protests and its suppressions. It saw the silencing of the anti-Putin Bolotnaya Square rally and the first public trials and imprisonment of the protesters, including the trial, conviction, and imprisonment of three members of the feminist performance art group Pussy Riot after they staged a 40-second Punk-Prayer inside Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on the 21st of February 2012.

A "political pamphlet on 'mature Putinism,' manifested through the suppression of mass protests against falsifications in the presidential and parliamentary elections and the subsequent tightening of the political regime"²⁴, *Antigona: Reduction* comments on many of these events. A dramatization of Antigone's solitary protest, it gestures toward the performativity of Pussy Riot's rebellion, and it also demonstrates that within the autocratic society, the only way for a citizen to be seen and to be heard is to perform an act of insolence within the mediatized public sphere. Media plays the most significant role in this act of resistance but also of reduction. Bol's text demonstrates that it is the energy of a televised transmission and populist propaganda that defines Antigone and her actions.



IMAGES 2 and 3 – Antigone/Reduction. New Stage Workshop, Alexandrinsky Teatr, St. Petersburg, 2014. Director Anfisa Ivanova. Photo: Tatiana Tumanova.

To Bol, modern tragedy cannot mimic the original Greek tragedy – because “the type of theatrical communication as it was practiced in Greek theatre has been irrevocably lost”²⁵ – but it can still seek forms of catharsis. To generate this new

²⁴ Katarzhyna Syska, “Antigona/Reduction Asi Voloshinoy. Performance bunta”, Unpublished Manuscript, Email to the Author, August 20, 2022, p. 1.

²⁵ Voloshina in Natalia Sokolova, “Asya Voloshina: ‘Khochetsya zanimat’sya teatrom, otsylajuschim k vertikalii,’” in *Prochtenie*, January 19, 2018, [online]. <https://lensov-theatre.spb.ru/prensa/asya-voloshina-hochetsya-zanimatsya-teatrom-otsylayuschim-k-vertikalii/> (accessed December 16, 2023).

dramatic form, Bol uses strategies of literary quotation, gesturing to the original, borrowing and commentary, so in her plays these borrowed texts often appear as ‘alien’²⁶. Stylistically, her theatre reminds of the 1920s formalist theatre experiments, evidenced in her admiration of Osip Mandelstam’s poetry and of the postmodernist search in performativity, including fragmentation, montage of citations, and palimpsest of borrowed texts; all of which serve as a vehicle to the authorial creative utterance and personal truth, Bol’s “vision of ways out of the ideological crisis”²⁷ and the world of catastrophe.

Written in verse (Act One) and in prose (Act Two), *Antigona: Reduction* mixes myth with contemporary reality, but it “violates the main principle of the ancient myth – obedience to the gods. [...] Voloshina excludes the Gods’ intervention in Antigone’s decision: to bury her brother and to die is only her choice”²⁸. In addition, in Bol’s adaptation of the Greek play, the function of the Chorus – the mouth-speaker of the people and of the author’s own view on the conflict – is reduced as well. Here a Theban society is represented by two random bystanders – Old Demos and Young Demos – who symbolically and metonymically stand for the Russian people. Two Demoses appear on stage twice: in the first instance they are there to celebrate the wedding of the royal couple and in the second they arrive after Antigone is already arrested to cheer the second reiteration of the same wedding, now with the fake Antigone (Ismene dressed as Antigone) on stage. In this play, the Chorus is reduced to the collective figure of these Two Demoses, who in their disappointment with and fear of the regime, remain ambivalent if not indifferent to Antigone, someone who dares to take on the heroic role of the leader of the resistance. As Bol explains, her play demonstrates that in Russia

Putin and the Russian people not only complement each other, they are mutually contaminated. [...] The point is not to reveal the contaminated atmosphere between the Russian Creons and the Antibunts, but to show the contaminated atmosphere between them and the Demos, the people of the country²⁹.

This is how Bol depicts this tension – tyrant vs people, individual vs Chorus – in her play: in the new Thebes the structural power of the city is so corrupted that it’s not just Creon who might serve as puppet in the hands of his own assistant/handler, it is also his people (Chorus) who can be seen as silent accomplices of Antibunt. The silence stands for conformism, and thus turns into complicity. Once again, Bol brings the Old Demos on stage, who teaches the Young Demos to forget his knowledge of the old truth and to accept the new one, to pretend that nothing has ever happened and to remember that obedience is the only tactic of survival available for them³⁰.

²⁶ Larisa Tyutelova et al, “Transformation of ‘Alien’ Text as a Technology for Generating the New in Russian Drama of the 1990s–2010s,” in *Technology, Innovation and Creativity in Digital Society: XXI Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future*, edited by Daria Bylieva and Alfred Nordmann, Cham, Springer, 2022, p. 377.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 386.

²⁸ Larisa Kislova, “Antichny myth v Russkoy ‘Novoy drame’ rubezha XX-XXI vekov”, *Philology and Culture*, (2015), 42 (4), p. 223.

²⁹ Asya Voloshina, “Personal Correspondence”, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Asya Voloshina, *Gibnet khor*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.



IMAGE 4 – *Antigone: Reduction*, Masterskaya Sovremennogo Teatra, St. Petersburg, 2020. Director Maria Galyazimova. Photo: Dmitry Yakubov.

Russian theatre has a long-standing tradition of questioning the unspoken bond between the people and the tyrant. Douglas J. Clayton argues that it was Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), who was among the first Russian writers to stage Russian people as a tragic Chorus and as accomplices to the crimes of the tyrant³¹. Bol's *Antigona: Reduction* speaks to this tradition as well: one can trace the dramatic genealogy of Bol's tragic Chorus to Russia's first national tragedy – Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (written in 1825), which stages a complex interdependence between the state and the people. Written about a period of Russian history remote from Pushkin's time, *Boris Godunov* spoke of the 19th century Russia – a country on the verge of a revolution, “probably with a bloody overthrow of the emperor”³². Bol's play echoes Pushkin's interpretation of the Russian people as an “elemental force, fickle, [and] unpredictable power” that holds political potential for the revolt³³. However, this unpredictable energy is hidden within the people's seeming indifference and apathy. Pushkin closed his tragedy with a symptomatic stage direction ‘the people are silent’, which pointed at the unspoken bond – contamination and interdependency – between the tsar and his people. This famous stage direction served as a warning sign of the dangerous potential that Russian people possess³⁴: the Chorus can be silent, but their silence is never clear whether it is a sign of submission or brewing revolt.

In *Antigone: Reduction*, Bol issues a similar warning. With Old and Young Demoses representing the people of Thebes, a highly reduced in size and functions Chorus figure turns into a metonym of Pushkin's *narod*. But if in Pushkin's *Boris*

³¹ Douglas J. Clayton, “Alexander Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* as Epic Theatre,” in *History, Memory, Performance*, edited by Yana Meerzon, Kathryn Prince and David Dean, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 98.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 99.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

Godunov the silence of the people remains ambiguous, in this play there is nothing uncertain about Demoses and their standing. They choose to remain silent and keep safe, because these Demoses – like Bol’s own audiences of 2013 – prefer personal comfort, economic stability, and the glamour of the rich over the truth. The ending of *Antigone: Reduction* speaks even more directly to this concrete moment of Russia’s history: Antigone is dead now, while Thebes prepares for Haemon’s second wedding. Unlike the Chorus of the Greeks, the people – the Two Demoses – stand in silence; they neither approve nor condemn the actions of the state; and thus, they allow Creon and his apparatchiks to play out their endgame.

With the war raging in Ukraine, as Bol states, there is no room left for hesitation, confusion, or compromise: the answer is only that – to fight against the aggressor is to side with the defenders of Ukraine. Written in 2013, before the annexation of Crimea and today’s war, *Antigona: Reduction* documents its own moment of history, when “almost no one went to the barricades”³⁵. It speaks to the moral obligation of the artist, who, when they “seem to be powerless in the face of reality, can try to do something for the other, or maybe for oneself, to keep in us the ability to feel empathy, and not only for yourself, but also for all of humanity”³⁶.

Case study two – *The Chorus Perishes*

In Esther Bol’s other play, *The Chorus Perishes* (2017), the action takes place during World War I. Its protagonist is a military doctor from St. Petersburg, who travels in a hospital train. He is surrounded by the voices of the fallen Russian soldiers, who make the Chorus of this play. The dialogue of the Chorus is semi-documentary, as it is based on the stories, observations, thoughts, and personal records of the Russian soldiers during the war, collected and transcribed by the sister of mercy Sofia Fedorchenko, who in 1917 published a book *People at War*, subtitled "Front Records". The play opens with the Prologue spoken by this Chorus: the lines gesture toward the catastrophe of WWI, during which mass killings have been introduced. To those who have experienced this catastrophe, the war permits neither catharsis nor redemption – only death and oblivion; and thus the Chorus speaks - “I don’t know who is to blame, but I hate it so much, and it is so dark and so painful - I seek only death”³⁷. In this play, the Chorus of the fallen soldiers makes a new version of Esther Bol’s people. These soldiers “had been deprived of civilization, they are absolutely uneducated, and so are their words, thoughts, actions, and worldview”³⁸. A figment of the protagonist’s imagination, these soldiers represent both revolt of the masses and victims of history; and so the play forces its readers to shift their attention from the fate of one (Doctor) to the fate of many. Chorus becomes the core protagonist of this tragedy, whereas guilt – something as experienced by both the Doctor and the Author - drives this play forward. The play “was written in 2014, right after the annexation of Crimea [...] and after the covert invasion of Russian troops in Eastern Ukraine. But the action takes

³⁵ Asya Voloshina, “Personal Correspondence”, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Voloshina in Nevinnaya, Iveta, „Dramaturg Asya Voloshina: ‘Vse seichas v pole gigantskogo eksperimenta’,” *Mk.RU*, May 15, 2020, [online]. <https://www.mk.ru/culture/2020/05/15/dramaturg-asya-voloshina-vse-seychas-v-pole-gigantskogo-eksperimenta.html>, (accessed December 16, 2023)

³⁷ Asya Voloshina, *Gibnet khor*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³⁸ Asya Voloshina, “Personal Correspondence”, *op. cit.*

place in 1914. The protagonist [Doctor – YM] has his own individual guilt: he shot a wounded soldier dead while performing a surgery because he could not stand anymore sawing flesh and bones without anesthesia. [...] But he also feels an inherent, collective, existential guilt – for the ignorance, backwardness of the soldiers. For their medieval barbarity. For this unrepairable rupture. Deep down he knows his individual guilt (although he hides it until the very end, pushing it out).”³⁹



IMAGE 5 – *The Chorus Perishes*, Fulcro Theatre, Director Daria Shanina, Photo: Alexander Khanin.

In his famous essay “On the Concept of History,” Walter Benjamin describes Klee’s painting ‘Angelus Novus’ as a metaphor of how one (a historian or an artist) looks at the past atrocities:

[Klee’s painting] shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.⁴⁰

A similar process takes place in *The Chorus Perishes*: by focusing the action of the play on the events of 1914, Esther Bol channels her own feelings of disaster and her sense of catastrophe that she experienced when witnessing the 2014 annexation of Crimea. In this play, historical distancing functions as the

³⁹ Asya Voloshina, “Personal Correspondence”, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Selected Writings, Volume 4. 1938-1940*, translated by Edmund Jephcott and others, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, Harvard, Harvard UP, 2006, p. 392.

playwright's personal dramaturgical and emotional device of writing and protection: "it is as if I needed some kind of sense of alienation, to use the materials, the documents, and the facts of another war to talk about the one that was taking place in front of me," Esther Bol explains⁴¹. Yet, zooming on the voices of the dead soldiers helps Bol change the focus of this tragedy. The title of the play – "The Chorus Perishes" – gestures toward Joseph Brodsky's Nobel Prize lecture, in which he discussed the consequences of the global stand-off between totalitarianism and other political systems. In Brodsky's lecture, Esther Bol recollects, "the line goes: 'In a real tragedy, it is not the hero who perishes; it is the chorus.' In the play though, it is the hero who perishes [...], but it's the Chorus that's dead right from the start"⁴². This is a typical device of the theatre of catastrophe: instead of studying the tragic fate of an individual, it looks at the tragedy of many. Yet, Esther Bol takes this device a bit further. In *The Chorus Perishes* an individual stands for an intellectual, who has lost their connection to the common people. "Already gone insane," Doctor continues to

despis[e] this under-human mass of flesh and blood that obliterates itself in the meat grinder of war. Unless as the war does not grind all the masses, it will not stop. And he will be prevented from enjoying the refined urbane lifestyle that he used to enjoy in his previous life. He does not realize that his privilege makes him inherently, ancestrally, patrimonially responsible for their barbarity... And that's a kind of real tragic guilt⁴³.

In other words, in Esther Bol's theatre, it is only Chorus who can play the role of the tragic protagonist today, because it is only Chorus, "who can take on the role of all those who were tortured to death or murdered"⁴⁴.

Like in Greek tragedy, in Bol's play, the fate of the protagonist – the fate of Chorus – drives the plot forward.

The ruined hero [Doctor - YM], blinded, about to shoot himself in the head, suddenly longs to hear a letter. But what he craves is not an exquisitely written letter from his artistic wife. He craves to hear one of those letters that a soldier's wife gets a literate neighbor to write to her husband for a dozen eggs. [...] At the last moment of his life our refined intellectual savors these primitive words and dreams that one day he gets a love letter like this... Thus, the individual is completely swallowed and destroyed by Chorus. So, I describe this act as a symbol of our collective collapse. The collapse of those who play the role of Russian intellectual⁴⁵.

Once again, for Esther Bol this kind of conclusion is directly linked to the situation in Russia; and at that point of time, to the catastrophe of the annexation of Crimea: "The masses in Russia in 2014 rejoiced that our country stole a piece of land from its neighbor. Who bears the blame and responsibility for this? Who should feel

⁴¹ Esther Bol, *Conversation with the Author*, *op. cit.*

⁴² Asya Voloshina, "Personal Correspondence," *op. cit.*

⁴³ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

the inherited, ancestral, patrimonial guilt?”⁴⁶

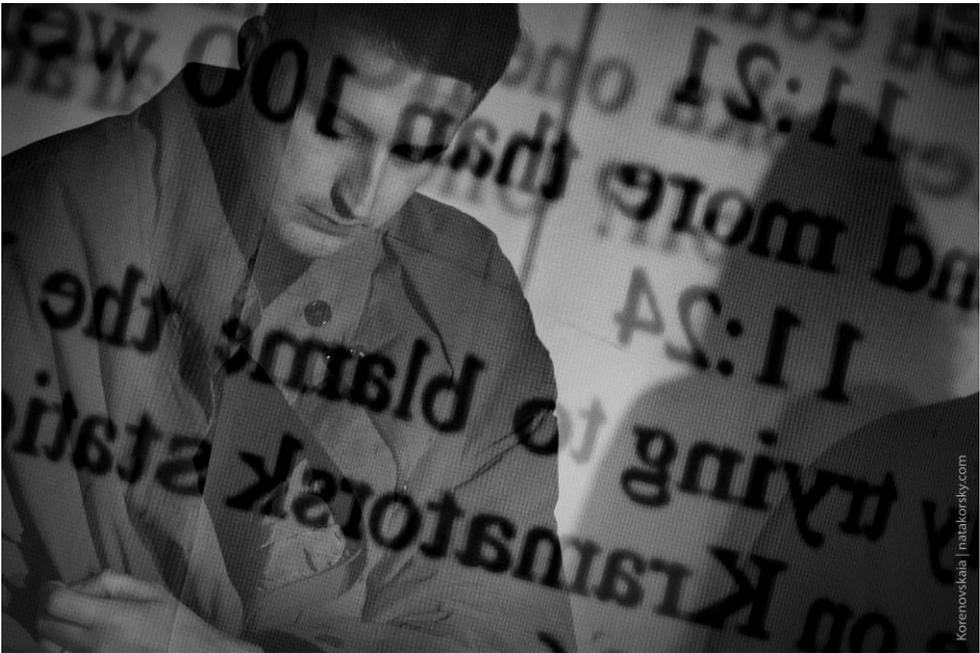
Case study three – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*

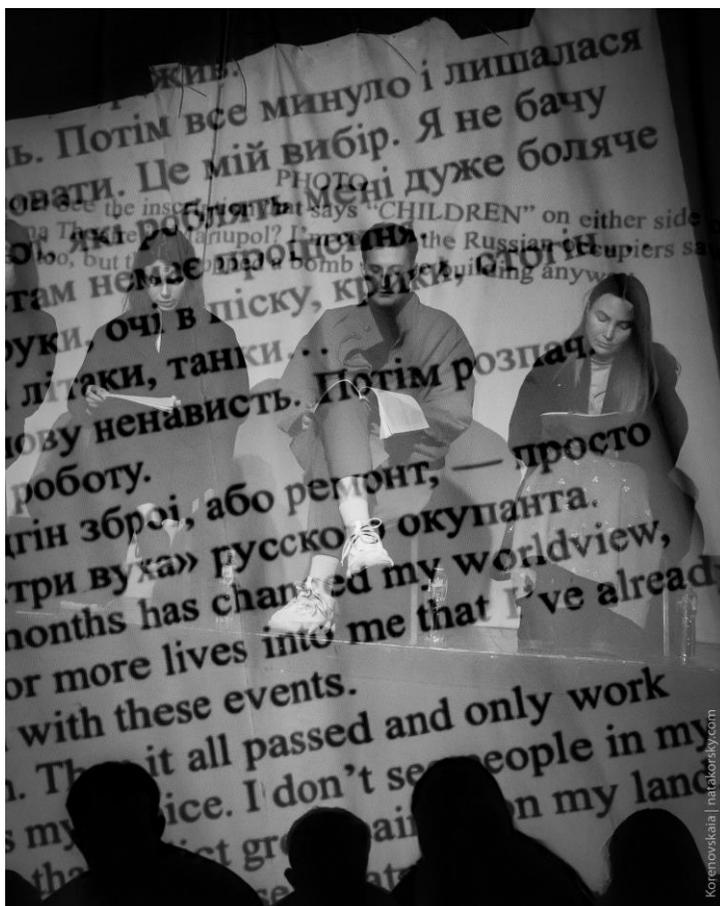
Written as the playwright’s immediate reaction to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the play *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*⁴⁷ is my last example of Esther Bol’s theatre of catastrophe. Subtitled “screen prose or a horizontal group of plays,” the play is dedicated to “all defenders” of Ukraine, with “all royalties from any public performance of this text [to] always go to Ukraine”⁴⁸. The action takes place on the iPhone of the female character, YOU, a pro-Ukrainian Russian, who finds herself in the safety of exile trying to come to terms with guilt and shame she feels because of her country’s crimes. A post-dramatic palimpsest, the text consists of newsfeeds from the Russian official media and Ukrainian Telegram channels, postings on social media, hate speech, YOU’s private correspondence with her friends and relatives, and her unsent love letters. This is a verbatim play that absorbs and transcends the voices of a deeply polarized Russian society, mostly cosmopolitan urbanites, and gives space to Ukrainians, who both ridicule, condemn, and thank YOU for her anti-war position. By focusing the action on the character YOU, who experiences the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a political fiasco of her generation and her personal catastrophe, Esther Bol juxtaposes isolation of the individual with destruction of the group.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ In 2022, the play was published in Russian on Esther Bol’s personal site and in English in the journal *Critical Stages*. The play was translated into French and, in 2024, will be published by L’espace d’un instant. Also, in January 2024, the play will be published in Russian by the Israel based publishing house Babel.

⁴⁸ Asya Voloshina, “CRIME/@AlwaysArmUkraine”, translated by Ricardo Marin-Vidal, *Critical Stages*, 2022 (26), [online]. <https://www.critical-stages.org/26/crime-alwaysarmukraine/>; (accessed December 16, 2023), p. 1.





IMAGES 6, 7 and 8 – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*,
The Lubimovka Echo Festival, Director Anastasia Patlay,
Belgrade, December 16-18, 2022. Photo: Nata Korenovskaia.

Exposed textuality is a literary device that characterizes Esther Bol's writing in this play. *Exposed textuality* refers to the presentation of a dramatic text on page as a constructed component of theatre rather than a 'natural' and 'spontaneous' element of performance; it makes "the apparatus of the theater visible"⁴⁹. By exposing text as something specifically constructed for this dramaturgical event, Esther Bol creates a new literary space in which she reveals how the scripts of national propaganda, governing institutions, and politics dominate Russian discourse on Ukraine. This way she also reveals deep interconnectedness between the subjectivity of her own I, the author of the play, and the subjectivity of 'YOU', the character, marked by the immediacy of the war.

In the Russian version of the text, the protagonist is called "TY", which is translated into the English "YOU". This choice demands a brief explanation of the multifaceted significance of this pronoun in Bol's text. As well known, the Russian pronoun "TY" is reserved for informal communication between family members,

⁴⁹ Jürs-Munbe, Karen, "Text Exposed: Displayed Texts as Players Onstage in Contemporary Theatre," in *Studies in Theatre & Performance*, 2010, 30 (1), p. 102.

relatives, peers or close acquaintances, while a more formal “VY”, very much like in French or German, is reserved for communication with the elderly people or one’s superiors. The fact that Esther Bol chooses to name her protagonist “TY” signals close if not intimate proximity between the author and her character and thus suggests an autobiographical overtone of this play as well. Secondly, a pronoun “TY” can be also used as a self-referential construct, i.e. when one refers to themselves not as “I” but as “TY”. This device can be found in autobiographical narratives, but also in those plays and stories that bear elements of a third-person narration. In this type of narrative, the author or the narrator is often found outside the described events of the story and provides either a limited or an objective point of view. Often such narrator refers to the characters by their names or by the third-person pronouns he, she, or they. When Esther Bol opts for “TY”/“YOU” – second person singular pronoun – to name her major character, she creates a sense of uncomfortable simultaneity – proximity and distancing – that characterizes the relationships between the author and the character in the first place, but also the connection between the character and the audience, and the author and the audience. For example, in relation to the author/character pairing, the use of “TY” suggests a heightened degree of the author’s self-referencing but also self-distancing, and thus allows the author Esther Bol to detach herself from her protagonist. At the same time, the use of “TY” helps playwright to invite if not envelop the audience into the action. Because the character does not bear any specific common name (Mary, John, etc), the name “TY”/ “YOU” establishes certain meta-theatrical and intersubjective type of relationships between the character and the spectators. The play imagines spectators within the catastrophic events it describes, and it makes the audience become more aware about their own role in and responsibility for the catastrophe unfolding in front of their eyes. Certainly, many other Russian war migrants, political exiles, and even those who stayed behind in the country, could subscribe to the feelings of shame and guilt they felt for the actions of Putin’s government and its supporters who initiated this full-scale invasion. Finally, the use of “TY” serves as a special interconnector between the author (Esther Bol) and her audience, to which I return a little later in this article. Hence, it is not surprising that the lines attributed to YOU are heavily interspersed by stage direction “breath”. Each “breath” punctuates the rhythm of the catastrophe as agitation, as spectacle and as sensation, which is experienced simultaneously by an individual (YOU) and by a group.

Unlike in the plays discussed above, in *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine* Esther Bol uses no historical distance between her own experience of the invasion and the world of fiction she creates – here Bol writes verbatim, from the time within the catastrophe. Accordingly, the text of the play functions both as an act of documenting the catastrophe and as the record of the author’s emotional state, in which many other Russian people including YOU, found themselves in the first weeks of the invasion. The time of this play is not historical, and it is not denoted by any literal devices of temporal distancing, it is the immediate time of here and now, the time of the historical catastrophe – or even myth, as Bol suggests⁵⁰ - from which there is no escape. To exit the space of this tragedy, YOU can do only one thing – she can only step out of the world of fiction into the reality of her audience. To help YOU cross this fiction/reality

⁵⁰ Esther Bol, *Conversation with the Author*, *op. cit.*

border, Esther Bol uses the devices of Brechtian epic theatre: first, she creates the idea of and the conditions for a dramaturgical rupture or interruption, then she invites her character to step into them.

The play consists of 18 segments, with the last one numbered “0”, not “18”. This is the moment of Brechtian rupture, when the character rebels against the dramatic logic of her own play and against the author, who writes it. In segment “17”, YOU suddenly realizes that the love of her life, Ignat, a Ukrainian artist, has been killed: “today I woke up with the knowledge that you are no more”⁵¹. Till this line, Ignat continues to appear in YOU’s mind: in her recollections of their past encounters, in her fears for his life, and in the conversations she imagines they are holding about the war and about the role (so called) bad and good Russians play in it

IGNAT

It’s not my place to give advice, but you write too much. Where things currently stand, non-Ukrainians are incapable even of writing a long post that won’t be cursed. I’m just telling you how it is.

Socrates knew that he knew nothing, and it didn’t offend him, yet anyone with a Russian background as a rule (really!!) is certain that they know Ukrainians. That’s very characteristic.

IGNAT

<your name> — <your pet name>, just live — that alone would mean so much to me. There’s no need for all this. Everything you’re doing is good, but it’s not honest: you love both Kyiv and me, which means that what you say and feel isn’t only for the sake of Ukraine.

Now I’ll say something offensive, but it’s honest: this is not your war.⁵²

YOU’s realization of Ignat’s death comes soon after this dialogue, which, to a certain degree, serves YOU as a permission to start grieving:

YOU

But you are no more. And that means I am no more too.

Or maybe, on the contrary, on the contrary, on the contrary.

Maybe for the first time ever — I am. Because I’m no longer afraid of hurting you. Of disappointing you by behaving like a Russian. [...] Of not honoring your request, your request, your request that I just live.

I’m no longer afraid of being in your way.

Of making trouble for you.

And that means I’m no longer afraid of anything — that was all that was left.⁵³

In these lines, the historical catastrophe of the invasion crashes with the personal catastrophe of the major character. So, in the next and final scene numbered “0”, the scene of dramaturgical rebut, YOU inverts the action. Infuriated by the Author’s attempt to write a melodramatic finale with YOU returning to Russia to be

⁵¹ Asya Voloshina, “CRIME/@AlwaysArmUkraine,” translated by Ricardo Marin-Vidal, in *Critical Stages*, 2022 (26), [online]. <https://www.critical-stages.org/26/crime-alwaysarmukraine/> (accessed December 16, 2023), p. 139.

⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 137-138.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

detained for extremism⁵⁴, YOU rebels against the logic of reader's empathy and compassion for the tragic protagonist, that makes the basis of tragedy. YOU reminds the Author that her authorial task is not to draw compassion for the character, the Author's "goal is to elicit compassion for something else"⁵⁵:

YOU

From the start you knew that it was imperative not to elicit compassion for me, a little Russian in "exile" with a martyr complex. Not for this eye that cries, but for everything that this eye sees, for everything it's capable of seeing.

Through its little scratched-up screen.

You know I'm right. But you didn't come up with how to solve that problem.

How to remove the stand-in you yourself created.⁵⁶

Much like the six angry characters from Pirandello's famous play, YOU of *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine* takes the fate of the dramatic conflict and her story in her own hands. "I came up with a better ending," YOU declares⁵⁷. "My ending is genuinely scary and revolting. And the focus will shift from me to the place where it belongs. I'll carry out the greatest suicide a character can commit in the name of embodying the author's intention."⁵⁸ With these lines YOU exits the fictional reality of the play, she steps in the reality off-stage, next to the audience members:

I'm doing this not before the people in the world of the play — I'm doing it right here and now in front of you. For you. To kill myself for you. To shift the focus of your gaze. The focus. I'm breaking the fourth wall. Picture this: I walk down to the front of the stage, step down into the auditorium and sit on an audience member's lap, just as you might see in a brothel. Would you like that? Would you like me to trespass your personal boundaries? I remove that audience member's glasses and knock on their skull. On their skull, inside of which all the meaning making takes place. I then fold up and vomit, straight up vomit. And I slither away. Watch the war, watch the war, watch the war. Don't look away from it.⁵⁹

This is the new Antigone of the theatre of catastrophe – ready to kill herself for the dramaturgical truth of the new tragedy as catastrophe. YOU's task is to move the audience's empathy away from herself as a tragic character, so to focus our attention on Ukraine. YOU's next Facebook posting is a feverish monologue of the blessing of three Putins⁶⁰, which leads to her deciding step. As a kind of dark Phenix, YOU commits an act of self-destruction and re-emerges as UOY, a pro-Russian Facebook avatar, the antipode of her own self.

UOY

And I woke up a different person.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 145.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 145.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 145.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

UOY

For the first time in the past six months, and maybe in my whole life, I felt... radiant joy. I guess it's important to choose the right side after all!

UOY: NEW FACEBOOK PROFILE PICTURE

Your picture framed in a Russian flag.

UOY: NEW FACEBOOK BIO

RuZZia is love.⁶¹

This change frustrates the audience and even makes them angry, because through YOU's self-destruction Esther Bol denies them a chance for recognition and identification with the character. To Esther Bol, YOU's suicide and then rebirth as her own opposite – a supporter of Putin's regime - serves as a slap in the face of her (mostly Russian speaking) audience. The artist takes away the pleasure of catharsis, which also serves her audience as a promise of forgiveness and forget-ness. Instead, Bol offers a *dark catharsis*: as an alternative of feeling solidarity with the tragic character, the audience must feel disappointment, anger, and hostility toward YOU, so their gaze would shift from YOU to Ukraine. To Esther Bol, even if YOU is compassionate for Ukraine, because she is from Russia - a representative of an imperial culture, the culture of the aggressor – in the eyes of the Ukrainians she has no right for forgiveness or for expressing her compassion. "My personal position is absolutely pro-Ukrainian, and so is the protagonist's," Esther Bol says; but Ukraine 'does not need [our] "deep empathy," and so we – the good Russians – must ask "Where should we put our deep empathy? Does your compassion change anything?," and "How to redeem an unredeemable guilt?"'⁶²

To summarize: in *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*, an act of dramaturgical inversion takes place. YOU is not the real protagonist of this play. Palimpsest of voices, in which YOU is immersed, stands for people, who during the act of performance take on the role of the protagonist. Like in Brecht's theatre, after YOU commits a suicide, the lights go up in the auditorium, the time of the fiction stops, and the people (the audience members) are forced to look at each other. This is the moment when the "dramaturgy of the spectator" is activated, and the new theatre of *political tragedy* begins⁶³. The power of this theatre is rooted in the act of *interruption* – "an interrupted aesthetic experience" of the spectator⁶⁴ - as a condition of one's political activity and consciousness. On the one hand, Lehmann argues, makers of the political tragedy "have to maintain the interruption, the caesura of the aesthetic contemplative mode in theatre"⁶⁵; on the other hand, they need to remember that "the Brechtian answer of presenting the political problem in epic distance to an audience is no longer

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

⁶² Asya Voloshina, "Personal Correspondence," *op. cit.*

⁶³ Hans-Thies Lehmann, "A Future for Tragedy. Remarks on the Political and Postdramatic," in *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, edited by Carroll, Jerome, et al., London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013, p. 89.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

sufficient, even if it presents the insight into our lack of insight rather than a didactic message”.⁶⁶



IMAGES 9 and 10 – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*, Meet Factory Theatre, Prague, 2023, Director Tomáš Soldán, Photo: Andrea Cherna.

Much of contemporary political theatre is “a theatre of situation”: it provides space for the politically engaged artists to “seek ways of creating a meeting point and conflict between aesthetic contemplation and its caesura by the intervention of social

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

reality”⁶⁷. In Esther Bol’s play, this is exactly what transpires: first, the audience is called to witness the catastrophe reenacted for them on stage, then it is invited to identify and sympathize with the protagonist. Yet, when YOU commits a suicide and emerges in the body of a new pro-Putin avatar, the audience is confronted with the interruption – it is that caesura in their aesthetic experience that takes place because of “the intervention of social reality”⁶⁸. At this moment – when Esther Bol denies her audience satisfaction of recognition and reversal – she invites them to take on the functions of the tragic Chorus. Yet, “there is no performance, no theatre, no acting out of a dramatic story. But there is the audience – our voices in the public space, our silence, our listening, our common moment of ‘Eingedenken’ (remembering)”⁶⁹. As this ending demonstrates, theatre of catastrophe – its dark catharsis - lies not with the quest for the new aesthetic forms but with such performative practices that can “undermine our melodramatic way of perception” and seek forms of tragedy that “make reality impossible”⁷⁰

Today’s tragedy, Lehmann explains, must be irrevocably political, as it is tightly connected to Hegel’s view of tragedy placed “at the borderline between Greek polis and the more modern world of the Roman empire and the Roman idea of the law, of a legal system”⁷¹. In increasingly multicultural society, which is heavily dependent on sensationalism and spectacle, tragic transgression is often conditioned not by the action presented on stage but by the labour of the audience:

Tragic experience is bound to a process where we are taken to the edge of normative and conceptual self-assurance, and this process cannot be achieved by purely theoretical subversion but by the uncanny mental and physical experience of entering the twilight zone, where the sustainability of cultural norms which we adhere to is put into doubt. This, however, can also be said about the dimension of the political where the latter is understood in the sense of questioning the fundamental structures of our being together in a *polis*, rather than taking positions on concrete political issues.⁷²

Friends’ voices, news media, social-media postings, personal emails that make up the informational background of YOU’s story constitute the fictionalized Chorus of Bol’s play. The dialogue can be named *conceptually choral* – a term coined by Martin Revermann in his analysis of Brechtian dramaturgy, in which the playwright engages a “collective wisdom, collective experience, and collective authority” with high self-reflexivity⁷³. Yet, Esther Bol positions her audience as

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁷⁰ Muller in Hans-Thies Lehmann, “A Future for Tragedy. Remarks on the Political and Postdramatic,” in *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, edited by Carroll, Jerome, et al., London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013, p. 109.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 99.

⁷³ Martin Revermann, “Brechtian Chorality,” in *Choruses Ancient and Modern*, edited by Joshua Billings, Felix Budelmann, and Fiona Macintosh, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 153.

reluctant members of this Chorus and thus as a counterpart character to the play's protagonist YOU. By inserting such stage direction "<insert your name>", Bol invites her readers to imagine themselves interacting with YOU through social media, thus turning this reader into an active agent of the action. Such stage directions as "Pipe down, <@yourname>. Would you like me to tell you what will happen in the near future?" and "Alas, <@yourname>, judging others based on yourself is foolish,"⁷⁴ further implicate individual readers into the making of the play, and so Bol creates a *conceptual chorus* of global citizens, equally implicated both into the war on Ukraine and into the larger issues of government censorship, totalitarianism, morality, and communal responsibility. The play mobilizes questions of the relationship between an individual and a community within a global society. Bol demands that her audience reflects on their role within the global community and, even further, on the accuracy of the term 'global community' when the war catastrophes persist. The play exhibits elements of *choral or collective mourning*⁷⁵, with the choir of internet voices acting as a vehicle of peoples' collective sense of being lost, their anger and frustration with the authorities but also with each other. Standing in for the audience's experiences, this fictionalized Chorus serves as a call to action, an indication of how one should be processing the catastrophic events they are witnessing. This is an act of mourning – but not necessarily of the loss of individual lives, rather of the circumstances that led to this tragedy. Yet, when YOU perishes this fictionalized Chorus perishes too: it metamorphizes into "us" – its own spectators – who now must take on a responsibility of making political tragedy today:

Tragedy may come about in such artistic practices which, on the one hand, imply a clear consciousness of the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere, but on the other hand find it difficult to remain within it, and seek ways not to dissolve but to interrupt this autonomy. What then happens is this: it becomes possible to re-invest the sphere of the real into the aesthetic domain which systematically is defined precisely by the exclusion of the real. Ethico-political responsibility re-enters into the aesthetic experience.⁷⁶

Questions of irredeemable guilt, however, continue to drive Esther Bol's work forward: to Kierkegaard, she writes, this sense of guilt "is lost in contemporary tragedy. So, protagonists carry individual, subjective guilt. But this kind of guilt is incommensurate with the substantial, epic, inherited guilt of real classical tragedy," which reduces the value of tragedy, in the time of the catastrophe⁷⁷.

Conclusion

Esther Bol left Russia in March 2022 in the gesture of anti-war protest and in solidarity with Ukraine. Since that time, she has been constantly and steadily working

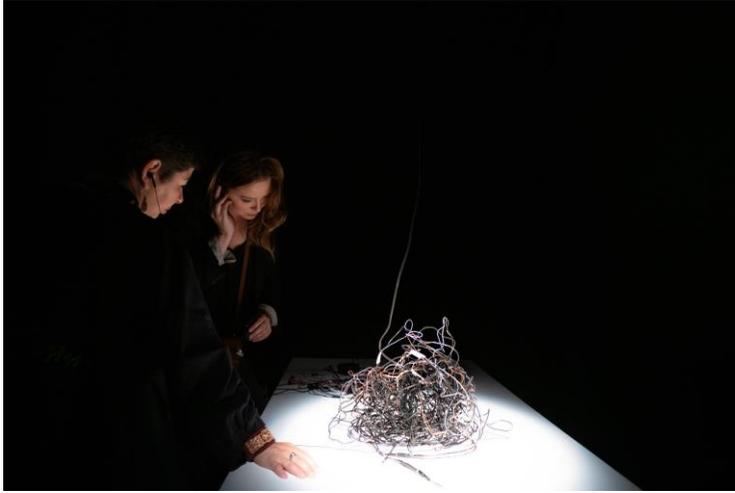
⁷⁴ Asya Voloshina, "CRIME/@AlwaysArmUkraine", translated by Ricardo Marin-Vidal, in *Critical Stages*, 2022 (26), [online]. <https://www.critical-stages.org/26/crime-alwaysarmukraine/> (accessed December 16, 2023), p. 45.

⁷⁵ Hans-Thies Lehmann and Erik Butler, *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*, London, Routledge, 2016, p. 400.

⁷⁶ Hans-Thies Lehmann, "A Future for Tragedy. Remarks on the Political and Postdramatic," in *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, edited by Carroll, Jerome, et al., London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013, p. 100.

⁷⁷ Asya Voloshina, "Personal Correspondence," *op. cit.*

toward the Ukrainian cause, both as an artist and as a political activist, including her financial help to the Ukrainian army. Bol's anti-war position resulted in Russian government's ban on her productions in the country, public ostracism in the state-sponsored and social media, and loss of family ties. Yet, what constituted the writer's activism in Russia, now has turned into a full-scale protest based on Esther Bol's clear realization that while this regime lasts, there will be no possibility of going back home.



IMAGES 11 and 12 – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*. Le musée des histoires (non) imaginées, Producers and curators Artem Arsenyan and Nika Porkhomovskaya; Lyon, October 2023, Photo: Anastasia Korostelkina.

Transforming *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine* from just a dramatic text geared toward a theatrical production into a type of performance art can be recognized as Esther Bol's attempt to reveal power of a tragic transgression that this text can offer. The first staged reading of *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine* took place in October 2022 (directed by Semyon Alexandrovsky) in Tel Aviv. Its first full-scale production opened

in March 2023 at the Meet Factory Theatre, in Prague (translated by Marina Feltlová and directed by Tomáš Soldán), with all proceeds from this event to be donated to the Ukrainian Embassy in Prague to support the Ukrainian army. In October 2023, Esther Bol participated in an interactive performance installation *Musée des histoires (non) imaginées* presented by Théâtre Nouvelle Génération in Lyon, in partnership with the anti-war platform Resistance Theatre.

Curated by a theatre producer Artem Arsenian and a theatre researcher Nika Parkhomovskaya, this installation offered its artists-participants, including Esther Bol, a chance to respond to the question: What do Russian theatre artists in exile feel when their native country attacks another? ‘Pain, fear, despair, shame, guilt. The spectrum of emotions is wide, but for many their consequence is unequivocal: the only possible decision is to leave one’s country in order not to be an accomplice to the crime, to keep talking, to create another future, an alternative future’ (Note of Intent). As the result, the works selected for this installation served as the artists’ collective act of

r
e
s
i
s
t
a
n
c
e

t

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Becker, Annette, “Catastrophe vs. Tragedy,” *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire* [En ligne], 118 | 2014, <http://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/1094> (accessed o December 16, 2023).

Benjamin, Walter, “On the Concept of History,” in Eiland, Howard and Michael W. Jennings (eds.) *Selected Writings, Volume 4. 1938-1940*, translated by l Edmund Jephcott and others, Harvard, Harvard UP, 2006, pp. 389-411.

Bol, Esther, *Conversation with the Author*, Zoom, November 10, 2023.

Butler, Judith, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, New York, Verso, 2009.

Clayton, J. Douglas, “Alexander Pushkin’s Boris Godunov as Epic Theatre,” in Yana r Meerzon, Kathryn Prince and David Dean (eds.), *History, Memory, i Performance*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 98-115.

Curtin, Adrian, *Death in Modern Theatre*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, n 2019.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika, “Revivals of Choric Theatre as Utopian Visions,” in Bilings, s Joshua, Felix Budelmann, and Fiona Macintosh (eds.), *Choruses, Ancient and m Modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 1-20.

Gilbert, S.M., *Death’s Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2006.

w

⌘ Nika Parkhomovskaya, “Vyiti iz teni/ Sortir l’Ombre,” *Nasha Gazeta*, October 17, 2023, <https://nashagazeta.ch/news/culture/vyiti-iz-teni> (accessed December 16, 2023).

,

a
n
d

- Jürs-Munbe, Karen, “Text Exposed: Displayed Texts as Players Onstage in Contemporary Theatre,” *Studies in Theatre & Performance*, 2010, 30 (1), pp. 101-114.
- Kislova, Larisa, „Antichny myth v Russkoy ‘Novoy drame’ rubezha XX-XXI vekov,” *Philology and Culture*, (2015), 42 (4), pp. 221–225.
- Laplantine, François, *Théâtre de la catastrophe : expérience des situations extrêmes et création artistique*, Paris, Le Pommier, 2022.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies, “A Future for Tragedy. Remarks on the Political and Postdramatic,” in Carroll, Jerome, et al. (eds.), *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013, pp. 87-110.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies, and Erik Butler, *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*, London, Routledge, 2016.
- Meerzon, Yana, ““On the Rightlessness for Compassion or How to Redeem an Unredeemable Guilt’. [Asya Voloshina]/ Esther Bol and Yana Meerzon: Dialogue,” *Critical Stages*, 2022 (26), [online]. <https://www.critical-stages.org/26/on-the-rightlessness-for-compassion-or-how-to-redeem-an-unredeemable-guilt/> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- Nevinnaya, Ivetta, „Dramaturg Asya Voloshina: ‘Vse seichas v pole gigantskogo eksperimenta’,” *Mk.RU*, May 15, 2020, [online]. <https://www.mk.ru/culture/2020/05/15/dramaturg-asya-voloshina-vse-seychas-v-pole-gigantskogo-eksperimenta.html> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- Note of Intent, *Le musée des histoires (non) imaginées*, [online]. <https://www.sensinterdits.org/en/le-musee-des-histoires-non-imeeines-2/> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- Parkhomovskaya, Nika, “Vyiti iz teni/Sortir l’Ombre,” *Nasha Gazeta*, October 17, 2023, [online]. <https://nashagazeta.ch/news/culture/vyyti-iz-teni> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- Revermann, Martin, “Brechtian Choralit,” in Billings Joshua, Felix Budelmann, and Fiona Macintosh (eds.), *Choruses Ancient and Modern*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 151-169.
- Sokolova, Natalia, “Asya Voloshina: ‘Khochetsya zanimat’sya teatrom, otsylajuschim k vertikali,” *Prochtenie*, January 19, 2018, [online]. <https://lensov-theatre.spb.ru/prensa/asya-voloshina-hochetsya-zanimatsya-teatrom-otsylajuschim-k-vertikali/> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- Spiridonov, Alik, “«Udar po Ukraine vyzheg mne cerdce». Rossiiskii dramaturg o trebovanii ubrat’ svoe imya z afish,” *VotTak*, April 9, 2022, [online]. <https://vot-tak.tv/novosti/09-04-2022-udar-po-ukraine> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- Syska, Katarzhyna, “*Antigona/Reduction* Asi Voloshinoy. Performance bunta,” Unpublished Manuscript, Email to the Author, August 20, 2022.
- Tyutelova, Larisa et all, “Transformation of ‘Alien’ Text as a Technology for Generating the New in Russian Drama of the 1990s–2010s,” in Bylieva, Daria and Alfred Nordmann (eds.) *Technology, Innovation and Creativity in Digital Society: XXI Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future*, Cham, Springer, 2022, pp. 376–389.
- Voloshina, Asya, Facebook Posting, April 9, 2023, [online].

- <https://www.facebook.com/a.part.Of.speech>; (accessed December 16, 2023).
- , "Personal Correspondence with the Author," July-August, 2022.
- , "CRIME/@AlwaysArmUkraine," translated by Ricardo Marin-Vidal, *Critical Stages*, 2022 (26), [online]. <https://www.critical-stages.org/26/crime-alwaysarmukraine/> (accessed December 16, 2023).
- , *Gibnet khor. Chetyre p'esy o Rossii*, St. Petersburg, Seans, 2018.
- Weaver, Andrew, "The 'Gulf Stream' Will not Collapse in 2025: What the Alarmist Headlines got Wrong," in *The Conversation*, August 3, 2023, [online]. <https://theconversation.com/the-gulf-stream-will-not-collapse-in-2025-what-the-alarmist-headlines-got-wrong-210773> (accessed December 16, 2023).

LIST OF IMAGES

- IMAGE 1 – Esther Bol. Personal photo.
- IMAGE 2 – IMAGE 3 – *Antigone/Reduction*. New Stage Workshop, Alexandrinsky Teatr, St. Petersburg, 2014. Director Anfisa Ivanova. Photo: Tatiana Tumanova.
- IMAGE 4 – *Antigone: Reduction*, Masterskaya Sovremennogo Teatra, St. Petersburg, 2020. Director Maria Galyazimova. Photo: Dmitry Yakubov.
- IMAGE 5 – *The Chorus Perishes*, Fulcro Theatre, Director Daria Shanina, Photo: Alexander Khanin.
- IMAGE 6, 7 and 8 – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*, The Lubimovka Echo Festival, Director Anastasia Patlay, Belgrade December 16-18, 2022. Photo: Nata Korenovskaia.
- IMAGE 9 and 10 – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*, Meet Factory Theatre, Prague, 2023, Director Tomáš Soldán, Photo: Andrea Cherna.
- IMAGE 11 and 12 – *Crime/#AlwaysArmUkraine*, Le musée des histoires (non) imaginées, Producers and curators Artem Arsenyan and Nika Porkhomovskaya; Lyon, October 2023, Photo: Anastasia Korostelkina.

ENTRE-DEUX, IDENTITÉ EXILIQUE ET TRAGÉDIE DE L'HISTOIRE:
FIGURES LITTÉRAIRES ET STRATÉGIES DE REPRÉSENTATION
SCÉNIQUE²

In Between. Exilic Identity and Tragedy of History: Literary Characters and Performative Representation Strategies

In this paper, I focus on some aspects and strategies of literary and theatrical representation which are involved in the highlighting of cultural differences, especially “in-between” spaces and identities, and their consequences in the life of communities. I base my study on several literary works and performances that range in time from Greek Antiquity up to our days. They develop topics like exile, migration, war, women rights, the right of asylum, gender discrimination, religious and ethnic persecution. Among them I would especially mention Aeschylus' *Suppliants* staged by director Silviu Purcărete and *Exile in the Land of Forgetfulness*, dance-theatre performance realized by Andreea Tănăsescu, based on Benjamin Fondane's life and writings. My main purpose here is to provide a minimum corpus and, more precisely, an annotated corpus of literary and theatrical works and productions on topics relevant to the experience of exile. This approach is not however exhaustive, it's a work in progress. I am now going on to explore such an area within a research project.

Key-words: *myth, exile, migration, women rights, the right of asylum, gender, religious and ethnic discrimination*

1. Du mythe à l'histoire comme champ du tragique

Dans les sociétés prémodernes, le mythe fondateur peut expliquer toute une série de particularités de la mentalité collective et légitimer ainsi les pratiques sociales qui en dérivent³. Il a donc essentiellement une valeur explicative et paradigmatique et va de pair avec les croyances religieuses et les rituels sacrés. Particulièrement, le mythe reflète les mécanismes du psychisme et la structure de certains rapports familiaux ou sociaux. Coextensif au premier, mais fonctionnellement différent, le mythe *littéraire* a plutôt une fonction esthétique. Il se présente comme une narration

¹ Université « Vasile Alecsandri », Bacău.

² La recherche afférente à cet article s'est développée dans le cadre de deux projets : « *Extramuros : pour un projet de théâtre rituel sur l'exode, entre mythe et actualité* » (2018-2020), projet de recherche – création financé par le *Fonds stratégique de développement de la recherche* de l'Université Laval, Québec, Canada; et « *La représentation des catastrophes humaines au début du XXIe siècle comme rite de passage: drame social ou retour à la tragédie?* », projet de recherche CRSH – Savoir (2021-2026), financé par le Conseil de Recherche en Sciences Humaines, Gouvernement du Canada. Les projets sont dirigés par Liviu Dospinescu, professeur titulaire au Département de littérature, théâtre et cinéma de l'Université Laval.

³ Mircea Eliade, *Aspects du mythe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1963.

« symbolique », bâtie autour d'un héros doté d'une grande force de « fascination », à même d'entraîner des effets soit « idéalisants », soit « répulsifs⁴ ». D'où la récurrence du même schéma mythique, au fil des siècles. Cela présuppose une nécessaire remise en contexte du noyau mythique, avec d'inévitables adaptations et changements de son sémantisme. Grâce à ces particularités, le mythe littéraire, à son tour, est à même de faire passer une explication d'un certain état de choses et, parfois, « un appel à l'action⁵ ». Par exemple, Antigone était vue en France, pendant l'Occupation, comme un symbole de la Résistance.

L'ancienne tragédie est faite de la matière des mythes. Plus généralement parlant, la mythologie, avec son échafaudage archétypique, nous restitue la manière dont une collectivité voit le monde. La mythologie nous apporte une vision unitaire et cohérente où toute composante de l'univers (êtres, choses, comportements et pratiques sociales, institutions, etc.) trouve sa place et sa raison d'être par rapport à l'ensemble. Cette cohérence de la représentation mythologique fait en sorte que tout élément particulier puisse avoir un sens dans l'image de la totalité du monde, même ce qui peut nous paraître « absurde ». Les anciens Grecs se défendaient contre l'angoisse de l'absurde en la remplaçant par la doctrine de la fatalité, non moins inquiétante : quelqu'hostile qu'il soit, le destin s'inscrit dans une logique infaillible qui règne dans l'univers. C'est la logique du conflit entre la volonté subjective de l'individu et les lois implacables (*Ἀνάγκη*, « Ananke ») auxquelles il doit se soumettre et auxquelles même les dieux ne peuvent se soustraire. Cette logique affreuse de la fatalité garantit l'ordre du cosmos et empêche sa dissolution dans le chaos⁶. Le mythe de la fatalité – qui est au cœur de la tragédie – intègre ainsi la souffrance humaine dans une vision raisonnée du monde. Raisonnée, mais imprégnée de la croyance en la force fascinante et affreuse – *fascinans et tremendum*⁷ – du sacré. D'ailleurs, à l'avis de Rudolf Otto, le sacré n'est autre que l'apothéose de l'Irrationnel, ou plutôt la manifestation des forces supérieures que la raison des humains n'est pas en mesure d'élucider.

Aujourd'hui, la tragédie est considérée périmée comme genre littéraire, mais le tragique s'avère inlassablement actuel comme catégorie *existentielle*, comme expérience humaine réellement vécue. Vécue en dehors de (et remémorée à travers) la fiction.

Dans quelle mesure le mythe, comme notion théorique, s'avère-t-il pertinent et utile par rapport à la société contemporaine? Dans cette perspective, la portée et la pertinence du mythe reposent, à mon avis, sur la relation qu'il entretient avec l'histoire. Tel que déjà remarqué par Aristote dans sa *Poétique*, l'histoire est le domaine du fait particulier. Narration exemplaire, avec une validité générique, le mythe s'efforce, en revanche, de saisir le noyau archétypique des représentations qu'on se fait des événements particuliers que l'on vit.

⁴ André Dabezies, « Des Mythes primitifs aux mythes littéraires », dans Pierre Brunel (dir.), *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires*, Monaco, du Rocher, 1988, pp. 1176–1186. Voir aussi André Dabezies, *Le mythe de Faust*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1999.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Guy Rachet, *La tragédie grecque*, Paris, Payot, 1973.

⁷ Rudolf Otto, *Le sacré*, traduction par André Jundt, Paris, Payot, 2015.

2. L'exil, « mythe » ou « thème » littéraire?

Le thème de l'exil, tout particulièrement, met son empreinte sur l'histoire de la tragédie comme vie et littérature à la fois, depuis les Grecs jusqu'à nos jours. En apportent la preuve, pour ne donner que quelques exemples, *Les Suppliants* d'Eschyle et le cycle troyen d'Euripide, notamment quelques pièces-maîtresse – *Hécube*, *Les Troyennes*, *Andromaque* – tout comme l'*Énéide* de Virgile ou les transformations successives de l'histoire d'Ulysse, d'Homère jusqu'aux auteurs du XX-ième siècle (dont Joyce et Benjamin Fondane).

Peut-on vraiment parler d'un mythe de l'exil ou plutôt d'un thème littéraire, voire d'un « thème mythique » ? À cet égard, Pierre Brunel constate un « flou terminologique » : dans l'œuvre, « le mythe se dégage difficilement du thème⁸ ». Il y a donc des « thèmes mythiques⁹ », conclut-il. Dans ce cas, la plupart des mythes littéraires (Don Juan, Faust, Oedipe, le Graal, etc.) sont-ils plutôt des thèmes mythiques ? Pour répondre à cette question, on s'appuie toujours sur André Dabiez, selon qui les concepts de mythe et de thème littéraire sont interchangeable, dépendamment du contexte de la réception. Un thème littéraire devient mythe lorsqu'il exprime la mentalité collective d'un certain groupe, à une certaine époque. Ainsi, l'histoire de *Tristan et Isolde* est un vrai mythe pour la société courtoise du XIIe siècle, dont il incarne les valeurs emblématiques – tout particulièrement, la doctrine de la *fin'amors*, « l'amour courtois ». Mais cette histoire n'est plus qu'un simple thème littéraire lorsque sa force de « fascination » collective s'affaiblit, et qu'elle ne répond plus aux nouvelles valeurs dominantes du public. Ainsi, aux XVe et XVIe siècles, pour le goût plus réaliste de la Renaissance, *Tristan et Isolde* n'est autre qu'un thème littéraire, dépourvu de son auréole mythique.

Plus généralement, toute une série de figures mythiques d'origine antique, assimilées par la culture européenne en tant que thèmes littéraires, récupèrent, à un moment donné, leur fonction de modèles fascinants¹⁰ qui, par définition, est spécifique aux mythes. On a déjà dit, pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, Antigone est redécouverte et symboliquement réinvestie par les Français comme figure tutélaire de la Résistance. Au carrefour de la littérature, de la psychologie et de la sociologie, le mythe (son héros, y compris) véhicule donc une « idée-force », redoublée par une « image-force » capable d'influencer la vie sociale et le comportement collectif, la manière de penser et d'agir de tout un groupe¹¹.

Dans le contexte de la société globale contemporaine et en tenant compte des précisions terminologiques ci-dessus, j'avance l'hypothèse que les figures de l'*étranger* et de l'*exil* convergent vers un vrai *mythe emblématique de nos jours*¹². Les

⁸ Pierre Brunel, « Préface », dans *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires*, Monaco, du Rocher, 1988, pp. 7–15.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Cf. Dabiez, « Des Mythes primitifs aux mythes littéraires », dans Pierre Brunel (dir.), *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires*, op. cit., pp. 1176–1186.

¹¹ Cf. Claude Rivière, *Socio-anthropologie des religions*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2008.

¹² J'ai formulé aussi quelques arguments à cet égard, à l'occasion de la conférence « *L'exode et la figure de l'étranger dans la littérature de l'Antiquité gréco-latine* », lors de l'événement « *L'exode syrien, des mythes littéraires aux théâtres du réel* », dans le cadre du projet « *L'exode syrien dans le théâtre du réel : vers une forme de ritualité sociale* » du professeur Liviu

programmes de *Breaking news* ne font qu'en témoigner. D'où l'actualité (et le sentiment de déjà-vu que nous inspirent) des histoires anciennes, telles celles du cycle de Troade¹³.

3. L'exil à l'ancienne: figures d'étrangers dans l'Antiquité greco-latine

3. 1. *Les Suppliantes* d'Eschyle

« Fait notable, les premiers étrangers » – les premiers migrants et réfugiés en masse – qui « viennent de l'aube de notre civilisation sont des *étrangères*¹⁴ », remarquait Julia Kristeva, elle-même native de Bulgarie, naturalisée en France. Plus exactement, ce sont les Danaïdes ou les *Suppliantes* d'Eschyle, protagonistes d'une très ancienne légende dont le dramaturge s'inspire lui-même. De plus, tel qu'observé par Kristeva, les *Suppliantes* sont « doublement étrangers: venant d'Égypte et rétives au mariage¹⁵ ».

Des tragédies grecques, les *Suppliantes* d'Eschyle semble être la plus ancienne qui nous soit parvenue. En dépit de sa beauté et de sa profondeur de pensée, on ne lui a remis aucun prix aux concours de création dramatique de l'époque, à cause de l'attitude critique de son auteur¹⁶. Plus exactement, dans cette pièce, Eschyle s'attaque aux préjugés concernant la condition des femmes et aux violences commises par les Grecs pendant les guerres¹⁷. Quelques vers de la pièce renvoient aux horreurs commises par les guerriers de Sparte en 493 av. J.-C., contre la cité d'Argos qu'ils ont voulu dépeupler par génocide et déportation¹⁸. D'ailleurs, selon certains avis, cette pièce semble avoir été écrite entre 493 et 490 ou, plus exactement, entre « le désastre d'Argos qui l'a inspirée et la bataille de Marathon¹⁹ ». (Il convient de se souvenir qu'Eschyle était l'un des combattants dans les batailles de Marathon, en 490, et de Salamine, en 480.)

Rappelons aussi que la légende des Danaïdes raconte l'histoire des cinquante filles du roi Danaos qui vivent au bord du Nil et qui refusent d'épouser leurs cousins, les cinquante fils d'Égyptos. Elles demandent asile à la cité d'Argos qui accepte de les accueillir. Le mariage est pourtant officié contre leur gré. Pendant la nuit des noces, les époux sont tués dans leur sommeil, excepté l'un d'entre eux, Lynceus, dont la vie est épargnée par sa femme, Hypermnestre. À l'*hybris* – la démesure – des Égyptiens répond donc l'*hybris* des Danaïdes elles-mêmes. Suivant une ancienne mentalité, dont le miroir fidèle est la tragédie grecque, les deux excès seront sévèrement punis: celui des Danaïdes, tout comme celui des Égyptiens.

Dospinescu à l'IPAC – Institut du patrimoine culturel de l'Université Laval, Québec, Canada, le 8 avril 2019.

¹³ Je reviens à ce sujet dans le chapitre « L'exil et la guerre, un noyau archétypique du mythe tragique : traces de l'histoire récente ».

¹⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, Paris, Fayard, 1988.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

¹⁶ Alice Voinescu, *Eschil*, București, Fundația Regală pentru literatură și artă, 1946.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*. Il faut noter qu'il y a aussi une chronologie alternative, « la datation actuellement tenue pour vraisemblable » étant 464/ 463 av. J.-C. Cf. Dominique Buisset, « Étranges humains que les femmes... », dans Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, n° 73, 1995 (jouée en 1993), p. 3.

D'une part, l'histoire des Danaïdes se fait donc l'écho d'une époque archaïque où la société humaine passait de l'endogamie à l'exogamie²⁰. D'autre part, cette histoire reflète également la conception politique, juridique et religieuse des Grecs Anciens sur les étrangers, sur le régime des immigrants et sur le droit d'asile qui leur était accordé. Au milieu des événements, Pélasgos, le roi d'Argos, a la meilleure occasion d'affirmer avec fierté la supériorité des Grecs sur les Barbares. Assumant la fonction de *proxène*, Pélasgos se porte garant de la liberté des Danaïdes qu'il accepte d'accueillir et de protéger dans sa cité, contre la menace des Égyptiens. Partagé entre la « prudence politique²¹ » qui s'impose devant le danger égyptien et le « risque d'ordre spirituel²² » auquel il s'expose s'il ignore la demande des Danaïdes, Pélasgos finit par offrir un abri aux fugitives.

3. 2. *Les Suppliantes, une identité entre-deux*

La discussion initiale de Pélasgos avec le groupe des Suppliantes met en évidence un paradoxe: elles sont des étrangères et pourtant des Grecques, venues d'ailleurs, mais « Argiennes de race²³ ». Elles descendent de Iô, bannie d'Argos par la jalousie d'Hera, l'épouse de Zeus. Pélasgos remarque tout d'abord les différences physiques (couleur de la peau) et culturelles (vêtements, parure, comportement) entre les nouvelles venues et les femmes d'Argos :

« De quel pays vient cette troupe ? *Sa mise n'est pas grecque*, elle se pavane dans *ses robes barbares et ses voiles* ! A qui donc suis-je en train de m'adresser ? Ce n'est pas un costume de femmes d'Argolide ni d'aucun pays grec. Et la façon dont vous osez arriver tranquillement dans le pays, sans hérauts, sans répondants et sans guides, est une chose inouïe !²⁴ » [c'est moi qui souligne].

« Vous ressemblez plutôt aux femmes africaines, et pas du tout à celles de ce pays-ci : c'est le Nil, peut-être, qui pourrait nourrir une plante pareille ! Ou bien... Le type chypriote est à votre image (...). J'entends dire aussi qu'il y a des Indiennes nomades qui montent des chameaux de selle comme des chevaux dans les parages de la terre d'Éthiopie ; ou alors, les femmes sans hommes, les mangeuses de chair, les Amazones... si vous aviez des arcs, je croirais que c'est vous !²⁵ » [moi qui souligne].

En même temps, Pélasgos ne peut ignorer une pratique que les inconnues partagent étrangement avec les Argiens : elles affichent les signes consacrés de leur condition de Suppliantes, en se présentant devant le roi avec des rameaux dans leurs mains : « Il est vrai qu'il y a là, auprès de vous, suivant l'usage, les rameaux des suppliants, tendus aux dieux de la cité : *c'est la seule chose qui puisse évoquer à l'esprit la Grèce*²⁶ » (moi qui souligne). Les affinités des Danaïdes avec l'Argos se font ainsi (entre)voir.

L'identité des Danaïdes se précise donc dans un point de rencontre des

²⁰ Kristeva, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

²¹ Voinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–56.

²² *Ibidem.*

²³ Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, n° 73, 1995 (jouée en 1993), pp. 14–18.

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ *Ibidem.*

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

peuples et des cultures. J'emprunte à Homi K. Bhabha le concept d'« espace interstitiel » (ou « entre-deux », *in-between*)²⁷ et désigner ainsi le contexte bivalent de la construction et de la (re)présentation identitaire des Danaïdes. « Comment les sujets sont-ils formés "entre-deux" », se demande Bhabha, chacun d'entre nous étant une « somme de parties de la différence » (des « parties » telles que « race, classe, genre, etc. ») ? À la recherche d'une manière d'appréhender la pièce d'Eschyle et sa mise en scène par Silviu Purcărete (qui constituera l'objet d'une section à part), on peut se laisser inspirer par la réponse que se donne Bhabha : « L'articulation sociale de la différence (...) est une négociation complexe, continue, qui cherche à autoriser les hybridations culturelles qui émergent lors des transformations historiques²⁸ ». L'histoire des Suppliantes est faite d'un jeu de différences et affinités, d'identité et altérité, que l'expérience de l'exil met en valeur d'autant plus. On peut en extraire un modèle des interactions et hybridations ethniques, raciales et culturelles. Pour moi, les Suppliantes sont essentiellement la figure du mélange, de l'entre-deux. C'est une image emblématique qui remonte à la plus haute Antiquité, et son ancienneté la rend d'autant plus significative. Il en dérive d'ailleurs l'étrangeté de l'étranger incarné par les filles de Danaos. Je dirais que les Suppliantes se confondent avec *un archétype du métabolisme interculturel de l'histoire humaine*, dès l'aube de la civilisation jusqu'à nos jours.

« Passage » entre des « identités figées », « l'espace interstitiel » ou « entre-deux » s'avère en mesure d'ouvrir la possibilité d'une « hybridation culturelle » qui accepte « la différence sans pourtant assumer ou imposer une hiérarchie²⁹ ». « Physiquement ou métaphoriquement », dans cet « espace liminal » se joue un « processus d'interaction symbolique » et se développe « un tissu connectif apte à construire la différence³⁰ ». À mon avis, dans la pièce d'Eschyle et dans le spectacle de Silviu Purcărete, l'eau est l'image (ou, pour mieux dire, le miroir et le médium) d'un tel « espace liminal » où se construit (la représentation de) l'identité des Danaïdes. Dans ce milieu spéculaire, d'interface, se rejoignent les eaux du Nil dont les Suppliantes se séparent explicitement, et les eaux d'Argos auxquelles les Suppliantes se dévouent en tant que demandeuses d'asile. La section suivante est d'ailleurs dédiée à cet aspect rituel de l'intégration des Danaïdes dans un nouveau pays, devenu pour elles une terre d'asile. Ce processus d'intégration est basé sur le passage entre deux identités: d'une identité figée dans le passé égyptien vers une autre, nouvelle, à même de relier le présent (un moment critique) avec la vie future (supposée être meilleure) en Argos, la patrie perdue et finalement retrouvée des ancêtres.

3.3. Auto-exil et rituel d'intégration dans *Les Suppliantes*: autochtone vs. étranger

Tel que déjà mentionné, dès leur arrivée dans le pays d'accueil, les Danaïdes d'Eschyle renoncent explicitement aux eaux du Nil et adoptent celles de la Grèce. Elles bénissent les dieux et les eaux de l'Argolide, en les reconnaissant finalement comme leurs propres dieux et leurs propres eaux. Pour le lecteur ou le spectateur

²⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, New York and London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 2–4.

²⁸ Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

contemporain, la scène peut paraître un peu bizarre. En fait, c'est un geste qui marque l'intégration des Danaïdes dans leur nouvelle patrie et qu'elles performant comme un *rite de passage*³¹. Mon hypothèse est qu'un tel rituel repose sur un très archaïque mythe de l'*autochtonie* et sur la vénération de la Terre – Mère. Je dirais que les mêmes croyances et le même imaginaire mythique inspirent aussi la carte de visite du roi Pélasgos qui règne sur l'Argos. Plus exactement, dès sa première rencontre avec les fugitives, ces Danaïdes venues d'ailleurs, Pélasgos se présente à elles en tant que fils d'un roi « *né de la Terre*³² », c'est-à-dire « fils du lieu », de la terre natale, à proprement parler, donc étymologiquement autochtone, avec des droits inaliénables³³.

Tel que je l'ai déjà dit, mon hypothèse est que cela dérive d'une très ancienne mentalité liée à la vénération de la Terre – Mère, largement répandue en Grèce et ailleurs. Selon de telles croyances, l'homme appartient à (naît et participe physiquement de) sa terre natale. Il en fait partie, à proprement parler. Ce scénario anthropogonique nourrit l'idée qu'avant la naissance, les âmes des humains résident dans le milieu naturel environnant: dans les eaux, dans les arbres, parmi les fleurs et les plantes, dans les grottes, sur les rochers, etc.³⁴ La terre natale est donc réellement impliquée dans l'ontogenèse³⁵. Cela explique également une coutume elle aussi très répandue chez les anciens peuples: lorsque le père lève son enfant de la terre (*de terra tollere*), en signe de reconnaissance, il le prend des bras de sa vraie mère, la Terre³⁶. Cette Mère tellurique, primordiale et universelle, berceau et tombeau de la vie à la fois, embrasse, dans une grande et indivisible « unité³⁷ », tout ce qu'il y a sur le sol, tout ce qu'il fait germer et pousser.

Pour conclure sur ce point, je suis d'avis que le rituel d'intégration performé par les Danaïdes d'Eschyle au début de leur exil auto-imposé, lors de leur arrivée à Argos, est étroitement lié aux mythes de l'*autochtonie*³⁸ et à l'adoration de la Terre – Mère, déesse des anciens cultes païens, particulièrement ceux des Grecs. Dans une prochaine section, on va voir de quelle manière le metteur en scène Silviu Purcărete exploite cet imaginaire ancestral dans le spectacle *Les Danaïdes* (1995), qui repose essentiellement sur la tradition du théâtre grec, notamment celui d'Eschyle. Sans trahir l'esprit de l'ancienne tragédie, ce spectacle rejoint pourtant une problématique sociale et culturelle très contemporaine. Il nous reste à découvrir, dans une section à part, les moyens scéniques dont s'y sert le metteur en scène.

³¹ Pour le concept, voir Arnold Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris, Librairie Stock, 1924.

³² « *La Terre a donné naissance à Palaichtôn, et moi/ je suis son fils Pélasgos, le prince du pays./ La race des Pélasges a très logiquement pris mon nom./ puisque je suis son seigneur : elle fait fructifier ce sol* ». Cf. Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, op. cit., pp. 3–46.

³³ J'ai abordé le sujet aussi dans Popa Blanariu, « Mentalitate și structură lingvistică. Reminiscente ale imaginarului cosmo și antropogonic », in Luminița Botoșineanu, Elena Dănilă, Cecilia Holban, Ofelia Ichim (dir.), *Distorsionări în comunicarea lingvistică, literară și etnofolclorică românească și contextul european*, Iași, Institutul de Filologie Română « A. Philippide », Editura Alfa, 2009, pp. 297–304. Vers. révisée dans Popa Blanariu, *Când literatura comparată pretinde că se destramă. Studii și eseuri*, I, București, Eikon, 2016, pp. 88–100.

³⁴ Cf. Dieterich, *Mutter Erde*, 1905, apud Gennep, op. cit., p. 57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, préf. de Georges Dumézil, traduction par Mariana Noica, București, Humanitas, 1992, p. 237.

³⁷ Eliade, *Tratat ...*, op. cit., p. 237.

³⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, Plon, 1958.

3. 4. La menace de l'étranger chez Euripide: Médée, Andromaque, « le Dieu étranger » des *Bacchantes*

J'ai déjà parlé de l'*hybris* des étranges filles de Danaos, demandeuses d'asile en Argos. Dans l'ancienne tragédie, elles ne sont évidemment pas les seules à commettre une telle forme d'*hybris*. Pour ne donner qu'un autre exemple, Médée d'Euripide semble les surclasser. Une (auto)exilée³⁹, elle aussi, Médée trahit et quitte sa Colchide natale par amour pour Jason. Par jalousie, elle n'hésite pas à tuer sa rivale et ses propres enfants, afin de faire souffrir ainsi leur père infidèle. À Iolcos et à Corinthe, ses cités d'adoption, Médée fait figure de magicienne « barbare », prête à tous les maléfices. Son image est peinte en couleurs plutôt négatives: elle défie les coutumes de la cité grecque et, par son art magique, échappe à la justice.

Dans une certaine mesure, le conflit de Médée avec la *polis* grecque ressemble à celui qu'esquisse Euripide dans une autre pièce, *Les Bacchantes*. Dieu « étranger », venu d'ailleurs et issu d'une autre lignée que les divinités de l'Olympe, maître de l'*enthousiasmos* (le « transport divin ») et de la folie sacrée, Dionysos des *Bacchantes* fait un pari trompeur avec le roi de Thèbes, Penthée. Trop confiant dans la force de la raison, le roi imprudent perd le pari et sa vie, à la fois. C'est un conflit récurrent chez les anciens Grecs. À mon avis, cela est aussi le symptôme d'une culture de l'équilibre et de la mesure (*πᾶν μέτρον*⁴⁰) qui sent s'affaiblir ses fondements rationnels, à cause de la nature imprévisible de l'âme, avec ses passions et ses faiblesses. Je dirais que c'est ici qu'on trouve le noyau dystopique d'une bonne partie des utopies occidentales, dans le sillage de la république idéale de Platon : il faut éradiquer les émotions (et bannir le Poète qui les nourrit, comme propose l'auteur de *L'État/ Περὶ πολιτείας*) ou, du moins, tenir les affects sous contrôle pour éviter qu'ils ne mettent en danger l'ordre social. C'est un lieu commun de l'utopie européenne, dont on ne peut ignorer le côté dystopique, à partir de la Renaissance et jusqu'à nos jours.

Particulièrement, chez Euripide, bien des siècles auparavant, Médée et Dionysos sont à même de démentir l'orgueil rationaliste de la cité grecque, son respect de l'ordre et de la structure logique et sociale. Dans *l'Iliade* d'Homère, Hélène de Troie n'en est pas loin. Elle aussi est une fugitive et une étrangère funeste. Effrayée et révoltée contre sa destinée, elle se reproche les conséquences néfastes de sa beauté et de ses penchants du cœur dans les vies de tant de gens, emportées par le fléau de la guerre⁴¹. Mariée à Ménélas, roi de Sparte, Hélène quitte son foyer sous l'emprise de sa passion pour Pâris, le prince troyen, fils cadet du roi Priam et d'Hécube. La fuite d'Hélène va coûter cher aux deux camps pendant la guerre de Troie.

Dans sa pièce *Andromaque*, Euripide nous rappelle d'autres clichés associés à l'étrangère – la barbare – vue comme une icône de l'altérité négative. Le portrait d'Andromaque, brossé par Hermione, l'épouse de son maître, ressemble plutôt à celui de la terrible Médée. Hermione réprimande à tort la princesse troyenne Andromaque. Veuve d'Hector, celle-ci est devenue, après la chute de Troie, l'esclave de Néoptolème. Comme on le sait, Néoptolème est l'époux d'Hermione et fils d'Achille, le héros emblématique des vainqueurs. Hermione fait à Andromaque le reproche de s'adonner à des maléfices comme, en général, les « femmes d'Asie », dont « l'esprit »

³⁹ J'en parle aussi dans *Când literatura comparată...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 113–142.

⁴⁰ Cela signifie littéralement « de la mesure en tout », « jamais trop » et « toujours assez ».

⁴¹ Voir André Bonnard, *Civilisation grecque*, Lausanne, La Guilde du livre, 3 vol., 1954–1959.

est « si habile dans ces arts funestes⁴² »: « tu voudrais me chasser de ce palais, pour y être maîtresse », « tu me rend par tes maléfices odieuse à mon époux⁴³ », comme dit Hermione en se déchaînant. Elle se fait donc ardemment l'écho d'une ancienne mentalité grecque. En dehors de l'image de l'altérité négative incarnée par les étrangères venues d'Asie, dangereuses par leur commerce de l'art magique, Euripide brosse pourtant un tableau émouvant des Troyennes captives, frappées par le fléau de la guerre et par le malheur d'être envoyées en exil. J'en parle dans la section suivante.

3. 5. L'exil consenti des Danaïdes, l'exil imposé aux Troyennes : Euripide, Hécube, Les Troyennes, Andromaque

Dans *Les Suppliantes*, Eschyle nous fait voir et apprécier la noblesse des Argiens et l'accueil bienveillant qu'ils réservent aux Danaïdes, les fugitives de Lybie. Elles s'exposent à un exode *consenti*, censé les sauver. À l'opposée, Euripide (*Les Troyennes, Hécube, Andromaque*) va dénoncer la brutalité des Grecs en Asie Mineure, contre la population civile de la cité vaincue. Trophées de guerre, les captives troyennes et leurs enfants sont soumis à des violences atroces, condamnés à la mort ou à l'exil et à l'esclavage. Leur ville, si splendide autrefois, est en proie aux flammes, réduite en poussière et en cendres. C'est l'image de la fin d'un monde, du crépuscule d'une civilisation. C'est le dernier, désastreux souvenir d'un pays à jamais perdu, que les captives emportent avec elles sur les vaisseaux des vainqueurs, en route vers la Grèce.

Les Danaïdes d'Eschyle dénoncent implicitement ce que subissent les Troyennes d'Euripide. Les Danaïdes réclament une condition de liberté et dignité, de libre choix, que les Troyennes perdent avec la chute de leur cité. La tragédie des *Troyennes* est tout un « éloge aux vaincus⁴⁴ ». Ils sont nobles, dotés d'une grande force de caractère, tandis que les vainqueurs, emportés par leur fureur paradoxalement « barbare », se livrent à des représailles sauvages et se déchaînent contre les femmes et les enfants sans défense. La guerre délivre la bête féroce cachée au cœur de la civilisation. Comme Eschyle auparavant, pour ses *Suppliantes*, Euripide a lui aussi payé à cause de son attitude critique. Il s'attaque, à son tour, à la barbarie des Grecs que l'ivresse de la victoire ramène aux instincts les plus bas. En revanche, les vaincues d'Euripide – ses Troyennes inoubliables – affrontent leur sort avec une dignité exemplaire. Il suffit de mentionner Hécube, Polyxène, Cassandre, Andromaque.

Dans la tragédie des *Troyennes*, Hécube « est la figure centrale, elle reste sur la scène du début jusqu'à la fin⁴⁵ ». Sa présence relie les moments d'intense dramatisation qui constituent la pièce. L'amour pour ses enfants est la clé de voûte de son fort caractère. La perte de sa fille Polyxène, de son fils Polydor, de son petit-fils Astyanax lui porte le coup de grâce. Elle est la vieille mère et la reine à qui la guerre a tout pris : sa famille, sa patrie, sa couronne, son espoir. Elle est le cœur de ce monde agonisant, il ne lui reste qu'à s'éteindre elle-même, après avoir puni Polymestor, l'infâme assassin de son trop jeune fils Polydor.

⁴² Euripide, « Andromaque », dans *Tragédies*, traduction par Nicolas Louis Marie Artaud. Paris, Charpentier, 1842, pp. 39–442.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ Aram Frenkian, *Curs de istoria literaturii grecești*, București, EDP, 1962, p. 75.

⁴⁵ Frenkian, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–76.

3. 6. L'exil fondateur d'Énée : de la chute de Troie au rêve de l'*aeterna Pergama*

Le tableau de la chute de Troie que brosse Euripide dans ses pièces trouve un écho dans l'*Énéide* de Virgile, l'épopée latine. À l'invitation de Didon, reine de Carthage, Énée évoque le sac de Troie. Son récit nous ramène à la mémoire la dernière nuit de la cité, de fête et d'aveuglement tragique. Les Troyens tombent dans le piège tendu par Ulysse, l'inventeur du funeste cheval troyen, et en s'en servant, les Achéens réussissent, enfin, à entrer dans la cité, au bout de dix ans de siège. Peu de temps après, Énée s'exile, partant à la recherche d'une terre promise à son peuple, une nouvelle Troie qui remplace le pays perdu. Cette nouvelle patrie à laquelle aspirent les survivants du massacre, réunis autour d'Énée et errant à la longue, est désignée de différentes manières dans l'épopée de Virgile: *serva altera Troiae Pergama* (III, 87-88), *recidiva Pergama* (IV, 344; VII, 322; X, 58), *aeterna Pergama* (VIII, 37). La tradition grecque, notamment Hellanicos de Mytilène (Ve siècle), attribue la fondation de Rome aux Troyens qui, conduits par Énée, prennent le chemin de l'exil vers la Péninsule Italienne. (D'ailleurs, Homère, à son tour, mentionne Énée.) Dans cette perspective qui n'est pourtant pas généralement acceptée, Rome, « la cité éternelle », serait une « nouvelle Troie », *recidiva Pergama*. Léon Lacroix résume ainsi la situation des rescapés:

Énée est un exilé. Forcé d'abandonner sa patrie, il s'est donné pour mission d'aller fonder ailleurs une "seconde Pergame", en se mettant à l'abri des terribles Achéens qui ont causé la ruine d'Ilion. D'autres Troyens ont pu échapper au massacre et ils ont pris le chemin de l'exil. La tradition a fait de l'un d'eux, Anténor, le fondateur de Padoue (*Én.*, I, 242-249). Un autre, Hélénos, qu'Énée rencontrera sur son chemin, s'est installé à Bouthrôtos en Épire (*Én.*, III, 295). Ni Anténor ni Hélénos ne jouissent d'une célébrité comparable à celle d'Énée. La légende a fait de ce Troyen émigré et de ses compagnons les lointains ancêtres des Romains. Elle a en outre établi des liens généalogiques entre Énée et l'illustre famille des Iulii, c'est-à-dire Jules César et d'Auguste⁴⁶.

On retrouve donc des traces du cycle troyen dans l'épopée latine de Virgile. Selon la légende, Rome, « la cité éternelle », est érigée sur un terrain culturellement imprégné de l'héritage oriental qu'ont laissé, à long terme, les rescapés de la guerre de Troie.

3. 7. L'exil expiatoire. Ulysse, un héros particulièrement versatile

Dans les tragédies d'Eurypide, Ulysse, le héros de l'intelligence des épopées homériques, devient la figure la plus répugnante de l'envahisseur. Il fait son esclave de la vieille reine de Troie, Hécube. C'est toujours lui celui qui convainc les chefs grecs de faire tuer Astyanax, le très jeune fils d'Hector et d'Andromaque, le petit-fils d'Hécube et le dernier rejeton de la famille royale troyenne.

Après son retour chez soi, en Ithaque, et après avoir puni les prétendants à sa fortune et à la main de Pénélope, son épouse, Ulysse d'*Odyssee* doit partir à nouveau en exil. Le prophète Tirésias tient à l'avertir de ce fait lors de la descente d'Ulysse dans le royaume des morts. C'est un exil à fonction *expiatoire*, censé racheter l'acte de justice ensanglantée – le meurtre des usurpateurs – commis par Ulysse, en légitime

⁴⁶ Léon Lacroix, « Le périple d'Énée de La Troade à La Sicile : Thèmes légendaires et réalités géographiques », *L'antiquité classique*, 62 (1993), pp. 131–155.

défense de sa vie, de sa famille, de son trône. En fin de compte, le marin d'antan doit à nouveau quitter son foyer et avancer, cette fois-ci, vers l'intérieur du continent, portant une rame sur son épaule. Tel qu'annoncé par Tirésias, il faut que le pénitent Ulysse ne s'arrête qu'une fois arrivé là où les gens ne connaissent ni la mer, ni le sel, ni les vaisseaux, ni les rames qui les mettent en marche. (Selon Homère, la rame est « l'aile du navire »). C'est à cet endroit-là précisément qu'Ulysse aura la permission de mettre fin à son errance et de faire le sacrifice traditionnel en l'honneur des dieux de l'Olympe, avant de retourner chez soi.

Oreste, le héros éponyme de la trilogie d'Eschyle, commet le meurtre selon la coutume de la vendetta, d'après l'ordre du dieu Apollon et avec l'intention de faire justice. À son tour, il doit partir en exil, malgré les circonstances atténuantes pour son comportement. Après avoir commis le parricide et l'inceste, en proie à sa mauvaise destinée, le départ en exil d'Œdipe de Sophocle a la même fonction expiatoire (*Œdipe Roi*, *Œdipe à Colone*). Pourtant, dès qu'elles mettent le pied en terre argienne, les Suppliantes d'Eschyle, par la voix de Danaos, font une précision qui est implicitement une dissociation entre deux types d'exil (et, à la fois, entre deux situations qui l'exigent) : le leur n'est pas censé expier un crime, mais les sauver d'un mariage forcé. « *Notre exil n'est pas souillé de sang*⁴⁷ [moi qui souligne] », rappelle haut et fort Danaos, le conseiller des fugitives dans la négociation avec les citoyens d'Argos.

Plus de deux millénaires et demi après, peu avant que la Seconde Guerre mondiale n'éclate, la figure d'Ulysse, le héros homérique, le navigateur à la recherche de sa patrie, Ithaque, va assimiler un autre symbole de l'errance, le Juif Ahasvérus. Ainsi, les traditions de Grèce et de Jérusalem⁴⁸ se croisent. Cela arrivera dans l'ample poème *Ulysse* de Benjamin Fondane, victime lui aussi de la guerre et, finalement, du camp de concentration d'Auschwitz où il va perdre sa vie quelques mois avant que la paix ne soit signée. L'analyse du poème fondanien ne fait pourtant pas l'objet de cet article. J'aurai peut-être l'occasion d'y revenir une autre fois. Dans une section à part, on va voir ce que devient la figure de l'Errant, avec, en toile de fond, la catastrophe collective de la Seconde Guerre et de l'Holocauste, dans un spectacle de danse-théâtre inspiré par la vie et l'œuvre de Benjamin Fondane.

4. L'exil et la guerre, un noyau archétypique du mythe tragique : traces de l'histoire récente. Souvenirs de l'Est

Par son écriture intertextuelle, qui remet les figures mythologiques et littéraires d'un passé lointain dans le contexte du monde contemporain, Lilia Bitar⁴⁹ relève l'aspect universel de certaines expériences de vie. Parmi les plus douloureuses,

⁴⁷ Pour une meilleure mise en contexte, « Vos rameaux suppliants,/ tout couronnés de blanc, symboles du respect de Zeus,/ tenez-les gravement dans votre main de bon augure,/ et, à ces étrangers, répondez comme il faut pour des immigrantes,/ par des paroles de respect, de lamentation, de prière,/ en disant nettement que *notre exil n'est pas souillé de sang* ». Cf. Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, n° 73, 1995, jouée en 1993, pp. 12–13.

⁴⁸ Voir Monique Jutrin (textes réunis par), *Benjamin Fondane à la recherche du judaïsme: entre Jérusalem et Athènes*, Paris, Lethielleux, 2009.

⁴⁹ Journaliste et poète montréalaise, Lilia Bitar se présente elle-même comme un mélange entre plusieurs cultures. Dans son œuvre, particulièrement dans la pièce *Les Syriennes des mers*, elle se questionne au sujet de l'identité et des rapports que nous entretenons avec nos origines.

la guerre, l'exil, le déracinement, la perte des proches. Dans sa pièce (ou, pour mieux dire, poème dramatique) *Les Syriennes des mers*, Lilia Bitar valide implicitement la compréhension du mythe comme narration exemplaire, censée saisir le noyau archétypique des représentations qu'on se fait des événements particuliers de notre existence historique. Dans *Les Syriennes des mers*, l'écriture intertextuelle, si chère d'ailleurs aux auteurs post-modernes, témoigne d'une manière de vivre le présent, solidaire d'une longue histoire répétitive des pertes et des souffrances causées par la guerre. *Les Syriennes des mers* est un palimpseste qui laisse apparaître les traces du modèle, *Les Troyennes* d'Euripide. La tragédie syrienne y est évoquée à travers des monologues de femmes. Les personnages d'Euripide inspirent Lilia Bitar dans la création de ses propres personnages. Parmi eux, Kinda est une version contemporaine d'Hécube, la reine de Troie au destin tragique. On a déjà remarqué, dans une section précédente, l'importance et la signification spéciale du motif de l'eau dans *Les Suppliantes* d'Eschyle. Lilia Bitar emprunte ce motif à l'imaginaire ancestral et lui confère une valeur particulière. Celle-ci se précise dans le tandem île – mer, tel que nous a laissé entendre l'auteure-même, lors d'une table ronde qui avait lieu à l'Université Laval, en avril 2019 : « l'île devient la métaphore d'un psychisme envahi d'eau, où la mémoire fuit et se mêle, la mer s'introduit dans les villes et la marée haute entraîne les protagonistes vers des temps archaïques qui induisent des contingences inattendues ».

Plus généralement parlant, la fiction (d'inspiration) mythique, soutenue par l'échafaudage des archétypes, est une archive des traces du vécu, stockées dans la mémoire collective. Des souvenirs douloureux de l'Europe de l'Est, y compris les déportations pendant et après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ont marqué de nombreuses œuvres de différents domaines de l'art. Pour ne donner qu'un exemple, sans en approfondir pourtant l'analyse⁵⁰, *Une histoire d'amour, Lindenfeld*, un film réalisé par le cinéaste Radu Gabrea, évoque la déportation de la population d'origine allemande de Banat, région du Sud-ouest de la Roumanie, après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. (La communauté s'y est établie il y a plusieurs siècles). Le film nous présente le retour du héros (interprété par Victor Rebengiuc), après soixante ans d'exil, dans son village natal, maintenant dépeuplé, et la rencontre émouvante des protagonistes, dont l'histoire d'amour a été brusquement arrêtée par la déportation. Quoique discrètement imprégnée d'un sentiment de fatalité et de l'amertume des pertes irrémédiables, l'évocation d'un passé douloureux ne passe toutefois pas sous silence les traces, voire les traumatismes, du traitement subi dans le camp de travail forcé. Encore à l'âge de l'adolescence, l'héroïne (interprétée, dans ses années de maturité, par Victoria Cociaș) y est brutalement envoyée. Comme les Troyennes d'Euripide, elle est l'une des vaincues auxquelles on a infligé les mêmes violences, privations et humiliation. Par un caprice de l'histoire, son parcours a été à jamais détourné, et sa vie volée.

⁵⁰ Dans une certaine mesure, j'ai essayé de le faire à l'occasion de la projection du film *Une histoire d'amour, Lindenfeld*, à l'Université « Vasile Alecsandri » de Bacău (le 27 avril 2015), en présence du metteur en scène, le cinéaste Radu Gabrea, et de l'actrice Victoria Cociaș, l'interprète de la protagoniste du film, en tandem avec l'acteur Victor Rebengiuc.

5. La mise en scène des *Suppliantes* d'Eschyle⁵¹ : Silviu Purcărete, *Les Danaïdes*⁵²

Silviu Purcărete emprunte à Eschyle une expérience humaine universelle et la met en scène d'une façon inédite, tout en faisant allusion aux problèmes du monde contemporain: l'exil, le déracinement, la peur de l'autre, l'identité et les différences culturelles, tel qu'il précise lui-même. Silviu Purcărete se permet une certaine liberté envers le texte d'Eschyle, sans pourtant en trahir l'esprit. Je vais rappeler quelques-unes de ses astuces dramaturgiques très efficaces dans le spectacle.

Dès le début, le metteur en scène construit en marge de la pièce d'Eschyle, en lui ajoutant un épisode dont les protagonistes sont les Olympiens. La souffrance humaine se consomme sous l'œil tout puissant des dieux. Tout en buvant sereinement leur nectar, les immortels regardent, préparent et commentent les événements humains. La scène se partage entre les hommes et les locataires de l'Olympe. C'est une manière de rendre visible, dans l'espace de jeu, un trait fondamental de l'ancienne tragédie : son conflit dérive d'une relation critique de l'humain avec la transcendance. Dans le spectacle de Silviu Purcărete, un tel voisinage fait descendre, dans l'horizontalité de la scène, la verticalité d'une hiérarchie ontologique dont dépend l'ordre du Cosmos.

Sous le haut patronage de Zeus, le souverain de l'Olympe, le public reçoit, au début du spectacle, une sommaire initiation dans la théorie du théâtre. C'est une petite incursion dans la problématique de la tragédie, un collage annoté des fragments de la *Poétique* d'Aristote. Il ne manque pas les renvois à la *mimesis*, à la *catharsis* et à la tragédie comme forme esthétique, comme espèce dramatique et expérience de vie, à la fois. Silviu Purcărete ajoute ainsi un cadre *métathéâtral* à l'histoire des personnages telle qu'on les connaît d'Eschyle. Tout cela, afin de préparer le public pour la suite.

La même relation ambiguë de l'humain avec le divin, constitutive de la tragédie, s'insinue dès la première image du spectacle: de l'ombre de la scène sort une silhouette blanche, fantomatique, un peu penchée vers le sol, qui traîne avec difficulté un lourd bagage vers le milieu de la scène. On se rend compte, un peu plus tard, que c'est le dieu Hermès, le protecteur des marins et des voyageurs – y compris les fugitives Danaïdes. Dans le contexte du spectacle, la figure du dieu emprunte (et manifeste allusivement), quelque chose de la *condition générique de l'exilé*, du réfugié, des « Suppliantes ».

Les Danaïdes entrent en scène ensuite, comme un seul corps souffrant: un groupe compact de silhouettes sans visage, impossible à différencier l'une de l'autre – habillées de vêtements longs, bleu foncés, comme des uniformes d'errantes. Blotties sur leurs bagages, les femmes du chœur annoncent leur présence par un cri aigu, prolongé, qui casse le rythme auguste du conseil des dieux et insinue, dans l'ouïe du spectateur, le frisson de l'angoisse humaine. Bien cachées de la tête aux pieds, elles ne laissent voir que leurs yeux: cinquante paires d'yeux multipliant la même crainte,

⁵¹ Cette section est une version révisée et augmentée d'un article paru en roumain: Nicoleta Popa Blanariu, « Patos, haos și Danaos » (Silviu Purcărete, *Danaidele*), *Ateneu*, no. 647–648 (2023), p. 21.

⁵² Mise en scène: Silviu Purcărete. Une coproduction: Teatrul Național „Marin Sorescu” Craiova, Holland Festival, Wiener Festwochen, Festival d'Avignon, Grande Halle de la Villette, 1995. Filmé pour la TVR, 1997. Coproducteur associé : Fundația pentru Teatru și Film TOFAN.

la même impuissance, la même prière. Avant de souffler mot, le chœur des Danaïdes renvoie hypnotiquement vers le public, le laser des cinquante regards qui s'apparentent silencieusement de la salle. Comme un commando d'*aliens*.

À l'abri des masques, se fait ensuite entendre la lamentation des Danaïdes. Elles parlent français, une langue autre que celle des autochtones. Toute leur allure respire un air d'étrangeté. Elles portent leurs bagages de réfugiées comme une enseignante, ensuite comme un bouclier et finalement comme partie d'un mur qu'elles édifient ensemble, pour les protéger contre le reste du monde. C'est seulement après le refus du roi Pélasgos de les donner dans les mains des Égyptiens que les Danaïdes vont dévoiler leurs visages et vont renoncer à leurs habits de couleur sombre. Elles les remplaceront alors par des vêtements blancs, mieux assortis à leurs cris de joie.

Guide et mentor des Suppliantes, Danaos⁵³ affiche une apparence androgyne. Il associe ainsi les attributs masculins du père et les signes de la féminité du groupe qu'il protège. La posture repliée, blottie, plutôt humble de Danaos – la mise en vedette des signes de la vulnérabilité – souligne une stratégie de *captatio benevolentiae*, explicitement reconnue comme telle dès le commencement de la pièce d'Eschyle. Le but en est de se faire accepter et soutenir par les citoyens d'Argos. Présence surprenante, Danaos se cache plusieurs fois dans sa valise. Il crée ainsi son absence et l'investit d'une signification clé dans l'économie du spectacle. Objet scénique essentielle chez Silviu Purcărete, la valise de Danaos est son emblème d'errant en quête d'un refuge. D'ailleurs, chaque Danaïde et même le dieu Hermès en portent une, comme accessoire d'identification. En tant que porte-voix des Suppliantes, Danaos est réduit à son rôle social de demandeur d'asile. Disparaître de temps en temps dans sa valise, ne fait que le souligner. C'est plus qu'un geste, c'est presque un *gestus* à la Brecht.

Le roi des Argiens, Pélasgos⁵⁴, retient également l'attention. Soutenu par ses béquilles, il parcourt la scène en long et en large, d'une mine inquiète, sinon effrayée, comme un grand oiseau qui bat des ailes sur le sol. Son allure trahit l'angoisse de la responsabilité, la difficulté de choisir entre le calcul politique – éviter un conflit armé avec les Égyptiens – et le devoir sacré de venir en aide aux Suppliantes : « agir... ne pas agir... et choisir un destin...⁵⁵ ». Largement écartées dans l'air, ses béquilles esquissent, à un moment donné, le mouvement protecteur des ailes développées pour réunir et consoler le groupe des cinquante Danaïdes. C'est un geste-emblème, voire un *gestus*, un marqueur de la fonction de *proxène* (protecteur des étrangers) qu'assume le roi Pélasgos. Il signale ainsi qu'il se porte garant de la sécurité des Danaïdes qu'il accepte d'accueillir dans sa cité. Les béquilles de Pélasgos ne sont pourtant pas analogues au sceptre de l'autorité laïque ou sacerdotale. Les béquilles sont ici le signe plutôt d'un pouvoir non autocratique, fondé sur (et amputé par) la volonté de la collectivité : « Vous n'êtes pas assises à côté de l'autel dans ma propre maison : si c'est, dans son ensemble, l'état qui subit la souillure, que tout le peuple – ensemble –

⁵³ Interprété par l'actrice Coca Bloos.

⁵⁴ Interprété par l'acteur Victor Rebengiuc.

⁵⁵ Pour une meilleure mise en contexte : « La souillure, qu'elle retombe sur ceux qui m'en veulent ! Vous venir en aide, je ne peux pas le faire sans dommage; et, de l'autre côté, il serait insensé de mépriser vos prières. Me voilà désemparé, l'angoisse m'étreint le cœur: agir... ne pas agir... et choisir un destin... » Cf. Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, no. 73, 1995, jouée en 1993, p. 20.

s'occupe à chercher des remèdes ! Car, moi, je ne serais pas maître d'accomplir une promesse avant d'avoir fait connaître les faits à tous mes compatriotes⁵⁶ » [c'est moi qui souligne]. Pélasgos accepte sagement et reconnaît ainsi les limites imposées par la démocratie⁵⁷ à ses prérogatives royales. Il exclut absolument toute conduite autocratique⁵⁸ à laquelle l'invite le chœur, cherchant à le convaincre ou, si non, à le séduire par des flatteries.

J'ai déjà parlé, dans une section précédente, du rite de passage exécuté par les Danaïdes, en vue de l'intégration (« l'agrégation⁵⁹ ») dans leur pays d'accueil. Plus exactement, elles renoncent explicitement aux eaux du Nil et adoptent celles de la Grèce. Probablement, c'est d'ici qu'il dérive un élément récurrent dans le spectacle de Silviu Purcărete: l'omniprésence de l'eau. C'est l'eau d'Argos dont s'entourent et à laquelle s'assimilent les Suppliantes. L'eau devient ainsi un marqueur d'identité à l'ancienne, à même de garder les traces des mythes archaïques de l'autochtonie et de la vénération de la Terre – Mère, déesse primordiale. L'eau que Silviu Purcărete choisit de répandre sur la scène devient le signe d'un rite de passage et d'une identité de l'entre-deux des Suppliantes, tel que déjà mentionné. Ainsi, la forme esthétique de son spectacle repose sur une très ancienne couche anthropologique de croyances, pratiques et représentations.

6. Exil au pays de l'oubli. À partir de Benjamin Fondane

*Exil au pays de l'oubli*⁶⁰ est un spectacle intermédial, qui organise toute la conception scénique autour de quelques idées inspirées par l'œuvre et la biographie de Benjamin Fondane. Celui-ci a été une personnalité tout à fait à part, dont l'ascension sur la scène intellectuelle française n'a été freinée que par sa déportation et sa mort dans le camp d'Auschwitz en 1944, peu avant la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Une sorte d'*amor fati* semble l'avoir poussé vers un tel dénouement. Ne pouvant plus sauver sa sœur de la déportation, il a renoncé à se sauver soi-même. Il semble avoir cultivé une relation spéciale avec le champ du drame, comme catégorie fictionnelle et existentielle à la fois. Dans un certain sens, Fondane assume sa vie

⁵⁶ Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, n° 73, 1995 (jouée en 1993), p. 20.

⁵⁷ « (E)n roi étrangement démocrate, celui d'Argos affirme hautement qu'il ne peut rien sans l'aval du peuple, et le v. 604 offre, pour nous, la première trace écrite du mot *démocratie*. Il faut noter que, selon la datation actuellement tenue pour vraisemblable (464/ 463 av. J.-C.), Eschyle présenta *Les Suppliantes*, dans le temps même où son ami Périclès inaugurait à Athènes sa fameuse "royauté démocratique". Dans la tragédie, l'asile est accordé aux Danaïdes non par un vote majoritaire, mais à l'unanimité, et Danaos souligne, outre l'habileté du roi à mener le débat, les raisons religieuses qui forcent la décision ». Cf. Dominique Buisset, « Étranges humains que les femmes... », dans Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, n° 73, 1995 (jouée en 1993), p. 3.

⁵⁸ « C'est toi la cité, c'est toi l'État : tu es le chef incontesté, tu es le maître de l'autel, et c'est le foyer du pays ; il n'y a qu'un seul vote : un signe de ta tête ; il n'y a qu'un seul sceptre, tu le tiens, sur ton trône, et tu décides en toutes choses : garde-toi de la souillure ! » (Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, *op. cit.*, p. 20).

⁵⁹ Cf. Gennep, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Chorégraphie et mise en scène: Andreea Tănăsescu. Spectacle présenté au Théâtre Municipal « Bacovia », au mois d'octobre 2009, dans le cadre du programme *Dans contemporan, Bacău*, organisé par Centrul de Cultură « George Apostu ».

comme une tragédie à vif. D'ailleurs, j'en ai déjà parlé dans un autre article⁶¹. J'en reprends quelques idées dans l'alinéa suivant, eu égard à leur affinité avec le thème abordé cette fois, notamment avec une tragédie de l'échec de la raison, qui n'a cessé d'obséder Fondane.

Le conflit tragique offre particulièrement à Fondane une clef de lecture de quelques biographies de l'histoire de la pensée occidentale, Nietzsche et Kierkegaard y compris. Dans *La conscience malheureuse* (1936), Fondane lit ces biographies presque comme des drames œdipiens, non pas dans le sens freudien, mais sophocléen, comme des drames de la connaissance : drames de la fatalité, de l'aveuglement et d'une chasse à la vérité poussée jusqu'à ses fatales conséquences. « Comme dans toutes les tragédies », Kierkegaard « doit mourir⁶² ». Sa pensée n'est que « l'expression mythique » d'une terrible « lutte intérieure », d'un « drame » affreux qui le déchire⁶³. Cela me semble être une tragédie multipliée, toujours la même, chez Œdipe, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard : tragédie inévitable de l'échec de la raison devant le mystère irrationnel, *tremendum et fascinans*, comme vérité ultime. Car certes, il y a une chose qui sera à jamais impossible : « être rationnel », tel que « parlait Zarathustra⁶⁴ ». La pensée est fatalement « vouée à l'échec », car « le rôle de l'existence » est de s'affirmer comme « impensable » et « d'offrir seulement du paradoxe et du scandale à la raison⁶⁵ ». De la même tragédie « sombre, intolérable » témoignent également les biographies de Baudelaire et de Rimbaud⁶⁶.

L'angoisse d'un désastre apocalyptique domine dans le spectacle *Exil au pays de l'oubli*. Déclamés ou écrits sur les panneaux de projection, des morceaux de textes de Fondane y sont insérés. Pourtant, le spectacle ne nous restitue pas l'individualité de Fondane, mais une situation générique: l'errant Ahasverus – effigie d'une destinée collective – ou la fragilité universelle de l'Homme devant l'Histoire, devant la Fatalité, voire devant l'Absurde.

Dès le début du spectacle, s'insinue la suggestion d'*agon*, de jeu de compétition: la scène ressemble à un terrain de sport, divisé en deux. Des simulacres de crânes sont lancés d'un côté à l'autre. La tragédie semble avoir outrepassé ses limites, mais le mal n'inspire plus pitié et horreur, comme disait le Stagirite. La sensibilité est usée, inerte, incapable à réagir. Bref, « Dieu est mort », emprunte à Nietzsche ses mots l'un des acteurs. Dans ce jeu cruel, la vie et la mort tombent dans l'anonymat et le dérisoire. La tragédie n'est plus qu'un modèle (esthétique et existentiel) impersonnel. C'est, en tout cas, ce que nous suggèrent les numéros inscrits sur les T-shirts des joueurs. La Mort s'insinue parmi les combattants – elle est l'adversaire par excellence, l'ennemie et la jumelle de la vie. La Vie rampe sur le sol, tandis que la Mort, orgueilleusement verticale, la domine froidement. Les silhouettes

⁶¹ Nicoleta Popa Blanariu, « Repenser le théâtre: Benjamin Fondane, pour une poétique existentielle », *Alea: Estudos Neolatinos*, vol. 24, no.1 (janeiro/ abril-2022) : 19 – 40.

⁶² Benjamin Fondane, *La conscience malheureuse*, Paris, Denoël et Steele, 1936. B. Fundoianu, *Conștiința nefericită*, traduction par Andreea Vlădescu, București, Humanitas, 1993, p. 230.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 228.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 224.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

⁶⁶ B. Fundoianu, *Imagini și cărți*, anthologie réalisée par Vasile Teodorescu, préface de Mircea Martin, București, Minerva, 1980, p. 642.

des dans(act)eurs s'adonnent fatalement à cette confrontation chorégraphiée.

L'une des figures les plus efficaces dans le spectacle est celle du Marionnettiste, une figure de la Mort omniprésente et toute-puissante. Tout vêtu de noir, en tirant les ficelles à la vue du public, le Marionnettiste semble être un messager du Néant ouvert par le départ de Dieu. Par rapport à d'autres personnages, plus animés et bruyants, le Marionnettiste fait entrer en scène la force expressive du silence sombre et du mouvement austère. Il est la source d'une sourde angoisse sans fin. Il insinue le sentiment d'un Mistère irréductible, terrifiant et fascinant à la fois. Le Marionnettiste imprègne l'espace de la scène d'une peur profonde, qu'éprouve une « âme en proie aux larves et aux fantômes de l'au-delà⁶⁷ ». Enfin, le Marionnettiste me semble être un avatar de cet être-là qui – comme disait Antonin Artaud⁶⁸ – fait entrer dans la scène le souffle de la grande peur d'où surgit l'ancien théâtre.

*

Narration exemplaire, le mythe est à même de saisir le noyau archétypique des représentations qu'on se fait des situations particulières de l'existence historique. Dans la littérature et dans les arts de la scène, le palimpseste mythique, notamment l'écriture et la dramaturgie intertextuelles, chères aux créateurs post-modernes (et, pour dire vrai, non seulement à eux) témoignent d'une certaine manière d'assumer le présent, tout en étant conscients d'une longue histoire répétitive où les catastrophes provoquées par les humains ne cessent de s'enchaîner. Au fil des siècles et presque partout dans le monde, on retrouve les mêmes expériences de malheur liées à la violence, la guerre, l'exil, la perte des proches, aux discriminations et persécutions de toute sorte. Nourrie par les archétypes sous-jacents et, en même temps, par l'expérience historique, la fiction d'inspiration mythique repose sur les traces du vécu, voire les plus traumatiques, emmagasinées dans le grand réservoir d'images, de symboles, d'émotions de la mémoire collective. Tout particulièrement, l'exil et la guerre constituent, à mon avis, l'un des noyaux essentiels du mythe tragique et d'une histoire des catastrophes humaines à n'en pas finir. D'où la récurrence et l'importance de la figure de l'étranger dans tant de créations littéraires et théâtrales, depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'à nos jours, y compris celles qu'on a déjà discutées dans cet article. Le corpus d'œuvres annotées ici reste évidemment à approfondir et à enrichir.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Artaud, Antonin, *Le théâtre et son double, suivi de Le théâtre de Séraphin*, Paris, Gallimard, 1964.
- Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, New York and London, Routledge, 1994.
- Bonnard, André, *Civilisation grecque*, Lausanne, La Guilde du livre, 3 vol., 1954–1959.
- Brunel, Pierre, « Préface », dans *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires*, Monaco, du Rocher, 1988, pp. 7–15.
- Buisset, Dominique, « Étranges humains que les femmes... », dans Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Po&sie*, n° 73, 1995 (jouée en 1993), p. 3.

⁶⁷ Antonin Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double, suivi de Le théâtre de Séraphin*, Paris, Gallimard, 1964. p. 86.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

- Coste, Didier, « Les universaux face à la mondialisation : une aporie comparatiste ? », *Bibliothèque comparatiste*, 4 (2008): <https://sflgc.org/bibliotheque/coste-didier-les-universaux-face-a-la-mondialisation-une-aporie-comparatiste/> (consulté le 15 juillet 2023).
- Dabezies, André, « Des Mythes primitifs aux mythes littéraires », dans Pierre Brunel (dir.), *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires*, Monaco, du Rocher, 1988, pp. 1176–1186.
- Dabezies, André, *Le mythe de Faust*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1999.
- De Grève, Claude, *Éléments de littérature comparée*, II, Paris, Hachette, 1995.
- Eschyle, *Les Suppliantes*, traduction intégrale par Dominique Buisset, *Poésie*, no. 73, 1995 (jouée en 1993), pp. 3–46.
- Euripide, « Andromaque », dans *Tragédies*, traduction par Nicolas Louis Marie Artaud, Paris, Charpentier, 1842, pp. 391–442.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Aspects du mythe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1963.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, préf. de Georges Dumézil, traduction par Mariana Noica, București, Humanitas, 1992.
- Fondane, Benjamin, *La conscience malheureuse*, Paris, Denoël et Steele, 1936.
- Frenkian, Aram, *Curs de istoria literaturii grecești*, București, EDP, 1962.
- Fundoianu, B., *Imagini și cărți*, anthologie réalisée par Vasile Teodorescu, préf. de Mircea Martin, București, Minerva, 1980.
- Fundoianu, B., *Conștiința nefericită*, traduction par Andreea Vlădescu, București, Humanitas, 1993.
- Gély, Véronique, « Mythes et littérature: perspectives actuelles », *Revue de littérature comparée*, 3 (2004), pp. 329–347.
- Jutrin, Monique (textes réunis par), *Benjamin Fondane à la recherche du judaïsme: entre Jérusalem et Athènes*, Paris, Lethielleux, 2009.
- Kristeva, Julia, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, Paris, Fayard, 1988.
- Lacroix, Léon, « Le périple d'Énée de la Troade à la Sicile : thèmes légendaires et réalités géographiques », *L'Antiquité classique* 62 (1993), pp. 131–155.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, Plon, 1958.
- Otto, Rudolf, *Le sacré*, traduction par André Jundt, Paris, Payot, 2015.
- Popa Blanariu, Nicoleta, « Mentalitate și structură lingvistică. Reminiscente ale imaginarului cosmo și antropogonic », dans Luminița Botoșeanu, Elena Dănilă, Cecilia Holban, Ofelia Ichim (dir.), *Distorsionări în comunicarea lingvistică, literară și etnofolclorică românească și contextul european*, Iași, Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide”, Editura Alfa, 2009, pp. 297–304.
- Popa Blanariu, Nicoleta, « Alternative Insights into Comparative Literature: Interdisciplinary, Intercultural, Intersemiotic. Dancing Ekphrasis and Transmedial Narrative », dans Asunción López Varela, Ananta Sukla (dirs.), *The Ekphrastic Turn: Inter-art Dialogues*, Champaign, Common Ground Publishing, 2015, pp. 130–167.
- Popa Blanariu, Nicoleta, *Când literatura comparată pretinde că se destramă. Studii și eseuri*, I - II, București, Eikon, 2016.
- Popa Blanariu, Nicoleta, « Le signe agissant. D'une sémiologie de la *mimesis* vers une pragmatique de la *performance* », dans *SIGNA: Revista de la Asociación Española de Semiótica*, 26, 2017, pp. 493–509.
- Popa Blanariu, Nicoleta, « Repenser le théâtre: Benjamin Fondane, pour une poétique existentielle », in *Alea: Estudos Neolatinos*, vol. 24, n.1 (janeiro/ abril-2022),

pp. 19–40.

Popa Blanariu, Nicoleta, « Patos, haos și Danaos », *Ateneu*, no. 647–648 (2023), p. 21.

Rachet, Guy, *La tragédie grecque*, Paris, Payot, 1973.

Rivière, Claude, *Socio-anthropologie des religions*, 2^e édition, Paris, Armand Colin, 2008.

Van Gennep, Arnold, *Les rites de passage*, Paris, Librairie Stock, 1924.

Voinescu, Alice, *Eschil*, București, Fundația Regală pentru literatură și artă, 1946.

Ziolkowski, Jan M., « Virgil », dans Rita Copeland (dir.), *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, vol. 1: 800 – 1558, 2016, pp. 165-186.

CATARINA AND THE NEW FORMULAS FOR EXPRESSING THE CONTEMPORARY TRAGEDY

There are theatre performances capable of contradicting the older sentences about the definitive death of tragedy and about the impossibility of authentic manifestation of the tragic on a contemporary theatre stage. The present paper is intended to be an analytical investigation of the ways in which Tiago Rodrigues' *Catarina* problematizes, by particular means, a theme of subtle catastrophes and the capacity of the modern spectator to intellectually experience new and uncomfortable formulas of the tragic.

Key-words: *Catarina, Tiago, Rodrigues, tragic, tragedy*

I have previously written other about this upsetting feeling that I, more intensely, more frequently, have been experiencing in the last couple of years: the tragedy is making a comeback². Customary in life, it seemed to not feel so comfortable among theatre genres. The death of tragedy, announced the decades ago³, has proved itself to be, however, just a phase of retreat or a disguise. Intimately connected to the word telling the story, the tragedy did not feel comfortable in postdramatic theatre⁴, although it had enough means to express it.

Tiago Rodrigues' production⁵, *Catarina and The Beauty of Killing Fascists*⁶, which we had the privilege to invite⁷, in the fall of 2023, at the National Theatre Festival, is one of examples strong enough to revive the theatrically-expressed tragedy. It announces, describes, and represents the catastrophe, the tragic impasse,

¹ "George Enescu" National University of Arts, Iași.

² I approached this topic in "The Conflict with the Other. Premises of the Rebirth of Tragedy", in Călin Ciobotari, *Letters to Hamlet. Essays on Theatre*, translated by Teodora Medeleanu, Mircea Sorin Rusu, Dana Bădulescu, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2023, pp. 204-223.

³ The reference is, of course, to George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, translated by Rodica Tiniș, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.

⁴ "Drama as an essentially dialectical genre is at the same time the exquisite place of the tragic. Theatre after drama, we might thus suspect, would be a theatre without the tragic." – Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, London, New York, Routledge, 2007, p.42.

⁵ Tiagos Rodrigues, recently appointed director of the Festival d'Avignon, came forward and imposed himself through a multitude of theatre hypostases: playwright, actor, performer, director, artistic director. Currently, he is one of the most important and influential European directors. More about his works on: <https://tiagorodrigues.eu/en/english/> In the Romanian space, apart from the performance in NTF 2023, this year, at the Sibiu International Theater Festival, the performance *As Far as Impossible* was also presented.

⁶ Produced in 2020 by Teatro Nacional D Maria II, Lisbon, in co-production with several other European theatres and festivals, having Festival d'Avignon as executive producer.

⁷ As a member of the team of curators of the National Theater Festival, 2023 edition, together with Mihaela Michailov and Oana Cristea Grigorescu.

the marshy ethical dilemmas, the existential dead-ends we seem to have reached or that we will soon arrive to. The playwriting draws the contours of a dystopia, one that does not, however, address a reassuring far future, but operates with an immediate one (the play takes place in 2028) in which we can already recognise the shadows, breaths, thinking reflexes from the present time we are living in. The complexity of Rodrigues' creation, the multitude of layers it is constructed on, the density of the topics he proposes demand reflections not only on the production itself, but also on the aesthetic formulas it advances, but also on what is happening to us in a *time out of joints* other than Hamlet's.

A series of contextual specifications is required. I watched the production in a climate where in Ukraine the evil has almost become mundane, with a war that has been going on for so long, that its victims no longer spark inside us anything more than an accounting interest, pointing out the casualties. In parallel, in what seems to be a media competition, we follow another war, the one in the Gaza Strip, with other hundreds of deaths, with kidnappings and hostages, with mass-murders, radically doubting humanism, and calling for histories from the distant past to justify today's cruelty... On the streets of Bucharest, on the very days of the two shows of *Catarina*, rallies of an extremist party with an alarming increase in sympathy prefaced the performance. It was post-faced by marches against violences and pro-tolerance. Widening the lens, in Europe, evergrowing islands of violence, risking to turning into continents. Drift, incertitude, unpredictability... And, in addition to the uncontrollable spectacle of history, *Catarina and The Beauty of Killing Fascists*, a production that places itself inside this world to retell it to us, Brechtian and not lacking irony, through theatrical means. The Shakespearean function of theatre, that of mirroring, is doubled by another: that of testing (certain reactions) and of warning (about something that is getting or has already got out of control).

Politics and Tragedy

One of the disconcerting elements of *Catarina*... is the ability of the director-playwright to mythologize, at sight, a tradition, the production being exemplary also through its almost laboratory-like observations that showcase us a process that stands as a basis for numerous mythifications of history, relativizing the truth of that history or generating newer and newer truths. It is the tradition of a Portuguese family, that, since 1954, periodically kills fascists, "fascists" naming the promoters, with different degrees of guilt, of certain extreme-right ideas that touch especially upon women's freedoms. The conventional, symbolic, feminisation of the characters can induce the background impression of a dispute between the sexes, especially because the victims are always men, never women. It is not clear whether the family's attitude towards a fascist woman would also be this radical, although the ritual, as a constant reenactment of the founding gesture (a woman kills a man who has murdered a woman), excludes gender variations of the actants.

The main element of this tradition is that great-grandmother who killed her fascist husband in front of her children, avenging his murder of Catarina Eufémia, a 26 year old woman⁸. The tradition is, thus, rooted in a historical reality, but also in a

⁸ Real character from the history of Portugal. „Catarina was born into a family of *jornaleiros* (dayworkers). By the age of 17 she was married and had already been working in the fields for years. By 1954 she was a mother of 3 children and pregnant with a fourth. From the mid 1940s

double murder, in a double act of extreme violence that places us in the middle of a neo-tragic scenario. It is a tragedy, if not impure, then of a different kind than the one delivered to us by the ancient Greeks. The Gods are completely absent, and the Justice is of a chilling relativism. The injustice the classical tragic hero must endure loses its meaning for the simple meaning that the justice-injustice ratio no longer has any consistency. Only the tradition is called to supplement it and to justify the ritualic murders that traverse this family's history. A veteran-testamentary air, with that "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," avenges murder through murder and celebrates life through death. Each member of the family, when they turn 26, on the day the first Catarina was killed, kills, in turn, a fascist. Not just anyhow, not just anywhere, but in a space and time rigorously organised: the family retreats somewhere in the countryside, far from the public area represented by the urban environment. Nature plays, in fact, a major role in Rodrigues' production: it intensifies the feeling of ancient ritual practices carried out par excellence outdoor, at the same time evoking the purity of certain primary energies; the soles of the one who kills have to be touching the ground barefoot, the joy of feeding on flesh, the allusions to the Dionysiac - through the not few wine bottles present on stage or through the red wine that is poured, also ritually, at a certain moment, the gravel thrown over the oak sapling, the house, herself articulated on the trunk of an oak, the bodies of fascists feeding the vegetation, the tree barks we see scattered on the stage, gloomingly lit by the stage lights, the society of the barn swallows we are obsessively told about – all these package⁹ the representation of the catastrophe that lies in wait in the shadows.

The ritual is not a social-quotidian one, it does not have anything of the banality of the day-to-day mechanical behaviour of the individual captive in the predetermined frameworks of society. Its exceptional character derives, primarily, from the fact that it is "a family ritual," a secret one, based on trusting the blood ties of a group that acts as a single individual (all of them, including the men, are called Catarina), in spite of the differences between the members of this family (the production begins with a funny-domestic dispute between the vegetarians and the meat-eaters of this clan). It is not motivated by personal pleasures, but by duties, it is

onwards, agricultural workers raised economic demands, usually just before the harvest. In 1954 they demanded an increase in pay from 16 escudos to 23, still a pitiful amount. The landowners not only refused to pay but also hired other labour from different parts of the region. On hearing that the other agricultural labourers had been hired, Catarina and 14 women workers went to address them as they arrived and appealed for solidarity. However, the police had already arrived. Undeterred, Catarina approached the workers but was stopped by a GNR who asked her what she wanted. « Only bread and work » was the reply. The agent, considering the reply as « impudent » gunned her down with a machine gun. She died minutes later and the 8 month child she was carrying in her arms was also injured. The agent was never prosecuted", <https://www.theleftberlin.com/helen-macfarlane-and-catarina-eufemia/>.

⁹ The tragedy is intimately linked in Rodrigues' works to the beauty of words, to the memory of the text. In the performance *By Heart*, Rodrigues asks ten audience members to memorise a line from Shakespeare's Sonnet XXX. The performance will not end until the entire sonnet has been recited, from memory, by the audience. "The difference here is what Rodrigues leads us to in the end: a statement about how the texts we hold in our memory become « the decoration of the house of our interior », according to the literary critic George Steiner, whom Rodrigues quotes at length" (Maya Phillips, „*By Heart* Commits Community to Memory", in *The New York Times*, 13th of October, 2021).

not optional, but compulsory. It is not performed just anytime, but, as I previously noted, on a certain day. On the other hand, however, it is also not burdened with useless complications. In its essence, the ritual of the killing is simple: shooting the victim, a victim that is not tortured beforehand, is not interrogated, as, just as true, is not given the possibility to defend itself. The only deceit the ritual resorts to in relation to the victim is the ephemeral illusion of a glimmer of hope: the one who will be sacrificed is given the chance to write on a note the name of somebody who is “more fascist” than them, in exchange to this denunciation being promised release. The group thus acquires information and hints about their next victims, a drop of cruelty that seems to amuse the one in charge of the game of freedom.

The members of this strange *genetic sect* (the analogies that can be formulated between genetics and ideologies are interesting) seem, moreover, to be foreign to them. They behave like normal people, ready to enjoy a good meal, a good wine, a pleasant evening summer, a conversation, the fact of being together. The tricks they play on each other are almost tender, and their existences seem outright serene. We can imagine them, beyond the ritual, in “civilian,” living their ordinary lives, with ordinary jobs, ordinary pastimes, and so on. For such people, the ritual also becomes a “moment of glory,” an annual compensation of the anonymity they decided to live in. Once a year, they put on traditional clothing, set up a festive table on which they write “No passing,” and kill a man whom they bury, marking the spot with an oak sapling.

The playwriting explores an ethical paradox: how far can one go with sanctioning violence? Is violence a solution for punishing violence? Is death a consolation for another death? Of course, these moral plights are not new, even if we only take into account the discussions on the capital punishment several states of the modern world faced or are still facing or, on an even more general note, on the philosophies of punishment and surveillance (Foucault). The novelty consists, however, in the way in which Rodrigues moves these ideas into an area of ideologies, the productions becoming, gradually, an upsetting picture in which we glimpse the extremes of the notable political axis (or political spectrum) theorised by the European culture¹⁰. The Portuguese family is, explicitly, left-wing. The frequent and not accidental quotations from Brecht, the references to the Soviet Socialism (the fragment from *The Internationale* and the melodic lines of a *Katyusha* with nuanced adaptations are part of the new chorus pieces of the new tragedy), and even the image of a nontraditional family welded around tradition rapidly cast doubt upon the sympathy that, initially¹¹, one was feeling for Catarina & co.

¹⁰ Political “left” and “right” are venerable terms, over two centuries old. They originate in the French Revolution of the end of the 18th century, indicating the placement in the physical space (right or left) of those for and against the king.

¹¹ We are facing a situation where the analysis of the production strongly depends on the political orientation of the one conducting this analysis. From the post-show talk in Romania, it quickly became obvious that for the left-wing critics the meanings of the show were completely different than for the right-wing ones. Therefore, I feel obliged to specify that, from a political point of view, the author of this paper is a follower of centrism, of moderation that excludes extremism, a position that, in this production, seems to be attributed to the youngest Catarina, the one who does not want to continue the tradition of the killing. Her centrism, however, does not come from political convictions, but rather from convictions of a moral

Calling for Brecht in this neotragic parabola is as interesting as it can be. He does not only legitimise an anti-fascist, left-wing thinking, but also procures a strange theatricality, a convention that, precariously Rodrigues emphasises from the very beginning of the production, as a form of safety net for effects he intuitively feels will have on the spectators. The quotations from Brecht demand us to stay in a state of alert, vigilant, not lost in just some story, but lucid and detached observers. Inviting Brecht into a production that operates with formulas of the tragedy, in a production where the characters wear long, ritualic dresses, evoking the ceremonials we suspect in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, represents exactly the “distance” that Rodrigues places between the old and the new tragedy, between the former implacability of the destiny and some radicalisations of today’s human thought. Brecht is a sign of a paradigm shift, fragments of his works being rendered to us on almost prophetic tonalities, he is now a sort of neo-Tiresias who can see in the future, describing exactly the time of the Portuguese production’s dystopia.

Against the backdrop of this terrible dispute between extremes, the festive setting for a new and *beautiful* murder (the reference to the beauty of the murder Ibsen’s Hedda talks about is only one of the theatrical allusions noted by the commenters of the production¹²) is being prepared for a new Catarina (all of this family’s women receive this name, in the memory of the victim from the starting point of the tradition). The father, the uncle, the narrator-cousin are all ready for what they consider to be a form of spiritual elevation. The killing, says the mother who has reached the seventh murdered fascist, does not deliver pleasure, but rather it lets you experience the satisfaction of a fulfilled duty. Isolated, pensive, the captive fascist, discreet, almost a conventional stage presence, silently awaits his death.

But the new Catarina is different. Terrified, disturbed, the family listens to her pleading against murder, pleading for reinterpreting tradition, pleading for disenchantment and exiting the mythology. Here intervenes the false topic of the girl’s sacrifice, overlaying sacrificing the fascist. It is a very skillful game, with multiple meanings, that the playwright carries out between *sacrifice* and *sacrificing*, and also between the manipulatory forgeries of these two terms. Catarina is willing to give up her own life to defend that of someone in whom she sees not a fascist, but a lonely, cornered man, which, in fact, is what is actually happening. Her sacrifice loses its value, however, through its utter futility. Catarina’s death represents more than just a page of Beckettian absurd; it indicates, clearly, the failure of any attempt to intervene, the dusk of any hope of returning to what used to be called normality¹³. Catarina’s

nature. Her gesture is, therefore, not a political, but a moral one.

¹² “We could allude to the various references of canonic dramatic literature that Tiago Rodrigues places on the performance: the ghostly Hamletian image of Catarina Eufémia calling for revenge; the Chekhovian situation of the family gathered in the countryside; the literal quotations of Brecht’s aphorisms; the metaphor of considering the curious household as a flock of swallows – which me resembles the same symbolic game between uniqueness and fragility played in Chekhov’s *The Seagull* or Ibsen’s *The Wild Duck*. We could. We could also evoke the dialogue that F. Ribeiro’s powerful setting establishes with brechtian devices (fundamental to understanding the game between truth and artifice during the unforgettable *coup-de-théâtre* in the final twenty minutes of the performance...). But it is the tradition of tragedy that Rodrigues is dealing with.”, Rui Pina Coleho, “The Ritual of Killing Fascists: Theatre and Sacrifice”, *Critical Stages/ Scènes critiques*, no.23, June/Juin 2021.

¹³ In one of his interviews on his view on theatre, Rodrigues insists on the association between

failure is the failure of those who still believe there still is a chance, that balance is still possible. A post-existentialist, post-Sartrean atmosphere establishes itself on the stage: with the exception of one character, all the family members die, shooting each other; a change of polarities, coup de théâtre: the fascist has now the word...

The contours of the catastrophe¹⁴ become evident at this point. New deities, abstract, but with intense presences, claim their right to existence. A blood-thirsty god on the left, another god, treacherous, cruel, manipulative on the right. Between them, distraught mortals, helplessly witnessing the collapse of a world they thought was safe, founded on indestructible foundations, the foundations of culture, of spirit, of civilization. The extremes have now taken control, the call to reason, to the venerable human virtues, to the long-trodden middle grounds becoming as irrelevant as this Catarina's death.

Incidentally, one of the most subtle signs of catastrophe is the way one operates with the doubt. Paradoxically, the tragedy does not derive, as for Hamlet, from uncertainty, but, on the contrary, from its absence. Catarina alone, the only apolitical character of the play, has doubts, only she resorts to this obsolete instrument of the humane, questioning tradition, the legitimacy of murder, the family-stranger relation. Politics, on the other hand, do not have doubts. The absolute conviction with which the sides support their points of view is distressing and implicitly announces an abrupt process of dehumanisation. The old Cartesian reasoning that directly links doubt with existence is overturned: only those who no longer doubt can claim existence. The characters in *Catarina and The Beauty of Killing Fascists* do not even have madness as an excuse; the thoroughness of the premeditation, the internal coherence of the arguments, the poisoned lucidity from within which they speak complicate this "new normality," which brings with it a new logic, a new morality, a redefinition of the human. Catarina's death therefore equates with an apocalypse of doubt...

Is the production a political one? Yes, to the extent that the previously mentioned general picture is crossed by political colours and forces you to interpret it in the light of your own political beliefs. No, to the extent that the director/playwright requires us, if we (still) can, to place ourselves beyond politics, beyond the axis, to observe and meditate on the horrors of politics. Yes, to the extent that his dystopia describes a bipolar society, a Janus Bifrons with equally hideous faces, a two-headed mutant terrifying in its conduct, a creature in which we recognize disturbingly familiar reflections, dangerously close adjacencies. No, to the extent that, nevertheless, the mechanisms of power no longer represent a stake to be demonstrated, but an almost natural, chronic reflex, organically embedded in contemporary human being. Yes, to

Catarina and normality: "I wonder if we can trust in democratic norms. The play is animated by several of these questions. When I think about the character of Catarina, I see someone who is calling into question what we think of as normal today" (Claire Bonnot, interview with Tiago Rodrigues, <https://exhibition-magazine.com/articles/claire-bonnot-interviews-tiago-rodrigues>).

¹⁴ As the author of productions in which the topic of the catastrophe is prominently insinuated, Tiago Rodrigues does not hesitate to indicate and name the tragedy. In *As Far as Impossible* (2020), an emotional incursion into the world of humanitarian personnel, the last line is: "The simple fact that humanitarian missions exist, even continue to persist, creates a tragic picture of humanity" (apud Irina Wolf, "Just a thin line separates the possible from the impossible," *Scena.ro*, March 21, 2022).

the extent that we admit the omnipresence of the political, the complete political contamination of modern societies, and, implicitly, of the art of our time. No, to the extent that the show is not campaigning for anything in particular, it is simply displaying the shortcomings we have reached. As an aside, it is worth mentioning here the Chekhovian tenderness with which Rodrigues treats his characters; not only does he not judge them, not only does he let them express themselves unhindered, but he looks at them with compassion, almost as if they were victims of something above them.

The last half hour tests the viewer's reactions by putting them in a position to take a stance on why it is happening, or, rather, on what is being said on stage. The hall is lit now, the audience sees and sees itself. Romeu Costa, the actor playing the fascist, comes to the edge of the stage and, during a brilliantly performed monologue, in a dramatic crescendo, synthesises all the newer and older theses of extreme right-wing thinking, from the ostracism of minorities to the promise of a New Republic. The acting allows glimpses of the madness of Hitler's delusions, pathological fanaticism, but also the manipulative skill of the well-versed politician who knows what the common man wants to hear. The character's speech is, from the perspective of the content, one of history, but also of the present. There is a striking freshness in it, something fascinating that evokes, in places, that enigmatic force of seduction by which Hitler and others like him persuaded the masses to follow them. Rodrigues and his actor showcase us this speech like a museum exhibit, we are armed with the Brechtianism from the start and know, of course, that we are in a performance hall. On the other hand, however, the distance between the stage and the audience seems to cancel out, so that everything that is said in those tense moments becomes a matter that goes beyond theatre, something that involves us personally, individually. The range of means by which the fascist character tries to convince us of his truths is dangerously large: from the manifest passion he puts into words, to the humour through which, in a few lines, he almost wins our sympathy. We watch it, become aware of our sympathy, feel ashamed of it, feel guilty, and possibly feel the need to self-censor other possible reactions¹⁵.

At times, his speech is applauded by the audience and what really bothers is that one does not quite know if the audience is applauding the actor's performance or the ideas the character is conveying. Or if the sympathy for the actor does not actually hide, in fact, an unacknowledged, not even to one's self, sympathy for the character... Another part of the audience heckles, protests, and demands that the actor stops this

¹⁵ Certainly not true for all viewers. Individual political beliefs come into play again. In a Facebook post, one day after the show in Bucharest, Iulia Popovici, a left-wing theatre critic, insisted on this relativism of interpretation: "I am absolutely sure that, if in *Catarina and The Beauty of Killing Fascists*, the title was about 'the beauty of killing communists,' and the "tradition" of the family was to kill a communist every year (of the dictatorship and after that), we wouldn't have had these discussions now in Bucharest. I was wondering even during the performance at the opening of the NTF, how are the Romanian defenders of the autonomy of 'value' and theatre aesthetics perplexed every time Brecht's name was said on stage (not to mention the Soviet songs, more specifically *Katyusha* plus *The Internationale*)". It is, however, amusing to note how left-wing commentators downplay the topic of reparative murder and the actions of murderers who quote from... Brecht.

poisonous speech¹⁶. Embarrassed, other spectators chime in: “We're, still, at the theatre.” There also are, I have no doubt, audience members who believe that these are the very ideas that the director himself promotes and who see in the show a form of contemporary, neo-Nazi propaganda. Other people in the audience perfectly understand that Rodrigues only presents us facets of extremism, but do not allow themselves to enjoy the luxury of having a reaction, remembering that they have not in any way sanctioned the criminal impulses of the left-wing characters, the members of the family who ritualistically kill fascists; to holler at some and keep quiet about others is, essentially, to consider the latter the lesser evil, or, to put it another way, that one extremism is less harmful than another. However, when it comes to murder, the lesser evil equation has no solution...

It is only during the curtain call that we breathe a sigh of relief and, understanding what we have been through, release ourselves, channelling our energies into celebrating some truly remarkable actors. It looks like we are happy, but, again, we cannot clearly tell if our happiness was occasioned by the encounter with very high-quality theatre or if we are simply happy that this exercise of testing the limits of the present is over. And, more than once, the sound of palms hitting each other, in applause, is akin to the sound of weapons being fired... We salute art, but the breeze of catastrophe blows uncertainly in the air between us and art.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ciobotari, Călin, *Letters to Hamlet. Essays on Theatre*, translated into English by Teodora Medeleanu, Mircea Sorin Rusu, Dana Bădulescu, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2023.
- Coleho, Rui Pina, “The Ritual of Killing Fascists: Theatre and Sacrifice,” in *Critical Stages/ Scènes critiques*, no.23, June/Juin 2021.
- Pais, Ana, “To Kill or Die For”, in *Performance Research*, 27:2, , 2022
- Phillips, Maya, „By Heart Commits Community to Memory”, in *The New York Times*, 13th of October, 2021.
- Steiner, George, *The Death of Tragedy*, translated into Romanian by Rodica Tiniș, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.
- Wolf, Irina, “Just a thin line separates the possible from the impossible,” *Scena.ro*, March 21, 2022.

¹⁶ This happens in most of the countries where the show is performed, but, from media reports, it seems that the show causes the most intense effects in Portugal. “Audiences in Portugal have loudly booed the fascist deputy, shouted back insults, hummed political protest songs or left the room entirely. Encouraged by a subtle lightening up of the auditorium and pressed by the interminable length of the speech, spectators feel entitled to express their unease and profound discomfort with the deputy’s monologue, thus transforming the theatre into a political assembly. [...] The audience in Setúbal also had a strong reaction: some protested and insulted the actor, telling him to stop talking and leave; others sniffed and cried silently.” (Ana Pais, “To Kill or Die For”, *Performance Research*, 27:2, 2022, pp. 81-90). On other occasions, Romeu Costa does not manage to finish his monologue, so vehement are the reactions.

LE RÔLE DU RÉFUGIÉ DANS LA REVUE ET DANS LE SPECTACLE MUSICAL

The role of the refugee in the revue and in the musical show

In Greece, after the disaster in Asia Minor, so-called light shows often include refugee women from Smyrna in their dramatic structure. The playwrights, in the 20th century, with a humorous tone, allowed this presence far from a dystopian atmosphere. This intervention tries to focus on the reasons for this way of integrating the role of the refugee and questions the difference in reception of the phenomenon in contemporary theatre.

Key-words: *théâtre de revue grec, rôle du réfugié, migrantes de Smyrne et Constantinople, érotisme et gastronomie.*

LE COMTE : Qui t'a donné une philosophie aussi gaie ?
FIGARO : L'habitude du malheur. Je me presse de rire de tout,
de peur d'être obligé d'en pleurer.
(Beaumarchais, *Le barbier de Séville*, Acte I, Scène 2)

L'humour, selon *le Petit Robert* en ligne, est une « forme d'esprit qui consiste à dégager les aspects plaisants et insolites de la réalité, avec un certain détachement² ». Sur scène, l'acte humoristique, « comme tout acte de langage, est la résultante du jeu qui s'établit entre les partenaires de la situation de communication et les protagonistes de la situation d'énonciation³ ». Cependant, si l'énonciateur proposait une vision décalée des événements historiques au caractère extrêmement traumatisant, le spectateur-récepteur pourrait-il être son complice ?

Le théâtre grec du vingtième siècle nous donne certaines réponses à cette problématique. La Catastrophe de l'Asie Mineure est une rupture majeure pour l'histoire du pays et l'année 1922 « constitue sans doute le traumatisme collectif le plus douloureux de l'histoire de la Grèce moderne⁴ ». Des milliers de Grecs de l'Orient, à la suite de massacres et de déportations, s'installent en Grèce. L'impact politique, économique et social de ces déplacements est immense comme les victimes

¹ Université Nationale et capodistrienne d'Athènes.

² La définition du mot sur : <https://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/humour> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

³ Patrick Charaudeau, « Des catégories pour l'humour ? », *Questions de communication*, no 10, 2006, <http://www.patrick-charaudeau.com/Des-categories-pour-l-humour,93.html> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

⁴ Dimitris Kamouzis, « Reassessing the “Asia Minor Catastrophe” of 1922 », *Diasporas*, no 40, 2022, pp. 165-169, <https://journals.openedition.org/diasporas/10419> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

de ces déplacements essaient de recommencer leur vie dans le pays d'accueil. Malheureusement, les réfugiés sont, souvent, en butte aux préjugés et la population autochtone les traite de *τουρκοσποροι* (*tourkosporoi*, graines turques).

La dramaturgie de l'époque évite de reconstituer le climat pessimiste de la destruction de Smyrne. La revue, un genre populaire basé sur l'actualité, semble être confuse devant le problème de l'intégration des réfugiés les premières années. Comme elle répond aux attentes d'un public plus large, parfois occasionnel, elle reflète, clairement, la perplexité de la société d'accueil. Après le quinquennat, elle met en œuvre des moyens conventionnels pour amuser ses spectateurs peu exigeants. Dans ses saynètes elle intègre des types, qui peuvent être facilement identifiés par ses spectateurs.

Le type ramasse lui aussi en une image unifiée et nécessairement simplifiée les attributs caractéristiques d'un groupe social. Voué à la généralisation, il ne s'attache pas aux nuances du cas individuel. De plus, l'image qu'une époque donne d'un groupe social ne peut se targuer d'une absolue neutralité : elle se construit forcément à partir des représentations collectives en cours et se diffuse dans le public à la façon d'un schème préconçu et toujours semblable à lui-même.⁵

Alors, les revuistes construisent le type de la femme smyrniote et la diffusent à partir de 1929. « Les femmes de Smyrne sont belles, lorsqu'elles se promènent en toilettes claires, au bord de l'eau, dans la fraîcheur des soirs⁶ », écrivait Gaston Deschamps en 1894. Sur les planches du théâtre Mondial, à Athènes, dans la revue *Suffragette* de Yorgos Assimakopoulos et Antonis Vottis sur la musique de Yorgos Vitalis, la saynète au titre « Le mec et la Smyrniote⁷ » met en évidence cette description. L'homme grec suit la jeune femme à l'accent d'Asie Mineure et flirte avec elle. Le sketch reprend le modèle de Deschamps : la Smyrniote est la plus câline du monde, elle est belle, sensuelle, charmante et tous les hommes tombent amoureux d'elle. Son tempérament est différent des femmes grecques, moins cosmopolites et plus pudiques. L'humour et la tendance à dédramatiser de ce genre de productions se révèlent comme des facteurs qui pourraient faciliter l'intégration de ces groupes sociaux dans la société.

Les femmes réfugiées de l'Asie Mineure sont émancipées par rapport aux normes et aux rôles genrés de la société d'accueil. Elles se trouvent loin du contrôle social de leur entourage et incarnent l'érotisme oriental qui est peut-être une menace pour les valeurs familiales de la capitale grecque ; ainsi, « un ensemble de traits et de comportements codifiés qui appartiennent à une culture⁸ » et une généralisation négative émerge autour d'elles. En revanche, cette présence stéréotypée correspond aux attentes du public qui, lui, veut profiter de ce caractère schématisé, impertinent

⁵ Ruth Amossy, « Types ou stéréotypes ? Les “Physiologies” et la littérature industrielle », *Romantisme*, no 64, 1989, pp. 113-123.

⁶ Gaston Deschamps, *Sur les routes d'Asie*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1894, p. 122.

⁷ Le duo de la saynète, avec deux comédiens très populaires, est disponible en ligne à : <https://vmrebetiko.gr/item/?id=9784> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

⁸ Christine Prévost, « Quelle place pour des “produits culturels de masse” dans la classe de français ? », *Le français aujourd'hui*, no 172, 2011/1, p. 104, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-francais-aujourd-hui-2011-1-page-103.htm>. (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

avec les hommes. Pour ce qui est du statut social ou encore la moralité de ces personnages, cela laisse la salle indifférente.

La revue revient à un autre personnage féminin de la diaspora grecque, de Constantinople cette fois-ci, en 1964. À l'époque, plusieurs ressortissants grecs furent expulsés et privés de tous leurs biens. Cette migration forcée aboutit à la constitution d'une mémoire traumatique de l'événement vécu. En été de la même année, au théâtre Metropolitan, dans la revue de Yorgos Yannakopoulos, *L'Athénienne 1964*, la saynète « Loulou de Constantinople⁹ » décrit l'histoire d'une jeune femme qui arrive en Grèce après avoir quitté sa maison natale et son oncle l'emmène à la *bouzoukia*¹⁰ pour l'amuser. Le nom de la nièce rappelle la femme fatale amoral de Frank Wedekind et l'actrice avec son « apparence orientale explosive¹¹ » passionne la salle. La présence très sexualisée de la comédienne, sans tenue appropriée, avec une gestuelle érotique et une aisance à communiquer avec l'orchestre et le public est loin de rappeler les problèmes de sa communauté d'origine. L'accent est mis sur un divertissement qui tourne autour de l'érotisme proche-oriental, et la saynète a été vivement applaudie par les spectateurs.

La recette ne change pas en 1968 et les nouvelles productions ressemblent à une banalisation du déjà-vu. Au théâtre Kotopouli-Rex, dans la comédie musicale *La belle et le grincheux* d'Assimakis Yalamas et Kostas Pretenderis, la nièce de la belle Vera est tombée amoureuse du neveu de Neofytos, un célibataire endurci qui ne permet pas à ses deux frères ni à son neveu de se marier. Vera se déguise en une chanteuse sensuelle de Constantinople qui flirte avec l'un des frères.¹² Le revuiste et les dramaturges produisent un discours humoristique sur une situation sérieuse et une mémoire encore bien vivante. Charaudeau estime que « ce qui est considéré par certains comme humour peut être considéré par les autres comme une méchante moquerie ou une insulte¹³ ». Cependant, ce contrat de communication entre l'écrivain et la salle ne semble pas attirer des réactions négatives. La cible est la présence de la femme constantinopolitaine, moderne et sans tabous, dans une intention satirique, et le spectateur demeure complice à ce jeu scénique.

Les échos du passé continuent d'inspirer de nombreuses productions contemporaines en termes de « représentations de la catastrophe humaine ». L'année dernière, 100 ans après la catastrophe de l'Asie Mineure, la dramaturgie qui s'adresse au grand public se distingue par la sobriété avec laquelle elle aborde son sujet : l'Histoire se complète par les micro-histoires des gens et les lieux de mémoire reviennent de temps en temps dans les pièces, proposant une réconciliation avec l'Autre et avec le passé. À côté des textes qui insistent plutôt sur le caractère

⁹ L'interview de la comédienne et la photo de la production de la saynète sont disponibles en ligne à : <https://www.tanea.gr/2017/01/27/lifearts/dws-toy-klwtso-na-gyrisei/> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

¹⁰ Nommés d'après l'instrument musical, *bouzouki*, les *bouzoukia* sont des clubs de nuit dans les quartiers populaires, où l'on joue de la musique *laïkó*, genre populaire des années 1950, descendant du *rebétiko*, genre musical originaire de Constantinople et de Smyrne, apparu au début du XXe siècle.

¹¹ Aggelos Doxas, « Trois revues », *Embros*, 27 juin 1964.

¹² La pièce est adaptée pour l'écran en 1969. La scène avec la danse sensuelle est disponible sur Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc1gJmdu5wM> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

¹³ Patrick Charaudeau, *ibid.*

traumatisant des événements de cette période, on peut mentionner à titre indicatif *Ma chère Smyrne* (2014)¹⁴ et *De Smyrne à Thessalonique* (2021) de Mimi Denissi et l'adaptation scénique du livre *Terres de sang* de Dido Sotiriou (2022) – des propositions moins sombres et plus spectaculaires, comprenant de la musique, des danses et des scènes du théâtre d'ombres de *Karaghiosis*, gagnent l'intérêt des spectateurs.

La sortie du film *Une touche d'épices* (*A Touch of Spice*, 2003) de Tassos Boulmētis utilise comme forme de détour les motifs de la gastronomie de la ville de Constantinople. Le théâtre à grand public et les spectacles commerciaux suivent la même tendance. Par exemple, l'adaptation pour la scène¹⁵, en 2010, du roman *Loxandra* de Maria Iordanidou présente une femme de Constantinople, très connue pour ses recettes et sa cuisine. Elle garde son accent, elle aime les chansons et reste l'âme de sa famille. C'est l'image qui a survécu à travers le temps ; quant à l'érotisme du passé, il laisse sa place à une femme surdouée pour la cuisine, maître des parfums et saveurs de la région. La distance temporelle permet ainsi aux femmes plus âgées de remplacer les jeunes et belles figures de la revue d'antan.

En 2013, au Théâtre National de la Grèce du Nord, la pièce *Avec d'exquises musiques, avec des voix*¹⁶ de Lambros Liavas¹⁷ est une mosaïque musicale de Thessalonique, une ville cosmopolite, carrefour de religions et d'ethnies différentes, où se côtoyaient marchands égyptiens, Juifs espagnols, Grecs orthodoxes et derviches soufis¹⁸. Le mythe repose sur la lecture d'un livre par un libraire et les faits marquants de l'histoire de la ville sont transférés de ses pages sur scène, en 20 tableaux. Une scène est dédiée à l'arrivée des réfugiés de Smyrne et de la région du Pont en 1922. Une année plus tard, à la suite du traité de Lausanne, l'échange des populations impose aux membres de l'ordre de Mevlevi (les derviches tourneurs) d'abandonner, eux-aussi, la ville. Dans ce cadre historique les chansons traditionnelles des Grecs de l'Asie Mineure, « Mon pauvre Orient », des Pontiques, « J'ai perdu ma patrie » et le Sema de la cérémonie Mevlevi, complètent la scène et touchent les spectateurs parmi lesquels se trouvent des descendants de ces réfugiés qui n'ont pas surmonté le traumatisme du déracinement. Bien que la fonction de la scène soit de ressusciter une mémoire collective, pour contribuer à préserver l'histoire et l'identité d'une communauté, la participation dans le spectacle de la comédienne Zozo Sapountzaki, la jeune Loulou déracinée, de la saynette « Loulou de Constantinople » (1964),

¹⁴ Le film *Smyrna* (2021) est tiré de cette pièce. Voir la bande-annonce du film *Smyrna, My Beloved* sur YouTube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DAEyCsZCnQ> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

¹⁵ Des extraits de la pièce sont disponibles en ligne à : <https://www.ntng.gr/default.aspx?lang=en-GB&page=2&production=37553&mode=27&item=37769> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

¹⁶ Le titre est basé sur un vers du poème de Constantin Kavafy, *Le dieu abandonne Antoine* (traduction de Stéphane Sawas), *Triages, revue littéraire et artistique*, no 26, 2014, p. 13.

¹⁷ Des extraits de la pièce sont disponibles en ligne, sur Youtube, à <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOtW6oGKbbw&t=26s>. Voir aussi les enregistrements à la page suivante, surtout la scène 8, sur l'échange de populations et où l'on peut entendre plusieurs chansons populaires dont « J'ai perdu ma patrie » et « Sema », chanson derviche traditionnelle : <https://www.ntng.gr/default.aspx?lang=en-GB&page=2&production=40664&mode=27&item=42585> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

¹⁸ Pour l'histoire interculturelle de la ville voir Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts. Christians, muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, Harper Collins, 2005.

imprime une tout autre dimension à cette identité collective, marquée par le charme des apparitions de la comédienne qui ont déjà fasciné le public quelques années auparavant.

En 2021, la pièce *Il était une fois à Bosphore*¹⁹ de Akis Dimou focalise sur les événements avant et après la nuit de terreur de Constantinople des 6 et 7 septembre 1955. À cause d'un prétendu attentat contre la maison natale de Kemal Atatürk à Thessalonique, la communauté grecque d'Istanbul devient victime d'un déchaînement de violence. Ce pogrom oblige un grand nombre d'habitants de quitter leur ville natale et de venir à Athènes. Sur scène, le particularisme ethnique et religieux de ses personnages, leur univers distincts avec leurs valeurs et leur imaginaire ne posent pas de problèmes à la cohabitation. Cette quotidienneté paisible change d'un jour à l'autre et les émeutes obligent les familles qui vivent en ville de la quitter. Au fond sur une toile passent des documents de l'époque car l'auteur veut « éclairer » une page relativement méconnue de l'histoire récente. La musique et les chansons de l'époque se mêlent aux épisodes différents. Les chansons fonctionnent comme lien entre les deux mondes. Le dramaturge écrit :

Je pense que les chansons et la musique de chaque époque laissent toujours une empreinte très forte à travers les années. Je ne peux imaginer aucun personnage d'une pièce de théâtre sans une chanson qui fredonne quand personne ne l'écoute. Ce n'est pas seulement que les chansons génèrent des images, c'est plutôt qu'elles en évoquent – Dieu sait à quelle profondeur – le frisson d'un moment qui, même si vous ne l'avez pas vécu, vous a captivé d'une manière indéfinissable. Les gens sont toujours allés et continuent d'aller en chantant. C'est un grand réconfort.²⁰

De nos jours, les dramaturges, dans d'autres pays, proposent des spectacles moins ennuyeux, aux situations cocasses, insistant davantage sur les motifs de la cohabitation. En Norvège, par exemple, le film grinçant et drôle *Bienvenus !* de Rune Denstad Langlo (2016) est une comédie sur la tolérance de la diversité, bref sur les compétences interculturelles. En France, la pièce *Adopte un réfugié* de Sel Sognid (2017) est une comédie qui bouscule les préjugés et les normes. L'écriture comique permet ainsi au public de dépasser plus facilement les barrières et les doutes pour l'Autre même s'il parle la même langue comme les réfugiés d'Asie Mineure. En revanche, sur la scène grecque contemporaine, les artistes sont moins enclins à traiter

¹⁹ Des extraits de la pièce dans une représentation au Théâtre Dassos, à Thessalonique, sont disponibles sur Youtube à : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0joJQY_TrQ (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

²⁰ Ma traduction : « Νομίζω ότι τα τραγούδια και οι μουσικές της κάθε εποχής αφήνουν πάντα πολύ ισχυρό αποτύπωμα μες στα χρόνια. Δεν μπορώ να φανταστώ κανέναν χαρακτήρα θεατρικού έργου χωρίς το τραγούδι που σιγομουρμουρίζει όταν κανείς δεν τον ακούει. Δεν είναι μόνο ότι τα τραγούδια γεννούν εικόνες, περισσότερο είναι ότι ανασύρουν –ένας Θεός ξέρει από ποιο βάθος– το ρίγος μιας στιγμής που ακόμη και αν δεν την έχεις ζήσει, σε έχει αιχμαλωτίσει με αδιευκρίνιστο τρόπο. Πάντοτε οι άνθρωποι πήγαιναν και συνεχίζουν να πηγαίνουν και τραγουδιστά. Μεγάλη παρηγοριά. », dans Ηλέκτρα Ζαργάνη, « Άκης Δήμου, 'Η Ιστορία γράφει τις ιστορίες μας' », *Documento*, le novembre 2021 [en ligne]. <https://www.documentonews.gr/article/akis-dimoy-h-istoria-grafei-tis-istories-mas/> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

ce genre de sujets avec humour ; la chanson et la musique ne sont pas suffisantes et le drame doit se profiler à l'horizon dans la plupart des productions.

Si seulement les producteurs et les directeurs artistiques pouvaient réaliser tout le sens des paroles de Pozzo, au premier acte d'*En attendant Godot* : « Les larmes du monde sont immuables. Pour chacun qui se met à pleurer, quelque part un autre s'arrête. Il en va de même du rire ». Car Pozzo décrit une situation bien réelle : les larmes et le rire sont omniprésents et cohabitent sur la scène du monde. Le théâtre, miroir de nos sociétés, voire de notre monde en crise humanitaire, s'empresse trop souvent de sensibiliser le public avec des pièces qui reproduisent sur scène des situations kafkaïennes. Pourtant, répondre à une catastrophe humaine pourrait se concrétiser, aussi, par la dédramatisation au moins d'une partie des événements qui la constituent. L'enjeu est de parler avec humour et donner une autre dimension, plus familière et certainement plus efficace à ces problèmes, voire peut-être proposer des solutions. Les théâtres de revue répondent peut-être mieux au principe du théâtre didactique de Bertolt Brecht selon qui « Depuis toujours, l'affaire du théâtre, comme d'ailleurs de tous les autres arts, est de divertir les gens. [...] En aucune façon on ne pourrait le hisser à un niveau plus élevé si on en faisait, par exemple, une foire à la morale [...] »²¹. Mieux encore, en suivant la pensée de l'auteure :

[n]ous avons besoin d'un théâtre qui ne permette pas seulement les sensations, les aperçus et les impulsions qu'autorisent à chaque fois le champ historique des relations humaines sur lequel les diverses actions se déroulent, **mais qui emploie et engendre les idées et les sentiments qui jouent un rôle dans la transformation du champ lui-même**²². [C'est moi que souligne]

C'est un peu dans le même esprit que nous plaçons notre réflexion et que nous proposons aussi de contribuer au développement de ce projet sur les représentations de la catastrophe humaine. Ainsi, pour les prochaines publications, nous comptons donc orienter nos études des représentations de la catastrophe humaine vers le théâtre de revue, de la comédie, de la comédie musicale, etc. Malgré ce choix en apparence paradoxal, c'est précisément dans ce champ-là du théâtre où on les attend le moins, vu tout le sérieux qu'elles impliquent, que ces représentations peuvent trouver des expressions des plus inattendues et des fonctions (théâtrales, esthétiques, sociales et rituelles) d'une bien plus grande complexité que ce que le corps et le public de la tragédie leur réserverait.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Amosy, Ruth, « Types ou stéréotypes ? Les "Physiologies" et la littérature industrielle », *Romantisme*, no 64, 1989, pp. 113-123. https://www.persee.fr/doc/roman_0048-8593_1989_num_19_64_5591 (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).
- Beckett, Samuel, *En attendant Godot*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, p. 44.
- Brecht, Bertolt, *Petit organon pour le théâtre*, Paris, L'Arche, § 3, 1999, p. 13.
- Charaudeau, Patrick, « Des catégories pour l'humour ? », *Questions de communication*, no 10, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2006

²¹ Bertolt Brecht, *Petit organon pour le théâtre*, Paris, L'Arche, § 3, 1999, p. 13.

²² *Idem*, § 35, p. 49.

<http://www.patrick-charaudeau.com/Des-categories-pour-l-humour,93.html>
(Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

Deschamps, Gaston, *Sur les routes d'Asie*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1894.

Kamouzis, Dimitris, « Reassessing the “Asia Minor Catastrophe” of 1922 », *Diasporas*, no 40, 2022 [en ligne], pp. 165-169
<http://journals.openedition.org/diasporas/10419> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

Mazower, Mark, *Salonica, City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, Harper Collins, 2005

Prévost, Christine, « Quelle place pour des “produits culturels de masse” dans la classe de français ? », *Le français aujourd'hui*, no. 172, 2011/1, pp. 103-112. [en ligne] <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-francais-aujourd-hui-2011-1-page-103.htm> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

Zargani, Electra, « Άκης Δήμου, « Η Ιστορία γράφει τις ιστορίες μας », *Documento*, le novembre 2021 [en ligne]. <https://www.documentonews.gr/article/akis-dimoy-h-istoria-grafei-tis-istories-mas/> (Consulté le 30 novembre 2023).

THE IDEA OF HUMAN TRAGEDY ON GREEK CONTEMPORARY STAGE – THEATRE DIRECTORS OPENING A POLITICAL DIALOGUE

This paper aims at examining human catastrophe as represented in different case-studies of the contemporary theatre stage of Greece. The case studies include the play *Iraq – Nine Parts of Desire*, by Heather Raffo, presented in 2017 and in 2023 in Ergotaxion Theatre, in Athens Greece, the opera *Carmen* by Georges Bizet, produced in 2018 by the Greek National Opera and the play *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller, produced in 2018 by the Greek National Theatre. In terms of methodology, the three different productions are examined under the same criteria, namely the play, the vision of the director, the means employed, possible challenges and perception of the play. According to the findings of the paper, despite differences among the performances in terms of the themes of the plays and the sizes of productions, audiences and spaces, artists shared a common critical view of today's society embedded in the interpretation and staging of their plays, setting human tragedy on an overlap between stage and real-life, through different means, mainly scenography, costumes and method acting coaching. In the case-studies examined, the stage served as a space of political debate, as deliberately and creatively set by the relevant theatre directors.

Key-words *catastrophe, tragedy, stage, contemporary, political*

Introduction

Although the 21st century may arguably be considered as the most technologically advanced of all times, there are still acute crises and catastrophes of people or nature that keep torturing humanity. Wars, massive killings, extreme natural disasters, or the relatively recent Covid-19 pandemic are a few of the examples demonstrating that no matter the advances, humans themselves are ready to trigger unspeakable human tragedy, leading to an overall loss of faith and confidence of the general public towards politics and institutions to safeguard world peace, solidarity, democracy and human values.

Throughout time it is observed that the theatre stage, performing arts and arts in general, are functioning as a mirror of society, artistically expressing people's agony while struggling through crises. Arguably, this phenomenon develops a link between art and politics in various ways and extends. Some examples may include German expressionism as showcasing artists' critique on the social and political situation especially between WWI and WWII², or the overall work of Brecht as theatre expressing political views and at the same time, stimulating and cultivating viewers' critical thinking³.

¹ National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

² Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and politics*, London and New York, Verso Books, 2020, p. 3.

³ Siegfried Mews and Herbert Knust (eds.), *Essays on Brecht: Theater and politics*, Chapel

Interestingly, human catastrophes may be considered as already represented in literature starting from Homer⁴ and in ancient theatre texts, such as Euripides' *Hecuba* and *The Trojan Women*, on the sufferings caused by war⁵, to name a few examples. Otherwise, research may have more to explore in terms of human catastrophe representation on theatre stage, examining both text and beyond text-related representations, while shifting from historical cases and rather shedding light to contemporary theatre production.

In this context the aim of this paper is to examine human catastrophe as represented in different case-studies of the contemporary theatre stage of Greece. To this goal, three different productions are to be examined under the lens of the same study – parameters. The three case-studies were chosen as showcasing on stage different kinds of human tragedy through different means, yet almost at the same time and at the same region – audience, while the fact of the representation of human catastrophe was actually one of their main elements. The case studies include: the play *Iraq – Nine Parts of Desire*, by Heather Raffo, presented in 2017 and in 2023 in Ergotaxion Theatre, in Athens Greece; the opera *Carmen* by Georges Bizet, produced in 2018 by the Greek National Opera; and the play *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller, produced in 2018 by the Greek National Theatre.

The common criteria under which the three plays are about to be viewed explore the sub-questions of how human catastrophe is represented, what is it that makes it “human” and how these representations function aesthetically and symbolically. Under this scope, these criteria include, firstly, the play and the author in order to set a context of the production as well as to define whether the human catastrophe aspect is already present in text, and therefore present in the performance by default. Secondly, the vision of the director and context of the production are to be explored in order to identify whether the director had a deliberate idea to express possible aspects of human catastrophe on stage apart from the ones of the text, if present. For this purpose the posters of the productions were used as visually optimising the main elements of the directors' vision, as well as their own statements on interviews and other media appearances. Thirdly, the means of human catastrophe representation on stage are to be explored focusing on the core components of a performance such as scenography, costumes, acting, music, lighting, overall direction or other means employed to enhance the performance or the viewers' experience. Fourthly, possible challenges on the way to this representation of human catastrophe on stage are to be explored, as well as, fifthly, the relevant perception of the performance and of the human catastrophe representation where applicable.

Notably, the author of the present article viewed live performances of all the three productions discussed herein.

Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1974, p. 199.

⁴ Alan H. Sommerstein, “Atê in Aeschylus”, in Cairns Douglas (ed.), *Tragedy and Archaic Greek Thought*, 2013, pp. 1-15, p. 4.

⁵ Jan Helge Solbakk, “You can't go home again: On the conceptualization of disasters in ancient Greek tragedy”, in Dranseika, Vilius, Bert Gordijn and Dónal P. O'Mathúna (eds.), *Disasters: Core concepts and ethical theories*, 2018, p. 87.

Iraq – Nine Parts of Desire

Play & Author

To create a context about the author and the text, the play *Iraq – Nine Parts of Desire* was written in 2003 by Heather Raffo, a female American writer, her father born in Iraq. It is a combination of nine monologues representing nine Iraqi women during the time between the first and second Gulf wars and occupation. Therefore, it is a play where human tragedy is plainly set as its main theme, since it is a play about women and war, or women during war, including captivation, massive killings, raping and overall disaster through bombing and the use of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, despite the seriousness of the issues discussed, the latter are approached through various perspectives including humour and a common feeling among the heroines of hope for peace, liberation and freedom⁶.

In the play, these nine women coming from completely different backgrounds share their personal stories bringing together the East and the West. In this light, the writer artistically achieves a cross-cultural gender portrayal by showcasing that all these women no matter where they are from share the same inner thoughts, fears, secrets, hopes and desires⁷.

Interestingly, the writer got inspired for this play by viewing a painting of a female artist in the contemporary museum of Baghdad, which triggered her desire to explore what it means to be a woman during war times. The play is well recognised as a major success with important awards and productions all around the world⁸.

Vision & Context

Although the two productions of the play had different directors, namely, Maria Olon Tsaroucha in 2017⁹ and Efi Meravoglou in 2023¹⁰, they shared a common vision, to tell Iraqi women's side of the story, in times of scepticism against the East and of rising femicides, through stimulating emotion, cultivating empathy through experience and engaging the audience's feelings. This comes as no surprise since the two directors were already collaborating in the first production, they are both acting coaches and they share a friendship and a common view on method acting.

⁶ Gamze Ar, "The Analysis of Heather Raffo's 9 Parts of Desire," *Melios: Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 2023, 1(1), p. 3.

⁷ Shaimaa Saeed, "Cross-cultural Performativity of Gender Communication in Heather Raffo's Play Nine Parts of Desire," *HERMS*, 2006, 11(3), p. 346.

⁸ Heather Raffo, *Iraq - 9 Parts of Desire*. [online] <https://heatherraffo.com/projects/nine-parts-of-desire/> (accessed November 29th, 2023).

⁹ In 2017, music was made by Maria Olon Tsaroucha, photos by Nikoletta Giannouli, sounds and lighting by Vassilis Dodos and the cast included Despoina Nikitidou, Dimitra Skebi, Efi Meravoglou, Ioanna Kyritsi, Katerina Bouzani, Maria Trygoni, Myrto Lodorou, Sotiria Chrysikopoulou. Culture Now, *Iraq - 9 Parts of Desire* (in Greek). [online] <https://www.culturenow.gr/iraq-9-topoi-epithymias-ston-texnoxoro-ergotaxion/> (accessed November 28th, 2023).

¹⁰ In 2023, scenography was made by the team, costumes by Sofia Katsoura, music by Efi Meravoglou, lighting by Giannis Karalias, the cast included Mygdalia Andreou, Aristeia Anysi, Konstantina Varda, Efi Meravoglou, Christina Mouzi, Sofia Paspaliari, Anastasia Ravani, Andriana Stravidopoulou, Sotiria Chrysikopoulou and little Dimitra Bellou. Lifo, *Iraq - 9 Parts of Desire*. [online] <https://www.lifo.gr/guide/theater/events/irak-9-topoi-epithymias> (accessed November 28th, 2023).



Image 1. Poster of the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2017. Poster Design by Dimitris Semitecolo.

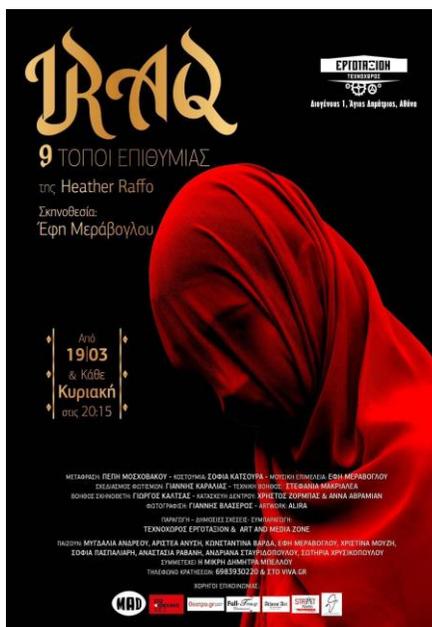


Image 2. Poster of the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2023.

As shown on the poster of 2017, there is the symbol of the feminine already at the fonts of the letters for the word Iraq at the title. Furthermore, there are symbols of the representation of all women, since there is a crowd at the background and at the same time, a meeting of the East with the West at the woman at the front, bearing some symbols of the East, scarf for the hair and worry-beads at hand and herself a brunette as typical of the East, yet only half hair covered and a red lip-gloss reflecting possibly as well the notion of desire as included in the title and throughout the text. Viewing the poster of the second production, it appears that both posters are designed in similar colours, namely black, sepia-gold, red and some white for the letters. Comparing the two posters, the woman at the first, stands in enface position and looks straight in the eyes, almost fearlessly, while the woman at the second poster only implies a look for a moment away from the floor, under her bourga-veil and while bending her body as expected from subalterns¹¹.

It appears that the feminine element is more present in the first poster with the crowd of the women and the font-symbol, compared to the second poster where it appears to showcase three main elements, the East, from the font and the burqa, the Woman as submissive to Man, as she is bending and fully covered without even some breathing space allowed, and Desire. Desire in red colour rather dominates the scene, along with the eyesight outwards where there is possibly hope. After all, women's seductive nature is justified in the sacred book of Islam, the Talib, according which

¹¹ Hany Ali Mahmoud Abdelfattah, "When the subaltern speaks: solo narrative performance in Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire* and Issam El-Yousfi's *Tears with Alcohol*," *Interventions*, 2022, 24(1), pp. 88-101, p. 100.

when God created the ten parts of desire, he gave nine parts to women and one to men¹². Interestingly, these choices about these posters on these two different eras of the production may reflect directors' views as influenced by the relevant context at the time, especially in light of a rather downturn on women's rights in Greece after the sharp rise in femicides during 2020 - 2023 and the re-evaluation of the legislation to decrease the criminal gravity of gender-based violence in 2018.

Means

As explained by Efi Meravoglou¹³, the means employed aim at stimulating personal engagement of the audience, as the main goal of the vision of both productions. Overall, there is a common approach, where directing invests largely in coaching the actresses through specific acting code and dedicated preparation, along with scenography, costumes, lighting, music and experience of the actresses themselves and of the viewer, including before the starting of the performance.

In 2017, as shown in the photos given to the press, this is mostly pursued through showcasing the portraits of the women – heroines looking straight in the eyes of the viewers, making them part of the story. At the same time, viewers appear as sharing part of the responsibility, since these eyesights appear as waiting for viewers' response on their stories, such as on the photo with the blood on the hand of the woman (Images 3, 4, 5, 6).



Image 3. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2017.

¹² Gamze Ar, "The Analysis...", *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹³ Efi Meravoglou, Interview by Eirini Polydorou about the production and direction of the play by Heather Raffo, *Iraq, 9 parts of Desire*, 10.07.2023.



Image 4. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2017.



Image 5. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2017.



Image 6. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2017.

Perhaps the most fundamental of the means for both the productions was a three months preparation, coaching and research for all the actresses through method acting, considered as favourable to cultivating viewers' empathy and personal engagement¹⁴. In this context, actresses also had the opportunity to enrich their acting research through meeting with civil society organisations and people coming from Iraq.



Image 7. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2023.

Expressionistic acting¹⁵ was employed in both directions where the wide range of voices, intense gestures and overall body engagement used (Image 7) could serve firstly, familiarising audiences with a view of a multiple self, as western viewers of manners closer to Delsarte's actor would be brought closer to the ways eastern cultures express their words, and secondly, highlighting the gravity and intensity of the sufferings presented¹⁶. Although the play is all about women's suffering during wars and occupation, there was absolutely no violence on stage.

To the contrary, even in moments of intense emotions, there was an overall feeling of calmness on stage, allowing the notable participation of a child of nine years old on stage, the daughter of one of the actresses in the production of 2023.

¹⁴ Susan Verducci, "A moral method? Thoughts on cultivating empathy through method acting," *Journal of Moral Education*, 2000, 29(1), pp. 87-99, p. 97.

¹⁵ Maria Olon Tsaroucha, *Iraq – 9 Parts of Desire* (video, in Greek), 2017, [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmTRjMBg4WM> (accessed November 20th, 2023).

¹⁶ Walker, Julia A., "'In the Grip of an Obsession': Delsarte and the Quest for Self-Possession, in 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'", *Theatre Journal by the John Hopkins University Press*, 2006, 58(4), p. 618.



Image 8. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2023.



Image 9. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire*, 2023.

Scenography in both productions was austere and symbolic. In 2017 the central scenery of the production was a square box, made of shoes, since shoes were used as the only way to identify corps in Iraq (Image 10), bringing on stage the human tragedy of not even being able to recognize the bodies of dead beloved-ones in times of war.



Image 10. Photo by Sofia Throuvala, published in the press, *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire, 2023.*

In the production of 2023, the back and floor of the stage are covered with the material of a military camouflage, showcasing the overwhelming presence of war, while making a reference to the texture of a sand and desert (Images 8, 9, 11), staging the catastrophe of a dry land, because of the war and especially because of a war over water, which is a main element and motive of the text. Also, there is the bottom part of a tree and roots coming from the ceiling, since women are rooted, as bound with their land and simultaneously uprooted due to the war (Images 11, 12). This idea is also reflected in the mostly dark lighting (Image 12), staging that women emerge from earth where they are rooted and therefore bound to suffer its catastrophes.



Image 11. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire, 2023.*

Regarding costumes and props, instead of any furniture, there are big pillows on the floor, in accordance with the eastern interior of houses and way of living (Image 11). In addition, to the opposite of human catastrophe there is also on stage a female divine entity of the water bearing wisdom and hope for peace. For her, a total white

costume is selected, designed according to the traditional Eastern burqa dress for women covering all body and head, leaving only the eyes to appear, which in real life would be black.



**Image 12. Press-Kit Photo for the production
*Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire, 2023.***

Apart from that, all heroines' costumes are according to the traditional dresses for women, including their hair scarf-covered, mostly in colours of earth, so that they are unseen compared to background, as they are unseen in real life and especially in times of war, yet sometimes allowing for some red elements staging also desire, passion and hope for life (Images 12, 13)



**Image 13. Press-Kit Photo for the production
*Iraq, 9 Parts of Desire, 2023.***

Additionally, there is a staging of a meeting between East and West as all heroines with their stage entrance bring to the stage some prob relative to their story and to their east heritage, yet combining western elements, such as a carpet with eastern design with a west-brand notebook (Image 13).

The lighting is rather dark (Image 7, 8, 9), mostly expressionistic with high contrasts (Images 12), wide use of focal lighting points (Image 7, 10, 11, 13) and in warm tones (Image 11) when in more bright moments, such as in the presence of the divine female goddess bringing hope for peace.

Challenges

The lighting is one of the aspects of staging human catastrophe and the overall performance, where challenges were set, since the small size of the theatre, of the stage space, of the height of the stage and of the distance between viewers and stage, along with the limited budget possibilities would not allow the full implementation of director's ideas. After all, as most off-Broadway theatres of Athens, *Ergotaxion Theatre*, where both productions of the play were presented, allows for limited stage possibilities and a maximum capacity of 50 seats for the audience. Nevertheless, Evi Meravoglou, the person that initiated both the productions of the play, suggests that if given the possibility to have literally no obstacles in terms of stage size and finance, she would still choose a black box theatre as more convenient for the creation of a feeling of captivity for the audience's experience.

Furthermore, there were political issues connected with the staging of this play, as its presentation of the human catastrophe connected to a rather recent war, touching on sensitive high political issues that for example would not allow for the presence in the audience of high officials of the countries involved, let alone for assigning the play under their auspices. Eventually, the sensitivity of the political aspect of this performance would not allow for any communication support, especially in 2017 on the first presentation of the play in Greece, a country of sensitive importance for the Gulf wars.

Furthermore, especially in 2017 there were financial shortages as well as a high financial risk connected with the fact that the Ergotaxion theatre, which was only in its first year, would have to take the risk to stage a politically and commercially difficult play that would not guarantee tickets not even for its financial survival. Nevertheless, despite the odds against the choice of the particular play, Efi Meravolgou, which was also in the production team, decided to proceed, because she felt a need to stage this human catastrophe in a way that would combat ignorance and hatred and that would cultivate empathy to the best of the overall society, therefore arguably making a choice of an artist acting politically, with high possibilities for that to come at her livelihood expense and the survival of her newly established theatre.

Perception

In terms of perception, interestingly in 2017 the play was perceived by audiences, and often fellow theatre artists, as *"not needed" or "not relevant"*, according to their own words as noted by Efi Meravoglou. This general scepticism was rather inverted in the second presentation of the play in 2023 when the acting performances were praised, young audiences and school educators were interested in the play, which was overall considered as *"well said"*, mostly needed and relevant. In an attempt to explain this much different perception between the two productions,

it could be interesting to see what the actuality and the common experience of Greece was in 2017 and 2023.

More specifically, 2017 was a time of rising levels of the far right, as Greece was under strict financial government measures of austerity and increasing levels of unemployment and poverty and sharpening polarisation, amidst rising xenophobia especially against muslims and people of Eastern provenance and, further pushed because of the ongoing proceedings of the trial for the murder of singer Pavlos Fyssas by the political party of Golden Dawn, that had taken place in 2013¹⁷. Arguably, this was not a favourable situation for staging a play about muslim Iraqi women. After all, there was the experience of the past where fanatic orthodox crowds would organise protests out of Chytirion theatre, where a small theatre company, similar to Ergotaxion theatre, had staged in 2012 the play *Corpus Christi*, where there was even violence and beatings against viewers of the play, the actors and journalists by protestors and the director of the play got sued and brought to court by Golden Dawn members¹⁸. On the other hand, in 2023 Greece and the whole world was struck by the riots in Iran for the murder of Mahsa Amini for taking off her hijab and for the oppression of women's rights by the religion police, which eventually led to more visibility for femicides and gender-related violence and claims of women's movements¹⁹. Greece was at the same time shocked by the femicide of Caroline Crouch by her husband in January 2023, monopolising the news for months, along with other femicides and gender-related crimes that would be brought to the attention of the media, in parallel with the rise of the Greek *Me Too* movement, which had started in 2021²⁰. This context, further supported by the power of advocacy of people in the platforms of social media and the gradual prevalence of political correctness against a deeply rooted mentality of a toxic patriarchy in Greece, would create in 2023 a much more favourable momentum for this play, compared to 2017, at least because this time people could identify with the female perspective of the play, which was a trend in the daily news and social media.

Also, according to the audiences' verbally expressed opinions after the performance, the description of the napalm bomb disaster narrated in the play, would bring them horror, as identifying with the major train crash at Tembi region of Greece that took place in 28 of February 2023, thus during the time of the play's presentations, where 38 passengers were killed as burnt alive and which overall contributed to further polarising of the greek society at the time²¹.

¹⁷ Jo Angouri and Ruth Wodak, "They became big in the shadow of the crisis' The Greek Success Story and the Rise of the Far Right.", *Discourse & Society*, 2014, 25(4), pp. 541-42. Also, Dietmar Loch and Ovidiu Cristian Norocel, "The populist radical right in Europe: A xenophobic voice in the global economic crisis," in *Europe's prolonged crisis: The making or the unmaking of a political union*. London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015, p. 251.

¹⁸ Tassos Angelopoulos, "Corpus Christi Case (2012). An Attempt to Institutionalize Far Right Censorship Against Theatre in Greece," in *Concept*, 2021, 22(1), pp. 65-66. Also, Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, "Queer responses to austerity: Insights from the Greece of crisis," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2015, 14(4), p. 1044.

¹⁹ Hamid Sajadi, "Iranian Women's Movement: Political Opportunities and New Forces," in *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2023, 25(2), p. 2.

²⁰ Fabienne Baidier and Anna Bobori, "Online Reactions to the# MeToo Movement," *La toile et les femmes*, no 39, 2023, p. 60.

²¹ Vassiliki Tsagkroni, "First thoughts on the 21 May 2023 election in Greece," *Greek Politics*

A View from the Bridge

Play & Author

A View from the Bridge, written in 1955 by Arthur Miller²², concerns the reality of the working class people in Brooklyn of the 1950's. The main hero Eddie, a dock worker, falls madly in love with his niece Catherine, who is getting married to Rodolpho. The latter, together with his brother Marco, are the cousins of Beatrice, Eddie's wife, poor illegal immigrants from Italy hosted in the couple's house. Blind of jealousy, Eddie reports the cousins to the immigration authorities, they manage to bail out, yet during a fight with Marco, Eddie gets stabbed by his wife and dies²³.

It is a play of social and political messages under a human-oriented perspective, highlighting the hardships and the sufferings poverty brings, and denouncing the social system of the time. The themes represented and relevant to human catastrophe include illegal immigration as crucial for survival, working class poverty and self-destructing lust and jealousy employed in such ways that Eddie is considered as a tragic hero and the play is often compared to ancient Greek tragedy²⁴.

Vision & Context

The play was presented in 2018 by the Greek National Theatre²⁵. As explained by the director Nikaiti Kontouri, her vision was to set the play to today, in view of the tragic fate of the immigrants and children flooding the Aegean in broken floats, and highlight the links of the play with ancient Greek tragedy²⁶.

In this context, the abstract combination of a hook and a hanging rose in red background shown in the poster of the production, may symbolise the heroes of the play as hooked by their fate (hook) which was triggered by lust and or passion (red and rose), while the hook as typical in docs, could also showcase the hardships of working class, as well as the inescapable and suffering fate (hook) of illegal immigrants as one of the tragedies of the play and of today, especially in Greece (Image 14).

Specialist Group – GPSG Pamphlet, (7). [online] <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3630037> (accessed November 22th, 2023).

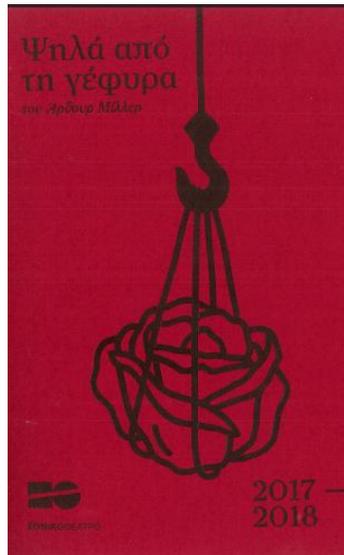
²² Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

²³ Gerald Weales, "Arthur Miller: man and his image," *Tulane Drama Review*, 1962, 7(1), p. 165.

²⁴ Hanyue Li, "The Idea of Tragedy in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge*," *English Language and Literature Studies*, 2018, 8(2), p. 115.

²⁵ Translation, adaptation and direction was by Nikaiti Kontouri, translation by Giorgos Kimoulis, scenography by Giorgos Patsas, lighting by Lefteris Pavlopoulos, music by Sofia Kamagianni, choreography by Agni Papadeli-Rossetou, video by Yorgos Zois, assistant set and costume designer was Tota Pritsa, assistant director was Thalia Griva, dramaturg was Vivi Spathoula, and cast included Giorgos Kimoulis, Maria Kehagioglou, Nikos Hatzopoulos, Ilianna Mavrommati, Stathis Panagiotidis, Alexandros Mavropoulos, Kostas Falelakis, Paris Thomopoulos, Tasos Pirgieris, Kostas Korakis, Thalia Griva, Nikolas Hanakoulas, Ilya Algaer, Giorgos Matziaris, Anastasis-Simeon Laoulakos, chorus by The Company and musician on stage was Christos Kalkanis. National Theatre of Greece, *A View from the Bridge by Arthur Miller*, 2018. [online] <https://www.n-t.gr/en/events/oldevents/Aviewfromthebridge> (accessed November 30th, 2023).

²⁶ Nikaiti Kontouri, Interview by Eirini Polydorou regarding the direction of the play by Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge*, 15.07.2023.



**Image 14. Poster for the production
A View from the Bridge, 2018.**

Means

Regarding the means, it appears that a scenography of abstraction and symbolism was key in staging human catastrophe in this production. As shown in image 15, there were hanging hooks across the stage for the hooked fates of the heroes.



**Image 15. Press-Kit Photo for the production
A View from the Bridge, 2018.**

Another main part of scenography was a symbolic raft onstage accounting for desperate illegal immigrants floating in sea (Image 16).



Image 16. Press-Kit Photo for the production *A View from the Bridge*, 2018.

Notably, the hooks, the raft and all actors as well, were always present onstage, arguably as human tragedy is always linked with and present throughout one's life. Costumes may as well be considered as one of the means to stage human catastrophe on stage in this production and as making a clear reference to real life human tragedy taking place at the time of the presentation of the production.



Image 17. Press-Kit Photo for the production *A View from the Bridge*, 2018.

Notably, on the first appearance of the actors playing the Italian immigrants, the heroes appeared in orange life-vests (Image 17) similar to the real life-vests worn by real life illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (Image 18) seen almost daily in the news at the time of the production, as flooding the Aegean Sea of Greece and the Mediterranean,

tragically drowned at times in their hope to reach Europe²⁷.



Image 18. Photo by Andrew McConnell in Greece, 2015, published by UNHCR.

Challenges

As expressed by the director there were not any major challenges linked with the production of this play. After all, it was a play chosen and produced by the National Theatre of Greece, therefore no crucial financial, practical, political or other obstacles appeared.

Perception

Regarding perception, overall there was general appraisal for the play and the direction in general. On the other hand, specifically the orange life-vests were not always welcomed. Notably, at that time, there were massive waves of monopolizing immigrants and refugees seeking asylum to Greece and a passage to Europe. The tragic incidents of their drownings due to the sinking of their boats in the Aegean Sea, as well as the inhumane conditions of their camps in the reception islands had been monopolizing the news in Greece and in Europe, involving the engagement of major organisations as well, such as the UNHCR and Amnesty International.

This growing visibility led to growing awareness of their sufferings, but at the same time to polarising society between those viewing migrants as a threat and those who would view them as suffering people who need our solidarity. Therefore, scepticism towards the production's staging of real life-vests and making a clear reference to the Aegean Sea tragedy, while it was not plainly needed by the text of the play, could be expressing the more conservative parts of society who would stand critically against the reception of the people massively arriving²⁸. On the other hand,

²⁷ Iosif Kovras and Simon Robins, "Missing migrants: deaths at sea and unidentified bodies in Lesbos," in Green, Sarah and Donnan, Hastings (eds.), *Migrating borders and moving times*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017, p. 171.

²⁸ Theodoros Fouskas and George Koulierakis, "Demystifying Migration Myths: Social Discourse on the Impact of Immigrants and Refugees in Greece," *Urbanities Journal of Urban*

indeed, it was not at all needed by the play to make such a clear reference to actuality, yet the artist-director apparently made a political choice on stage, contributing also to the overall momentum on raising awareness about the humanitarian disaster in the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea, in times when authorities would still not provide for adequate policies.

Carmen

Play & Author

The play, written in 1875 by Georges Bizet and based on a novel of 1847 by Prosper Mérimée is considered as the most original of all french operas²⁹. It is an opera comique about *Carmen* a gypsy that defied social norms of her time to live a life of freedom and passion³⁰. The play takes place in the 1820s at the frontier of a remote town near Seville, Spain. A soldier, Don José, falls in passionate love with Carmen and abandons his childhood sweetheart, Micaela, a woman of virtue standing as the opposite character of Carmen. Jose loses his military career for her sake and follows Carmen into smuggling. Despite his desperate efforts, Carmen loses interest in him and he eventually kills her out of jealousy during a bullfight. The themes and motives of the play include freedom as opposed to captivation, violence as linked with savage passion, which would be opposed to morals and norms of the times about women³¹.

Vision & Context

Carmen was produced in 2016, presented again in 2018 by the Greek National Opera³² and staged at Odeon of Herodes Atticus, the most important venue of the country, after the ancient theatre of Epidaurus. The vision of world class director, Stephen Langridge as expressed to the press material of the production referred to a “a modern, sharp, take on the opera, relevant to our times, set in contemporary Europe, a continent of closed borders and poverty”³³. His view, as showcased in the poster of

Ethnography, Special Issue Greek Crisis Inequalities, 2022, 12(5), pp. 19-20.

²⁹ Edgar Istel and Janet Wylie Istel, “Carmen: Novel and Libretto--A Dramaturgic Analysis,” *The Musical Quarterly*, 1921, 7(4), pp. 493-510, 493.

³⁰ June Dams, “The Femme Fatale Versus the Sentimental Heroine in Georges Bizet’s Operas: Characterisation and Performance,” in Sandhoff, Bridget and Hedenborg-White Manon (eds.), *Transgressive Womanhood: Investigating Vamps, Witches, Whores, Serial Killers and Monsters*, Oxfordshire, Inter-disciplinary Press, 2014, pp. 153-164, p. 153.

³¹ Ciprian Tudor, “Bizet’s Carmen. Between the cultural agenda of the 19th century and contemporary postcolonial, post-orientalist or feminist readings,” *Analele Universității Spiru Haret. Seria Jurnalism*, 2017, 18(2), p. 17.

³² Conductor was Lucas Karytinis, director Stephen Langridge, set designs-costumes by George Souglides, video by Silbersalz Film, Hagen Wagner & Thomas Bergmann, lighting by Giuseppe di Iorio, movement by Dan O’Neill - Fotis Nikolaou, chorus master was Agathangelos Georgakatos, children’s chorus mistress Konstantina Pitsiakou, cast of singers; Anita Rachvelishvili, Kate Aldrich, Pavel Černoch, Dimitris Paksoglou, Dionyssi Sourbis, Dimitris Tiliakos, Maria Mitsopoulou, Myrsini Margariti, Tassos Apostolou, Petros Magoulas, Yannis Selitsaniotis, Nikos Kotenidism, Chrissa Maliamani, Danae Kontora, Artemis Bogri, Harris Andrianos, Nikos Kotenidis, Nikos Stefanou, Christos Kechris, With the GNO Orchestra, Chorus, Soloists, Ballet and Children’s Chorus. Greek National Opera, *Odeon of Herodes Atticus - Carmen*, 2018. [online] <https://www.nationalopera.gr/en/archive/productions-archive/season-2017-2018/item/2190-carmen> (accessed November 30th, 2023).

³³ Athens Epidaurus Festival, *Carmen by Georges Bizet*, 2018. [online]

the production, reflects on when passion (dominating red heart) becomes savage (bull, heart with horns). Notably, the scene makes a reference to a bullfight, therefore to Spain where the play is staged, as well as to the last act of the play, when Carmen gets killed right out of the bullring. Interestingly, bullfighters take the bulls by their horns to control them, as it happens to this heart standing instead of the bulls' head/brains, since it is controlled by its horns, its savage passion. On the other hand, the body of the bull is white, pure before passion for Carmen, while the dominating red heart with horn brings dark clouds, referring to something dark about to happen, that would lead to human catastrophe, at the black background.

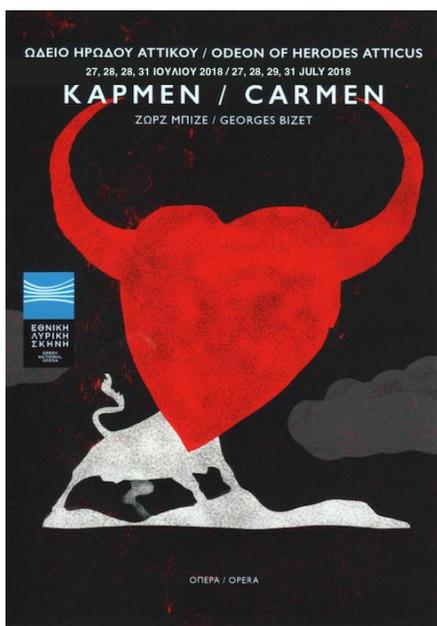


Image 19. Poster of *Carmen*, Greek National Opera 2016 and 2018.



Image 20. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Carmen*, 2016, 2018.

Means

Regarding means, the scenography and costumes of the production, by George Souglides stage human catastrophe by making a clear reference to real-life human catastrophe, viewed in the daily news. In more detail, the overall set was a staged refugee hotspot, similar to the refugee hotspot of the Greek island Lesbos, seen in the daily news of Greece and Europe, as a real-life humanitarian disaster of the 21st century. The play started with a high fence with guards and with containers on stage (Image 20) as the fence, the guards and the containers of the refugee's camps. Screenings of people in queues projected on containers (Image 21) would make a reference on people queuing to receive food, or to the absurdly long queues refugees would have to wait for days just to apply for papers. The overall set was all about captivation, poverty and people limited, imprisoned.

https://aefestival.gr/festival_events/greek-national-opera-carmen-2018/?lang=en (accessed November 29th, 2023).



Image 21. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Carmen*, 2016, 2018.

Furthermore, in the third act, where Carmen meets with the smugglers, human catastrophe is staged with the setting of human trafficking and prostitution, again in the inside part of the containers (Image 22).



Image 22. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Carmen*, 2016, 2018.

As with all aspects of life in the refugees' camps, everything in this production would happen in or somewhere near the containers (Image 23).



Image 23. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Carmen*, 2016, 2018.

Apart from the setting, costumes were also a clear reference to the human catastrophe of desperation of refugees. The first time the chorus came on stage, all chorus singers, apart from the soldiers, came on stage wearing real orange life-vests and stood at a line, backs to the fence, creating a rather impactful image of people who just made it to not get drowned in the sea, yet they are standing as if they were about to be executed. Their acting and choreography, served as well to showcasing their fear and desperation in different scenes of the production, while soldiers would express the other side dominating over fear and power (Image 24).



Image 24. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Carmen*, 2016, 2018.

In this production, there were also references to human catastrophe as destruction of nature. In the beginning of the performance, there was on stage an out of context violent killing of a bull and throughout the performance there were trash bins on stage and projections of images and videos of nature being destroyed (Image 25).



Image 25. Press-Kit Photo for the production *Carmen*, 2016, 2018.

Additionally, in crucial moments there were flashbacks staged for the heroes, arguably as a chance that humanity still has to save nature and its own being, or as reverse timing for a fate to come, since despite the flashbacks, the heroes went straight to their destruction.

Challenges

It may be supported that there were no apparent challenges linked with the production of *Carmen*. After all, all needed resources in terms of personnel, material, networking, design, finance and media communication were at disposal, since the play was produced by the country's largest music theatre institution, the National Opera of Greece, at one of its most important venues and with a world-class director and performers.

Perception

Regarding perception, there were different opinions about the play's direction in critics from Greece, asking questions such as why highlighting a well-known problem which is everywhere in the news and why including it in a play about love, passion and freedom, rather than as an attempt to impress³⁴. On the other hand, there were also supporters, suggesting that it was a well-put mirroring of reality, staging the biggest humanitarian crisis on European grounds, especially as viewed right next to Parthenon, the world's symbol of democracy and giving the audience food for thought³⁵.

³⁴ Kostas Karasavvidis, *We saw Carmen in Herodion (in Greek)*, 2023 [online] <https://shorturl.at/mKN07> (accessed November 29th, 2023).

³⁵ Laurant Barthel, *Carmen sous le Parthénon*, 2023 [online] https://www.concertonet.com/scripts/review.php?ID_review=13262 (accessed November 29th, 2023).

Discussion: Theatre Direction as Political Action

Comparing the three case-studies on the different criteria under examination (Table 1), the discussion focuses on how human catastrophe is approached in terms of the play, the performance, director's vision, the means, the challenges and the perception of the overall production.

To start with, text wise, all the three plays have passion and desire as a common theme, which in *Carmen* and the *View* leads to the hero's killing, and thus human catastrophe, while in *Iraq*, desire is considered as women's characteristic justifying their oppression by men, extending to violence, abuse and raping and overall, human catastrophe. Apart from human catastrophe linked to passion and desire, in *Iraq*, which is about wars, occupation, violence and women's oppression, human catastrophe is directly at the heart of each monologue of the text. Secondly, on the *View* the plot is driven by social injustice and poverty-driven illegal immigration. At the same time, in *Carmen*, the dominating theme of passion could indirectly be approached as freedom versus social norms' captivation, violence, smuggling, killing and also, as dominance of man over woman (passion/killing of Carmen) and over nature (bullfight/killing of the bull). Having in mind that all these stand as forms of human and natural catastrophes, it may be argued that human catastrophe in its social aspect is dominating *Iraq*, is more indirectly referred to in the *View*, and furthermore indirectly implied in *Carmen*. At this point, it could be noted that text-wise, apart from the killings of the heroes, the directors of the *View* and of *Carmen*, did not have to represent human catastrophe on stage, as it was not plainly written in the text of the plays. Consequently, it may be supported that the representation of human catastrophe on stage in these productions were directors' choices, according to their visions for their plays. Furthermore, despite differences in the texts of the plays and the sizes of the spaces, audiences, financial and other resources of the three productions, apparently there were similarities among the directors regarding their approaches for setting human catastrophe on stage.

Firstly, the similarities in the focus of the visions of directors, including self-destructing passion (*View*, *Carmen*) and desire (*Iraq*) and aspects of human catastrophe such as killings, social inequalities and violence in all the three plays, may arguably be considered as leading to similarities to the design approaches for the posters of the three productions, mirroring the visions of the directors. In this sense, the posters of all the three productions were more or less based on the same colours, black and red. Red for desire (*Iraq*) or passion (*View*, *Carmen*), black for a dark background setting the overall darkness of the scene, as one of human catastrophe (*Iraq 2023*, *Carmen*), or black as human catastrophe setting-sketching the image on a fully passioned-red background (*View*).

Additionally, all directors shared the idea of bringing the play to a modern version, to *today's* audience. In this context, they had common approaches in terms of the means they used to represent human catastrophe on stage, with a special focus on scenography and costumes. More specifically, they all introduced real-life human catastrophe references on stage, such as costumes- life-vests (*View*, *Carmen*), hooks, a float (*View*), fence, trailer and overall scenography of a refugee's hotspot (*Carmen*), and/or scenographic symbols to real-life human catastrophe such as death representation of massive killings with the shoebox (*Iraq*, Image 10). In this sense, directors employed their staging means as their on-stage response of the real-life today

at the time, which included wars and femicides (*Iraq*), a migration crisis with refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea (*View, Carmen*), or trapped in refugee hotspot camps and a sharp rise of human trafficking^{36,37} (*Carmen*) (Table 1).

Table 1. Human Catastrophe on stage.
Comparative presentation of the three case studies.

Human tragedy in...	<i>Iraq – Nine Parts of Desire</i>	<i>A View from the Bridge</i>	<i>Carmen</i>
Play and author	Throughout text, wars, killings, violence, rapes, desire as justifying women's oppression	Directly for passion & killing, indirectly social injustice, poverty, illegal migration	Directly for passion & killing, indirectly freedom against social norms, yet self-destructing
Vision – directors' highlighted motives	Meeting the East, awareness on their suffers, <i>today</i> approach, humour	Fate of working class and illegal immigrants, <i>today</i> approach	Freedom Vs Captivation, <i>today</i> approach
Relevant real-life context at the time	Wars, femicides, train accident, rise of far right, fascism especially against Muslims and East	Refugees drowning in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas	Refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, Europe building walls and camps, rise of human trafficking
Means	Acting code, scenography, shoes-box, roots, costumes, symbols, experience theatre, always present, no violence on stage	Scenography – float, hooks, costumes – life-vests, real-life human catastrophe & violence on stage	Scenography – fence, trailer, guards house, videos, costumes – life-vests, real-life human catastrophe & violence on stage
Challenges	Stage size, space, seats, finance, promotion, politics	No major challenges	No major challenges
Perception	Scepticism at first, warm welcome afterwards	Scepticism about life-vests	Divided opinions on relevance of life-vests, refugee hotspot

³⁶ Mustafa O. Attir, "North African Regular and Irregular Migration: The Case of Libya," *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 2018, 30(2), p. 7.

³⁷ Fransje Molenaar, and Floor El Kamouni-Janssen, *Turning the tide. The politics of irregular migration in the Sahel and Libya*, CRU Report, The Hague, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2017, p. 6 [online].
<https://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/Irregular-Migration-in-the-Sahel-and-Libya-2.pdf> (accessed November 30th, 2023).

Notably, although *Iraq* had the text of most present human catastrophe and violence, it was the production with the least presence of on-stage violence, and the most presence of humour as direction and acting figures. Acting was also most likely the most important of the means used in *Iraq*, to stage human catastrophe in different nuances, compared to the other two productions were scenography and costumes. One may argue that this could be the only choice for a production facing financial, spatial and overall implementation challenges. Yet, according to director's words³⁸, even if given all the resources needed for a big production, she would still invest in acting as her main means for staging of human catastrophe, because she herself is an acting coach and strongly believes in her method for enhancing the transmission of the play's messages and the engagement and experience of both, actors on stage and audience off stage, which comes in accordance with findings of the literature³⁹.

Nevertheless, regardless of the director's intentions, the first launching of the play was perceived with scepticism, as it was also the case with the real-life references of human catastrophe in the *View* and in *Carmen*, setting therefore scepticism as one more similarity among the three case-studies. It was even supported by critics, that in *Carmen* the director employed such references as a tool for impression⁴⁰. Indeed, it may be considered as common knowledge of arts critics that the level of questioning a society's convenience zone is well-established among the metrics of what makes an artwork of high intellectual quality. In other words, the level of denouncing a society's defects is one of the characteristics discerning low art from high art, popular culture from high culture.

On the other hand, commercial art works that mostly spread pop culture and are easy to consume, lead at the same time to high commercial revenue, or at least higher, compared to high art. After all, the latter, comparingly less spectacular, overall more difficult intellectually or even emotionally inconvenient or at times a heavy experience, appear of less possibility to a viewer's purchase decision when buying theatre tickets, to have some fun on a Saturday night, after a long working week. Nevertheless, it is more or less this argument that makes high art as art for the few and intellectuals, yet for artists themselves this is not always a viable choice in terms of earning their livelihood through their craft. Bearing in mind all these parameters, it is interesting to see to what extent artists would choose to include a political perspective in their project and whether such a decision would affect the adequacy of their economic resources or a possible threat for the project's economic success. This is especially true for *Iraq*, where on top of financial limitations on the project's production, the play's political challenges, previously explained, could further increase the financial risk of a ticket-selling failure.

In other words, in *Iraq*, this play, as the staging of human catastrophe, was against its financial survival odds, while in the *View* and in *Carmen*, it was needless and against the policy of the government, who was the payer of the production, which arguably makes the choice of the directors not only deliberate, but also political and transforms the theatre stage to a platform of political debate. Arguably, some critics' or audience's participants' scepticism on staging human catastrophe not plainly requested by the texts of the plays, may reflect that not all parts of society are ready

³⁸ Meravoglou, Interview..., *op. cit.*

³⁹ Verducci, "A moral method...", *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Karasavvidis, "We saw Carmen...", *op. cit.*

to face its mirror. It may also be supported that the directors in these cases are not merely criticising a society, only to make some noise. They rather appear as artists who, despite any possible negative consequences of such a choice against them, they act politically through their art, doing art directed to their audience, to society and not art for the sake of art, eventually giving art a political role.

This political role may be a reason why the directors in these cases went beyond staging human catastrophe, to staging human tragedy, going beyond from a static snapshot of reality (staging catastrophe) to a critical view of the dynamics that led to the situation photographed (staging tragedy). After all, catastrophe, etymologically comes from Greek and it is composed of two words, *cata-* (κατά) which means down and *-strophe* (στροφή), which means turn. So, catastrophe stands for downturn and as it is used in everyday language, it is about a disaster that comes suddenly and of a massive extent, leaving nothing behind. On the other hand, a *tragedy*, as it is considered in theatre and in life, brings at some point a *catastrophe*, yet it does not hit suddenly, but rather comes as a consequence, while it is also connected with a *crisis*. The latter stands for a decision-taking-process based on certain *criteria*, and at the same time, for a turbulence created after a catastrophe, often without realising that the critical situation eventually leading to the disaster, was already there beforehand. In tragedy, the *crisis* of the tragic hero is fogged by his passion (*πάθος*) and his cloudy judgement leads him/her to committing *hubris*. Therefore, a tragedy, follows a scheme of stages, as the irreversible fate of the tragic hero who commits a *hubris*, such as Eddie in the case of the *View*, a play considered as related to ancient Greek drama⁴¹. Followed by *ate*, as he is blinded by his passion and commits an even more serious crime (betraying Rodolpho), leading to fate's intervention/Gods' wrath which is *nemesis* and, eventually followed by his fall, his disaster, (himself is killed), which is *tisis*. So, contrary to *catastrophe*, which is of static nature, in *tragedy*, which comes as a dynamic process, any disaster is fatal, follows stages and is caused by one's series of actions and choices-decisions (*crises*), who therefore bears responsibility.

In this context, it may be supported that the directors staged catastrophe as tragedy, in the sense that in all the three cases they were interested in a staging of the plays that would be *critical* to society and that would leave viewers with food for thought and a *critical* view of their everyday real-life. In *Iraq* raising awareness on the shared values among the East and the West, the war sufferings and women's perspective were clearly stated as the director's vision as set in a real-life dominating narrative against the East. In the *View* and *Carmen* directors' visions clearly included mirroring society's *hubris* on stage, regarding the way the West treats illegal immigrants and refugees, as set in prevailing real-life daily news.

Overall, the directors expanded from human catastrophe to human tragedy, stressed the political aspect of theatre and re-set the stage as a space of political dialogue and at the same time, as a reflection of society. In other words, the directors eventually questioned the limits between stage and real-life, allowing for audience participants to form their own *crises*/judgements on the *crises*/critical situations and responsibility bearers, through staging them as intertwined with real life.

Finally, one may argue that there is nothing new in discovering the political role of theatre, which is documented across the centuries, with a plethora of plays

⁴¹ Li, "The Idea...", *op. cit.*

from different eras and authors such as Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Brecht and Beckett, to name only a few examples. Yet, the point of the present is that beyond authors, there is also a political role of theatre directors. Directors, as set-stagers interpret any play and present their own narrative. As creative artists themselves, directors may as well be sensitive to society's stimuli and inter-act politically through their art. After all, in *Carmen* and in *View*, there was no need from the texts-plays to present any such human tragedy on stage, nor to connect it with real-life, while for *Iraq*, the staging of the particular play at the particular timing was a political act in itself.

Finally, the fact that perception of their work included scepticism arguably suggests that their perspective is mostly needed. If nobody reacted, it would have meant that no-one would feel inconvenienced, that no-one would care and that human tragedy in real life would have prevailed as a norm. Yet, there was a reaction, which triggered a dialogue. Most importantly, when there is still dialogue, there is still hope.

Conclusions

To sum up, this paper aimed at examining human catastrophe as represented in different case-studies of the contemporary theatre stage of Greece, under the same study – parameters. Despite differences among the performances in terms of the themes of the plays and the sizes of productions, audiences and spaces, artists shared a common need to stage human tragedy, even if not needed by default, as not plainly referred to in the texts of the plays. They also shared an overall *today* approach on the interpretation and staging of their plays, where human tragedy would arise through an overlap between stage and real-life on stage, through different means, mainly scenography, costumes and method acting coaching.

Reasoning for directors' choice to set human tragedy on stage would include raising awareness and critically mirroring society, providing the audiences with food for thought. Perception of the productions was not rather welcoming, possibly implying that society is not yet ready to accept such criticism. Nevertheless, in the case-studies examined, the stage served as a space of political debate, as deliberately and creatively set by the relevant theatre directors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdelfattah, Hany Ali Mahmoud, "When the subaltern speaks: solo narrative performance in Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire* and Issam El-Yousfi's *Tears with Alcohol*," in *Interventions*, 2022, 24(1), pp. 88-101.
- Adorno, Theodor et al, *Aesthetics and politics*, London and New York, Verso Books, 2020.
- Angelopoulos, Tassos, "Corpus Christi Case (2012). An Attempt to Institutionalize Far Right Censorship Against Theatre in Greece," in *Concept*, 2021, 22(1), pp. 61-73.
- Angouri, Jo, and Ruth Wodak, "'They became big in the shadow of the crisis' The Greek Success Story and the Rise of the Far Right," in *Discourse and Society*, 2014, 25(4), pp. 540-565.
- Ar, Gamze, "The Analysis of Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire*." *Melius: Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 2023, 1(1), pp. 1-13.
- Athens Epidaurus Festival, *Carmen by Georges Bizet*, 2018. [online] https://aefestival.gr/festival_events/greek-national-opera-carmen-2018/?lang=en (accessed November 29th, 2023).

- Attir, Mustafa O., "North African Regular and Irregular Migration: The Case of Libya," in *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 2018, 30(2), pp. 1-7.
- Baider, Fabienne, and Anna Bobori, "Online Reactions to the# MeToo Movement," in *La toile et les femmes*, 2023, pp. 59-79.
- Barthel, Laurant, *Carmen sous le Parthénon*, 2023. [online] https://www.concertonet.com/scripts/review.php?ID_review=13262
- Culture Now, *Iraq – 9 Parts of Desire* (in Greek), 2017. [online] <https://www.culturenow.gr/iraq-9-topoi-epithymias-ston-texnoxoro-ergotaxion/> (accessed November 28th, 2023).
- Dams, June, "The Femme Fatale Versus the Sentimental Heroine in Georges Bizet's Operas: Characterisation and Performance," in Sandhoff, Bridget and Hedenborg-White Manon (eds.), *Transgressive Womanhood: Investigating Vamps, Witches, Whores, Serial Killers and Monsters*, Oxfordshire, Interdisciplinary Press, 2014, pp. 153-164.
- Eleftheriadis, Konstantinos, "Queer responses to austerity: Insights from the Greece of crisis," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2015, 14(4), pp. 1032-1057.
- Fouskas, Theodoros, and George Koulierakis, "Demystifying Migration Myths: Social Discourse on the Impact of Immigrants and Refugees in Greece," *Urbanities Journal of Urban Ethnography, Special Issue Greek Crisis Inequalities*, 2022, 12(5), pp. 9-28.
- Greek National Opera, *Odeon of Herodes Atticus – Carmen*, 2018. [online] <https://www.nationalopera.gr/en/archive/productions-archive/season-2017-2018/item/2190-carmen> (accessed November 30th, 2023).
- Istel, Edgar, and Janet Wylie Istel, "Carmen: Novel and Libretto – A Dramaturgic Analysis," *The Musical Quarterly*, 1921, 7(4), pp. 493-510.
- Karasavvidis, Kostas, *We saw Carmen in Herodion (in Greek)*. [online] <https://shorturl.at/mKN07> (accessed November 29th, 2023).
- Kovras, Iosif, and Simon Robins, "Missing migrants: deaths at sea and unidentified bodies in Lesbos," in Green, Sarah and Hastings Donnan (eds.), *Migrating borders and moving times*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017, 157-175.
- Li, Hanyue, "The Idea of Tragedy in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge*," *English Language and Literature Studies*, 2018, 8(2), pp. 115-120.
- Lifo, *Iraq - 9 Parts of Desire*. [online] <https://www.lifo.gr/guide/theater/events/irak-9-topoi-epithymias> (accessed November 28th, 2023).
- Loch, Dietmar, and Ov Cristian Norocel, "The populist radical right in Europe: A xenophobic voice in the global economic crisis," in Guiraudon, Virginie, Carlo Ruzza and Hans-Jörg Trenz (eds), *Europe's prolonged crisis: The making or the unmaking of a political union*. London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015, pp. 251-269.
- Meravolgou, Efi, Interview by Eirini Polydorou about the production and direction of the play by Heather Raffo, *Iraq, 9 parts of Desire*, 10.07.2023.
- Mews, Siegfried, and Herbert Knust (eds.), *Essays on Brecht: Theater and politics*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1974.
- Miller, Arthur, *A View from the Bridge*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
- National Theatre of Greece, *A View from the Bridge by Arthur Miller*, 2018. [online]

- <https://www.n-t.gr/en/events/oldevents/Aviiewfromthebridge> (accessed November 30th, 2023).
- Weales, Gerald, "Arthur Miller: man and his image," *Tulane Drama Review*, 1962, 7(1), pp. 165-180.
- Molenaar, Fransje, and Floor El Kamouni-Janssen, *Turning the tide. The politics of irregular migration in the Sahel and Libya, CRU Report*, The Hague, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2017. [online] <https://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/Irregular-Migration-in-the-Sahel-and-Libya-2.pdf> (accessed November 30th, 2023).
- Raffo, Heather, *Iraq – 9 Parts of Desire*. [online] <https://heatherraffo.com/projects/nine-parts-of-desire/> (accessed November 29th, 2023).
- Saeed, Shaimaa, "Cross-cultural Performativity of Gender Communication in Heather Raffo's Play Nine Parts of Desire," *HERMS*, 2006, 11(3), pp. 325-348.
- Sajadi, Hamid, "Iranian Women's Movement: Political Opportunities and New Forces," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2023, 25(2), pp. 1-13.
- Solbakk, Jan Helge, "You can't go home again: On the conceptualization of disasters in ancient Greek tragedy", in Dranseika, Vilius, Bert Gordijn and Dónal P. O'Mathúna (eds.), *Disasters: Core concepts and ethical theories*, 2018, pp. 87-104.
- Sommerstein, Alan H, "Atê in Aeschylus," in Cairns Douglas (ed.), *Tragedy and Archaic Greek Thought*, 2013, pp. 1-15.
- Tsagkroni, Vassiliki, "First thoughts on the 21 May 2023 election in Greece," *Greek Politics Specialist Group – GPSG Pamphlet*, (7). [online] <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3630037> (accessed November 22th, 2023).
- Tudor, Ciprian, "Bizet's Carmen. Between the cultural agenda of the 19th century and contemporary postcolonial, post-orientalist or feminist readings," *Analele Universității Spiru Haret. Seria Jurnalism*, 2017, 18(2), pp. 5-19.
- Verducci, Susan, "A moral method? Thoughts on cultivating empathy through method acting," in *Journal of Moral Education*, 2000, 29(1), pp. 87-99.
- Tsaroucha, Maria Olon, *Iraq – 9 Parts of Desire* (video, in Greek), 2017, [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmTRjMBg4WM> (accessed November 20th, 2023).
- Walker, Julia A., "'In the Grip of an Obsession': Delsarte and the Quest for Self-Possession, in 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'," *Theatre Journal by the John Hopkins University Press*, 2006, 58(4), pp. 617-636.

**REGARDER, SE LAISSER EMPORTER :
LA CATASTROPHE VISIBLE ET TANGIBLE
DANS LE THÉÂTRE DE ROMEO CASTELLUCCI**

Watch, let yourself be carried away: the visible and tangible catastrophe in the theater of Romeo Castellucci

If Walter Benjamin stated that “the concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are *status quo* is the catastrophe,” theatre director Romeo Castellucci invites spectators to understand the theatrical act both as a means to *watch* the catastrophe and a means to possibly activate a *change* within the “status quo”. In what concerns the treatment of the historical references in connection with the concept of “catastrophe”, these are often adapted and filtered through a dramaturgic transformation process, rendering the precise event in question hard to read in a literal manner. As for the aesthetic representation of the catastrophe, Castellucci plays with the codes of violence in a way that distances the spectators from the perception of what could be qualified as *shock value*. It is from the entanglement of light and sound design with scenic objects and with a certain corporeal quality of presence that a sensual effect evoking the catastrophe is generated. Whether the spectators are exposed to events that they can more easily identify as wars, natural disasters or to an ambiguous but imminent threat that cannot be fully designated, the catastrophe in the theatre of Castellucci acts as a vehicle for both awareness and *transportation*. We will illustrate the hypostases of catastrophe in the stage work of Romeo Castellucci mostly in reference to the *Tragedia Endogonidia* cycle, *Inferno*, and his more recent performance *Bros*.

Key-words: *Romeo Castellucci, catastrophe, visual theatre, falling bodies, representation of violence*

Introduction

Des références à Auschwitz et à l'ère fasciste, des sacrifices, des enfants dévorés, des animaux dont la présence renforce l'atmosphère chargée d'étrangeté, de grands feux et de grands déluges – ce ne sont que quelques-unes des suggestions conceptuelles et visuelles qui font penser à la catastrophe lorsqu'on émerge dans l'univers théâtral de Romeo Castellucci. Pourtant, si l'on analyse chacune de ces instances individuellement, le spectateur s'aperçoit assez vite que celles-ci s'échappent à une contextualisation temporelle et spatiale précise. Si occasionnellement certains événements historiques sont évoqués de manière transparente, c'est sur la suggestion que le metteur en scène italien mise pour faire confronter le spectateur à la catastrophe. Dans cet article, nous avons à dessein d'investiguer l'approche castellucienne de la catastrophe dans un contexte où la

¹ Université Laval, Québec, Canada.

représentation théâtrale comme communication est refusée pour en faire une démonstration du théâtre comme *mise en crise* de la parole et de la représentation, tel que le suggère le metteur en scène lui-même : « La parole met la communication en crise² ».

Pour ce qui est de notre approche, nous allons passer en revue une série de procédés esthétiques et corporels à travers lesquels Castellucci transpose en image et en corps la notion de catastrophe, pour nous arrêter ensuite sur les éléments les plus signifiants inclus dans cette série. Cette partie de notre recherche relève du traitement de ce que nous avons défini par le verbe *regarder* – soit l’analyse du langage scénique relié à la catastrophe – pour annoncer ensuite plusieurs problématiques qui témoignent du verbe *emporter*³. La dimension « emporter » vise les stratégies performatives à travers lesquelles le regard du spectateur est activé dans un sens qui le rapproche d’une potentielle transformation, d’un désir d’agir et de se laisser contaminer par la même matière qui semble métamorphoser les performeurs sur scène. Comment aborder cette perspective d’une possible transformation/ transportation du sujet regardant quand l’auteur même avoue ne croire ni dans le « mysticisme » de l’art ni dans la catharsis véhiculée à travers la scène⁴ ? Quel langage et quelles stratégies extra-langagières pour signifier un *être-ensemble*, ne serait-ce qu’éphémère, durant un moment de traversée symbolique de la catastrophe humaine ? Bien que cette recherche se consacre fondamentalement à l’investigation des éléments esthétiques énoncés en lien avec le verbe « regarder », nous entendons ouvrir à la fin de ce texte une discussion sur la réception de la représentation de la catastrophe qui tienne compte des spécificités du statut de la représentation dans l’œuvre de Castellucci. C’est en nous servant d’illustrations tirées de plusieurs performances signées par Romeo Castellucci, telles que *Tragedia Endogonia*, 2002-2004, *L’Enfer*, 2008, et *Bros*, 2021, que nous allons forger notre analyse de la représentation de la catastrophe chez Castellucci.

Tragédie, violence, catastrophe dans la vision et la pratique théâtrales de Romeo Castellucci

Après avoir fini des études en arts plastiques à Bologne, Castellucci revient à Cesena, sa ville natale du nord de l’Italie, pour y fonder, en 1981, ensemble avec sa sœur Claudia Castellucci et son épouse Chiara Guidi leur compagnie de théâtre, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, qui allait être accueillie dans quelques années partout en Europe comme l’un des projets théâtraux les plus audacieux du début des années 90.

² Notre traduction : « *La parola mette in crisi la comunicazione* », intervention de Romeo Castellucci dans l’émission « *Save the Date* », *RayPlay.it*, le 15 janvier 2021, min. 07:50, [en ligne]. <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2021/01/Save-the-Date-2020-2021---E13-d996fda6-b679-4449-91b5-99ee4fecc408.html> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

³ L’usage du terme dans ce contexte spécifique nous a été inspiré par la locution verbale italienne « *portare via* », souvent employée par Castellucci pour désigner les effets que l’acte théâtral exerce sur l’être humain selon ses convictions (voir, par exemple, ses déclarations lors d’un entretien accordé à la dramaturge Piersandra Di Matteo, « *La Caverna #2* », *YouTube*, chaîne « *Temporada Alta* », min. 27 : 35-28 : 55, [en ligne]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2NlRub7Ruk> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

⁴ Romeo Castellucci, « L’extrême création de Romeo Castellucci », intervention dans l’émission « *L’invité culture* » animée par Olivia Gesbert, *France Culture*, 1 juillet 2019, min. 17, [en ligne]. <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/l-invite-e-culture/l-extreme-creation-de-romeo-castellucci-9702022> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

Bien que Romeo Castellucci rejette l'étiquette de « théâtre visuel » et de « théâtre d'images », il est difficile de ne pas associer la démarche de la Societas à un « théâtre au plus près des arts plastiques⁵ », où se déclinent « la sculpture humaine vivante dans ses frémissements, la figure plastique en mouvement, entre l'engourdissement et la vitalité⁶ ». Parmi les titres les plus notables que l'équipe toujours installée à Cesena a signés au cours de quatre décennies de création, nous mentionnons *Giulio Cesare* (1997), *Genesi. From the Museum of Sleep* (1999), *Tragedia Endogonia* (2001-2004), *Hey Girl!* (2006), le triptyque composé d'*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso* (2008), *Sur le concept du visage du fils de Dieu* (2010), *The Four Seasons Restaurant* (2012), *Go down, Moses* (2015), *Le Metope del Partenone* (2015), *Democracy in America* (2017), *Vita Nuova* (2019), *Bros* (2021) et l'installation-performance *Le Troisième Reich* (2023). Castellucci a quant à lui monté aussi de nombreux spectacles d'opéra.

Interrogé par le journaliste René Solis de *Libération*, Romeo Castellucci désigne sans hésitation « la catastrophe » lorsqu'on lui demande ce qui lui produit de la peur : « Tout ce que je fais a un rapport avec la catastrophe [...] La vraie catastrophe, ce serait que le courant ne passe pas avec les spectateurs. Mais ce serait encore pire si tout se passait gentiment. Humiliant pour tout le monde, une forme d'abdication⁷ ». Affirmation qui n'est pas sans résonance à plusieurs niveaux avec ce que Walter Benjamin désignait par « catastrophe » : « Il faut fonder le concept de progrès sur l'idée de catastrophe. Que les choses continuent comme avant, voilà la catastrophe⁸. » Si la catastrophe ne se fait pas illustrer chez Castellucci en déployant des moyens scénographiques et corporels qui relèvent du grotesque et de l'horreur – comme l'ont fait les Actionnistes viennois⁹ et comme le font encore des metteurs en scène comme Jan Fabre ou Rodrigo Garcia, sans oublier le groupe espagnol La Fura dels Baus¹⁰ –,

⁵ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Le théâtre postdramatique*, traduit de l'allemand par Philippe Hendri-Ledru, Paris, L'Arche, 2002, p. 267.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 267-268.

⁷ Romeo Castellucci interviewé par René Solis, « Tout ce que je fais à un rapport avec la catastrophe », *Libération*, le 4 juillet 2008, [en ligne]. https://www.liberation.fr/cahier-special/2008/07/04/tout-ce-que-je-fais-a-un-rapport-avec-la-catastrophe_75624/ (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire. Un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme*, traduction vers le français de J. Lacoste, Paris, Payot (Petite Bibliothèque Payot), 1982, p. 342.

⁹ Groupe autrichien fondé par Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch et Rudolf Schwarzkogler en réponse au conservatisme catholique qui caractérise l'Autriche immédiatement après la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Leur esthétique corporelle est décrite ainsi par Matthias Schäfer : « Le corps devient un outil afin de libérer des angoisses inconscientes et refoulées. Il est employé en tant que miroir des pires excès et cruautés existant dans notre société, et devient objet chamanique qui absorbe le mal de l'humanité et qui doit le guérir. Ainsi, par l'utilisation orgiaque et symbolique du sang et d'excréments, le corps devient métaphore des sentiments refoulés. », dans Matthias Schäfer, « Le corps comme garant du réel », *La lettre de l'enfance et de l'adolescence*, Érès, no. 3/ 69, 2007, p. 89, [en ligne]. DOI : 10.3917/lett.069.0087 (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

¹⁰ Groupe performatif catalan fondé en 1979 qui, tout comme les Actionnistes viennois, met en scène un corps radical, en faisant usage d'une violence souvent choquante à l'époque : « les corps des acteurs se confrontent également, dans des actions souvent violentes et destructrices, aux objets industriels les plus variés (carcasses de voitures, automates motorisés, aquariums, caddies de supermarché, barils de pétrole, écrans de télé...), ainsi qu'aux matières organiques ou à des dispositifs technologiques inquiétants. », « La Fura dels Baus », dans *La Contra Ola*.

il importe néanmoins de revenir à l'étymologie du terme « catastrophe » pour mieux comprendre une possible grille de lecture de cette dernière dans les créations scéniques de l'artiste italien.

Lorsqu'on se dirige vers son sens grec, la catastrophe renvoie à l'idée de « bouleversement¹¹ » : si l'on se sépare donc de sa signification généralisée de « grand malheur¹² » et si l'on met en lumière le sens de « bouleversement, renversement » en premier, il est possible de constater que la « catastrophe » est beaucoup plus présente dans le théâtre de Castellucci qu'on ne le soupçonne à premier abord. Il est en premier lieu question d'un bouleversement des codes théâtraux, qui, bien que singulier et facilement reconnaissable par ceux qui suivent son travail, s'inscrit dans les mutations plus larges entraînées par ce que Hans-Thies Lehmann appelle le « théâtre postdramatique¹³ » (qui ne constituent pas l'objet de notre recherche actuelle).

Deuxièmement, le « bouleversement » en contexte d'imaginaire catastrophique dans l'œuvre scénique de Castellucci dépasse les marges des actions et des images scéniques pour signaler un potentiel effet auprès des spectateurs. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'un bouleversement émotionnel éphémère et superficiel mais plutôt du fait d'accepter l'expérience théâtrale comme une réaction de résistance au réel. Cette résistance ne comporte rien d'une tendance esthétisante-escapiste – approche qui n'a jamais caractérisé les démarches théâtrales de Romeo et Claudia Castellucci –, mais une qui fait du théâtre « un mode de reconfiguration du réel, une façon de donner potentiellement un sens au réel ou, tout le contraire, de lui enlever le sens¹⁴. » Ou bien : « Ce qui nous intéresse nous (c'est-à-dire moi), c'est d'*ouvrir une fissure dans le réel* et donner l'accès à un autre monde : celui de la conception [...] Concevoir, c'est "accueillir". Le ventre de la conception devient ainsi un lieu d'incubation et d'ouverture¹⁵ » [c'est nous qui soulignons]. Et encore cette conviction sur le décalage du théâtre d'avec le réel :

La seule chose dont je sois sûr, c'est que, au théâtre, on n'a pas le droit de montrer la réalité. La vraie violence, le vrai sang. Au théâtre, l'interdit, c'est la réalité. Je ne crois pas au théâtre-vérité. Au théâtre, tout doit être faux. Le théâtre, c'est la pure fiction, l'impossible conjonction de l'espace et du temps,

Synth Wave and post punk from Spain 1980-86, [en ligne]. <https://lacontraola.com/la-fura-dels-baus/> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

¹¹ « Catastrophe », *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, [en ligne].

<https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9C1095> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

¹² « Catastrophe », *La Langue Française*, [en ligne].

<https://www.lalanguefrancaise.com/dictionnaire/definition/catastrophe> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

¹³ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Le théâtre postdramatique*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Notre traduction du texte original en italien : « *È un modo di riconfigurare anche l'esperienza del reale, è un modo di dare possibilmente un senso o anche togliere senso alla realtà.* », Romeo Castellucci en dialogue avec Piersandra Di Matteo, « La Caverna #2 », *YouTube*, min. 19:25, *source citée*.

¹⁵ Romeo Castellucci, « Lettre de Romeo Castellucci au Festival d'Avignon », Blog de la revue *Alternatives théâtrales*, 26 février 2016, [en ligne]. <https://blog.alternativestheatrales.be/lettre-de-romeo-castellucci-au-festival-davignon/> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

l'ailleurs. Car seul le faux permet le travail de l'intelligence, fait que le spectateur n'est pas l'otage de ce qu'il voit¹⁶.

Les dimensions sous lesquelles se présentent la tragédie et la violence dans le théâtre de Castellucci constituent en soi des sujets qui dépassent largement les cadres fixés par notre recherche. Toutefois, nous ne pouvons pas procéder à l'analyse des signes de la catastrophe dans les spectacles de notre corpus sans faire quelques précisions fondamentales pour la compréhension de la grammaire castellucienne. Car c'est la tragédie – et la violence qui l'accompagne de manière inhérente – qui est constitutive de l'acte théâtral chez Castellucci, même lorsqu'il est question de performances comme *Hey Girl!* ou *Vita Nuova*, où la relation avec la tragédie est moins transparente que dans *Tragedia Endogonia* ou dans les spectacles inspirés par *La Divine Comédie* de Dante Alighieri. Le metteur en scène rappelle à cet égard qu'il ne suffit pas de constater la présence des *malheurs* pour qu'il y ait aussi une « conscience de la tragédie¹⁷ » :

La tragédie a pris le nom de tragédie parce que quelqu'un s'est mis à crier : le dieu Pan est mort. La fonction du théâtre, comme celle de l'acteur, est depuis toujours une fonction religieuse, rassembleuse, au sens étymologique du mot. La communauté instantanée que le théâtre crée – une communion entre des personnes qui ne se connaissent pas –, s'organise précisément autour de ce vide. Je considère qu'il est indispensable de laisser vide ce vide. La fonction historique du théâtre est bien la division, et non la fausse réunion¹⁸.

Quant au rôle de la violence dans ce réseau complexe d'agents de la tragédie, Castellucci souligne son refus d'une violence « du sang [...], du divertissement, du sensationnel. [...] La violence est une force qui t'emporte et qui te transporte là où tu ne voudrais pas être, là où tu ne t'attends pas du tout¹⁹. » Pour Castellucci, l'*image* est le véhicule principal de la violence, cette « force » donc qui confère à la tragédie la consistance qui lui est propre, puisque l'image est la seule capable d'accomplir ce processus de *transportation*²⁰ : « Mais l'image que je reçois n'est pas violente parce qu'il y a du sang. Finalement l'image peut être très bien une qui soit tendre. Elle est violente parce qu'elle t'emporte et parce que les outils habituels de raisonnement ne sont plus suffisants²¹ ».

¹⁶ Romeo Castellucci interviewé par Fabienne Pascaud, « Au théâtre, l'interdit, c'est la réalité », *Télérama*, le 7 juillet 2012, [en ligne]. <https://www.telerama.fr/scenes/romeo-castellucci-au-theatre-l-interdit-c-est-la-realite,83898.php> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

¹⁷ Romeo Castellucci dans Enrico Pitozzi et Annalissa Sacchi, *Itinera. Trajectoires de la forme. Tragedia Endogonia*, Actes Sud, 2008, p. 13.

¹⁸ Bruno Tackels, *Les Castellucci*, Besançon, Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2005, p. 64.

¹⁹ Notre traduction du texte original en italien : « *La violenza non è quella stereotipata del sangue, non è la violenza quella che ha che fare con l'entertainment [...] La violenza è quella forza che ti porta via là dove tu non vuoi, là dove tu non ti aspetteresti.* », Romeo Castellucci en dialogue avec Piersandra Di Matteo, « La Caverna #2 », *YouTube*, min. 26:27 et min. 27:38, *source citée*.

²⁰ En italien : « *portare via* », voir note 2.

²¹ Notre traduction du texte original en italien : « *Ma l'immagine che ricevo non è violenta perché c'è del sangue. Potrebbe anche essere un'immagine tenera. Ma è violenta perché ti porta via e gli strumenti che hai di giudizio non sono più sufficienti.* », Romeo Castellucci en dialogue avec Piersandra Di Matteo, « La Caverna #2 », *YouTube*, min. 28:30, *source citée*.

Notons que dans le discours de Castellucci la tragédie n'est ni un événement « malheureux » ni un « retour au passé²² » à travers lequel le metteur en scène chercherait à actualiser des formes rituelles en faisant usage d'un langage contemporain. Sans entrer ici dans les complexités des axes de communication reliant rituel, violence et tragédie dans le théâtre de Romeo Castellucci, nous retiendrons, dans ce contexte où notre attention se penche en particulier sur les images de la catastrophe, que la tragédie est une occasion d'interrogation individuelle et collective par rapport au sens de l'apparition de l'individu au monde²³ (plutôt que par rapport à la mort, comme on pourrait s'y attendre). Elle se présente aussi comme une occasion de réflexion communautaire²⁴ autour du cycle infini de la vie et de la mort.

Présentation du corpus

Tragedia Endogonia (2001-2004) est constituée de plusieurs épisodes dont chacun porte le nom d'une ville où l'épisode en question est joué. Le titre incarne l'antinomie entre la fin à laquelle renvoie le terme « tragédie » et la reproduction infinie de la vie captée par le terme « endogonia²⁵ », employé en biologie pour désigner la capacité de certains organismes vivants minuscules de se multiplier par eux-mêmes, étant dotés de gonades tant féminines que masculines et donc capables d'une reproduction sans fin. Les épisodes témoignent d'une conception circulaire de la dramaturgie, étant intitulés ainsi : C.#01 Cesena, A.#02 Avignon, B.#3 Berlin, BR.#4 Bruxelles, BN.#5 Bergen, P.#6 Paris, R.#7 Roma, S.#08 Strasbourg, L.#09 London, M.#10 Marseille, C.#11 Cesena. *Crescite*.

En 2008, Romeo Castellucci a présenté au Festival d'Avignon trois spectacles inspirés par *La Divine Comédie* de Dante Alighieri : *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* et *Paradiso*. Définissant lui-même le chef d'œuvre dantesque comme « l'antimatière du théâtre²⁶ », il se donne comme mission, non la « traduction » scénique de la *Comédie*, mais l'activation d'une « condition où l'on se place pour mieux voir, pour se métamorphoser en voyant²⁷ », sans que des vers du poème de Dante se fassent entendre durant ce voyage. Dans ce cycle, c'est *Inferno* qui constitue le point principal d'appui dans notre analyse. Au côté des artistes professionnels présents sur scène, une

²² Romeo Castellucci dans Enrico Pitozzi, Annalisa Sacchi, *Itinera. op. cit.*, p. 13

²³ « Dans la tragédie grecque, par exemple, nous sommes seuls face à l'obscène, face à l'horreur de la vie, face au problème d'être né », dans « Le théâtre est un champ de bataille », entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, *Olga Blog*, 3 novembre 2023. [en ligne] <https://olgablog.co/romeo-castellucci-le-theatre-est-un-champ-de-bataille-2/> (Consulté le 25 novembre).

²⁴ Romeo Castellucci dans Enrico Pitozzi, Annalisa Sacchi, *Itinera. op. cit.*, p. 17.

²⁵ « Extract : Focus *Tragedia Endogonia* », site officiel du *Romaeuropa Festival*, le 22 janvier 2021, [en ligne]. <https://romaeuropa.net/news/extract-tragedia-endogonia/> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).

²⁶ Notre traduction du texte original en italien : « *l'antimateria del teatro* ». Romeo Castellucci, « Incontri Ravvicinati. Romeo Castellucci », *RaiTV*, [en ligne]. <https://www.raicultura.it/teatro-e-danza/articoli/2023/10/Incontri-Ravvicinati-2db15891-1f6d-4ed9-9113-9e7023299550.html> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).

²⁷ Entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, propos recueillis par Antoine de Baecque pour le *Festival d'Avignon*, 2008, 62^e édition, [en ligne]. <https://festival-avignon.com/fr/edition-2008/programmation/paradiso-24611#page-content> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).

cinquantaine d'amateurs ont été recrutés²⁸ pour participer à ce que Castellucci a conçu comme un « monument de la douleur²⁹ ». Joué dans la Cour d'honneur du Palais des Papes, *Inferno* intègre cet espace particulier à tous les niveaux de conception dramaturgique : « Nous voulons imaginer une succession d'événements, une occupation de l'espace, qui seraient capables de rencontrer cette architecture, non comme décor de théâtre mais comme 'reste', comme passé réclamant d'être repris et ressuscité.³⁰ »

Parmi les spectacles de notre corpus, *Bros* est le plus récent et celui qui touche le plus sensiblement à des problématiques sociales actuelles bouleversant le monde occidental. Envisagée comme « farce existentielle qui nous pousse à réexaminer notre relation avec la liberté, la justice, la violence, la responsabilité personnelle, la pensée critique, le devoir de rendre des comptes et avec l'obéissance³¹ », la performance est basée sur un principe dramaturgique inédit : les 23 performeurs qui incarnent les policiers sont obligés de suivre en temps réel, suite à un engagement écrit qu'ils auront signé, les indications reçues dans leurs oreillettes, même si elles sont absurdes et même si elles risquent de les mettre en danger ou de les pousser à des actes anticiviques. Défilent sur scène un vieil homme (Valer Dellakeza) donnant corps au prophète Jérémie lorsqu'il profère des incantations en roumain, des images géantes représentant un singe et le portrait de Samuel Beckett, pendant que des quantités diluviennes d'eau s'écoulent ; enfin, entre ces éléments distinctifs, c'est la violence qui s'infiltré partout.

La chute – tomber dans l'histoire, tomber dans la catastrophe

Parmi les procédés esthétiques et corporels à travers lesquels nous cherchons à illustrer le verbe « regarder » tel qu'expliqué en début de ce texte, nous avons repéré sept catégories principales qui y sont liées dans le contexte d'un imaginaire catastrophique : des objets, des corps et des matières qui chutent, l'usage d'une palette chromatique spécifique renvoyant à des éléments rituels et mythiques bien ancrés dans l'imaginaire collectif (par exemple, le rouge pour le sacrifice et le sang, le blanc pour une éventuelle purification, le noir pour renforcer la sensation de vide et de pesanteur), la présence des animaux, l'apparition des enfants, l'emploi d'objets à connotation sacrée ou symbolique dans un contexte quotidien (la Menorah³² dans *P.#6 Paris*, les vêtements des prêtres dans *R.#7 Roma*, le piano brûlant dans *Inferno*) ou, à l'inverse,

²⁸ Brigitte Salino, « Castellucci mène *L'Enfer* au sommet », https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2008/07/07/theatre-castellucci-mene-l-enfer-au-sommet_1067221_3246.html, le 7 juillet 2008, [en ligne]. https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2008/07/07/theatre-castellucci-mene-l-enfer-au-sommet_1067221_3246.html (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).

²⁹ *Inferno*, Programme du *Festival d'Avignon*, 2008, 62^e édition, [en ligne]. <https://festival-avignon.com/fr/edition-2008/programmation/inferno-24609#page-content> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).

³⁰ *Idem*.

³¹ Notre traduction du texte original en anglais: « *existential farce that spurs us to re-examine our relationship with freedom, justice, violence, personal responsibility, critical thought, accountability, and obedience.* », dans « Bros | Romeo Castellucci. A curious ritual that toys with law and order at Onassis Stegi », *Onassis.org*, 2022, [en ligne]. <https://www.onassis.org/whats-on/bros-romeo-castellucci> (Consulté le 27 novembre).

³² Le chandelier juif à sept bras.

l'emploi d'objets renvoyant au quotidien dans un contexte investi de significations sacrées (le ballon et les voitures dans *Inferno*, les machines à laver dans *P.#6 Paris*). Enfin, la dernière catégorie concerne l'évocation de figures historiques importantes pour l'évolution de la culture occidentale, comme Beckett (*Bros*), ou des personnalités historiques et mythologiques qui évoquent soit la guerre (Charles de Gaulle dans *P.#6 Paris*, Mussolini dans *R.#7 Roma*), soit un bouleversement radical du cours de l'histoire, comme Jésus-Christ ou Abraham dans *P.#6 Paris*. Bien entendu, le lien des éléments évoqués avec la catastrophe est amplifié par un usage dramaturgique de l'éclairage, des sons et de la scénographie qui va, lui aussi, dans le même sens.

Dans le cadre des *Journées d'études* intitulées « Représentations de la catastrophe humaine en théâtre et en arts de la scène », organisées³³ au Département de théâtre de l'Université du Péloponnèse à Nauplie, les 28 et 29 juillet 2023, nous avons pu présenter la recherche actuelle sous la forme d'une communication. Grâce à ce format, nous avons également bénéficié de tous les moyens techniques qui permettent l'illustration d'un thème comme la catastrophe, où l'aspect visuel a une importance majeure, à travers des images et des extraits vidéos commentés.

En tenant compte des conditions actuelles de production discursive, nous avons choisi de sélectionner, parmi les nombreux éléments esthétiques et corporels intégrés dans la communication soutenue aux *Journées d'études*, une seule catégorie qui nous rapproche de la représentation³⁴ de la catastrophe dans les spectacles de notre corpus. Nous nommons ici *la chute des corps*³⁵, précisant que dans la sphère des « corps » nous introduisons le sens qui lui assignent la physique et la chimie, c'est-à-dire toute substance ou objet matériel. Ce regroupement nous permettra ainsi de constater l'amplitude et l'intensité de certains signes qui traversent le thème de la catastrophe, qu'il s'agisse d'un corps humain mis dans une situation chorégraphique impliquant la chute dans *Inferno* ou de l'eau qui coule sur le plateau de *Bros*. Quant au terme « chute », on lui accorde aussi un élargissement sémantique qui va de des gestes les plus évidents – comme le saut dans le vide – jusqu'à des sens qui permettent de réfléchir à l'écoulement des liquides comme étant également une forme de chute. Dès que le contexte nous le permet, nous allons mettre en lien les corps en chute avec des éléments que nous avons associés à d'autres catégories parmi celles mentionnées ci-dessus en lien avec la catastrophe.

Commençons par souligner, dans l'analyse des corps en chute, que chez Castellucci la *chute* relève d'un paradoxe qui est si plastiquement suggéré par le titre

³³ Dans le cadre du projet de recherche dirigé par Liviu Dospinescu, « La représentation des catastrophes humaines au début du XXI^e siècle comme rite de passage : drame social ou retour à la tragédie ? », subvention CRSH Savoir, Conseil des recherches en sciences humaines et sociales du Canada, 2021-2026.

³⁴ Bien que le mot « représentation » ne soit pas le plus fidèle par rapport au discours scénique et théorique de Romeo Castellucci, dont le théâtre est un véritable manifeste « anti »-représentation, nous avons néanmoins choisi de maintenir ce terme. D'abord pour éviter de tomber dans le piège d'autres terminologies qui risquent d'être tout aussi éloignées de l'« esprit castellucien » mais aussi parce qu'en se plaçant à l'intérieur de ce champ sémantique il sera plus facile de poser également le débat concernant les possibles difficultés spectatorielles liées précisément à ce refus de la « représentation ». Nous invitons le lecteur à tenir compte de ces nuances, appuyées aussi par les éléments apportés dans les sections précédentes, lorsque le terme « représentation » se glisse dans notre discours.

³⁵ « *falling bodies* » dans la communication mentionnée ci-dessous.

Tragedia Endogonia : en ce sens, les hypostases à travers lesquelles la chute est activée relèvent d'une ambiguïté qui ne saurait trancher entre la sphère du *vivant* et celle de la *mort*. Pour distinguer entre les différentes catégories de corps en chute, nous avons organisé leur analyse en tenant compte des thèmes qui les réunissent mais aussi de leur nature et de leur texture. Nous allons ainsi aborder dans ce qui suit la chute des corps humains, la chute des objets « lourds » et la chute des corps liquides.

La chute des corps humains – défier sa condition, défier la gravité

Dans *Inferno*, les performeurs professionnels et amateurs sont à la fois des inconnus et des proches à qui on tente de sauver la vie lorsque la simulation d'un accident a lieu. Des bouches grand-ouvertes simulent les cris en se synchronisant aux sons travaillés par Scott Gibbons, collaborateur de longue date de Castellucci. Pour certains performeurs, l'accident est suivi par une autre forme de « disparition ». Montant sur une plate-forme surélevée – immense boîte couverte d'une toile noire – certains d'entre eux, hommes et femmes, s'y posent frontalement mais aussi de dos, maintenant une posture qui suggère l'envol – bras en croix et les yeux rivés vers le ciel³⁶. Ils disparaissent ensuite derrière cet inédit autel, sans que le spectateur puisse saisir l'intégralité du geste qui constitue la chute. Lors de cet enchaînement de chutes, des titres d'œuvres d'Andy Warhol sont projetés sur les murs de la Cour des papes : *Banana* (1966), *Self-portrait* (1964), *Marilyn Monroe* (1967), *Hammer and Sickle* (1977), *Empire* (1963), *Kiss* (1963-1964), *Vinyl* (1968), *Knives* (1981). Si le travail sonore et l'obscurité du plateau entretiennent une ambiance funeste, les corps en chute réfutent toute forme d'affectation. Les visages contemplatifs n'affichent aucun signe d'emprise de panique ou d'horreur, contrairement à la gestuelle beaucoup plus expressive étalée pendant l'épisode de simulation d'accident déroulée antérieurement aux chutes.

Dans son analyse du saut dans *La danse du temps* de la chorégraphe Régine Chopinot, Amanda Cron-Faure avance, sur la figure de la chute :

C'est grâce à l'action permanente de chaînes musculaires que le corps peut maintenir sa posture érigée, luttant contre les contraintes de la gravité. L'inhibition ou la suspension de cette fonction tonique provoquent la chute. Si l'on définit l'homme de par sa posture érigée, la chute représente son désir d'attraction vers le sol, un « lâcher prise » où se joue l'abandon d'un état habituel³⁷.

Dans cette lumière, les corps en chute dans la séquence analysée s'imposent, eux aussi, comme des entités « luttant contre les contraintes de la gravité ». S'extirpant de la foule soumise aux épreuves de l'enfer pour passer à un état « autre », sans exprimer l'horreur de la mort et la peur du vide dans lequel ils sont en train de plonger, les individus se libèrent de « l'effort d'être soi³⁸ » pour mettre le corps dans un rapport inédit avec les lois de la gravité. Ils font du passage de l'axe vertical à l'axe horizontal

³⁶ *Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, Romeo Castellucci, DVD, Paris, Arte Éditions, 2009. La scène se déroule entre les minutes 54 et 58.

³⁷ Amanda Cron-Faure, « Le saut et la chute dans La Danse du temps », *Repères. Cahier de danse*, Éditions La Briqueterie/ CDCN du Val-de-Marne, no. 2, 2009, p. 16, [en ligne]. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-reperes-cahier-de-danse-2009-2-page-15.htm> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).

³⁸ David Le Breton, *Disparaître de soi. Une tentation contemporaine*, Paris, Métailié, 2015, p. 34.

non seulement un « désir d'envol³⁹ » mais aussi un accueil volontaire du *risque* : si les maux vécus sur la surface du plancher sont subis, incontrôlables et régis par le hasard, l'exposition au risque de la chute est un choix qui souligne le désir de « disparaître de soi » comme une propension vers la continuité de la vie.

Dans une perspective ontologique chrétienne, la chute, comprise comme l'entrée du péché dans l'Univers, entraîne l'éloignement de l'être de l'essence, « le point d'où l'être humain a 'chuté', la nature réelle et non-déformée des choses⁴⁰ », dans les termes du théologien Paul Tillich, et elle ne peut plus se révéler que par la médiation de la grâce christique. Dans *Inferno*, la chute est une tentative de se sauver soi-même en contrecarrant à la pesanteur d'une condition défaillante la grâce exercée, dans la vision de Simone Weil, par la *décréation*, c'est-à-dire « l'acte de faire passer du créé dans l'incrée⁴¹. »

Figure cruciale de la grammaire de la danse contemporaine, la chute constitue une signature incontestable chez des chorégraphes comme Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), pour qui « la chute et le rétablissement sont la nature même du mouvement⁴² », en passant par Trisha Brown (1936-2017), dont le travail entier interroge le rôle de la gravité, jusqu'à Willi Dorner ou Catherine Diverrière.

Ce qui rend la chorégraphie de Cindy Van Acker pour *Inferno* encore plus pertinente dans la perspective de la catastrophe est le fait d'obscurcir une partie du processus de chute. Les spectateurs assistent au moment où les performeurs préparent l'envol pendant quelques secondes d'immobilité contemplative et à la descente qui s'ensuit, sans pourtant être témoins de l'atterrissage qui atteste de la « réussite » ou de l'« échec » de la chute. Pour Lee Yanor, « la notion de chute est quelque chose de très total, c'est une fin et un début⁴³ » ; dans *Inferno*, les spectateurs n'ont pas accès à la « fin » de la chute, qui s'avère ici dépourvue d'intérêt.

Amanda Cron-Faure note quant à elle que « la suspension est le moment qui souvent marque les esprits » parce qu'elle « donne l'illusion que le danseur échappe, pour un instant, aux lois de la gravité⁴⁴ ». Dans ce contexte, il est stimulant de constater que l'intérêt de la suspension dans *Inferno* réside précisément dans la place que les auteurs Castellucci et Van Acker accordent à l'« investissement imaginaire du spectateur⁴⁵ », qui a la liberté d'y voir tantôt une image de la catastrophe, tantôt la promesse d'une métamorphose libératrice.

³⁹ Amanda Cron-Faure, « Le saut et la chute dans La Danse du temps », *art. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Notre traduction du texte original en anglais : « *Essence as that from which being has "fallen", the true and undistorted nature of things* », dans Paul Tillich, « Being and the Question of God », *Systematic Theology*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 203.

⁴¹ Simone Weil, *La pesanteur et la grâce*, Paris, Librairie Plon, Agora, 1988 (1947), p. 42.

⁴² Catherine Diverrière, Julie Charrier, « CND Écriture chorégraphique », décembre 2020, Centre National de la Danse, décembre 2020, p. 33, [en ligne]. <https://www.cnd.fr/fr/file/file/1910/inline/Synthe%CC%80se-Julie%20Charrier-Catherine%20Diverre%CC%80s.pdf> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Amanda Cron-Faure, « Le saut et la chute dans La Danse du temps », *art. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁵ François Le Goff, Julien Botella, « Expérience esthétique et imaginaire scénique : usages de la captation dans la lecture du texte théâtral », *Pratiques, littérature, didactique*, no. 193-194 – « Pour une didactique du théâtre : entre textes, jeux et représentation », 2022, p. 13, [en ligne]. <https://doi.org/10.4000/pratiques.11529> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).

L'on revoit en revanche les figures ayant performé la chute jouer de nouveau au niveau du sol dans les séquences suivantes, preuve que dans le paradigme castellucien ni la chute comme infiltration du péché ni la chute comme abandon au vide infernal ne sont définitives. Conçues comme des étapes fragmentées d'un processus où le spectateur est invité à s'interroger « sur le rapport entre représentation et négation du paraître⁴⁶ », les chutes s'articulent comme possible remède individuel face à une catastrophe qui touche le collectif.

La chute des corps lourds – l'écrasante (post)modernité

L'écroulement des écrans TV et les voitures qui tombent s'inscrivent davantage dans une forme de spectacularité visuelle spécifique au langage scénique de Castellucci. Aussi intrigante que la chute à moitié cachée d'un corps humain puisse l'être, les voitures et les écrans qui descendent dans *Inferno* et dans *P.#6 Paris* sont d'autant plus éblouissants sur le plateau par l'association inattendue des signes. Là où l'on se croit dans une sorte d'hétérotopie protégée de toute immixtion du quotidien, des objets « brutaux » y font leur apparition.

Souvent dans le cadre des dramaturgies postdramatiques, l'insertion inattendue des objets du quotidien fonctionne comme une césure ironique qui permet une distanciation critique par rapport à la gravité du sujet abordé – comme c'est souvent le cas dans les spectacles de Jan Fabre⁴⁷. Or, dans *Inferno* et dans *P.#6 Paris*, l'alliance étonnante entre les objets du quotidien et des réseaux de signes renvoyant à l'extraordinaire amplifie l'exceptionnalité de l'espace-temps proposé plutôt que de créer une brèche permettant de s'éloigner temporairement de la *pesanteur* dominante.

Vers la fin d'*Inferno*, une équipe de performeurs vêtus de costumes d'ambulanciers introduit sur scène une voiture écrasée et carbonisée. C'est de là que sort une silhouette dont le masque attaché au visage et la perruque font immédiatement penser à Andy Warhol, le « père du Pop Art ». Agissant sur scène comme un intrus qui n'a pas l'air de se sentir confortable sur le plateau, il prend des photos avec sa caméra et joue avec une voiture téléguidée pendant que derrière lui l'on saisit des corps étalés sur plusieurs niveaux dont on ne perçoit que les semelles – possible références aux chambres de gaz à Auschwitz.

Montant sur la voiture brûlée, il exécute lui aussi une chute – chorégraphiquement moins élaborée que celles analysées dans le sous-chapitre précédent, mais inscrite dans un même rapport de proximité avec le vide et avec la perspective d'une « disparition de soi⁴⁸ ». Après ces chutes, les téléviseurs accrochés en haut sur la façade de la cour du Palais des Papes tombent eux aussi un par un, désintégrant ainsi le mot « ÉTOILES » que les lettres inscrites sur leurs écrans composaient, jusqu'à ce qu'on puisse lire « TOI » sur les écrans des trois téléviseurs encore accrochés au mur. Après cet enchaînement de chutes, « Warhol » se retire dans

⁴⁶ Ces propos ont été émis dans le contexte d'un commentaire sur un autre spectacle de Castellucci, *The Four Seasons Restaurant*. « The Four Seasons Restaurant: Romeo Castellucci / Festival d'Avignon », *Le Bruit du Off*, 30 mars 2011, [en ligne]. <https://lebruitduoff.com/2011/03/30/the-four-seasons-restaurant-romeo-castellucci-festival-davignon-2012/> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).

⁴⁷ Voir, par exemple, la multitude de poupées Barbie dans *Tant que le monde a besoin d'une âme guerrière* de Jan Fabre (2000).

⁴⁸ Voir David Le Breton, *Disparaître de soi, une tentation contemporaine*, op. cit.

la même voiture d'où il avait surgi, geste qui marque la fin du spectacle. L'association d'Andy Warhol avec les écrans télé n'est pas difficile à déchiffrer sous l'angle de la sémantique du Pop Art, phénomène artistique qui entretient un rapport particulier avec la reproduction des images et leur circulation : tant les écrans de télévision que l'apparence d'Andy Warhol figuré à travers un masque renvoient à une forme d'artificialité.

Rendant compte de la transition entre la modernité fascinée par la vie des machines et une postmodernité qui redécouvrira plus tard, à travers la danse contemporaine américaine et l'art performance, les bases organiques de l'acte scénique, l'artificialité des téléviseurs contraste ici avec un autre usage qu'en a été fait dans une autre performance célèbre. En 1971, à New York, la violoncelliste et performeuse avant-gardiste Charlotte Moorman jouait toute nue de son instrument, portant les installations intitulées *TV Cello* et *TV Glasses*, créées par Niam June Paik et composées d'écrans télé, de boîtes en plexiglass et de nombreux câbles. Hannah Higgins, professeure d'art à l'Université d'Illinois, expliquait ainsi l'attachement de l'artiste américaine à ces objets artificiels : Moorman voulait transformer la perception selon laquelle « la technologie est cette chose qui est complètement séparée du corps » pour en faire « une extension du corps.⁴⁹ » À l'opposée, les écrans fonctionnent dans *Inferno* non comme une extension du corps mais comme une annulation de ce dernier, comme si la chair, défaillante et soumise à la dégradation, devenait obsolète en présence de ces matières lourdes promettant la *vie-diffusion* éternelle.

Ce qui est plus stimulant à saisir dans cette association, si l'on se réfère toujours à la catastrophe, c'est le rapport avec l'histoire : Qu'est-ce qui *tombe* et s'écrase véritablement lorsque ce « Virgile moderne⁵⁰ » chute en même temps que les écrans télé qui produisent ainsi un son infernal en émanant de la fumée par terre? Expliquant son intérêt pour Warhol, Castellucci articule ainsi sa vision du rapport de l'artiste américain avec l'histoire : « À l'instar du poète latin Virgile, c'est un artiste qui a déjà vu l'Enfer. L'Enfer de Warhol, c'est la surface, le silence, le rien du langage [...] Il est ma référence à une époque plutôt qu'à l'histoire, puisqu'avec Andy Warhol, d'une certaine façon, c'est l'histoire même qui se termine⁵¹. »

Marquant la sortie définitive du modernisme et le passage vers le postmodernisme de l'ironie, de la répétition et de la « surface », l'œuvre de l'artiste qui a changé le monde de l'art avec ses photographies sérigraphiées sur toile correspond à ce que le théoricien Stanley Trachtenberg définissait comme spécificité de l'art postmoderne, soit « la tendance simultanée de vider l'œuvre de signification

⁴⁹ Notre traduction du texte original en anglais : « *technology being this thing that's really separate from the body* », dans Elizabeth Bacharach, « Charlotte Moorman: Shattering Barriers between art and technology », le 24 février 2016, [en ligne]. <https://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/charlotte-moorman-shattering-barriers-between-art-and-technology/> (Consulté le 1^{er} décembre 2023).

⁵⁰ Margherita Laera, « Comedy, Tragedy, and 'Universal Structures'. Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* », *Theatre Forum*, no. 36, 2010, p. 5.

⁵¹ Notre traduction du texte original en anglais : « *Like the Latin poet Virgil, he is an artist who has already seen Hell. Warhol's hell is the surface, the silence, the nothingness of language [...] He is my reference to an epoch, rather than to History, because with Andy Warhol, in a certain sense, History ends.* », *ibid.*, p. 8.

et de la réifier en tant qu'objet dans le monde⁵². » Le « vide du langage » dont parlait Castellucci et le « vide de signification » dans la production artistique que prolifèrent le postmodernisme seraient-ils ainsi une « catastrophe » ?

La chute des téléviseurs et les chutes d'Andy Warhol que Castellucci met en scène semblent indiquer que « la fin de l'Histoire » ne coïncide pas avec la fin de la vie : si l'auteur s'efface au profit d'une artificialité extrême, si les véhicules des images reproduites en série s'écrasent pour être remplacés par des machines encore plus performantes, la prolifération de l'*image* se poursuit à l'infini, indifféremment des conditions historiques et technologiques. En tant que preuve, la *représentation* même d'*Inferno* qui, en montrant à travers l'image la fin du langage et la fin de l'Histoire, participe à l'annulation de la perception de ces événements comme « Catastrophe ».

C'est dans un sens similaire que l'on peut rapprocher la chute d'une autre catégorie d'objets lourds dans *P.#6 Paris* de l'imaginaire de la catastrophe chez Castellucci. Dans cette performance du cycle *Tragedia Endogonidia* qui commence par l'évocation du sacrifice de Jacob par Abraham – avec des machines à laver à la place de l'autel qui apparaît dans le livre de la Genèse – Jésus se trouve sur scène, après avoir été contrôlé par des militaires, en compagnie d'un cheval dont seule la croupe est visible et d'une femme sur le plan gauche. La femme, dont l'apparence indique une paysanne qui ne comporte aucun signe outrancier à part la poitrine dévoilée, commence compulsivement à tirer du lait de ses deux seins.

Immobile et implacable, Jésus regarde frontalement le public lorsqu'une ancienne voiture descend des cintres⁵³, bouleversant ainsi l'ambiance calme où seul le son (produit électroniquement) des seins dont coule le lait se fait entendre. Quelques secondes plus tard, deux autres voitures émergent simultanément sur le plateau suivant le même modèle. À la fin de cette séquence, Jésus monte sur le toit de la voiture et, bien qu'il ne chute jamais comme la figure de Warhol dans *Inferno*, il s'y allonge, suggérant une sorte d'enterrement symbolique dans ce cimetière désolant de voitures.

Étranges messagers de la postmodernité dans un contexte dominé par une série de figures fort symboliques – Jésus-Christ annonçant la mort, la femme porteuse de fertilité et de la continuité de la vie et un cheval qui, selon l'imaginaire biblique de l'Apocalypse, peut être interprété comme annonciateur de la catastrophe qu'est la fin d'histoire mais aussi de la victoire des saints⁵⁴ – les voitures s'y insèrent comme traces de l'artificialité entraînée par le développement technologique au 21^e siècle.

À l'instar de la figure warholienne, génie par excellence de l'artifice, les automobiles suggèrent, elles aussi, la production sérielle de marchandises. Néanmoins, si Warhol en fait de manière transparente un *statement* de son dessein d'extirper la signification à l'intérieur de l'œuvre, à l'époque moderne tardive la massification de la production d'automobiles se construit comme une incontournable promesse du progrès et comme marque d'individualité de la logique consumériste :

⁵² Notre traduction du texte original en anglais : « *tendency to both empty the work of meaning and to reify it as an object in the world.* », dans Stanley Trachtenberg, *The Postmodern Moment: A Handbook of Contemporary Innovation in the Arts*, London, Greenwood Press, 1985, p. 7.

⁵³ *Tragedia Endogonidia*, Romeo Castellucci, DVD, Raro Video, 2002, min. 20:25.

⁵⁴ « Je regardai, et voici, parut un cheval blanc. Celui qui le montait avait un arc ; une couronne lui fut donnée, et il partit en vainqueur et pour vaincre. » (Apocalypse 6: 2).

Mais quelles sont les envies niées par la main droite de production du système seulement pour être apaisées par les substituts vides mis à disposition par la main gauche de la consommation ? Les premières parmi ces envies sont la liberté, l'individualité, le progrès – tous des victimes de la « société administrée » de la production capitaliste de masse⁵⁵.

Dans *Inferno*, c'est un Andy Warhol morbide, froid mais très lucide qui téléguidé une voiture jouet, maîtrisant l'objet « de masse » derrière son masque impénétrable. À l'opposée, dans *P.#6 Paris* ce sont les véhicules qui envahissent et prennent en possession l'espace humain marqué par le lait régénérateur de la femme et le sang rédempteur de Christ. Entre la voiture-jouet d'Andy Warhol et les voitures écrasantes dans *P.#6 Paris*, ce sont deux visages opposés de l'hypermodernité qui se glissent : l'un est celui qui écrase l'individu par l'évolution technologique, l'autre est celui qui, en faisant usage des stratégies de la même technologie, s'en sert pour inscrire dans l'art cette chute même de l'individu dans une nouvelle époque.

Chute-écoulement des corps liquides – l'eau-torture dans *Bros*

Selon Kenza Jernite, la « peinture matière » dans l'œuvre de Castellucci « peut recouvrir différentes significations, ou plutôt passer d'un sens à un autre en s'enrichissant de toujours plus de significations.⁵⁶ » Sang et urine (dont la simulation est montrée de manière transparente devant les spectateurs), chocolat fondu et beaucoup d'eau, ce sont les principales matières liquides employées dans les spectacles de notre corpus. Le sang dans *P.#6 Paris*, *R.#7 Roma* et dans *Inferno* annonce, sans doute de manière assez prévisible, à la fois la mort et la rédemption mais aussi l'inutilité du sacrifice, comme dans *R.#7 Roma*, où la matière rouge peut être comprise comme le sang des Italiens ayant lutté pour protéger le pays du virage au fascisme, incarné ici par Mussolini et les ecclésiastiques qui ont soutenu son ascension. Dans la même performance, le chocolat fondu fonctionne comme métonymie pour la matière fécale et indique la dégradation morale du pays pendant la même époque.

L'exemple que nous avons retenu dans notre travail concerne une instance d'écoulement dont la mise en scène est non seulement plus proche techniquement de ce qu'on a désigné par « chute » dans cette recherche, mais aussi particulièrement pertinent dans l'encadrement de la catastrophe tel qu'également désignée plus haut, dans ce travail. Nous avons ici en vue l'eau qui coule abondamment dans la performance *Bros*⁵⁷ (2021) et dont l'usage renvoie à la catastrophe, à la différence des autres corps ici analysés, par l'usage de la torture.

⁵⁵ Notre traduction du texte original en anglais : « *And what hungers are these that are denied by the system's right hand of production only to be placated with empty substitutes offered by the left hand of consumption? Foremost among these are freedom, individuality, and progress, all casualties of "the administered society" of capitalist mass production* », David Gartman, « Three Ages of the Automobile. The Cultural Logics of the Car », *Culture, class, and critical theory: between Bourdieu and the Frankfurt school*, New York, Routledge, p. 65.

⁵⁶ « Peinture et écritures scéniques contemporaines : la peinture-matière chez Jan Fabre, Romeo Castellucci et Vincent Macaigne », *Agôn*, « Matières », no. 8, 2019, [en ligne]. <https://doi.org/10.4000/agon.6332> (Consulté le 7 décembre 2023).

⁵⁷ Nous avons visionné le spectacle *Bros* dans le cadre d'une séance de projection suivie par une rencontre animée par Arnaud Laporte avec Romeo Castellucci à la MC93 Bobigny le 7 janvier 2023.

Nous avons déjà souligné le concept central de *Bros* : il est question de la violence entraînée par la relation de l'individu avec le pouvoir et avec l'autorité, le metteur en scène souhaitant interroger jusqu'où un citoyen est disposé de se rendre pour obéir et forger de cette façon « un portrait de nous⁵⁸ ». Pour les performeurs non-professionnels qui acceptent de porter les costumes de policiers américains des années 30, la violence commence avant le spectacle pendant lequel ils écoutent dans les oreillettes les ordres (collectifs et individuels) à exécuter, puisqu'ils doivent signer un « pacte » (remis aussi aux spectateurs en version imprimée) à travers lequel ils s'engagent à suivre *religieusement* les indications reçues : « J'exécuterai les ordres jusqu'au bout, même s'ils m'exposent à la honte. Après le spectacle, je ne révélerai les ordres à personne. L'exécution des ordres sera mon oblation, sera mon théâtre⁵⁹. »

Si d'habitude la source des liquides présents sur les plateaux des mises en scènes de Castellucci n'est pas dévoilée, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit de la manipulation de l'eau et de la peinture-sang, dans *Bros*, l'eau arrive sur le plateau grâce à l'action en temps réel des performeurs et ce, dans un cadre spectaculaire du point de vue de la logistique impliquée :

[...] neuf bouteilles de gaz (vides) laquées en noir vaporisent de l'eau par des buses cachées derrière chacune d'elle, raccordées en coulisses à un moteur-pompe et à un réservoir. Les jets de vapeur sont synchrones avec le son puisque le système hydraulique était connecté à un synthétiseur et à un clavier où chaque touche commandait un spray de brumisateuse, pour faire des *forte* (plus de pression à l'eau) ou *pianissimo* (moins de pression), comme pour un vrai orgue, avec l'eau à la place de l'air⁶⁰.

La complexité technique qui fait surgir les quantités diluviennes d'eau sur scène est mise en action pour participer à un imaginaire de la torture moins habituel si l'on se rapporte au traitement de la violence tel que livré par Castellucci dans la plupart de ses spectacles. Évitant l'exposition directe des gestes de la violence et misant sur la force des images plastiques pour la suggérer, dans *Bros* l'agression du corps est beaucoup plus frontale et l'emploi de l'eau participe considérablement à la perception amplifiée de la violence. Un homme nu, allongé sur le sol inondé d'eau, est torturé sous les coups des policiers pendant que d'autres agents regardent la scène d'agression. Tour à tour, les policiers commettent des actes violents à l'adresse de leurs collègues. Un policier fait verser de l'eau sur le visage recouvert d'un collègue, le soumettant ainsi à une sorte d'ordalie⁶¹. Simultanément, d'autres collègues lui

⁵⁸ Romeo Castellucci en dialogue avec Laure Adler dans le cadre de l'émission « L'heure bleue », « Aliénation, Romeo Castellucci », *France Culture*, le 15 février 2022, min. 40, [en ligne]. <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/l-heure-bleue/l-heure-bleue-du-mardi-15-fevrier-2022-5978326> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2022).

⁵⁹ Cf. l'« Index de comportements remis aux participants inavertis », feuillet distribué aux spectateurs lors des représentations du spectacle *Bros*.

⁶⁰ Alexandre De Dardel, « Castellucci, les ordres du Prince », *As La Revue*, le 20 novembre 2023, [en ligne]. <https://www.revue-as.fr/2023/11/20/castellucci-les-ordres-du-prince/> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2023).

⁶¹ Institution judiciaire du Moyen Âge consistant en la soumission du sujet à une épreuve particulièrement cruelle : la capacité de celui à qui la violence était infligée de surmonter l'épreuve déterminait son innocence, alors que son effondrement donnait raison à ses tortionnaires. L'ordalie par l'eau ou « l'ordalie fluviale » s'exécutait en faisant use soit d'eau bouillante soit d'eau froide. Pour plus de détails historiques et anthropologiques sur cette

administrent des coups qui rendent encore plus terrifiante une ambiance déjà lourde de violence grâce au travail sonore de Scott Gibbons et à l'emploi des effets de l'obscurité dans laquelle le plateau est noyé.

« L'eau violente » évoquée par Gaston Bachelard, génératrice d'« excitation coléreuse⁶² », s'attaque non seulement aux organes du corps – il n'est pas difficile, dans ce cadre de souffrance physique et psychologique créé par Castellucci, d'imaginer à quel point les corps des performeurs doivent être affectés par l'ingurgitation d'eau – mais aussi aux sens. Même lorsque les performeurs ne sont pas directement assujettis à une forme de torture impliquant la présence de l'eau, sa chute brusque et envahissante sur scène brouille les sens, dégradant d'abord la vision et la capacité de distinguer les composantes de la réalité environnante : « Pour classer les êtres selon un ordre stable, il faut en effet qu'ils puissent être rassemblés sous l'unité d'un regard. Or, dans la nuit, les sens sont en permanence susceptibles de se contredire les uns les autres⁶³. »

L'eau coulant à flots depuis les canons ou les bidons manipulés sur scène par les policiers opère alors moins comme symbole du déluge-catastrophe mais plutôt comme la catastrophe de l'aveuglement collectif lorsqu'on décide de se soumettre même aux injonctions les plus absurdes et injustes. Si la peinture-sang se fait manifester elle aussi dans *Bros*, comme dans la plupart des créations théâtrales-performatives de Castellucci, c'est l'eau torturante qui crée une impression plus durable auprès des spectateurs. L'eau qui, loin de s'avérer une matière à potentiel purificateur, se manifeste comme une autre hypostase du nocturne dans la catastrophe qu'est la perte de la solidarité et de la raison.

Que reste-t-il après la catastrophe ?

Vu la nature et la dimension de ce travail, nous réserverons les problématiques proposées dans le cadre de la communication initiale en lien avec la dimension « emporter » pour un futur article. Toutefois, nous considérons qu'avancer une série d'interrogations liées à la représentation de la catastrophe et ses incidences sur la réception s'avère essentiel pour clore le présent article.

Nous avons déjà précisé que nous employons le terme « représentation » non sans une certaine réticence issue du discours même de Castellucci sur son propre travail⁶⁴ : « C'est un pèlerinage que nous faisons dans la matière. C'est donc, un théâtre des éléments. Les éléments ne sont que ce qu'il a de plus purement communicable, comme la plus petite communication possible. C'est ce qui m'intéresse : communiquer le moins possible⁶⁵. » Il importe de mentionner que le manifeste énoncé par la Societas Raffaello Sanzio ne concerne ni un programme « mystique » – Castellucci refuse également toute association avec le mysticisme et

pratique, voir Christophe Archan, Gérard Courtois, Gilduin Davy, Marc Valleur, Raymond Verdier, *Les ordalies – rituels et conduites*, Mare et Martin, 2022.

⁶² Gaston Bachelard, « L'eau violente », *L'eau et les rêves. Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*, Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1942, p. 207.

⁶³ Michaël Foessel, *La nuit. Vivre sans témoin*, Éditions Autrement, 2017, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Bien entendu, au-delà de toute nuance esthétique et philosophique, avec Castellucci on est toujours dans une démarche représentationnelle dans le sens strict du terme.

⁶⁵ Claudia et Romeo Castellucci, *Les Pèlerins de la matière. Théories et praxis du théâtre. Écrits de la Societas Raffaello Sanzio*, traduit de l'italien par Karin Espinosa, Besançon, Édition Les Solitaires Intempestifs (Essais), 2001, p. 111.

avec le langage théologique – ni un élitisme fondé sur la quête du cryptique. Au contraire, il souligne dans quasiment toutes ses interventions l'importance qu'il accorde au spectateur : « Le théâtre doit offrir à chaque spectateur la possibilité de rêver, d'imaginer et de fantasmer à partir de ce qui est présent sur le plateau. Le spectateur doit composer son propre spectacle, c'est sa responsabilité entière. Il ne faut pas la lui retirer⁶⁶. »

Dans ce contexte, nous nous posons les questions suivantes : Par quels moyens affectifs et sensoriels la représentation de la catastrophe implique et *emporte*-elle les spectateurs, ainsi que les performeurs professionnels et amateurs ? Comment la dynamique du *toucher* pourrait-elle s'articuler comme possible réponse au bouleversement subi lorsque le corps-performatif ou le corps témoin est confronté à la catastrophe ? Quelles pourraient être les limites théoriques et réceptives d'un refus de la représentation et quels pourraient être les éventuels manques et frustrations expérimentées par les spectateurs lorsque l'*incommunicabilité* acquiert le statut d'un programme esthétique et philosophique ? Enfin, vu les mutations sociétales et culturelles des dernières années et la manière dont elles influent sur les réponses aux catastrophes historiques, comment peut-on envisager l'impact et la réflexion auxquels peut pousser un théâtre qui refuse une lisibilité accessible de la catastrophe ?

Dans le sillage des problématiques soulevées par la présente recherche, nous envisageons de nous appuyer davantage sur « la possibilité de représenter l'impossibilité de la représentation⁶⁷ » dans une perspective de la réception de la catastrophe. Si le théâtre de Castellucci présente une « volonté d'exalter la matière visible au détriment de la fable et du dicible⁶⁸ », nous souhaitons examiner à travers quelles stratégies du « dicible » il serait possible d'englober la perception de la catastrophe dans le théâtre de la Societas Raffaello Sanzio.

Conclusion

Notre recherche s'est penchée sur la mise en lumière de la représentation de la catastrophe dans *Tragedia Endogonidia* (notamment l'épisode *P:#6 Paris*), *Inferno* et *Bros* de la Societas Raffaello Sanzio. Nous avons centré notre intérêt principalement autour de la dimension esthétique et performative de la mise en scène de la catastrophe, mettant en lumière les multiples éléments qui y participent. Ainsi avons-nous repéré des stratégies visuelles-performatives couvrant un large panel de manifestations renvoyant à la catastrophe, parmi lesquelles la chute des corps, des objets et des matières, la présence des animaux et des enfants, un usage chromatique spécifique, l'emploi d'objets sacrés dans un contexte quotidien, mais aussi des objets du quotidien insérés dans un contexte sacré et enfin, l'insertion des figures historiques ou des personnalités contemporaines dont la présence peut être associée à des catastrophes historiques. Notre analyse s'est notamment concentrée sur la stratégie de

⁶⁶ Romeo Castellucci en entretien avec Jean-François Perrier, *Festival d'Avignon*, février 2007, [en ligne]. https://festivalavignon.com/storage/document/62//18462_file_entretien_avec_romeo_castellucci.pdf (Consulté le 8 décembre 2023).

⁶⁷ Catherine Grenier, *La revanche des émotions. Essai sur l'art contemporain*, Paris, Seuil, 2008, p. 65.

⁶⁸ Francine Di Mercurio, « L'évidement théâtral: Lieu de surgissement de l'image chez Romeo Castellucci », *Les Chantiers de la Création*, no. 4, 2011, « La vacance », pp. 1-13, p. 2, [en ligne]. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lcc.371> (Consulté le 9 décembre 2023).

la *chute*, vu symboliquement comme pénétration du péché originel dans le monde mais regardée aussi comme mouvement d'activation d'une forme de liberté (les corps humains), comme déclenchement de la (post)modernité (les corps lourds) ou comme altération des sens des sujets d'un pouvoir aveugle et aveuglant (le corps liquide). Vu que la *représentation* dans le théâtre de Romeo Castellucci est mise à l'écart au profit d'une *incommunicabilité* qui privilégie la force de l'image à la parole, nous avons associé cette partie de notre recherche au verbe « regarder ». La partie associée au verbe « emporter » (à partir de la locution verbale « *portare via* » en italien, souvent employée par Castellucci pour expliquer sa démarche théâtrale) se propose quant à elle de se pencher sur les effets des choix spécifiques de (écart) de la représentation auprès des spectateurs qui risquent potentiellement d'expérimenter certaines frustrations face au vide qui se niche sciemment dans le théâtre plastique de Castellucci. En ce sens, nous avons annoncé à la fin de ce texte une série d'interrogations que nous envisageons de transformer en questions de recherche pour un futur travail d'investigation des liens entre la catastrophe et le statut de la représentation dans l'œuvre théâtrale-performative-plastique de Romeo Castellucci.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Bachelard, Gaston, « L'eau violente », *L'eau et les rêves. Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*, Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1942, 267 p.
- Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire. Un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme*, traduction vers le français de J. Lacoste, Paris, Payot (Petite Bibliothèque Payot), 1982, 286 p.
- Castellucci, Claudia, Romeo Castellucci, *Les Pèlerins de la matière. Théories et praxis du théâtre. Écrits de la Societas Raffaello Sanzio*, traduit de l'italien par Karin Espinosa, Besançon, Edition Les Solitaires Intempestifs (Essais), 2001, 208 p.
- Foessel, Michaël, *La nuit. Vivre sans témoin*, Éditions Autrement, 2017, p. 43, 167 p.
- Gartman, David, *Culture, class, and critical theory: between Bourdieu and the Frankfurt school*, New York, Routledge, 179 p.
- Grenier, Catherine, *La revanche des émotions. Essai sur l'art contemporain*, Paris, Seuil, 2008, 198 p.
- Le Breton, David, *Disparaître de soi. Une tentation contemporaine*, Paris, Métailié, 2018, 208 p.
- Laera, Margherita, « Comedy, Tragedy, and 'Universal Structures'. Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* », *Theatre Forum*, no. 36, 2010, pp. 3-15.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies, *Le théâtre postdramatique*, traduit de l'allemand par Philippe Hendri-Ledru, Paris, L'Arche, 2002, 307 p.
- Sainte Bible, version Louis Segond, Société Biblique Française, 1910.
- Pitozzi, Enrico, Annalisa Sacchi, *Itinera. Trajectoires de la forme. Tragedia Endogonidia*, Actes Sud, 2008, 234 p.
- Tackels, Bruno, *Les Castellucci*, Besançon, Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2005, 122 p.
- Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1967, 442 p.

- Trachtenberg, Stanley, *The Postmodern Moment: A Handbook of Contemporary Innovation in the Arts*, London, Greenwood Press, 1985, 323 p.
- Weil, Simone, *La pesanteur et la grâce*, Paris, Librairie Plon, Agora, 1988 (1947).

Sources web

- Bacharach, Elizabeth, « Charlotte Moorman: Shattering Barriers between art and technology », News - Medill – Northwestern University, le 24 février 2016, [en ligne]. <https://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/charlotte-moorman-shattering-barriers-between-art-and-technology/> (Consulté le 1^{er} décembre 2023).
- « Bros | Romeo Castellucci. A curious ritual that toys with law and order at Onassis Stegi », *Onassis.org*, 2022, [en ligne]. <https://www.onassis.org/whats-on/bros-romeo-castellucci> (Consulté le 27 novembre).
- Castellucci, Romeo, « Lettre de Romeo Castellucci au Festival d'Avignon », Blog de la revue *Alternatives théâtrales*, 26 février 2016, [en ligne]. <https://blog.alternativestheatrales.be/lettre-de-romeo-castellucci-au-festival-davignon/> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- « Catastrophe », *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, [en ligne]. <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9C1095> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- « Catastrophe », *La Langue Française*, [en ligne]. <https://www.lalanguefrancaise.com/dictionnaire/definition/catastrophe> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- Cron-Faure, Amanda, « Le saut et la chute dans La Danse du temps », dans *Repères. Cahier de danse*, Éditions La Briqueterie/ CDCN du Val-de-Marne, no. 2, 2009, pp. 15-16, [en ligne]. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-reperes-cahier-de-danse-2009-2-page-15.htm> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).
- de Baecque, Antoine entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, *Festival d'Avignon*, 2008, 62^e édition, [en ligne]. <https://festival-avignon.com/fr/edition-2008/programmation/paradiso-24611#page-content> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).
- De Dardel, Alexandre, « Castellucci, les ordres du Prince », *As La Revue*, le 20 novembre 2023, [en ligne]. <https://www.revue-as.fr/2023/11/20/castellucci-les-ordres-du-prince/> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2023).
- Di Mercurio, « L'évidement théâtral: Lieu de surgissement de l'image chez Romeo Castellucci », *Les Chantiers de la Création*, no. 4, 2011, « La vacance », pp. 1-13, [en ligne]. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lcc.371> (Consulté le 9 décembre 2023).
- Diverrès, Catherine, Julie Charrier, « CND Écriture chorégraphique », décembre 2020, Centre National de la Danse, décembre 2020, p. 33, [en ligne]. <https://www.cnd.fr/fr/file/file/1910/inline/Synthe%CC%80se-Julie%20Charrier-Catherine%20Diverre%CC%80s.pdf> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).
- « Extract : Focus Tragedia Endogonidia », site officiel du *Romaeuropa Festival*, le 22 janvier 2021, [en ligne]. <https://romaeuropa.net/news/extract-tragedia-endogonidia/> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).

- Inferno*, Programme du *Festival d'Avignon*, 2008, 62^e édition, [en ligne]. <https://festival-avignon.com/fr/edition-2008/programmation/inferno-24609#page-content> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).
- Kenza, Jernite, « Peinture et écritures scéniques contemporaines : la peinture-matière chez Jan Fabre, Romeo Castellucci et Vincent Macaigne », *Agôn*, « Matières », no. 8, 2019, [en ligne]. <https://doi.org/10.4000/agon.6332> (Consulté le 7 décembre 2023).
- « La Fura dels Baus », *La Contra Ola. Synth Wave and post punk from Spain 1980-86*. [en ligne] <https://lacontraola.com/la-fura-dels-baus/> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- Le Goff, François, Julien Botella, « Expérience esthétique et imaginaire scénique : usages de la captation dans la lecture du texte théâtral », *Pratiques, littérature, didactique*, no. 193-194 – « Pour une didactique du théâtre : entre textes, jeux et représentation », 2022, [en ligne]. <https://doi.org/10.4000/pratiques.11529> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).
- « Le théâtre est un champ de bataille », entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, *Olga Blog*, 3 novembre 2023, [en ligne]. <https://olgablog.co/romeo-castellucci-le-theatre-est-un-champ-de-bataille-2/> (Consulté le 25 novembre).
- Pascaud, Fabienne, entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, « Au théâtre, l'interdit, c'est la réalité », *Télérama*, le 7 juillet 2012, [en ligne]. <https://www.telerama.fr/scenes/romeo-castellucci-au-theatre-l-interdit-c-est-la-realite,83898.php> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- Perrier, Jean-Perrier, entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, *Festival d'Avignon*, février 2007. [en ligne] https://festivalavignon.com/storage/document/62//18462_file_entretien_avec_romeo_castellucci.pdf (Consulté le 8 décembre 2023).
- Salino, Brigitte, « Castellucci mène *L'Enfer* au sommet », https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2008/07/07/theatre-castellucci-mene-l-enfer-au-sommet_1067221_3246.html, le 7 juillet 2008, [en ligne]. https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2008/07/07/theatre-castellucci-mene-l-enfer-au-sommet_1067221_3246.html (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).
- Schäfer, Matthias, « Le corps comme garant du réel », dans *La lettre de l'enfance et de l'adolescence*, Èrès, 2007, no. 3/ 69, 2007, pp. 87-96, [en ligne]. [10.3917/lett.069.0087](https://doi.org/10.3917/lett.069.0087) (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- Solis, René, entretien avec Romeo Castellucci, « Tout ce que je fais à un rapport avec la catastrophe », *Libération*, le 4 juillet 2008, [en ligne]. https://www.liberation.fr/cahier-special/2008/07/04/tout-ce-que-je-fais-a-un-rapport-avec-la-catastrophe_75624/ (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- « The Four Seasons Restaurant: Romeo Castellucci / Festival d'Avignon », *Le Bruit du Off*, 30 mars 2011, [en ligne]. <https://lebruitduoff.com/2011/03/30/the-four-seasons-restaurant-romeo-castellucci-festival-davignon-2012/> (Consulté le 28 novembre 2023).

Médiagraphie

- « Aliénation, Romeo Castellucci », Romeo Castellucci interviewé dans l'émission « L'heure bleue » animée par Laure Adler, *France Culture*, le 15 février 2022, min. 40, [en ligne]. <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/1-heure-bleue/1-heure-bleue-du-mardi-15-fevrier-2022-5978326> (Consulté le 5 décembre 2022).
- « Incontri Ravvicinati. Romeo Castellucci », *RaiTV*, [en ligne]. <https://www.raicultura.it/teatro-e-danza/articoli/2023/10/Incontri-Ravvicinati-2db15891-1f6d-4ed9-9113-9e7023299550.html> (Consulté le 27 novembre 2023).
- « La Caverna #2 », Entretien de Piersandra Di Matteo avec Romeo Castellucci, *YouTube*, chaîne « Temporada Alta », min. 27:35-28:55, [en ligne]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2NIrUb7Ruk> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- « L'extrême création de Romeo Castellucci », Romeo Castellucci interviewé dans l'émission « L'invité culture » animée par Olivia Gesbert, *France Culture*, 1 juillet 2019, [en ligne]. <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/1-invite-e-culture/1-extreme-creation-de-romeo-castellucci-9702022> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).
- « Save the Date », *RayPlay.it*, le 15 janvier 2021, [en ligne]. <https://www.raisplay.it/video/2021/01/Save-the-Date-2020-2021---E13-d996fda6-b679-4449-91b5-99ee4fecc408.html> (Consulté le 25 novembre 2023).

Enregistrements vidéo – spectacles du corpus

- Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, Romeo Castellucci, DVD, Paris, Arte Éditions, 2009.
- Tragedia Endogonia*, Romeo Castellucci, DVD, Raro Video, 2002.

EXISTENCE AT THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE. CONTEMPORARY THEATRE AS A SYMBOLIC POUND OF FLESH

The present paper examines the back-and-forth exchange between Greek tragedy and contemporary theatre regarding the theme of violence, catastrophe, and existence at the challenge of the impossible. To put into words this impossible, I prefer to use the French version of the term, *hors-sens*, in order to describe what is opposed to the search of sense (*hors-sens* is also different from the nonsense), to describe what lies beyond any significance or meaning: the unbearable, the unendurable, the insufferable, the unimaginable, the insurmountable and so on. Contemporary theatre represents the art and the act of re-telling and not-leaving-behind; through its identificatory or repulsive side, contemporary theatre also requires a therapeutic and a psychoanalytic effect: not only for the audience, but also for the actresses/ actors or victims involved in the drama. My personal and psychoanalytic approach is that nowadays theatre transmits a symbolic pound of flesh, as a Shakespearian heritage and metaphor from his play, *The Merchant of Venice*. Finally, a substantial aim of this paper is to review how contemporary European stage directors deal with the nude condition of violence and *hors-sens*, therefore I will discuss three significant case studies – Milo Rau, Tiago Rodrigues and Pippo Delbono – with constant reference to some Lacanian major concepts from his clinical teaching: anxiety, pound of flesh, object (a), social bond, the triad the real, the symbolic, the imaginary and others.

Key-words: *violence, contemporary European theatre, Lacanian psychoanalysis, pound of flesh, jouissance, sufferance and pain*

Introduction.

An Archeology of Violence in the Contemporary European Theatre

The category of the theatrical, what we generally name *the essence of theatre*, represents the central dimension in both Greek tragedy and modern theatre. If modern theatre adapts and embodies the major themes of tragedy, contemporary theatre requires a different aesthetics of interpretation or even its disappearance. The vigorous restoration of the tragic elements within the contemporary vision of the world is dominated by the new functions of the notions of individual and destiny, of stage and theatricality. Has destiny left behind the individual and the stage of its life or does it continue to act within its interiority? This paper aims to reevaluate the dramatic aspects of these new forms of representation: does the theatrical articulate, in its deep bound with tragedy and drama, distinctive and unusual tragic events, new and different acts or gestures?

Nowadays, when theatre is subjected to the *postdramatic* paradigm (the-after-drama-theatre), contemporary history and politics determine the present tragic motifs; moreover, the production of theatre is strongly influenced by what I intend to call *the*

¹ Forum of the Lacanian Field, Romania.

tragedy of life, meaning the life – its rests, residues – which belongs to tragedy by way of modern war, guilt, collapse of cities, and especially genocide. In the realm of theatrical performance, especially after the 2nd World War, the tragedy of life continues and amplifies the already restrictive and altered species of tragedy. But since the ancient forms of tragedy as described by Aristotle are inappropriate to the (post)modern theatre and they do not create tragic heroes anymore, existence and violence on stage suffer a turning point in their development and require a new and *superhistorical* definition of the tragic phenomenon behind the horizon of the sacred and unsacred dialectic, as Hans-Thies Lehmann points it out in his book, *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*:

The task is to theorize tragedy as a phenomenon not just as it is given abstractly but also in concrete terms: the that and the how of its connection to the reality of performance, *i.e.* to a theatrical process – however different may be the forms that tragedy assumes. In view of the high prestige that tragic literature has traditionally enjoyed, it is fitting to observe that tragedy does not represent the only form of theatre that may be of the highest order. To be sure, tragedy provides an especially interesting case; otherwise, it would not have garnered attention so consistently. What is more, the author admits that it has occasionally occurred to him that, after all, tragedy, with its characteristic combination of affective and mental convulsion (*Erschütterung*), might embody the essence of the theatre itself. All the same, the concern here is not to declare tragedy the crowning achievement of art. A great deal of exceptional theatre is not tragic, yet it is still great art – complex and “deep”. Contemporary postdramatic forms include brilliant documentary theatre, installation theatre, comedy, political theatre, the theatre of images, theatre bordering on performance art, and much more; none of them need be concerned with tragedy at all. The point merits emphasis, for every discussion of contemporary theatre includes an element of aesthetic evaluation...²

In fact, Lehman writes about different languages of theatrical approach which should be adapted to different new stage situations. Theatrical stage becomes the space of the performer (which represents both the actress/ actor and the spectator), a space of act and speech, a space of thinking, reflection, but also of impulsive and uncontrollable feelings, and fundamentally of violence. As I am trying to underline regarding the tragedy of life in the contemporary theatre, criminal and irrational violence takes over the cathartic function of sacrifice. Considering that for the ancient Greeks the sacrifice represented a sort of negotiation between the sacrificer and divinity, my question concerns the status of the victim in this chain of theatrical violence and its relation to the human catastrophe. If the victim, through its own death or through its crime, stands for an aesthetic interruption of the theatrical act, the modern director is thus confronted with a process of reflection upon the boundaries of violence and terror.

The main purpose of this paper is to evaluate how contemporary European stage directors deal with the nude condition of violence, of the impossible and its related states: expressions of power, post-colonialism and religion, terrorism and bureaucracy, society/ state/ government and dissimulated humanism, innocent children dying, rapes, mutilated bodies, and souls, etc. In this context, I believe that

² Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*, trans. by Erik Butler, Routledge, 2016, p. 2.

contemporary theatre transmits a symbolic pound of flesh; on these terms, it is very important to trace an archeological line of interpretation down to the Shakespearian heritage and metaphor from *The Merchant of Venice*. The impossible lies here in the fact that a personal debt can only be paid by means of one's body or life. Moreover, the discourse of the contemporary theatre creator embodies an authority that functions beyond the stage: the theatre director is the master of rehearsal, a "complete" artist with original views and marks, the artisan of the show created in a laboratory of metamorphosis and performance strategies. To be more precise, the contemporary director represents the "theoretical conscience" of the process (as George Banu writes in his study, *Les Répétitions. De Stanislavski à aujourd'hui*) that repeats and portrays the tragedy of life, by identifying this personal tragedy of the individual within the political play. This is a constant idea in the works of Luk Perceval, Eimuntas Nekrošius, Peter Brook, Robert Wilson and Silviu Purcărete, to mention only a few contemporary directors. In the next pages, I will discuss three significant case studies, Milo Rau, Tiago Rodrigues and Pippo Delbono, with constant reference to some Lacanian major concepts from his clinical teaching.

The Contemporary Pound of Flesh

When I first heard of the theme of this special issue on the human catastrophe, my thought flew to the pound of flesh. On the one hand, the pound of flesh, taken near the heart and related to a supposed or imaginary harmony of the body, conveys an inherent cutting into pieces and refers to indetermination and, moreover, to the mysteries of the *psyche*. Certainly, it is as close as possible to the heart, as Shakespeare writes, but this question hides another one: how close could it be to the soul or to the *psyche*, how close could it be to something which is very difficult to comprehend or articulate? On the other hand, the sentence that William Shakespeare uses in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), namely that a personal debt can be paid only by means of one's own flesh, represents the object of Jacques Lacan's edifying analysis of Shakespeare's play in his Seminar *L'Angoisse*:

The engagement of the man who speaks in the chain of the signifier with all its consequences, with this henceforth fundamental springing forth, this elective point that I earlier called that of an ultra-subjective radiation, this foundation of desire in a word, it is in so far as, it is not that the body in its functioning would allow us to reduce everything, to explain everything in a reduction to the dualism of the *Umwelt* and the *Innenwelt*, it is because there is always in the body, and by the very fact of this engagement in the signifying dialectic, something separated, something statued, something inert from then on: that there is a pound of flesh.³

In *The Merchant of Venice*, the possibility of a miracle within the catastrophe lies in the judicial exception through which the contract can be revoked. The pound of flesh – the memorable lines "A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off/ Nearest the merchant's heart"⁴ – configures both separation and inertia, the signifier and the signified that cannot be considered separately, since the pound of flesh cannot be

³ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar Book X. Anxiety* (1962-1963), trans. by Cormac Gallagher, p. 201, [online]. <https://www.valas.fr> (accessed December 5, 2023).

⁴ The following quotations of the play are from the online edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, [online]. www.williamshakespeare.net (accessed December 5, 2023).

removed without wounding the heart or the body. The paradox lies in the fact that the pound of flesh represents something that the subject does not have; if he had had it, it would have been impossible to offer it; if he had had it and gave it away, he would have died and, therefore he couldn't be a donator. The pound of flesh also conjugates the social bond, which indicates the universal of the speaking being (fr. *le parlêtre*, the word of Jacques Lacan).

The cutting into pieces is the price that the subject pays for his life and the result, the piece of meat which must weigh no more than one pound (0.453 kg), is the signifier of all signifiers which is, after all, impossible to reattach to the imaginary body, to its image made up according to an illusion of unity. Precisely this private and privative slice of body, the piece of flesh that can only be accessed through the death of the organ and/or body, represents a lethal, sacrificial mark that enters the dialectic of demand and desire – the desire of the one who offers it, the request of the one who wants to receive it (“What does the Other want from me?”). As an example, Shylock's speech, the one of the Jew as a human, by which he argues his desire to possess the heart of the Christian man; he abandons the mercy in favor of violence and vengeance: “If you wrong us, shall we not revenge? / If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.” In addition, Shylock considers that he has the right to buy the dearly pound of flesh, since the promise was made in the sky and, therefore, he appeals with obstinacy and anger to the law of Venice.

The pound of flesh which I demand of him
Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
I stand for judgment. Answer: shall I have it?

The word and speech that the subject utters is fully involved in his living body. For Jacques Lacan, the delivery of flesh, insofar as it represents the object (a), the object cause of desire, the rest that cannot be restored and a vacuole, has the quality of an acting-out that cancels the interpretation because the character has left the stage of the theatre (or the scene within the scene in Hamlet) for the public stage of the world. In Lacanian terms, acting out implies an avoidance of anxiety (fr. *angoisse*), an attempt to escape from it. Anxiety occurs when the subject is threatened by the object (a) as loss, which is in fact undesirable, but paradoxically and at the same time, anxiety signals the desire of the subject. The acting-out is opposed in its essence to the *passage à l'acte* (passage to the act/ action) and embodies the behavior of the subject who unfolds himself, that is, what he shows through his (impulsive) conduct. The passage to the act signifies a request for love, for symbolic recognition against the background of despair, it can be interpreted, and it is on the side of the unrecoverable and the irreversible. To act – a verb that applies not only to the stage of the theatre or of the game – means to play a part or to perform; in the moment of acting out, the parade makes itself visible. The pound of flesh links in Shakespeare's play, according to Lacan, the law of debt to the law of gift through a total social pact. It is, in fact, a pact executed (i.e., performed) as close as possible to the heart, from and through a forbidden area; detached from the body, the pound of flesh has no use in itself and it signifies *nothing* – *chose*-ification (> fr. *la chose*/ the thing, *l'achose*). For Lacan, the thing represents the lost object of the subject which will always remain strange to him, it is the cause of his desire (fr. *l'objet-cause de son désir*) and un

unassimilable residue; all in all, the thing hides a sign of longing for an impossible reunion of the subject with the object. Shakespeare writes that:

A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man,
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttuns, beefs, or goats.

The very instant of the sacrificial cut, at the limit of the law, thus opens a new way of negotiating the division between desire and *jouissance*, but it is also an implacable and threatening deal; it translates on the one hand the terrifying nature of the relationship with God and on the other the hour of the truth, *l'heure de la vérité* in Lacan's formula, the one that cuts the thought and the body in two and brings out the "anti-Semitic feeling". For Lacan, *jouissance* lies beyond the Freudian principle of pleasure, in such a manner that it becomes sufferance and pain, very close to the death drive⁵. The question of the French psychoanalyst is if this pound of flesh stays as an analogue of castration and for the waste left behind by divine vengeance, around which the whole scenario revolves:

The Christian has learnt through the dialectic of redemption to identify himself ideally to the one who at a particular time identified himself to this very object, to this refuse left by divine vengeance... [...] Such is the illusion of the Christian who always believes he has more heart than the others, and God knows why this is? The matter no doubt appears more clearly – this is what I believe I have helped you to see as being essential, it is the basis of masochism – this attempt to provoke the anxiety of the Other, become here the anxiety of God, is effectively second nature for the Christian, namely that this hypocrisy – and everyone knows that in other perverse positions, we are always capable in experience of sensing the playfulness and the ambiguity that are always there – namely that this hypocrisy is more or less the same as what he experiences for his part more as oriental hypocrisy.⁶

If Shakespeare's play ends in a guarantee of fidelity and love, the premises change in the contemporary theatre, where, in order to exist on stage, the body interrogates its limits and literally bears the marks of the cutting into pieces, the stigmatization and the uncanny, which is precisely a mysterious and frightening experience. As a matter of fact, Sigmund Freud elaborated the concept of the uncanny in his 1919 essay *Das Unheimliche*: it is what unconsciously reminds us of our forbidden, threatening, and repressed impulses, combined with the dread of being castrated.

The mythical violence that arose in Greek tragedy from the patriarchal domination is transferred nowadays into the cruelty and monstrosity of some characters following the conviction that the body on which violence is committed engenders more violence and an explosion of consciousness. In the context of this psychological realism, there are multiple directions we must follow to reveal the consequences of the catastrophe: the game of destruction and creation – the brutal intervention in the author's text, the divided space and the divided ruins, the unusual mix of objects and music reflecting the everyday tragic, the fragments of dreams, the

⁵ See *Le Séminaire Livre VII. L'éthique de la psychanalyse* (1959-1960) and *Le Séminaire Livre XVII. L'envers de la psychanalyse* (1969-1970).

⁶ J. Lacan, *The Seminar Book X. Anxiety* (1962-1963), *op. cit.*, p. 202.

character as an objectified victim. The victim is often confronted with the extreme stage intentions of the director, physical and psychic surveillance, and the incorporated character becomes a helpless creature, desperate and alienated, at the mercy of an impenetrable theatre director. To be and to become the violence-doer (my reference is to the famous play of Eugene O'Neill, *Mourning becomes Electra*, 1931⁷) demands a total involvement and an attempt to create a *marionette*, a sort of a scenic control that in the contemporary context may almost lead to a *de-theatricalisation* of theatre. The contemporary theatre modifies the essence of suffering and violence on stage becomes not an isolated act, but a social and cultural event, which should be understood in the historical and actual cycle of violence, nonviolence/ peace, (non)aggression, revenge, and vengeance.

Milo Rau, between Ihsane Jarfi and Orestes

Theatre must stage violence and catastrophe to find out what they both really signify. For the Swiss director Milo Rau (b. 1977), also departing artistic leader of NT Gent, political theatre means to involve people who were already involved: the investigation from the part of the victim/ witness and the political circumstances of the theatrical event are two conscious choices. A former student of Tzvetan Todorov and Pierre Bourdieu, Milo Rau founded in 2007 the theatre and film production company *International Institute of Political Murder* (IIPM) with the purpose of documenting the last hours of Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu, but, over these years, the institute questioned important historical events with the help of film, literature, theatre, research papers, journals. But how does he represent catastrophe and the tragic human condition on stage? Rau creates a documentary theatre that incorporates heterogeneous materials and examines intra-aesthetically the fascinating appearance of violence and lamentation. This new form of imagistic theatre represents in fact a *conjectural tragedy*: crime is incomprehensible, senseless, and has its roots in the traumatic impermeability of violence. Milo Rau's production *The Repetition* (2018), the first part of the series *Histoire(s) du théâtre*, is a multi-perspective theatrical narration of a criminal case in 5 acts, based on the murder of Ihsane Jarfi in April 2012 in Liège, and also on Søren Kierkegaard's philosophical concept of repetition. If for Kierkegaard "There is no repetition at all"⁸, then there is no repetition of the same, but a repetition in difference, a different same and a changeless new in the contemporary theatre if we take into account that time and space, beginning and ending, memory and audience can never be the same, and the instant and aesthetic truth of the stage cannot be repeated, only reproduced at a mimetic level. Nonetheless, the category of repetition brings to life not only the I of the writer, but also the I of the audience or the I of the actor/ actress that makes an appearance, pointing to the performative dimension of a dramatic text that deals with a creative and unresolved

⁷ For more details and for the relation between woman and violence, see my article "Long Life's Journey into Truth. Soren Kierkegaard, Eugene O'Neill, and the Woman," *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology*, vol. XI, no. 1/ 2021, Department of Socio-Human Research, "George Barițiu" History Institute of The Romanian Academy, Cluj University Press, topic: *Kierkegaard's Humanistic and Literary Heritage*, pp. 119-146.

⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition in Fear and Trembling. Repetition, Kierkegaard's Writings VI*, ed. and trans., with Introduction and Notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton Univ. Press, 1983, p. 131.

contradiction – the internal repetition, expressed within the individual and turning itself into a Kierkegaardian theatre of ideas.

Since the reality of theatre means understanding the violence or the aggressiveness of stage direction, the strategies of Milo Rau are those of a theatre director who should rewrite the strategies of a criminal. In the Ghent Manifesto, Rau declares that he wants to reshape the European theatre: theatre should speak to the present and change the world. A new genre of postmodern theatre emerges: the monologue of violence, fear or terror depicted by the victims themselves – *Compassion. The History of the Machine Gun* (2016, a production of Schaubühne Theatre Berlin). Two women, Consolate Siperius and Ursina Lardi, try to find an answer for Europe's hypocrisy in front of the refugees' crisis. How long can we pay attention to the suffering of the other and why... after all? Why does a dead person at the gates of Europe value more than a thousand victims of the Congo civil war? Ursina, a former drama teacher and now a volunteer at an NGO in Rwanda, walks on an over decorated stage setting, with a lot of furniture and ruined objects that outline the map of suffering and the violence of language; finally, she incriminates the role of these organizations that would only prolong the crises – again, the abovementioned tragedy of life –, and she urinates on the stage. Practically, Ursina urinates on the concept of empathy (compassion) that became a ruin without illusions in both theatre and its praxis, the theatre of life. Moreover, conjectural tragedy is insensitive to the fragility of the individual and to its inadequacy to the ideological or political sphere. I believe in a redefinition of the contemporary theatre (and a reformulation of tragic) as a *corporeal* one that reflects the very body of the theatre itself: the actor must see the event and participate in it; it is about Rau's necessity to imply the actor/ victim to create a substantial bound between the performer and the dramatic representation. After all, it constitutes the visual *transgression of the very process of mise-en-scène* since it unveils artificiality or even the impossibility of human relations. Nonetheless, being directly connected to the body, violence and catastrophe prescribe the entire tragic spirit of the performance.

In *Orestes in Mosul* (2019), the religious purpose merges with the political one: the state of emergency is analogous to the state of exception, and it is always correlated to a double issue: immigration, and revenge, on the background of catastrophe exercised by the Islamic State, in a devastated world and with an image in ruins of Mosul, arguably the first city ever created. Rau asks himself if Greek tragedy can truly help to heal a burnt city; therefore, he travels to Mosul to stage his personal version of Aeschylus' Oresteia. The story of violent death is perpetual, cyclical – at the interstice between the ancient tragedy and the Syrian tragedy of today, in eternal repetition and at every step, with daily “executions” to be performed theatrically, brutally, and cruelly in front of the eye of the camera, as if only in this way the truth would be known. The actors are spectators of their own bloody documentary, in which “it takes an eternity to hang a man” (quote from the play). In addition, Rau relies on a short-circuit between knowledge and recognition: the viewer is asked if he could look at the other in the moment of death, until the last gesture, a moment as intimate, intrusive, and pornographic as possible. Being a theatrical and tragic rewriting, the body of the actor must correspond to that of the victim; on the other hand, the spectator detaches himself at the end of the performance in a post-event interpretation, in an immemorial present, due to the identification to the victim. Just as importantly, the body of the actor stands for a symbolic pound of flesh in the

contemporary theatre, on the horizon of the illogical death, of a situation without sense or significance.

Tiago Rodrigues: to the Extent of the... Real

In the face of fragility, disaster, and imminent obliteration, both Milo Rau and Tiago Rodrigues answer that the only thing that endures and can be delivered from one generation to another is the *word*. The word is the only remnant of the derision and the abominable, confronted with a horror that cannot be looked at, a word that goes beyond the borders of language and which transmits the untranslatable, moreover the word that refers to the part of life that cannot be narrated and, at the same time, to the speech which is simultaneously cut into pieces.

Actor, director, playwright, and the current director of Festival d'Avignon, Tiago Rodrigues (b. 1977) always considered theatre as a human assembly, a living one, which should be approached by means of compassion. It is important to note that in the theatrical creation of Tiago Rodrigues the feeling of catastrophe inspires affection and empathy. *Insofar as the impossible (Dans la mesure de l'impossible, 2022)* is based on excerpts spoken in French, English, and Portuguese from 30 interviews that him and his team conducted with humanitarian workers from the International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders:

There's one important thing you need to know: we're not heroes, confesses one of them, right from the start. I know, I know. "I'm not a hero", it is precisely what heroes say. But it may sound a little pretentious, but we're not heroes.

We're like an umbrella in the face of a tsunami.

We're a piece of bandage on humanity's suffering.

And when you understand that you can really start working.⁹

As for Milo Rau, the style, and the rhythm of this kind of documentary theatre translates the speech of the victim and the emergency of the word: the story of the life should refuse *ab initio* the *hors-sens* of the existence, without touching the feeling of common morality, and, moreover, it should transfer this existence into another reality. For Tiago, the transition is from chaos, crisis, starvation, violence, the death of the innocent child, the unspoken sufferance of the mother... to a world of change and peace. But even the title of this theatrical creation – *Insofar as the impossible* – contains the impossibility of change: it is impossible to remove the impossible, it is impossible to remove violence and pain. Therefore, my question explores the limits of theatre (and, subsequently the limits of existence) to the test of the impossible, the irremediable or the unbearable, which is often described by Jacques Lacan as "the real".

Lacan considers that for the human condition, the real is impossible, incomprehensible, behind the limits of knowledge, defined as that which never ceases

⁹ My translation from the original quote in French:

« Il y a un truc important que vous devez savoir : nous ne sommes pas des héros, avoue l'un d'eux, d'entrée de jeu. Je sais, je sais. « Je ne suis pas un héros », c'est précisément ce que disent les héros. Mais ça peut paraître un peu prétentieux mais nous ne sommes pas des héros.

On est comme un parapluie face à un tsunami

On est un bout de sparadrap sur la souffrance de l'humanité

Et quand tu comprends ça, tu peux vraiment commencer à travailler. »

not to write itself (in French: “ce qui ne cesse pas de ne pas s’écire”), considering that it cannot be expressed *in* or *through* language, because the entrance into language marks the painful separation from the real¹⁰. The Lacanian real can only be understood in correspondence with the categories of the symbolic and the imaginary. Also, the signs of the real are often perceived as traumatic and threatening, full of tension, insofar as the real is in relation to the death drive and to the compulsion of repetition, which is mortiferous and destructive. Since repetition is perpetuated by the failure of the symbolization, Lacan defined the real as that which always returns to the same place. Nonetheless, the real is located in the irreducible realm of the nonmeaning, and my connection with the contemporary theatre grasps precisely the instance of the *infernal machine* of murder and catastrophe.

Returning from Rau and Rodrigues to Shakespeare, the persisting question is: what does it remain from the human existence that paradoxically continues to affirm itself only as suppression? As I have already noted, a pound (slice or portion) of meat must be delivered or slaughtered, according to a contract that indicates the fulfillment of the most important law. The marks of contemporary society – this is just one of the multiple lessons of theatre – denote the perverse *jouissance*, excessively inscribed *in* and *on* the body, the geography of exorbitant and illogical human sacrifices, which replace, without appeal, the singular desire, and the ethical solution.

Pippo Delbono and his Theatre – the Connection with the Dead

As opposed to violence and catastrophe, Pippo Delbono (b. 1959, Varazze) proposes the hope and the idea of theatre as a fortunate encounter of bodies – both living and dead ones. The desire to recover the original loss of the human being is verified on the contemporary theatre stage by the poetic and (almost) psychoanalytic productions of Pippo Delbono: the Italian director creates performances *made* by the body and *seen* with the body, in a communion of bodies on the stage. Believing that it is the human’s destiny to love without limits, he builds an affective and empathetic theatre by exploring the experience of extreme human and social difference, and marginality, which he opposes to despair and depression, for example by impregnating his productions with the influences of Pina Bausch’s dance. The demand which is always addressed to otherness or to the marginal represents a special human relationship that is impossible to be seen. To be more specific, the person and character of Bobò or the person and character of Nelson embody above all the closure that opens up, the exclusion that should not be the norm: Nelson Lariccia is a homeless person, diagnosed with schizophrenia. The other one, Bobò, locked up in a psychiatric asylum for 45 years, deaf-mute, has never used sign language; microcephalic, illiterate, but Beckettian in his isolation, his mute cry on behalf of the things that cannot be named, they all sum up the abandonment, the loneliness and the constraints to which the individual is subjected in today’s society, meaning the price that he has to pay for his very living body.

Bobò, whose real name is Vincenzo Cannavacciuolo, was born in 1936 and died in 2019; the tragedy of his birth conceals the death of his twin brother at birth. Committed to a psychiatric asylum since 1952, Bobò is noticed by Pippo Delbono in a theatre workshop that the director holds in 1995. Pippo represents for Bobò the brother he could never have had. In fact, it is Delbono who brings Bobò out of his own asylum,

¹⁰ See *Le Séminaire Livre IV. La relation d’objet*, 1956-1957; *Le Séminaire Livre XXIII. Le sinthome*, 1975-1976; *Le Séminaire Livre XXV. Le moment de conclure*, 1977-1978.

out of his own horror. He attributes to him the conception of a theatre that is not psychological but physical, the aesthetic model of his entire theatre. Delbono says that Bobò *exists*, while the other actors *show* themselves. He finds in Bobò the combination of tenderness and poetry, thus becoming the heart of his theatrical productions, but also the symbolic pound of flesh that he felt he had to sacrifice at the death of his companion.

After the Battle (Dopo la Battaglia, 2011) presents the spectacle of memories overloaded with the sufferings, smells, signs, and traces of all those who have passed through the “prison” of the asylum. Thus, an actualization of suffering and interior catastrophe takes place at each of Bobò’s stage appearances through his delicate body, the pale face made up of sadness, reminiscent of Ingmar Bergman’s tragic carnival characters, the awkward gestures as if each time he discovers something for the first time, the silence that only accentuates the open wounds of intimacy.

The transfer of love, as opposed to the powerless cry, gains meaning through a collection of poetic images in *The Joy (La Gioia, 2018)*. The images are not only poetic, but they are also dreamlike or redemptive, graceful, and flowing from the director’s beliefs that in front of physical or mental illness, people are like flowers or children. *La Gioia* is the hymn addressed to the lost and to the capacity to love what is different from oneself, namely the deformed, the handicapped, the migrant, the wanderer, the cripple, the prostitute, the transvestite, the mutilated face and so on. Pippo Delbono’s theatre does not only imitate and reproduce reality in a realist or naturalistic way, but it also represents a living one, in the lineage of Antonin Artaud, of the self that must be discovered at all costs, of the indeterminate and of the gender that can oscillate from feminine to masculine and vice versa. The stage name is, after all, the *real* name. If, psychoanalytically speaking, love means giving something we don’t have to someone who doesn’t really want it¹¹, Delbono insists on love that makes sense only in relation to the rest, to what remains after loss or division, on the whole he questions the lack of love or the need and necessity of love.

I believe that the feeling of hope and peace in the contemporary theatre is well-represented and well-rehearsed by an image that Delbono creates throughout his entire theatre: to dance always as in a war atmosphere, in the proximity of the dance of death and love, in the manner of Dante’s circles, Francisco de Goya’s paintings, the intimate Strindbergian theatre and Federico Fellini’s sad carnival. This peculiar type of eternal image denotes a necessity of a body for the other next to it (in the park, on the bench, in bed, on the stage), a necessity to dance with the audience, in the mosaic of solitudes or contradictions in which bodies are thrown, finally in an impossibility of recovering the lost innocence of the child. At the same time, the body must be told, through the incantatory power of the voice, that it is loved. The stake is not only about the recovery of the child, but also about the recovery of Delbono’s mother in *Orchids (2013)*, a flower standing for a double-sided question: where does the truth end and where does the lie begin? In Lacanian terms, we often state that a truth is *half-told*¹², in its nodal merging

¹¹ Cf. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire Livre VIII. Le Transfert, 1960-1961*: “L’amour c’est donner ce que l’on n’a pas à quelqu’un qui n’en veut pas.”, p. 19, [online]. <http://www.staferla.free.fr> (accessed December 5, 2023).

¹² In French: “La vérité ne peut que se mi-dire...”; “... nulle évocation de *la vérité* ne peut se faire qu’à indiquer qu’elle nous est accessible que d’un *mi-dire*, qu’elle ne peut se dire tout entière, pour la raison *qu’au-delà de sa moitié il n’y a rien à dire*.”, Jacques Lacan, *Le*

with the lie: a truth can never be fully conveyed and at its heart it dwells the lie. Decisively, if theatre becomes a celebration, Delbono believes that it must be, above all, one of life and of flesh; this brings about the possibility of a communication or connection not only with the different, but also with the dead, because the death of a loved one, despite the unimaginable pain, can constitute a redemption or a salvation for the person who remains alive:

When I decided to go into theatre, I hadn't yet known that my theatre would be a theatre of the body. At first, the theatre I was studying was a theatre of texts, of words, of interpretations of paper characters, without bodies. Then, in Denmark, after the loss of my beloved friend, I threw myself into the theatre of the body. I wanted to forget; I didn't want to die with him. I didn't want to think of my destroyed body, of his dead body. I didn't want to let my body die like his. That's why I began to spend hours, days, months, and years working relentlessly on the dance, on the body. To find a new life in this body, a life that would take me away from this loss, from this pain.¹³

Above all, Pippo Delbono's theatre is a theatre of the body writing its own text, of the body next to another body. Through this writing, through its singular and extraordinary corporeality, the body becomes aware of every part of itself, of every organ, precisely through the extreme awareness of the fragility inscribed in it. The poetry of the unconscious, of an unconscious that takes another unconscious by the hand and performs theatrically in a similar rhythm, is the central event despite the lack of dialogue – at times it is a dialogue without words, opposed by its nature to the dialogue full of words and emphasis of the victim used in the theatre of Milo Rau or Tiago Rodrigues. Finally, these are only a few faces of the representation of catastrophe in the contemporary theatre which underline the existence of the individual at the challenge of the impossible and of the incomprehensible, and my purpose was to reveal the mixture between sufferance and its articulation in two major directions: the speech full of momentous words and the speech without words.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Artaud, Antonin, *The Theater and Its Double*, New York, Grove Press, 1958.

Câmpean, Noemina, "Mort et répétition dans le théâtre européen contemporain : La Reprise. Histoire(s) du Théâtre de Milo Rau », *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology*," Department of Socio-Human Research "George Barițiu" History Institute of the Romanian Academy, Cluj University Press,

Séminaire Livre XVII. L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970, [online]. <http://www.staferla.free.fr>, p. 30 (accessed December 5, 2023).

¹³ My translation: "[...] quand j'ai décidé de faire du théâtre, je ne savais pas encore que mon théâtre serait un théâtre du corps. Au début, le théâtre que j'étudiais était un théâtre de textes, de paroles, d'interprétations de personnages de papier, sans corps. Puis, au Danemark, après la perte de mon ami adoré, je me suis jeté dans le théâtre du corps. Je voulais oublier, je ne voulais pas mourir avec lui. Je voulais ne pas penser à mon corps détruit, à son corps mort. Je ne voulais pas laisser mourir mon corps comme le sien. C'est pourquoi j'ai commencé à passer des heures, des jours, des mois, des années à travailler avec acharnement la danse, le corps. Pour retrouver une vie nouvelle dans ce corps, une vie qui m'éloigne de cette perte, de cette douleur.", Pippo Delbono, *Regards*, Actes Sud, Paris, 2010, pp. 104-105.

- topic: *Instances of Repetition: Cinema, Theatre and Psychoanalysis*, vol. XII, no. 1/ 2022, pp. 145-160.
- Câmpean, N., "Teatrul ca întâlnire a corpurilor: livra de carne și miracolul," *Psyche Journal* (www.revistapsyche.ro), published in two parts on June, 19 & July, 26, 2023.
- Fortier, Corinne, "À corps et à cris : Pippo Delbono ou l'extraordinaire théâtre des corps," *GRAAT On-Line, Le corps dans tous ses éclats. Corps dévoilés, exhibés et jouissants*, 22, 2019, pp. 304-332, [online]. <https://hal.science/hal-02458640> (accessed December 5, 2023).
- Banu, Georges, *Les Répétitions. De Stanislavski à aujourd'hui*, Actes Sud, 2005.
- Benjamin, Walter, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Delbono, Pippo, *Regards*, Actes Sud, Paris, 2010.
- Dürrenmatt, Friedrich. "Problems of the Theatre" in Volkmar Sander (ed.), *Plays and Essays*, New York, Continuum Publishing, 1982, pp. 233-61.
- Frick, John W., *Theatre and Violence*, University of Alabama Press, 1999.
- Girard, René, *La violence et le sacré*, Bernard Grasset, 1972.
- Kierkegaard, Søren, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition, Kierkegaard's Writings VI*, ed. and trans., with Introduction and Notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton Univ. Press, 1983.
- Lacan, Jacques, *Le Séminaire Livre VIII. Le Transfert* (1960-1961), [online]. <http://www.staferla.free.fr> (accessed December 5, 2023).
- Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire Livre XVII. L'envers de la psychanalyse* (1969-1970), [online]. <http://www.staferla.free.fr> (accessed December 5, 2023).
- Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book X. Anxiety* (1962-1963), trans. by Cormac Gallagher, p. 201, [online]. <https://www.valas.fr> (accessed December 5, 2023).
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies, *Postdramatic Theatre*, Routledge, 2006.
- Lehmann, H.-T., *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*, Routledge, 2016.
- Novak, Sonja, "Dramatic Representations of Contemporary Terror: Genres of (Post)modern Tragic Theatre?", in Fogarasi, György, Zoltán Cora and Ervin Török (eds.), *Critical Theory Online 3: Terror(ism) and Aesthetics*, 2015.
- Rachet, Guy, *La tragédie grecque*, Payot, 1973.
- Shakespeare, William, *The Merchant of Venice*, online edition, [online]. <http://www.williamshakespeare.net> (accessed December 5, 2023).
- Szondi, Peter, *An Essay on the Tragic*, Stanford Univ. Press, California, 2002.
- Milo Rau, « The Ghent Manifesto », [online]. <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/article/rules-shake-city-theatre> (accessed December 5, 2023).
- Brayshaw, Teresa, Anna Fenimore, and Noel Witts, *The Twenty-First Century Performance Reader*, London/ New York, Routledge, 2019.

The Artist's Point of View
Le point de vue de l'artiste

TIME AND DISTANCE IN THE FACE OF CATASTROPHE AND ARTISTIC CREATION: A THEATRICAL EXPLORATION

In this paper I will be exploring the importance of time and distance in relation to human catastrophes in terms of creating and presenting theatrical works to audience through my own personal perspectives and experiences as a writer/director. There will be four different personal examples: two plays, *Old Child* (2016) and *Last World* (2006) I wrote and directed, one project, *Istanbul Testimonials* I created in 2014 and questions and explorations for my new play *Aksak* or *Delirium* (pending name), in process of creation right now.

Key-words: *Contemporary Turkish Theatre, Post-realistic Writing, Performance, Theatre and Politics, Representations of Reality, Turkish Playwrights*

I think theatre is a powerful tool in terms of recreating reality. In life we cannot change reality but on stage we can. This aspect excites me and opens the doorway to limitless possibilities. The exploration of time and distance in the context of human reality can be considered as a central theme in theatre history. Theatrical representation has always dealt with this main question of delivery of reality of life into the reality of the stage; a kind of a way to translate life into stage. From Bertolt Brecht's alienation effect to Aristotle's concept of catharsis to postmodern deconstruction to Hans Thies Lehmann's "post dramatic theory", each theoretical lens offers a unique perspective on the dynamic interplay between reality, aesthetics and politics within the theatrical domain.

As we navigate through such surreal times as these after 9/11 and the recent 2020's pandemic which hit us in every possible way with fierce reality we also realize that this is a time, a beginning of a century which somehow was prophesized by the very same sentences of Antonin Artaud, almost a century ago during last century's plague: "In the theatre, as in the plague there is a kind of strange sun, a light of the abnormal by which it seems that the difficult and even the impossible suddenly become our normal element."²

At Galata Perform, our theatre and performance company in Istanbul, we have been doing New Text New Theatre workshops since 2006 actively. In one of our workshops, I vividly remember Ensatt Playwriting Department's Director and playwright/musician Enzo Cormann talking about the myth of Medusa in relation to playwrighting. Medusa in Greek mythology, as everybody well knows, the most famous of the monster figures known as Gorgons, was usually represented as a winged female creature having a head of hair consisting of snakes; she was sometimes represented as very beautiful. Medusa was the only Gorgon who was mortal; hence her slayer, Perseus, was able to kill her by cutting off her head. Because the gaze of

¹ Writer, Actor, Director of Galata Perform, Istanbul.

² Antonin Artaud, *Theatre and Its Double*, New York, Grove Press, 1958, p. 30.

Medusa turned all who looked at her to stone, Perseus guided himself by her reflection in a shield given him by Athena and beheaded Medusa as she slept.

In his workshop Cormann referred to this myth and talked about how theatre and plays should be and that directly providing the reality itself to the audience would turn the audience into stone; meaning dead which means that this would not change anything. So, the shield of Perseus is needed but how and how much were the main questions. I find this a very valuable discussion although I tend to disagree to some point since, in my works, I choose to confront harsh realities of our times especially after my personal experiences of so many catastrophes that somehow slid through my life. In dealing with such experiences as in ‘translating’ them to a theatrical language onto stage I almost always preferred to use a shield, as Enzo Cormann mentioned, but to what extent? Moreover, given the fact that theatre always takes its main strength from the representation of reality where does fiction and reality start and finish? And how do we balance esthetics with reality and politics?

Aristotle states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse ‘terror and pity’ and thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions³ in contrast to Plato’s idea that representation should be controlled and monitored. These general questions lead us back to the core of theatre in terms of representation, imitation and replication. In this respect I would like to go back to the idea of changing and/or reimagining reality in relation to staging human catastrophe on stage in order to discuss time and space in the creation of my works and their effect on representing reality on stage.

OLD CHILD – Lives Unlived Becoming Lives Reimagined on Stage

Old Child is a play I wrote in the aftermath of the specific years of 2014-2015. The play focuses on the lives of four children who have lost their life because of war, migration, terrorism and violence. In the play these children from real life are imagined in a utopic world where they actually live a life. Cemile Çağırca who died in the East of Turkey in Cizre during a shooting Cemile who is 8 dies in front of her house with a random bullet. She has to be kept in a deep freezer because of the ban for Kurdish citizens to leave their houses. Alan Kurdi who is Allen in the play is the Syrian refugee child who died in the Aegean coast of Turkey. The third child is Cemal Ellian who dies during a bombing in Phalestine in a children’s park where 8 children die. The fourth of the four children is Deniz Veysel Atılgan who died in the Ankara Peace Walk where hundreds die during a bombing.

Eylem Ejder in her review about the play mentions that “all of these children are dead, but now living in a kind of utopia, created by Yesim Özsoy.”⁴

I think in this play I especially felt the power of theatre making and the idea of changing reality the most. Theatre’s main mission for that reason for me is to provide another an alternative reality to the one we are experiencing. Another way of seeing the world. I mean the power of changing that reality on stage something we feel helpless and unable to do in real life like in face of catastrophes. Expressing the reality on stage as a mirror versus showing a world of ideals on stage appears to be

³ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "catharsis". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11 Sep. 2023, [online]. <https://www.britannica.com/art/catharsis-criticism>, (accessed 22 January 2023).

⁴ Ejder, Eylem, *A Drama of Unlived Stories: Old Child by GalataPerform*, Arap Stages, Martin E. Segal Theater Center Publications, Volume 7, Fall 2017.

our main dilemma most of the time. In this respect we may say that the play constitutes a ‘post-realistic’ approach to theatre.



Figure 1. *Old Child* at *Garajistanbul* venue, photo credit: Ali Gürler.

This is the creative aspect but there’s also the aspect of time and space as soon as this confrontation with the current reality, in this case the catastrophic experiences that we went through as a society, is represented on stage and the audience shares this area of recognition through theatrical means. My personal experience with expressing such strong losses of our times right when the society was about to heal its wounds created an effect in which they felt too soon to deal with that open wound. What I am trying to say is that as we are passing through such strong feelings of despair, grief in life, sometimes representing these wounds too early on stage becomes problematic. Maybe if this play is to be staged now or other stories are derived through this play, it can have a different effect on the audience. I think as plays travel through time and space, each specific staging of the play in another geography and/or time changes the play itself.

Miriam Falton-Dansky writes in the introduction of the book *Viral Performance* about Caryl Churchill’s play *Seven Jewish Children* which was staged at Royal Court Theatre in 2009. Ironically it was about the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. Dansky gives the play as an example of how theatre can be viral and how 21st century’s practices of theatre can have this effect in relation to the performances of the text. The book was written before the pandemic and I believe it is quite meaningful for our times of pandemic, digital age and performance, in many ways. After the play also was performed at the New York Theatre Workshop, the text sparks local and later on international controversy, opening a discussion on the topic of Israeli and Palestinian conflict, not only for the audience, but also for the people who had not seen and only heard about the play:

Not only did *Seven Jewish Children* go viral. It was, I believe, designed to do so. The play's eloquent brevity, its sparse staging requirements, and its deliberate political provocations suggest that it belongs to a new species of performance, self-consciously created for rapid international circulation: viral performance for the twenty first century. If Churchill could not have predicted how artists, audiences, and reading and listening publics would respond to her text, the play's form still suggested openness to rapid dissemination and radical reimagining. So did the terms under which Churchill offered other artists the production rights, which were openly available at no cost, as long as audiences were not charged admission and the producing artists collected funds for the organization of Medical Aid for Palestinians.⁵

This is how Churchill imagined the travelling of her play as the text is reinterpreted in relation to the political reality of its subject. Just as I wonder how *Old Child's* utopic world, in which I imagined the dead children to live their lives, can be pluralized and maybe performed after its close attachment to the times that the events took place, I also wonder if *Seven Jewish Children* can open a new discussion now, as the war is at its peak in the region.

Another time and space in my life which is at the core of these political events and my artistic preoccupations, is 2001 in New York, more precisely the 11th of September.

***LAST WORLD*⁶ – As People Fall Off Skyscrapers A Dystopia is Prophesized**

The Woman: Beneath water and time... Swamps... In between the two big rivers...⁷ I vanished inside that country of mud, music and words.⁸ I disappear. I sink into my past. Ahh and there it is. It is the Hor!⁹ The Hor, the Hor, the Hor! That dear swamp. I am drowning. I am drowning inside you and yet you are so beautiful. (*Last World*)

Three characters appear in the play *Last World*; the Woman, the Man and the Third Person. The Woman represents the East and her words have references to Eastern texts like for example Gilgamesh Legends, Quran, 1001 Night Tales and details from the geography of Mesopotamia; current Middle East in between the two big rivers of Firat and Dicle also situated in the East of Turkey. These geo-cultural references are also representative of the idea of catastrophe in relation to history.

I wrote the play *Last World* four years after my experience in New York of 9/11. Times have passed and I had also moved out of New York back to Istanbul and so I had some distance to the event because I was far away from where it had happened although it felt as if it had happened everywhere in the world, we all felt the consequences of this disaster even years after.

⁵ Miriam Felton Dansky, *Viral Performance- Contagious Theaters from Modernism to the Digital Age*, Evanston/ Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2018, pp. 3-4.

⁶ The play has premiered at the 15th edition of Istanbul International Theatre Festival, in 2006. All quotations will be from the original manuscript, not yet published.

⁷ Noah's Ark is said to embark between Firat and Dicle rivers in current Middle East and Eastern Anatolia into a mountain.

⁸ In between Firat and Dicle rivers there is Şatt'ül-Arap swamp.

⁹ In Mesopotamian Arabic "hor" means swamp.



Figure 2. *Last World* at Yeni Melek Theatre, photo credit: Ali Öz.

When the catastrophe happened it was early in the morning of September the 9th I had been living and working in New York City for some time with my husband and my son who was born there. I had produced two of my plays in off-off Broadway. My husband was working as a web designer, and he was also attending exhibitions and creating art but for some time it was as if we had been feeling the stress of the city because we were already discussing moving back to Istanbul. For that reason, we had left our son, Sinan Can, to my mother in Istanbul. For one last time we were going to think about what we should do. I was walking in the park when it happened. A deranged guy came up to me and said “they are gone, they are both gone I can’t believe it!” he said. I could not make sense. I went home in the upper West side of the city and I realized that nothing was working; the tv, the phones... After some time, my mother could reach me from my old-fashioned mobile. She was in panic. She had just watched everything on tv but still I did not know what had happened in the city I was living in. After that I remember the dark smoke over the city, the weird smell that persisted for days after, the guy at the Hungarian coffee shop looking at me weirdly when I told him my name to write on the cup he was holding, the name which I realized had a kind of a Middle Eastern sound, our American friends whom after seeing Osama Bin Laden on TV, screaming at the top of their voices to nuke the Middle East; the geography where my son was so close at the time and the geography where I came from. It was time to move back. There was no question in our minds.

It was three or four years after the disaster I was living in Istanbul, I had founded my own theatre. It was our fourth production on stage. I was pregnant with my second child whom I refused to give birth to in US although many advised to do so since it was very desirable and convenient because of visas etc. since as Turkish citizens we were treated like a third world Middle Eastern citizen potential for terrorism; almost all countries asked for a visa, so some of us tried to get citizenship

and/or give birth in other countries so that our children are not exposed to such discrimination. I never thought it would be more and more difficult for a Turkish citizen to get a simple visa as time passed but here we are now and borders are more tightened and anyone who is not an American, European and/or British might as well be a terrorist so we are exposed to more tightened regulations for getting visas with refusals, short amounts of time permitted or no appointments attained for even more than a year... Distance and time worked together with the symbolic aspect of the play which makes me wonder as in representing human catastrophe on stage whether it affects us as artists in a positive way or maybe not? For both the audience and myself as the writer of the play everything has become a representation, a symbol and I found myself creating an abstract world of symbols representing these strong moments of my life and the world's timeline.

The subject of the play is about a plane crash and three characters who are suspended in the open air; not being able to define where they are. Somewhere on the borders of Europe, a plane crash happens. Three people on board the flight numbered Noah 71/71 find themselves in a place they cannot describe. They are unaware of each other. For a while, they try to understand this indescribable place. Are they dead? Has time stopped? Has the end of the world come? Where are they? The Woman, The Man and The Third Person represent the East/West and the 'neither that nor the other' proposition that undoes and releases this equation. The fall of the plane is actually the harbinger of a collapse taking place or is about to take place. In this sense, *Last World* aims to propose an interpretation to the concept of the 'end', starting out from the representations of its characters. Is it possible to end? What does the end of life mean? Does love for people, the world, the creator end? Can the world end, die out? What does the end mean? How do we end? The text of the play draws strength from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, blends and incorporates many texts ranging from Indian, Turkish, Arabic and Persian culture to Shakespeare's *Richard the Third* and *Hamlet*, from Dante's *Divine Comedy* to Rumi, from Sophocles' *Oedipus* to Fuzuli's ghazals and to Sevim Burak, from tarot cards to Attila İlhan, from everyday utilisation bills to the oldest love poem thought to be written by a Sumerian nun.

The visual reference of the play is based on contemporary artist Genco Gülan¹⁰'s *Daily Mythologies and Scream* series. Gülan also built a stage installation for the play. The play symbolically draws references and attributes an oath to the people who died falling off the skyscrapers in or to escape their death in the falling buildings at the aftermath of the disaster of 9/11.

A personal experience which turned into a play after two years with a distance to the main event shows that the distance affects one's creation and interpretation process immensely. Jerome Bell's words about theatre in an interview after his work "disabled people" centered on the collaboration with Theatre Hora which is a theatre created for artistic work with people of learning disabilities resonates with. For Bell,

[...] theatre is precisely about being able to see what you're not used to seeing, what's hidden and concealed from view. Theatre that shows what you know by heart, that doesn't take a risk in the performance, that doesn't question the performance, that doesn't push the performance to its limits is of no interest to

¹⁰ Genco Gülan artist's website: <https://gencogulan.com> (accessed December 14, 2023).

me. If you don't go to theatre to be a voyeur and see what you're not allowed to see, I don't understand why you go.¹¹

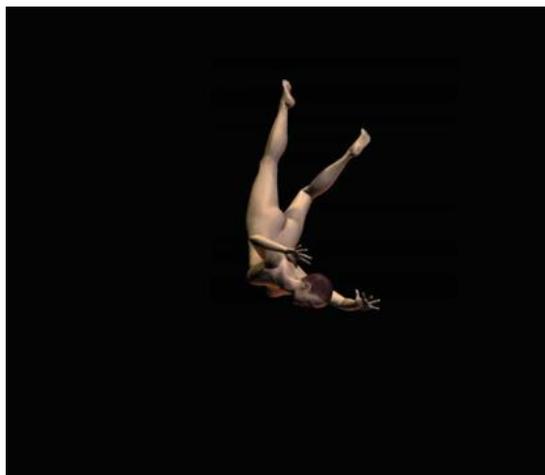


Figure 3. Woman *The Fall of Super heroes*. 2003. Digital print on canvas, vernic. 90cmx90cm. (Turan Özcan collection).

I believe *Last World* was for me a play where I wanted to carve out my heart about my close experience sadness of 9/11 for the voyeuristic purposes of the audience to see. It was so close to my heart, but I needed time in order to process and bring forward the conceptualization of the reality of life at the time.

Another pivotal time in my life happens to be the Gezi protests in Istanbul in 2013 in Istanbul.

Istanbul Testimonials – Utopia becomes our Dystopia

Istanbul Testimonials /*Tanıklıklar* was a project dedicated to what happened on the 31st of May in 2013 and during the month of June in Istanbul regarding the protests against the Turkish government by its own citizens, entitled loosely in the media as “Gezi Events”. The project brought together four new playwrights: Şenay Tanrıvermiş, Öznur Şahin, Sami Özbudak, Burak Safa Çalış from GalataPerform's New Next New Theater Project. The play consisted of four different testimonials of the month of June 2013 in Istanbul by four different writers who all experienced the events in very different ways. I edited and directed these testimonials. Walking between the lines of fiction and reality the project aimed to reflect an insider's view on Istanbul's resistance which mainly evolved out of a protest against the destruction of a park in the middle of the city and spread to the whole of Turkey in defense of freedom and human rights; environmental, women's, elections, freedom of expression etc...

¹¹ Jérôme Bell, “Interview about *Disabled Theatre*,” [online]. <http://www.jeromebel.fr/index.php?p=2&s=15&ctid=1> (accessed December 14, 2023).

The project was important because, again, it was in the aftermath of the Gezi protests. This experience was very different from a previous similar project called Gezerken in which sets of four different playwrights were called to write plays to be performed at the Gezi Park as the protests were happening. I was actually involved and called to write a play with three other playwrights in the second round of playwrights to write. The first four playwrights who wrote plays about Gezi and they were staged during the protests in the park. But as the second round of playwrights of which I was a part of, we all discussed the power of the events and the performative strong aspect of it superseding whatever we were supposed to write and/or will write. So we preferred not to write for the project at the time. One year after the protests and as Gezi was politically and literally overrun by the government, we were called by teatr.doc and playwright and festival director Mikhail Durnenkov to write about what had happened in order to do a play reading in Moscow, which we could at that time; it was the right time for us to understand what had happened and how we could convert such a strong experience into words.

Istanbul Testimonials, with its testimonials of the June 2013 protests, became a space for shared witnessing and collective reflection. It was written and read almost two years after the Gezi protests in another country. At the time people had advised me not to promote it in the Turkish press because of political implications, which was not so apparent at that time for us, so we did not hesitate and promoted it¹². But, later on, all who were involved in the Gezi protests were announced as terrorists against the government. In time a utopia became our dystopia.

“Aksak or Delirium” – A Work in Progress on the Idea of Madness and Falling

In 2004 I wrote and staged *Aksak İstanbul Hikayeleri (Limping Tales from İstanbul)* which got to be translated to French (*Histoires Syncopées d’İstanbul*) by Maison Antoine Vitez¹³ and later on was staged at the Greek Theatre Festival in 2015 under the name *Histories d’İstanbul*¹⁴.

The play is based on the reflection of the Ottoman music structure on acting and text. The text consists of 12 characters and their monologues; deconstructed and interjected. The sections of the play are designed to resemble a music piece. In the way that the stories come together, syncopate and the feeling of rhythm, the “syncopated style” of the Ottoman Classical Turkish Music is taken as reference point. The irregularity of the stories is envious of the 9/8 rhythm, which is referred to as “syncopated” (*aksak*) in the Turkish Classical Music. As most Turkish musicians would agree although the syncopated style (*aksak*) is considered as irregular and asymmetrical, with repetition a harmony and symmetry is attained. So the play discusses this idea of symmetry/asymmetry of East/West, tradition/modernity through the stories of two different families and their affinities from İstanbul; a city that

¹² Nerdun Hacıoğlu, “Gezi eylemleri Rusya Sahnesinde,” *Hurriyet*, İstanbul, January 20, 2014, [online]. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kelebek/gezi-eylemleri-rusya-sahnesinde-25604575> (accessed December 20, 2023).

¹³ See abstract and translator’s point of view at *Maison Antoine Vitez*, [online]. <https://www.maisonantoinevitez.com/fr/bibliotheque/histoires-saccadees-distanbul-669.html> (accessed December 20, 2023).

¹⁴ Synopsis and other information on the performance at Teatre Barcelona website, [online]. <https://es.teatrebarcelona.com/espectacle/histories-distanbul> (accessed December 20, 2023).

somehow reaches harmony despite all its chaos. *Aksak* is also a term used in Turkish language for something that does not flow, that goes wrong. Like a glitch, an abnormality in a perfectly normal world.

I would like to carry on with this idea of abnormality, *aksak*, syncopated rhythm of life, and integrate it to our current reality of the 21st century on the brink of madness in a digital, viral and post truth world. In the *Lesser Known Monsters of the 21st Century*, Kim Fu writes stories of science fiction, fantasy, and even crime fiction blended together where the lines between reality and fiction blurred and layers of normalcy reveals the weird, creepy things at the core of each story.

Just as Haruki Murakami mentions about life and reality as “the best way to think about reality is to get as far away from it as possible,”¹⁵ Kim Fu submerges this reality in a masterful way. In line with a Turkish story, writer Gamze Arslan’s world, as she also looks to the abnormal beyond the normalcy in her stories compiled under the title *Kanayak*¹⁶, in which normalized violence permeates her stories. In the same way I would like to take real stories mostly of women and create a play in which the madness becomes normal, normal is pregnant to madness and nothing is without a glitch.

In Bill Viola’s video art “The Raft”¹⁷ we see a group of bystanders unaware of each other, even though they are disinterested in each other’s lives, they still stand together. As a flood takes over and they suddenly are confronted with a catastrophe as they fall, hurt, feel themselves at the edge of life they hold onto each other and for the first time they really see each other.

As we see human catastrophe as a break, a glitch that disrupts the flow of life, nature and beings, universe in its totality our personal stories in relation to madness, misdoings and flaws in life still continues with some kind of a weird harmony. Just as the asymmetry with repetition becoming harmonious. I would like to fictionalize real stories, in order to visually, verbally and physically represent the cracks of our times politically in relation to the personal.

In such crazy, pandemic, digital, dystopic, viral, crisis times of newly risen wars, unbelievably true climate crisis, re-fascistic politics, the death of humanity for once and all in face of the approaching sea of the digital world, constant sickness of the body and the soul all this seems quite logical for me.

Cihat: I had a teacher. I used to visit her sometimes. She used to say, I sometimes think that everything happens for a reason. With a magical stick everything is put into places. Lives cross, divide, break up, end, depart and another one comes right after.¹⁸

In line with the pivotal times and experiences I had in my life specific to the catastrophes that went parallel to my life and everyone else’s; some close and some far away, the idea of physical and abstract distance becomes determinant in the way we create works. Similarly post 2019 years entail turning points in the world. In years

¹⁵ Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Random House, 2011, p. 231.

¹⁶ Gamze Arslan, *Kanayak*, İstanbul, Can Yayınları, 2019.

¹⁷ Bill Viola, *The Raft*, May 2004, [online]. <https://youtu.be/4Ili9pvlxdk?si=fKLUmNo7NNChY4QB>, (accessed December 15, 2023).

¹⁸ Yeşim Özsoy, *Aksak İstanbul Hikayeleri* [original title: *Limping Tales of Istanbul*], İstanbul, Habitus Yayınları, 2019, p. 50.

we will also look back upon these years and most probably chronicle the devastating effects on our and each other's lives in a strange and beautiful fatalistic way grounded and merged in harsh realities of life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arslan, Gamze, *Kanayak*, Istanbul, Can Yayınları, 2019.
- Artaud, Antonin, *Theatre and Its Double*, New York, Grove Press, 1958.
- Bell, Jérôme, "Interview about *Disabled Theatre*," [online].
<http://www.jeromebel.fr/index.php?p=2&s=15&ctid=1> (accessed December 14, 2023).
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, [online].
<https://www.britannica.com/art/catharsis-criticism>, (accessed December 22, 2023).
- Ejder, Eylem, *A Drama of Unlived Stories: Old Child by Galata Perform*, Arap Stages, Martin E. Segal Theater Center Publications, Volume 7, Fall 2017.
- Felton Dansky, Miriam, *Viral Performance- Contagious Theaters from Modernism to the Digital Age*, Evanston/ Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2018.
- Murakami, Haruki, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, New York: Penguin Random House, 2011.
- Nerdun Hacıoğlu, "Gezi eylemleri Rusya Sahnesinde," *Hurriyet*, Istanbul, January 20, 2014 [online]. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kelebek/gezi-eylemleri-rusya-sahnesinde-25604575> (accessed on January 20, 2023).
- Özsoy, Yeşim, *Aksak Istanbul Hikayeleri (Limping Tales of Istanbul)*, Istanbul, Habitus Yayınları, 2019.

**PASS-PORT:
THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE “PASSAGE” ON THE
THEATRICAL STAGE**

The discussion aims to examine the methodological approach and the representation on stage of my doctoral research entitled “Sea Journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy” (Kings College London 2016, supervised by Edith Hall) as a result of a workshop and the rehearsals that followed. The performance *Pass-Port* was performed at the theatre Argo in Athens, in November 2022². Focusing on the element of wanderings as a main axis of my study, the theoretical and practical aim of the research was to integrate the problematic of immigration and refugees, as well as the dynamics it shapes in the societies of the future through the wanderings of mortals, heroes and gods in ancient Greek tragedy. Moreover, the discussion will be focused on the dramaturgical procedure and the directorial choices regarding the stage representations, not only of the sea as a place of multiple dynamics, symbolism and interpretations, but also of the coast as a liminal space and a border between two homelands, life and death, nostos and nostalgia.

Key-words: *Pass-Port, performance, passage, migration, liminality, Greek tragedy*

Travelling within the world of the ancient Greek tragedy is always an experience “full of adventure, full of discovery,” like a marvelous voyage to Constantine Cavafy’s Ithaca. For the seafaring Greeks, sailing was a synonym for gaining knowledge. The sea was not only the natural background setting of ancient Greeks’ everyday life, but its vastness, as it expanded beyond the limits of their known world, stimulated their curiosity to explore it.

However, in many cases, the adventure of wandering is the result of exodus and catastrophe. In *Hecuba* and *The Trojan Women*, for example, the dramatic setting oscillates between two particular spaces: the devastated Troy and the sea as the setting for the imminent departure. The sea functions as a passage to exile for the Trojan captive women and as a passage to return home for the Greek army (freedom and enslavement, catastrophe and rebirth)³. Liminality in between personal and collective, life and theatre, trauma and healing is constantly manifested. Particularly, in *The Trojan Women*, the seashore reflects, in the most appropriate way, the liminal situation of the women who face an imminent departure to exile. The dispersal of the women in islands and cities, washed by rivers and the sea, ironically evokes the image of the corpses of the Greek soldiers filling the shores of the Aegean that Poseidon and

¹ Artistic director and theatre Director at In-Between Art Theatre Company, Athens, Greece.

² Trailer of *Pass-Port – Sea journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy*, Theatre direction by Leonidas Papadopoulos, In Between Art Theatre Company, 2022, [online]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rY90525-WyQ> (accessed December 17, 2023).

³ Collard (1991), Gregory (1997 and 1999), Harrison (2008), Hourmouziades (1965), Lee (1976), Mossman (1995), O’Neill (1941), Rehm (2002), Segal (1990), Zeitlin (1991).

Athena eagerly planned in the prologue of the play (*Trojan Women*, 77-97). In the first *stasimon* of Euripides's *Hecuba* (444-483), the chorus speculates about their future servitude in potential Greek destinations. Even though the inconsistency between the wishes of the captive women and their identity as married women, is obvious,⁴ simultaneously a challenge is posed suggesting that this liminal situation could be characterized as a symbolic rite of passage.

Arnold van Gennep in his seminal work *The Rites of Passage*, classifies the initiatory rituals in three different stages: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation⁵. Taking into account the destruction of the Trojan women's previous life, their imminent voyage to Greece could easily be identified as a procedure of transition. Losing their identities, women pass to a new stage of life, and this transition is marked by a symbolic death and a subsequent rebirth. The journey into exile, in comparison with these rites, contains separation, transformation via a liminal stage and a kind of a new incorporation. Furthermore, another significant similarity here is that several rites of passage are usually accompanied by violent acts, particularly involving rituals of sacrifice or reproducing symbolic representations of the wildness of humanity's primitive instincts⁶. Captive women who face the catastrophe and savagery of the war are not only like the bereaved birds crying for their fates and losses,⁷ but also like animals in cages. The similarities with ritual ceremonies at Brauron, where young girls acted as bears for Artemis in the festivals of Arkteia, are profound⁸. The pre-marriage status of these maidens is symbolically reproduced by the Trojan women who face an impending new marriage. Either maidens, or married, they are going to be a part of a maturation process that leads them to a marriage, or a second marriage.

The conclusion reached provides this kind of transition as a symbolic rite of passage. The role of the sea is also crucial, as the background for the Greeks' destruction which is desired and is prefigured by Poseidon and Athena in the prologue as a form of punishment for the Greeks' impiety after their victory at Troy. The sea journey from Troy to Greece can be also illustrated as a passage of the Acheron, where the ships of the Greeks, transporting the spoils of victory, become the boats which will lead them to their demise. Another motif that links rites of passage with the Trojan women's journey is that in both cases girls or women were removed or exiled to a place isolated from their own households or communities and were "subjected to physical orders and trials"⁹. The significant difference between these two parallel situations is that the young girls re-integrated afterwards into the social community of

⁴ Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1906, p. 206.

⁵ A. Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, 1909, as cited in Mark William Padilla, *Rites of passage in ancient Greece: Literature, religion, society*, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1999, p. 15.

⁶ Goff, as cited in Padilla, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-128.

⁷ Polyxena in *Hecuba* (178) and Hecuba in *Trojan Women* (146) mention birds to express vulnerability and motherhood.

⁸ On the Arkteia, see Paula Perlman, *The Arkteia: a festival celebrated in honor of Artemis in Attica*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 111-133.

⁹ For this aspect of the rites of passage for young girls, see Katz as cited in Padilla, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-147.

their cities, while the captive women are confronted with mutual separation and enslavement.

Van Genneep suggests that travel itself “is a passage with dynamics of the type found in other passage rites such as those of initiation”; observing also that travel “must also be one of the commonest basic structures for narratives.”¹⁰ Travel is Trojan women “captive’s dilemma,”¹¹ the choice between death and a new perspective of life. In *Hecuba* and *The Trojan Women*, the period of waiting undergone by the women is a liminal situation; and the seashore a space of contradictory feelings and realizations: a stage where a symbolic dramatic *agon* takes place between the primitive and civilization. In this remote threshold space between two poles and respective choices, human beings must determine their own lives. If we can identify the seashore as a tragic space, it is because it acquires a temporary character within the frameworks of ancient Greek tragedy as a liminal space of *dilemma*, choice, and transition.

From my scrutiny on the surviving texts discussed, it might easily be inferred that sea’s multiple transformations, through the imaginary world of the theatre, are closely connected with Greek’s understanding of the transformation of life to catastrophe and death, and from death to immortality. Aeschylus’ *Persians* provides a striking example of the transformative powers of the sea. The aquatic landscapes become passages of destruction and death for the defeated Persian army. Xerxes’ crossing of Hellespont, a gulf devoted to the young maiden Helle after her fatal fall in its waters, evokes nature’s alteration, which is the beginning of total disaster for the Persians. The crossing of Hellespont, as well as the desired but unsuccessful crossing of the river Strymon, can be seen as a symbolic reflection of the final *pompe* of the Elders towards the Persian palace, which acquires the characteristics of a funeral procession. It is also implied that these Elders can be seen as the reverse image of the absent young troops, fostering images of the dead Persians’ lost potential future. Hence, the final march of the play can be interpreted as a metaphorical homecoming. As a result, places of triumphant battles function simultaneously as sacred tombs of death. The waters of Salamis in Aeschylus’ *Persians*, for example, become a synecdoche for the destruction of the Persians and the central point of the dramatic structure of the play. The narrow straits acquire a clearly defined imagery as a passage of death, a place of no escape and an absolute “other.” The sea’s power and boundlessness transforms into a “vast ocean of catastrophes” (*κακῶν δὴ πέλαγος ἔρρωγεν μέγα*, *Persians*, 433).

The sea as a morbid space of death hosts shipwrecks, secrets, and drowned sailors. The sea, though familiar to the Greeks, preserves the fear of the unknown in many aspects of their life. The soulless bodies the Persian soldiers and the maiden Helle in Aeschylus’ *Persians*, as well as the corpse of the young prince Polydorus in Euripides’ *Hecuba*, swaying in the sea, preserve a perpetual mobility that differs from the stillness of the tomb and as a result it can be suggested that the sea creates an image of endless travelling as a kind of symbolic immortality.

The sea is a no man’s land, and like the Underworld, a place of no return. It can be metamorphosed to become a deadly trap with no chance of escape. The

¹⁰ Genneep, as cited in Padilla, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

¹¹ Scodel (1998, 153) points out the choice of the women in *Trojan Women* to ‘remain within the past or to try to negotiate a future’.

darkness of Hades finds one of its most striking metaphors in the abyss of the sea. In Aeschylus' *Persians* the dead commanders are identified as fishes, children of silence. Nevertheless, it is suggested that the repeated recitations of the Persian generals, as well as the chorus' invocation to Darius, indirectly and symbolically, succeed in allowing the invisible and imaginary chorus of the "departed" souls to emerge from Hades.

Heroes and gods' wanderings in the sea have, in several cases, much in common with today's refugees who, in pursuit of a safer life through the sea routes, expose themselves to the unpredictable nature of the watery environment. A typical example is the Mediterranean Sea which in our temporary history, as far as in ancient world, becomes the wet grave of many of them. It is the same place that in Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates says that "the earth is very large and we who dwell between the pillars of Hercules and the river Phasis do so in only a small part of it around the sea, like frogs or ants round a pond"¹². So we could suggest that the journey of wandering is timeless. The sea becomes a medium of salvation but, unfortunately, in many times a passage to death. It hides within it, the journey of the refugee, the sadness of loss, but also the hope for a better future.

The performance *Pass-Port – Sea journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy* was a stage voyage full of sound and light. It narrated the wandering of souls and bodies who search for their own identity in a world which is both familiar and paradoxical. During the workshop the dramatic works of ancient Greek literature were studied and researched meticulously. Simultaneously texts from the corpus of modern Greek literature, poetry, and visual arts, as well as historical documents and life narratives, are also incorporated in our dramaturgical research and analysis. More specifically the study material includes: Myths and Homeric Epics and Hymns. Texts of ancient Greek literature (History, Philosophy and Lyric Poetry), the surviving works of ancient Greek tragedy, the Doctoral research "Sea Voyages in Ancient Greek Tragedy", imagery of wanderings and crossings through the sea, representations of symbolic and real borders of all kinds in literature and other art forms, historical documents, verbatim stories and life narratives. Thus, the maritime itineraries of the ancient Greek tragedy intersect with other texts and intertexts of the modern Greek literature. From Alexandros Papadiamantis and Aristotle Valaoritis to Kostis Palamas – different literary shells that echo the sounds of the sea and its hidden treasures or traps.

In the heart of our study remains the ambivalent *cosmos* of the sea with its prominent role. As we mentioned before, many of Greek tragedies begin or end with arrival or departure by sea. In Euripides' *Trojan Women* the band of women are being herded onto the Greeks' ships in order to sail away to their life in slavery. Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* are asylum-seekers who arrived on the shores of Lerna, near Argos. Euripides' *Andromache* and *Helen* are fugitives and prisoners of war. The dangerous waters of the Black Sea in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, become the mean of Iphigenia, Orestes and Pylades' escape from Taurike Chersonesos. The mention of

¹² Plato. *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*. Edited and translated by Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Preddy. Loeb Classical Library 36, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 344/375, [online]. DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.plato_philosopher-phaedo.2017 (accessed December 17, 2023).

Crimea brings in mind the nowadays displacing of thousands of citizens far away from their homeland.

The liminal dimension of the sea remained as one of the main axes and precursors of the directorial approaches, both in terms of the composition of the text and of its visual representation. Traveling to our own Ithaca, all the members of the performance, create a visual representation of a journey that captures, through the passage of the sea, a wandering route, not only through humans' historical evolution, but also through a search for the unpredictable light and darkness eddies of human nature.



Photo 1: “O breeze, breeze of the sea...where will you bear me, the sorrowful one?” (Euripides, *Hecuba*), in *Pass-Port*; production photo by Miranda Papadopoulou (2022).



Photo 2: “And she (Earth) bore also the fruitless deep with his raging swell, Pontus, without sweet union of love” (Hesiod, *Theogony*); production photo by Katerina Arvaniti (2022).



Photo 3: Refugees at sea during the storm, in *Pass-Port*; production photo by Katerina Arvaniti (2022).

Considering that the dramatic action is undeniably determined by its visible or invisible spatial characteristics, it can be suggested that the seascape, despite its

absence from the theatrical setting, has a prominent role in the visible sphere of the theatre. Nevertheless, in many cases in the theatrical art, the element of water can be depicted through the scenographic code. The “sea” in the performance of *Pass-Port*, beyond the vast imagination of the diegetic space, enters limited within the stage space¹³. As a result, the water integrates and interacts with the actors within the theatrical stage. Through the narration and the development of the plot, the water emerges and mirrors the bodies of the actor and from imaginary it becomes visible. The use of a structure filled with water inundates the stage space resulting in the bodies of the actors acquiring an experiential interaction. Actors’ movements and expressions play a distinctive role. Their clothes and their bodies, sink or reflected on the water surface, while the stage objects (ropes, children's toys and small boats) float acquiring their own semiotic dimension (yokes, killing nets and life preservers) in the development of the plot. The three wooden platforms, each time, acquire their own identity: an island in the chaos of the immensity of the sea, a forgotten homeland, a desert island, a ship that will unite two different worlds, a life raft that will prolong human beings’ agony and hope to reach their destination.

Closing this brief account of the semantic theoretical and practical issues of the performance *Pass-Port – Sea Journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy*, I cite a piece of dramaturgical composition that encapsulates the notions of exodus and catastrophe through the sea:

... Sea... place of passage... It brought me here, far from my land. I had never been on a boat. I only knew about the sea from the paintings and all the nautical stories I heard from men. For sailors who fought desperately the waves in order to be saved and when the storms raged the sea and they were left surrendered in the wild waters. I feel trapped in a sea of despair. I am abandoned to the multitude of my woes, because the storm of life has crushed me. Where can I ask for a shelter? In which country? Which way should I take? What demon or God, what man will come to save me? Everywhere is a desolation. Throw my wretched body into a ship. I do not want to see the light of the day. Let the water become the passage for my death and not the path for a refuge...

Sea... place of passage...

The performance *Pass-Port – Sea journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy* encapsulates not only the never-ending voyage through the sea and its symbolic synecdoche to life, but also the notion and catastrophe in a world of constant turmoil. Every man is like a sailor travelling in space and time. His life is an adventure of departures and arrivals, victories and disasters, calm waters and storms. Man struggling with divinities (*δαίμονες*), Furies (*Ἐρινύες*), and the all-tamer time (*πανδαμάτωρ χρόνος*), fights to escape his predicted fate. His wanderings in a sea of despair, metaphorically, illustrate the pursuit of a desired eternity within the limits of his mortal life. Hence, the fragile condition of many of the characters of ancient Greek tragedy could be present them, on both dramatic and scenic world, as liminal figures of the exodus, exposed endlessly at the mercy of elements. As a result, the dilemmatic,

¹³ Manos Damaskinos, “Dissolving the boundaries between dramatic and scenic space. The liquid element on the theatrical stage,” in the theatrical program of the performance *Passport*, Athens, 2023.

in many cases, human figures, through their exodus, follow their route to salvation or catastrophe.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Collard, Christopher (ed.). *Euripides' Hecuba, with Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips LTD Publishers, 1991.
- Gregory, Justina, *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Gregory, Justina (ed.), *Euripides, Hecuba: introduction, text, and commentary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Damaskinos, Manos, 'Dissolving the boundaries between dramatic and scenic space. The liquid element on the theatrical stage', in the theatrical program of the performance 'Passport', Athens, 2023.
- Harrison, John, *Euripides' Hecuba*, Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Hourmouziades, Nicolaos, *Production and imagination in Euripides: Form and function of the scenic space*, Athens, Greek Society for Humanistic Studies, 1965.
- Lee, Kevin Hargreaves (ed.), *Euripides' Troades with Introduction and Commentary*, London: Macmillan, 1976.
- Mossman, Judith, *Wild justice: a study of Euripides' Hecuba*, Clarendon Press, 1995
- O' Neill, Eugene, "The prologue of the *Troades* of Euripides," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 1941, 72, pp. 288-320.
- Padilla, Mark William, *Rites of passage in ancient Greece: Literature, religion, society*, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1999.
- Plato, *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*, edited and translated by Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Preddy, Loeb Classical Library 36, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 344/375, [online]. DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.plato_philosopher-phaedo.2017 (accessed December 17, 2023).
- Perlman, Paula, *The Arkteia: a festival celebrated in honor of Artemis in Attica*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989.
- Rehm, Rush, *The play of space: Spatial transformation in Greek tragedy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Segal, Charles, "Violence and the Other: Greek, Female, and Barbarian in Euripides' *Hecuba*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, vol. 120, 1990, pp. 109–131.
- Scodel, Ruth, "The Captive's Dilemma: Sexual Acquiescence in Euripides *Hecuba* and *Troades*," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. 98, 1998, pp. 137–154.
- Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Ulrich, *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1906.
- Zeitlin, Froma, "Euripides' *Hekabe* and the somatics of Dionysiac drama," *Ramus*, vol. 20, 1991, pp. 53-94.

Webography

- Trailer of *Pass-Port – Sea journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy*, Theatre direction by Leonidas Papadopoulos, In Between Art Theatre Company, 2022, [online]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rY90525-WyQ> (accessed December 17, 2023).

Poetical Post-Scriptum
Post-scriptum poétique

GAZA

que suis-je que sommes-nous sinon l'ombre sombre d'un désir
il faut mettre fin à cette mascarade
arrêter le temps
l'avant de l'avant
l'après de l'après
relâcher les amarres ça n'a plus de sens
raconter des histoires
exhiber des images
dire des phrases parfaites
il faut briser le mur jeter la pierre piétiner les cristaux
laisser tomber les choses nouvelles et s'habiller en guenilles **extatiques**
se dénuder de phrases anodines
atteindre le fond du point le plus obscur
dans le neuvième cercle
juste ça
juste un trou de glace dans la mémoire
un océan de glace comme une tasse de sucre noir
pervertie
mal fermentée des adieux et des rêves
il ne reste plus rien
et il n'est pas nécessaire d'inventer les débuts du néant
l'océan se déverse sur les rues sur l'aurore
sortir un réveil au milieu de la boue
sortir du monde s'échapper
revenir au point où tout commence
mais rien ne recommence
tout est usé de formes et reliques
tout est peint dans les voûtes sacrées
avec des avalanches de rires patriarcaux
le monde
enfermé dans des étreintes
brisé le ciel les diagonales de l'horizon
la plaine tombe avec un brusque
bruit de mamelons fanés
Comme elle est fausse la mémoire la caresse inouïe qui nous déchire
la légende éparse de tous les débuts et une fin de couteaux
de tours
de boucheries
une épaisse boue de peaux et de mains

¹ Université Laval, Québec, Canada.

un œil aveuglé
un mot muet
est-ce cela la seule chose brève qui nous reste?
le reste est imprimé virtualisé
transformé en poussières de l'étrange
exposé sur l'autel du passé
dans les pardons nouveaux
dans les vieux pardons et les diatribes aux signes alarmants
assez de dire
assez de se taire
crier sans force le cri préliminaire
une rupture de mots
un cri comme une immense couche de poussière
dans la gorge
la veine cassée et l'os titubant
par cette rue
par cet escalier
par la pente abrupte de l'incendie
les nuages et les rêves se consomment
que suis-je
que suis-je maintenant
que sommes-nous à l'instant d'une horloge perturbée
la frontière est étroite
la pluie tombe comme un baume et le monde se tait
regarder le monde
laisser courir les heures
parcourir la tranchée des rêves caducs
l'insoutenable face de la mémoire
mais la journée achève une heure de plus
juste une heure pour attendre dans un coin de la rue
après tout est fini
il y a une fumée qui flotte entre les ruines
entre les pierres une fumée noire comme une grenade
une fenêtre brisée
une porte sans murs seulement une porte debout
ou l'image finale de la défaite
la ville n'existe plus
cette paire de chaussures alignées
de petites chaussures alignées
juste une paire de chaussures au milieu des débris
pourquoi la parole
pourquoi la mémoire sans fin
les toges les regards étonnés une langue des phrases noires
vide de mots
vides les phrases et les signes
les yeux sont vides de tant voir la fumée noire
le dictionnaire se tait
les feuilles du dictionnaire servent à ne rien dire

pour se taire à des cris de décence impudique
plus rien
pas avant que tout se termine dans un adage qui répète la même fausse note
plus de discours
plus de phrases de soulagement dissimulées dans des papiers de luxe et oratoires
non plus rien
tant de mensonges
et les preuves si visibles
qui vient un moment où se taire est le seul moyen qui reste
il n'y a même pas de place pour une grimace
il n'y a pas de place pour autre chose que de rester les yeux exposés
et le sourire muet
pétrifiée sur les joues
sculpté dans la boue de la mort
ou dans la boue de la vie
dans l'épaisse boue de la vie qui est la même chose
qui est la mort elle-même et l'heure unique qui sonne
avec ses cloches cassées et ses sermons complices
la face déshabillée de signes
un corps agenouillé
l'ombre des corps les pas inachevés et la fumée
la fumée noire un ciel de taches sombres comme la nuit éternelle
une cendre permanente
une pluie de voyelles perdues dans les canaux profonds du cerveau
et le corps là
et la boue sur le corps
les yeux vers l'infini l'espace vide des yeux
et le corps abandonné jeté dans les décombres
le petit corps les petites mains la fièvre glacée qui les dévore
comme un silence final
une carte postale d'adieux une photo perdue emportée par le vent
aujourd'hui ils se sont rencontrés, hier ils ont dit demain sera sûrement
peut-être alors
la seule réponse ou la question
pourquoi ? pour que les titres disent les voix les réseaux les toiles d'araignée
la soie pour tisser des mots à l'ombre
un de plus un de moins toutes une rangée de mots
une montagne de lettres inachevées
pour quoi faire ? pour ça
pour que personne ne dise pour qu'ils ne demandent pas
pour regarder vers le soleil
aveugles heureux
marchez défilez et faites vos discours
l'hémicycle la régénération les tables de la loi
laquelle ? celle-là toujours la même
une avenue des protocoles une fanfare de fantoches dansant
sous les lumières rougeâtres horizon ouvert horizon brisé
feux clignotants

comme un grand jeu d'artifices
une fête de lumières éclatantes
une odeur de cendres et de corps et de morceaux de corps dispersés
dans ce qui n'est plus rien
mais peu importe
faisons comme si de rien n'était
disons que ce n'est pas vrai que la danse dessine ses cercles parfaits
une colonne de fumée blanche
la clé définie du prochain concile
puis nous rédigeons un manifeste un engagement une lettre
un traité
une rhétorique du monde permanent
une métaphore parfaite pour que tout recommence
cette image ce musée cette heureuse coutume de faux bijoux
que suis-je que sommes-nous une syntaxe caduque
que suis-je que sommes-nous un après-midi paisible
une distance une porte fermée
une ville qui n'est plus une ville ni une limite
ni l'ombre de l'enfant cherchant entre les ruines
que suis-je que sommes-nous rien nous ne sommes rien
on l'a déjà dit
nous sommes peut-être une répétition intermittente
que suis-je que sommes-nous je suis ce que nous sommes
ce qui se répète et nous ne savons rien encore une fois de plus
encore et encore
une dernière fois peut-être demain
demain quand il ne restera plus rien
quand la mémoire s'habillera à nouveau en fête du dimanche
cela rien une fois de plus
peut-être que ça n'a pas d'importance ?
nous ne sommes qu'une répétition intermittente
une répétition intermittente une répétition intermittente

Contributors' Biographical Notes
Notes biographiques des contributeurs

Călin CIOBOTARI is a theatre critic, associate professor and PhD supervisor at the Faculty of Theatre of the “George Enescu” National University of Arts Iași. He’s also an associate professor of the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Political Sciences at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Iași. Member of the Romanian Theatre Union and the Romanian Writers’ Union, he is the author of more than twenty books and a thousand articles (publishing, studies, theater chronicles etc.). He is the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Dacia Literara*, producer and presenter of the show “The Stage” (Apollonia TV Iași). In 2019 and 2022 he was awarded the UNITER Award for Theatre Criticism. In 2020, 2022 and 2023 he was director and selector/curator of the National Theatre Festival. Among his widely popular volumes, we mention *The Marginals of Chekhov* (2016), *The Director and the Text, Reading Practices* (2017), *Hamlet in the Cherry Orchard* (2018), *Rereading Gorky. A Theater on the Brink of Crisis* (2021), *A History of Theatre Kissing* (2022), *Letters to Hamlet* (2023). Within the Doctoral School of Theatre, whose director he has been since 2020, his focus is Aesthetics, Drama Theory and Performance Arts.

*

Noemina CÂMPEAN is a psychoanalyst, a poet and an independent researcher. She practices Lacanian psychoanalysis in Romania and France, and she is a member of the Forum of the Lacanian Field in Romania. She holds a PhD *Summa cum laudae* in Literature at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (2016) and a doctoral scholarship at the Romanian Academy in Bucharest with the thesis *August Strindberg and Ingmar Bergman. Comparative Perspectives on the Pain of the Innocent* (book published in 2018 at Școala Ardeleană & Eikon Publishing House, Cluj Napoca). She organizes, with Flaviu Campean, the International Colloquium on Cinema, Theatre and Psychoanalysis in collaboration with the Faculty of Theatre and Film at BBU (2018, 2019, 2021, 2022) and with the Regional Francophone Centre for Advanced Social Studies in Bucarest (CEREFREA Villa Noël, 2023). Noemina publishes articles on the polymorphic relations between cinema, theatre and psychoanalysis in Strindberg, Bergman, Kierkegaard, O’Neill, Herzog, Zanussi, Jelinek, Haneke, Visconti, Beckett, Joyce, Milo Rau etc. Research trips at the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3, Lyon, France, and at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Books of poetry: *Nudul lui Pilat* (2005) and *Culori ectopice* (2022).

*

Liviu DOSPINESCU is a full professor of theatre studies at the Department of Literature, Theatre and Cinema at the Université Laval. He holds a Ph.D. from the Université du Québec à Montréal in Studies and Practices of arts, with a thesis on the strategies of the *mise en scene* leading to the immersive experience in Samuel Beckett’s “phenomenological theatre” (Dospinescu, 2007). He is interested in interdisciplinary forms of performing arts, especially dance-theatre, and in cultural studies applied to performing arts. He is Principal Researcher of the SSHRC project “Representations of Human Catastrophe through Rites of Passage at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Social Drama or Return to the Tragedy?” (2021-2026), funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). He has explored the “Intercultural Genetics in the Theatre of the Balkans” (2013-2016), a project funded by the *Fond de recherche du Québec – Société et culture* (FRQ-SC) and “The Syrian Exodus in the Theatre of the Real” (SSHRC, 2017-2020). He is also

a director, actor and author, his practice having been developed as *research theatre*; he explored the Live Movie as a new genre within his “Scenic Writings for Permeable Screens” project (2010-2013), contributing to the development of hyperrealist aesthetics in theatre through two experimental creations, *La Boîte* and *Sables vivants* (2012). He is an associate member of the Interdisciplinary Circle of Phenomenological Research, a member of the *Institut du patrimoine culturel* (IPAC) of the Université Laval, of the *Communauté de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la vulnérabilité* (CRIV), of the *Laboratoire international associé* (LIA) « Arts, société et mieux-être » (Université Laval – Université de Nice Côte d’Azur – Villa Arson), and of the International Association of Theatre Critics (AICT), as well as a corresponding member of the Académie du Var (France).

*

Yana MEERZON is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Ottawa. With four single authored books and nine co-edited collections, most recently *Performing Nationalism in Russia* (Cambridge UPress, 2024, forthcoming) and *Palgrave Handbook on Theatre and Migration* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023; with Steve Wilmer), Professor Yana Meerzon, specializes in theoretical approaches to contemporary performance and dramaturgy, questions of displacement, multilingualism, and identity politics. For the past two decades, Professor Meerzon has been studying theatrical representations of migration created by migrant artists in Europe and North America. With the rise of political populism, religious fundamentalism, and nationalism, she turned to the issues of borders and politics of nation building, within which today’s practices and discussions of global migration take place. A former President of Canadian Association for Theatre Research (CATR, 2020-2022), Meerzon is a co-editor of the journal *Critical Stages*, published by International Association of Theatre Critics, and also is a co-editor of the book series Palgrave Studies in Performance and Migration (with Steve Wilmer). Her current project is entitled “Between Migration and Neo-Nationalism(s): Performing the European Nation – Playing a Foreigner”; and it has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

*

Konstantza GEORGAKAKI is an Official Collaborator of the SSHRC project, “Representations of Human Catastrophe through Rites of Passage at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Social Drama or Return to the Tragedy?” She is a Professor in the Department of Theatre Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA). She has got her B.A. Degree from the School of Philosophy/ Department of Literature, and her Ph.D. from the Department of Theatre Studies of the NKUA. Her research interests focus on the fields of Modern Greek Theatre History in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as on its archival documentation. She is also interested in the reception of foreign theatre companies on the Greek stage. She published *Life and State of an Old Lady. Inspection and Dictatorship* (1967-1974) at Ziti Publications in Thessaloniki, 2015, in which she focuses on the relation between Athenian “revue” and dictatorship. She also has published *Le charme éphémère de la revue (1894-2014)* at Polaris in Athens, 2015. She is co-writer of the 13-episode documentary, *It’s just a Junta? Will it pass?* (2011-2012; Director: Fotos Lambrinos). She is Coordinator of the Department of Theater Studies for the *Erasmus +* agreements with Paul Valéry-

Montpellier III University (2004-2021) and Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca (2020-2021), as well as responsible for the CIVIS Agreements (2019-2020).

*

Beatrice LĂPĂDAT holds an M.A. degree in Comparative Literature and Literature Theory from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Scenic and Screen Arts at the Laval University from Québec, under the direction of Professor Liviu Dospinescu. Her thesis focuses on “The Manifestations of violence as a return to ritual in Jan Fabre’s shows.” As a cultural journalist, she collaborated with *LiterNet*, *Observator Cultural*, *Cultura*, *Lucafașarul*, *Teatrul Azi*, *Scena.ro*, *MaCulture*, *Sibiu International Theatre Festival* and *Festival d’Automne*. Beatrice Lapadat benefited from the Québec Research Fund – Society and Culture scholarship and is affiliated to the Canadian Association for Theatre Research (CATR) and the *Société québécoise d’études théâtrales* (SQET), as well as to the *Institut du patrimoine culturel de l’Université Laval*. Her main research interests concern the avatars of ritual and violence in performing arts, political theatre, and queer identities. She has published numerous scientific papers on these topics nationally and internationally.

*

Yeşim ÖZSÖY is an Official Collaborator of the SSHRC project, “Representations of Human Catastrophe through Rites of Passage at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Social Drama or Return to the Tragedy?” She is a writer, director and performer and the founder and General Artistic Director of GalataPerform, based in Istanbul. The company focusses on new text, new technologies and interdisciplinarity. Since 2002, Yeşim Özsoy has written, directed and produced plays in Istanbul and in Europe. Her plays have been translated into English, French, German, Russian, Romanian, and Italian. She has attended numerous festivals nationally and internationally. With GalataPerform, she also initiated various projects and festivals. *Visibility Project* (2004-2012) was about the relationship of the theatre space with the surrounding neighborhood and looked at utilizing all spaces in the district of Galata, Istanbul; *New Text New Theater Project* (2006-...) initiated and deals with the development of new dramatic writings in Türkiye. Her play *Limping Tales from Istanbul* premiered at the GREC Festival of Barcelona in July 2017 at Teatre Lliure, where it has been produced by a Catalan theatre group and performed in Catalan; another play, *House of Hundred* (2018), is part of a multi-national co-production which toured in Europe, was reviewed in *The Times* and has been selected as one of the must-see shows by *The Guardian*. Recently, she was commissioned to write a play for Ortak Yapım (Joint Production) which matched her play *Sand Lilies* with Zorlu Production; it was produced for the 2022 theatre season and is currently on stage.

*

Leonidas PAPADOPOULOS is artistic director of Athens-based In-Between Art Theatre Company. His main interests focus on ancient Greek drama and stage directing. His credits, as a director, include a string of critically acclaimed productions, such as *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett, *Little Eyolf* by Henrik Ibsen, *The Double Bass* by Patrick Suskind, *Bury the Dead* by Irwin Shaw, *The Thrill of Love* by Amanda Wittington, *Sofia* by Ignacio Garcia May, *Donna abbandonata or You really disappointed me Mr George* by Glikeria Basdeki, *The Building* by Panagiota Phylaktaki, *Bakersfield Mist* by Stephen Sachs, *The Birds* by Conor McPherson, *One*

Day When we were young by Nick Payne, *Mikrasia* by Leonidas Papadopoulos, *Vanya Sonia Masha and Spike* by Christopher Durang, *Pass-Port – Sea Journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy*, based on his doctoral thesis and funded by the Greek Ministry of Culture. He also worked as an actor with directors such as Robert Sturua, Nikita Milivojevic, Slobodan Unkovski and Michalis Kakogiannis. He was awarded his doctorate from the King's College London (UK) in 2016 (Scholarship by Onassis Foundation and the Greek State Scholarship Foundation). He taught Theatre History at the Department of History, Ionian University/ Greece, Theatre Directing, Ancient Greek Drama, and Performance Analysis in undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (2017-2023). He participated as a dramaturge in National Theatre of Greece' history project "It happened in Greece" (2016-2018) and in Contemporary Greek Play Festival at Municipal Theatre of Piraeus (2017-2020 and 2023). As a member of a postdoctoral research team, with Prof. Eva Stefani and Dr Anna Poupou, he focuses on the reception of US and European crime films in Greece from the post-war period until today. He was a member of the organizing committee of the European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama/ Arc-Net (2009-2017).

*

Eirini POLYDOROU holds a B.Sc. in Management Science and Technology from the Athens University of Economics and Business, a B.Sc. of Theatre Studies from the University of Patras, an Acting Diploma from Veaki Drama School, a M.A. of International and European Studies from Panteion University and a European Diploma in Cultural Project Management from the Fondation Marcel Hicter. Her ongoing Ph.D. at the department of Theatre Studies in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens focuses on Cultural Policies. Since 2000, she has worked as an artist and project manager in numerous performances in Greece and abroad, mostly in dance, theatre, and dance-theatre. Her first short film *N.O.S.U.G.A.R. (New Order Solidarity Urgent Greek/Global Arising Revolution)* was selected for official screening in several festivals around the world, nominated for several awards and won the Critics Award in the Falcon International Film Festival (London, 2018). Her music video "Emmanouel" won Best Music Video Runner Up in the Chambal International Film Festival (Mumbai, India, 2020) and her music video "Hamogelo" won Best Music Video in the same festival, in 2022.

*

Nicoleta POPA BLANARIU is an Official Collaborator of the SSHRC project, "Representations of Human Catastrophe through Rites of Passage at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Social Drama or Return to the Tragedy?" She teaches *Comparative Literature, Literary Anthropology, Discourse Analysis, Literature and Performing Arts*, at the University "Vasile Alecsandri" in Bacau (Romania). Her research interests include world and comparative literature, comparative intercultural studies, intermediality, visual semiotics and performance studies. She is a member of the editorial board of *Studii și Cercetări Științifice – Seria Filologie* (Romania), coordinating more than twenty issues, during the last fifteen years, as well as a member of the *Southern Semiotic Review* (Australia). She is coordinator of "Logos" Interdisciplinary Research Group and scientific director of "Interstud" Research Center in the Faculty of Letters of "Vasile Alecsandri" University. She has published numerous articles in scientific journals from United States, Spain, Brazil, India,

Australia, etc., three single-authored books in Romania, and seven co-authored books in France, Great Britain, United States, Italy, Australia (with London: Bloomsbury Publishing, Paris: L'Harmattan, New York & London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, among them), as well as several university manuals. She also co-translated Patrice Pavis's *Dictionnaire du théâtre as Dictionar de teatru* (2012), with Florinela Floria. Among her most recent contributions, "Prolegomena to a Semiotic Approach to Dancing", in *Open Semiotics* (vol. 3, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2023); "Semiotics in Performance and Dance", in *Bloomsbury Semiotics* (vol. 3: *Semiotics in the Arts and Social Sciences*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022); "A Mythological Approach to Transmedia Storytelling", in *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies* (New York and London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2019), with Dan Popa; "Repenser le théâtre: Benjamin Fondane, pour une poétique existentielle", in *Alea: Estudos Neolatinos*, Vol. 24, 1 (2022); "Transmedial Prometheus: from the Greek Myth to Contemporary Interpretations", în *Icono 14. Revista científica de Comunicación y Tecnologías emergentes*, 15 (1), 2017.

*

Luis THENON is a full professor at the Department of literature, theatre and cinema at Université Laval where he teaches theatre direction and acting, but also literary theory in Spanish language. He did postdoctoral research in History at the University of Costa Rica and is a member of the Network of Transcultural Studies of Central America and the Caribbean (University of Costa Rica). Luis Thenon finished his studies in Theatre Directing at the *Instituto Universitario Nacional de las Artes de Buenos Aires* and was a recipient of the Center national des arts (Argentina). He has published numerous scientific articles on scenic arts. He is a theatre director, dramaturge, scenographer, poet, and novelist. For more than 20 years he has carried out research on the development of new media and their incidence in performing arts. Founder and ex-director of LANTISS (*Laboratoire des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Image, du Son et de la Scène*), he is closely interested in the new forms of the intermedial ecosystem. His stage creations address immersive universes and the multiple materiality of the stage body. Luis Thenon is author of six collections of poetry, including *Meridianos* (2023), *Continente de esperas* (2020) and *Memoria de los mares* (2018), of the novel *El sótano* (2017), and of two books of short stories, *Cuentos mínimos* (2019) and *Relatos clandestinos* (2021). He is also the author of ten plays, including *Le vol des anges* (2003), *Le postier de Londres* (2005), *Les conquérants de la frontière nord*, (2010) et *La fuite d'eau* (2009).

Event
Événement

Federico García Lorca 125

Transmedia Echoes of a Spanish Tragedy
Échos transmédia d'une tragédie espagnole

Pe 18 decembrie 2023, în contextul împlinirii a 125 de ani de la nașterea dramaturgului spaniol Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), Liviu Dospinescu, profesor titular de studii teatrale la Université Laval (Département de littérature, théâtre et cinéma), Quebec, Canada, a ținut o conferință sub genericul „Federico García Lorca, Carlos Saura și Antonio Gades în *Nunta însângerată*: o întâlnire transmedială esențială în cultura spaniolă contemporană“. La eveniment, au participat studenți ai programelor de licență și masterat de la Facultatea de Litere a Universității „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău. În urma audierii conferinței și a discuției care s-a purtat cu acel prilej, un grup de masterande a oferit redacției câteva scurte comentarii pe tema propusă de invitat. Le redăm în cele ce urmează (N.P.B).

*

Elena Vrâncianu¹

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA, CARLOS SAURA ȘI ANTONIO GADES ÎN *NUNTA ÎNSÂNGERATĂ* : O ÎNTÂLNIRE TRANSMEDIALĂ

The aim of this paper is to observe how Federico García Lorca's tragedy is transposed from the literary to the cinematic medium. Conceived by director Carlos Saura as a cinematic reconstruction of a rehearsal of Antonio Gades' ballet company, the film preserves the poetic atmosphere and symbolism of Lorca's play, offering an exemplary cinematic interpretation of this story of love, tradition, destiny and death, a story similar to the Shakespearean tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*.

Key-words: *Lorca, Saura, Gades, theatre, film, dance, transmediality, metacinema*

Creație a poetului, prozatorului și dramaturgului spaniol Federico García Lorca, tragedia în trei acte *Nunta însângerată* a fost pusă în scenă pentru prima dată în 1933, la Madrid.² Lorca a început să lucreze la marea sa tragedie populară, în timp ce cutreiera țara cu teatrul lui ambulant, „La Barraca”, inspirându-se pentru aceasta dintr-o întâmplare reală, un anunț al poliției.³ Pe atunci, tânăr și încrezător în forțele proprii, Lorca declara: „Port în mine o sută de mii de drame”, „Am ce scrie timp de 150 de ani”.⁴ Nu știa că va sfârși la 37 de ani, răpus de dușmanii libertății.⁵

¹ Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău.

² Mihnea Gheorghiu, „Prefață” la Federico García Lorca, *4 Piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958, p. 9.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ N. Lăbușcă, „Federico Garcia Lorca – Patru piese de teatru”, *Teatrul*, Nr. 9, anul IV, septembrie, 1959, p. 95.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

În prefața la *4 Piese de teatru*, Mihnea Gheorghiu susține că *Nunta însângerată* este „istoria unui căsătorii zadarnice” și „o tragedie a « singurătății » (*soledad*) femeii spaniole în climatul insuportabil de apăsător al tradițiilor iraționale”⁶. Mai mult, această lucrare a lui Lorca este „o dramă poetică și un poem dramatic”⁷ cu rădăcini înfipite adânc în pământul andaluz,⁸ desfășurată pe două planuri – unul convențional, de teatru clasic, altul legendar, de baladă populară.⁹

În *Nunta însângerată*, iubirea fanatică, istovitoare, întâlnește moartea.¹⁰ Pornind de la un episod rural banal – răpirea miresei, piesa își schimbă direcția și se îndreaptă spre crimă.¹¹ O tânără mireasă se căsătorește cu un tânăr, dar în ciuda aparențelor fericite, mireasa este îndrăgostită de fostul logodnic, Leonardo din neamul Felix. Leonardo, la rândul său, deși este căsătorit și are un copil, încă nutrește sentimente pentru fosta iubită. În noaptea nunții, mireasa fuge cu Leonardo. Mirele și alți nuntași îi urmăresc pentru a-i aduce înapoi, dar are loc o confruntare în pădure, unde cei doi bărbați își pierd viețile.

În 1981, piesa lui Federico García Lorca se bucură de o adaptare cinematografică realizată de regizorul spaniol Carlos Saura. *Bodas de Sangre* se deschide cu imaginea garderobei, unde un bărbat aprinde luminile, montează și pregătește recuzita: buchetul și voalul miresei, brâul mirelui, cuțitele, peruca gri a mamei, un tub cu sânge fals. Unul câte unul, dansatorii intră vorbind și râzând. Încep să se machieze și să își așeze obiectele personale și imaginile cu cei dragi în cabină, în timp ce cântăreții își încălzesc vocile și își exersează acordurile de chitară. Aceste activități, de fapt, documentează cu lux de amănunte etapele ritualului fizic și psihic de pregătire și transformare a actorilor în personajele pe care le interpretează.¹²

O funcție importantă a acestei rame metateatrale o reprezintă și inserarea în cadru a fotografiei cu trupa de teatru ambulant „La Barraca” a lui Lorca. Despre ea dansatorul și coregraful de flamenco Antonio Gades întreabă imediat ce ajunge la teatru: « José, ¿dónde está la foto? ». O primește și o așază în colțul oglinzii de pe măsuta de machiaj. Semnificativ este și faptul că Gades este cel care realizează conexiunea și totodată, continuitatea misiunii lui Lorca și acum a lui Saura, de a face cunoscută publicului tragedia.¹³ De îndată ce fotografia este așezată la locul ei, Gades rostește un monolog în fața oglinzii, își aplică machiajul, fumează o țigară și își pregătește corpul pentru filmare. După ce are loc o repetiție generală, toată lumea se îmbracă și își primește recuzita.

Dansul corpului de balet este alcătuit din șase scene care reproduc și ne reamintesc cele trei acte ale piesei de teatru. În rezumat, acestea sunt următoarele: 1) dansul dinaintea nunții, al mamei și al Logodnicului; 2) cântecul pentru copil al doicii și discuția dintre soți; 3) dansul dorinței dintre Leonardo și logodnică; 4) *fiesta* de

⁶ Mihnea Gheorghiu, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ N. Lăbușcă, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁹ Mihnea Gheorghiu, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰ N. Lăbușcă, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹¹ Gheorghiu, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹² Wendy L., Rolph, “Lorca/Gades/Saura: Modes of Adaptation in ‘Bodas de Sangre’”, *Anales de La Literatura Española Contemporánea*, vol. 11, no. 1/2, 1986, p. 195, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27741753> (accesat 4 ianuarie 2023).

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

nuntă, fuga lui Leonardo și a logodnicei, inițierea căutării; 5) continuarea căutării, întâlnirea nuntașilor mânioși cu îndrăgostiții; 6) duelul morții în *slow motion*, dintre Leonardo și Logodnic.

Toate acestea sunt reprezentate prin interpretare scenică (pantomimă), dans și acorduri de chitară. Astfel, jocul actoricesc, dansul și muzica sunt utilizate pentru a amplifica intensitatea emoțiilor și pentru a exprima pasiunea, tensiunea și suferința personajelor. Așadar, putem spune că între cele trei figuri reprezentative ale culturii spaniole, Lorca, Saura și Gades a avut loc o întâlnire transmedială, care aduce contribuții semnificative la promovarea și reinterpretarea operei lui Lorca într-un alt mediu artistic, consolidând astfel influența sa asupra culturii spaniole și internaționale.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

- Gheorghiu, Mihnea, „Prefață” la Federico García Lorca, *4 Piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958.
- Lăbușcă, N., „Federico Garcia Lorca – Patru piese de teatru”, *Teatrul*, Nr. 9, anul IV, septembrie, 1959.
- Rolph, Wendy L., “Lorca/Gades/Saura: Modes of Adaptation in ‘Bodas de Sangre’”, *Anales de La Literatura Española Contemporánea*, vol. 11, no. 1/2, 1986, pp. 193-204, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27741753> .

*

Giulia-Gabriela Cristea-Nechita¹⁴

INTER ȘI TRANSMEDIALITATE ÎN *NUNTA ÎNSÂNGERATĂ*

The text reveals that Federico García Lorca, delving into folklore, wrote the trilogy of rural tragedies: *Blood Wedding*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, and *Yerma*. The 1981 film adaptation, directed by Carlos Saura and choreographed by Antonio Gades, adds a transmedial dimension by integrating theatrical elements and flamenco dance. The analysis highlights the use of empty space, the knife as a symbolic and recurring theme, and the relationship between the text and the film. Artistic innovations, such as the bride's white dress and the group photo of the wedding guests, stand out. The film brings to the forefront universal themes of love and couple drama, comparable to other literary works. The meeting between Lorca's play and the film represents a significant transmedial adaptation in Spanish culture, showcasing cultural diversity through flamenco dance and the artistic innovations of the director and choreographer.

Key-words: *theater, rural tragedy, transmediality, empty space, flamenco*

¹⁴ Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău.

Federico García Lorca „a ajuns la bogăția enormă a filonului popular, după un lung ocol prin coridoarele pustii ale modernismului”¹⁵, scriind o trilogie de tragedii rurale sau populare: *Nunta însângerată*, *Casa Bernardei Alba*, *Yerma*. Scrisă și montată la Madrid, în 1933, *Nunta însângerată* este „istoria unei căsătorii zădărnice”¹⁶, subiect preluat din realitate. Tragedia *Nunta însângerată* a reprezentat un punct de plecare pentru regizorul Carlos Saura și coregraful-actor Antonio Gades, care au realizat un film cu același titlu, în anul 1981. Filmul *Bodas de Sangre* păstrează cronologia evenimentelor importante din piesa lui Lorca, dar unele scene semnificative sunt reconsiderate, chiar modificate, aspect pe care îl urmărim în acest articol.

Montarea cinematografică are o dimensiune transmedială inedită, corelând resursele expresive ale unor arte diferite. Atrage atenția, de pildă, utilizarea spațiului teatral (scena și culisele deopotrivă) în pelicula cinematografică. Apariția actorilor în cabină, costumarea lor, aplicarea machiajului, înregistrate astfel, constituie o ramă prin care filmul încadrează spectacolul ce urmează. Acesta recurge la mijloacele pantomimei (spectacolul neavând cuvinte rostite, ci doar intuite de privitor), ale dansului flamenco și ale muzicii. În spațiul intim al cabinei, aflăm povestea actorilor, urmată de spectacolul propriu-zis. Un procedeu menit să ajute spectatorii să pășească în universul ficțiunii este construcția filmului ca o repetiție a spectacolului inspirat de piesa lui Lorca: o repetiție într-o sală austeră, săracă în elemente de decor, care trimite explicit la perioada în care a trăit și a scris Lorca.

Conceptul de *spațiu gol* este teoretizat de Peter Brook în *The Empty Space* (1968), mai exact în capitoul „Teatrul mort”: „Aș putea să iau orice spațiu gol și să-l numesc scenă goală. Un om traversează acest spațiu gol în timp ce altcineva îl privește, și asta e tot ceea ce trebuie ca actul teatral să înceapă.”¹⁷ Potențialul expresiv al spațialității este folosit ingenios de regizorul filmului. În prima scenă a repetiției, *spațiul gol* este umplut de o prezență feminină, văduva – mama logodnicului. Prin teatru-dans, cu ajutorul gesturilor simbolice și al dansului flamenco, este adusă în fața publicului relația mamă-fiu, importantă în desfășurarea acțiunii dramatice.

Un accesoriu teatral – *cuțitul* – este o punte între piesă și film, un element ce trimite către trecutul personajelor, un simbol al fatalității, al temerilor și presimțirilor mamei. Precum baltagul din romanul lui Mihail Sadoveanu, *cuțitul* este arma cu care, în final, se face dreptate. Intensificarea acordurilor muzicale subliniază îngrijorarea mamei la vederea lui. Motivul *cuțitului* traversează deopotrivă piesa și filmul, asupra lui cad blestemele mamei în textul lui Lorca: „Blestemate fie toate cuțitele și banditul care le-a născocit.”¹⁸ În altă piesă de Lorca, *Publicul*, *cuțitul* reprezintă arma, dar și dorința metamorfozei: „Silueta cu corzi de viță de vie – (*Ridicându-se*.) Eu m-aș preschimba în *cuțit*. Într-un *cuțit* ascuțit timp de patru primăveri.”¹⁹

„Amorul, dramele cuplului, triunghiul conjugal, micul lagăr domesticofamilial sunt teme vechi de când lumea, zeei și muritorii fiind în aceeași măsură

¹⁵ Federico García Lorca, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁷ Peter Brook, *Spațiul gol*, București, UNITEXT, 1997, p. 17.

¹⁸ Federico García Lorca, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958, p. 232.

¹⁹ Federico García Lorca, *Teatru*, București, 2022, p. 30.

prizonierii lor.”²⁰ Putem identifica temele din piesa lui Lorca în multe alte opere literare, precum *Ion* al lui Liviu Rebreanu sau *Romeo și Julieta* de William Shakespeare. Lista se poate completa, începând cu cele mai vechi texte cunoscute și până în contemporaneitate. Relația lui Leonardo cu soția sa ne este sugerată în pași de dans. Partenerii nu sunt foarte apropiați, dansul lor are ceva nefiresc, trădând ruptura. Condiția lui Leonardo de străin în propria casă, o prezență absentă, este redată scenic tot prin jocul pașilor. O altă scenă semnificativă din piesa lui Lorca este aceea a pregătirii miresei care poartă o rochie neagră, semn al unui dublu doliu: sacrificarea iubirii în favoarea mariajului, iar la final, pierderea amândurora, a celui iubit și a logodnicului nedorit. În piesa lui Lorca, rochia neagră a miresei prefigurează finalul tragic. Regizorul Carlos Saura valorifică însă simbolismul rochiei albe, stropite, la finalul filmului, cu sângele amestecat al celor doi rivali.

Apariția primului nuntaș, Leonardo, o tulbură pe mireasă. Dansul ei exteriorizează agitația care o cuprinde anticipând ce grozăvie urmează să făptuiască, fugind cu amantul de la propria sa nuntă. Pentru ea, a fi mireasă este doar un rol social, pe care nu și-l asumă. Se simte captivă la nunta ei, iar ritmul gândurilor este marcat cinematografic prin percuții. Cântecele miresei, un fel de „Ia-ți mireasă ziua bună”, în varianta spaniolă, este interpretat, în film, de bărbați: „Plecând spre altar,/ acum din casa ta,/ amintește-ți că luneci/ lucind ca o stea”²¹. Scena are, evident, valența arhaică a unui rit de trecere. Interpreții cântecului, însoțitori ai miresei, sunt apărătorii purității acesteia și ai ordinii tradiționale. Desigur, unul dintre ei poartă, la loc vizibil, *cuñit*. Poza de grup a nuntașilor este o inovație a regizorului, inexistentă în piesa lui Lorca. Astfel, Saura creează o figură cinematografică unificatoare, prin care este surprins tumultul personajelor, întipărit pe chipuri. Ca procedeu cinematografic, artificul *zoom*-ului focalizat pe fețele actorilor surprinde cu acuitate mimica și sporește tensiunea.

După scena în care cele două rivale dansează față în față, disputându-și inima lui Leonardo, urmează probabil cea mai dramatică și emoționantă scenă, aceea în care îndrăgostiții fug împreună, pe cal, prin pădure. Mama logodnicului este cea care declanșează ultimul act al tragediei. Ea îi dă fiului *cuñitul* pentru a face dreptate, după ce, la începutul piesei, dimpotrivă, îi luase arma. Scena duelului dintre logodnic și Leonardo este vag conturată în piesa lui Lorca: „se aud două țipete sfâșietoare”²². În schimb, în film, această parte prinde consistență scenică, vizuală, coregrafică. Este filmată în *slow motion* pentru a capta și transmite emoția pe care o poartă gesturile și expresiile faciale ale nefericiților prinși în triunghiul amoros. Camera de filmat surprinde astfel detalii dintre cele mai fine ale trăirii personajelor. Duelul este pentru început unul de dans, cei doi se privesc drept în ochi și execută mișcări rapide de flamenco. Momentul fatal este subliniat prin *slow motion* și tăcere. Muzica este oprită. La final, după ce logodnicul și amantul au fost răpuși, mireasa se privește în oglindă și își atinge rochia albă cu mâinile pline de sângele celor doi. Scena marchează dimensiunea tragică a poveștii.

Pe tot parcursul filmului, se observă cum un text dramatic este transportat din mediul literar în cel scenic și cinematografic, cu ajutorul dansului flamenco, al

²⁰ Saviana Stănescu, „De la A'moor la o nuntă însângerată”, în revista *Scena*, nr. 14-15, 2000, p. 14.

²¹ Federico García Lorca, *4 piese de teatru*, București, Editura „ESPLA”, 1958, p. 288.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 328.

muzicii, al jocului actoricesc, prin pantomimă, gesturi, expresii faciale și, desigur, prin talentul interpreților spanioli.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

Brook, Peter, *Spațiul gol*, București, UNITEXT, 1997.

Lorca, Federico García, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958.

Lorca, Federico García, *Teatru*, București, 2022.

Stănescu, Saviana, „De la A'moor la o nuntă însângerată”, în *Scena*, nr. 14-15, 2000.

*

Ana-Adelina Poștelea²³

SUBJUGAREA VIETII PRIN TRADIȚIE ȘI SALVAREA ONOAREI PRIN VĂRSARE DE SÂNGE, DUPĂ PIESA NUNTA ÎNSÂNGERATĂ A LUI FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

The *Blood Wedding* by Federico García Lorca is a classic piece of contemporary Spanish drama. It is a tragic play in which two men fight for honor and the woman they love. The traditions and customs used by Federico García Lorca come from the gypsies of South America. The film is directed by Carlos Saura and the performance is done with the help of flamenco dance and pantomime. The relationships between the characters are observed with the help of flamenco dance, and the central motif is the figure, preceded by the leitmotif of the knife. In the Andalusian landscape, honor, sacrifice and sacrifice are above life itself.

Key-words: *tradition, honor, escape, flamenco dance*

Peisajul andaluz este valorificat prin scrierea lui Federico García Lorca, *Bodas de sangre* („Nunta însângerată”). Această piesă clasică a dramaturgiei contemporane dezvăluie un destin tragic, în care pasiunea și onoarea se spală cu sânge. Tradiția dramatică a culturii spaniole este redefinită prin percepția regizorului Carlos Saura, care aduce dansul flamenco și obiceiurile țiganilor din America de Sud. Regizorul ne introduce treptat din realitatea actorilor în lumea ficțională și intimă a personajelor. Dragostea pasională se va sfârși printr-o moarte tragică, în fapt, printr-o vărsare de sânge.

Legăturile sufletești dintre mamă și fiu ne sunt dezvăluite cu ajutorul pantomimei, al mișcărilor scenice și al gesturilor tandre, toate acestea însoțite cu dansul flamenco. Momentul care tulbură armonia celor doi este acela al scoaterii cuțitului, culminând cu blestemul mamei: „Cuțitul, cuțitul... Blestamate să fie toate cuțitele și banditul care le-a născocit... Și tot ceea ce poate ciopârți trupul unui

²³ Universitatea Vasile Alecsandri din Bacău.

bărbat...”²⁴. Cuțitul devine un leitmotiv cu ajutorul căruia se declanșează agitație și spaimă, în momente dintre cele mai răscolitoare ale piesei lui Lorca și ale filmului lui Saura.

Relațiile dintre personaje transpar în mișcările de flamenco, iar legăturile lor sufletești sunt astfel dezvăluite privirii spectatorilor. De pildă, atât în piesă, cât și în spectacolul coregrafiat de Antonio Gades, care face obiectul filmului lui Saura, legătura dintre Leonardo și soția lui se resimte de o tensiune a rupturii inevitabile, pe care o captează și o redă scenic un expresiv duet de flamenco. În scrierea lui Lorca, soacra lui Leonardo îi cântă copilului un cântec de jale, prevestind sfârșitul tragic: „Dormi, tu, trandafir, plânge murgul, plânge. Pe copite sânge, înghețată-i coama și-n trece ochi, sclipind un pumnal de argint. Coborau la râu, Și cum coborau, sângele curgea apa o-n trecea”²⁵.

Dacă Saura evidențiază trăirile sufletești prin pantomimă, dans, mimică, Lorca potențează aceste situații cu ajutorul teatrului poetic, care are afinități cu scrierile shakespeariene, îndeosebi cu tragedia *Romeo și Julieta*. „Originalitatea sa stă tocmai în această fuziune dintre dramatic și liric, care nu anulează însușirile scenice”²⁶. Gesturile personajelor anunță și subliniază clipa fatidică. De exemplu, în ziua nunții, Logodnica este agitată și își aruncă diadema cu flori de portocal, atrăgând dojana slujniciei că va chema astfel un blestem asupra ei. Personajele lui Lorca stau sub semnul fatal al cutumei, al obiceiurilor bine împământenite, ceea ce supune unei tensiuni apăsătoare viața lor lăuntrică. Un alt moment care tulbură liniștea și armonia nunții este sosirea primului nuntaș, Leonardo, un semn de rău augur pentru tinerii pe cale să se căsătorească. În creația lui Saura, intensitatea afectivă a revederii dintre Leonardo și Logodnică se ghicește din mișcarea coregrafiată a celor doi. Un gest aparte este acela schițat de Leonardo care, prin poziția brațelor, trasează recurent un spațiu vid, o absență a ființei iubite, pe cât de prezentă și apropiată, pe atât de inaccesibilă.

Spre finalul piesei și al filmului, fuga este un motiv central: fuga lui Leonardo din propriul cămin și din căsnicie, precum și fuga Logodniciei de la propria nuntă. Prin pantomimă și accentuarea cinematografică a expresiei chipurilor, Saura scoate în evidență momentul în care Leonardo, alături de Logodnică, fuge pe cal, de la nuntă. Odată ce absența celor doi este descoperită, mama Logodnicului este cea care pune cuțitul în mâna propriului fiu pentru a spăla rușinea pricinuită de fuga Logodniciei.

Finalul tragic nu poate decât să adâncească și mai mult spectatorul în vraja întunecată a poveștii, atât pe plan vizual, cât și pe plan textual. La sfârșitul filmului lui Saura, cei doi bărbați seucid unul pe celălalt, iar Logodnica își asumă însemnele vinovăției, maculându-și rochia cu sângele celor doi. La Lorca, deznodământul este de o altă intensitate, el le pune față în față pe cele două femei, pe Logodnică și pe mama Logodnicului. Acest moment este unul plin de însemnătate și tensiune, lăsând așteptată eliberarea amândurora de sub povara blestemului sângelui și a suferinței. Logodnica sosește asemenea unui miel la tăiere, așteptând furia mamei să se reverse asupra ei: „Am venit ca să mă omoare și să mă ducă împreună cu ei”²⁷. Sfârșitul pe

²⁴ Federico García Lorca, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958, p. 232.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 236.

²⁶ N. Lăbușcă, „Federico Garcia Lorca – Patru piese de teatru”, *Teatrul*, Nr. 9, anul IV, septembrie, 1959, p. 95.

²⁷ Federico García Lorca, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958, p. 336.

care Lorca îl imaginează rezumă emblematic destinul tragic al celor doi bărbați, îndeplinindu-se astfel atât blestemul mamei, prevestirile soacrei lui Leonardo, cât și vorbele slujnicei. Versurile din final accentuează tragedia, mama și Logodnica deplângând sângele curs în numele dragostei.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

Lăbușcă, N., „Federico García Lorca – Patru piese de teatru”, *Teatrul*, Nr. 9, anul IV, septembrie, 1959.

Lorca, Federico García, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958.

*

Magdalena Chitic²⁸

Drama satului spaniol din perspectiva studiilor de gen

Résumé: Ce travail analyse les éléments de transmédiabilité dans le spectacle de Antonio Gades et dans le film de Carlos Saura, réalisés d’après la célèbre pièce de Federico García Lorca, *Bodas de sangre*. Ainsi, une analyse comparative fera le but de cet article.

Mots-clés: Federico García Lorca, Carlos Saura, transmédiabilité, film.

Federico García Lorca și-a pus într-un mod extrem de puternic amprenta asupra literaturii spaniole a secolului XX, fiind considerat poet național. Cu o viață tumultuoasă, victimă a unui asasinat politic din cauza simpatiei pentru Frontul Popular și a condiției sale de homosexual declarat, Lorca era pentru acea vreme un nonconformist și un inovator. Venindu-i greu să se plieze pe standardele și codurile impuse de societate, Lorca a încercat să schimbe gândirea patriarhală și constrângerile sociale, acelea la care erau supuse femeile, între altele. Autoritatea tradiției, în piese precum *Nunta însângerată* (*Bodas de sangre*), ne permite o comparație cu o nuvelă din literatura română, *Gura satului* de Ioan Slavici.

Nunta însângerată (1933) este lucrarea care marchează momentul de plenitudine al dramaturgului Federico García Lorca. *Nunta însângerată* este o poveste de iubire imposibilă, reeditând istoria neîmplinitei iubiri din *Romeo și Julieta*. Abordând probleme esențiale ale existenței, teatrul lui Lorca este emblematic pentru teatrul poetic, dezvoltându-se în jurul unor simboluri precum sângele, cuțitul, trandafirul, luna etc. Cu referire la întâmplarea adevărată din care s-a inspirat piesa lui Lorca, publicațiile vremii comentau insinuant acuzator: „Capriciile unei femei provoacă dezvoltarea unei tragedii sângeroase, care îi costă un bărbat viața”²⁹. O astfel de constatare pare să-i dea dreptate lui Elif Shafak, scriitoare contemporană de origine

²⁸ Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău.

²⁹ <https://www.actualidadliteratura.com/ro/bodas-de-sangre/>.

turcă: precum busola arată nordul, tot așa și degetul bărbatului va arăta spre femeie când va fi vorba de învinovățire.³⁰

Pentru a ilustra mai bine diferențele dintre opinia societății și motivele personale ale eroilor acțiunii dramatice, vom schița o analiză comparativă între piesa lui Lorca și reprezentarea cinematografică a lui Carlos Saura. Se poate începe cu două întrebări strâns legate una de cealaltă, lansate, în cursul discuției pe marginea piesei, de profesoara noastră de literatură comparată: situația protagoniștilor confirmă natura conflictuală a tragicului? Există o valoare pe care aceștia, ca eroi tragici, o afirmă prin chiar autodistrugerea lor? Răspunsul este da, pentru că eroii, punând iubirea mai presus de propria lor viață, creează tragicul, la fel ca în *Romeo și Julieta*.

Un aspect important de menționat este acela că filmul înfățișează repetiția unui spectacol realizat pe baza piesei lui Lorca, *Nunta însângerată*. Reprezentația, așadar, nu este una finală, ci mimează momentul repetițiilor. Saura dezvăluie culisele, arătând detaliile din spatele cortinei: relația dintre actori, machierea, costumarea etc. Spațiul intens, involburat, pasional al lumii lui Lorca este preluat din piesă și transpus într-o manieră artistică în spectacol și film, întrucât textul nu dispune de resursele cinematografiei.

Spațiul central este gol în momentul în care Logodnicul își înștiințează Mama că se va căsători. Scena dintre mamă și fiu este pantomimică, iar acțiunea conține elemente simbolice. Relația dintre mamă și fiu este una extrem de puternică, fiind accentuate prin gestică intenția de protecție a mamei și spaima ei față de imprevizibil. Apare un simbol important, cuțitul, simbol prevestitor al finalului însângerat. Mama vrea să-și prevină fiul în legătură cu aspectele care țin de familia viitoarei lui soții, dar și a trecutului ei tumultuos, pentru care este judecată de gura satului. Intuiția ei de mamă n-o va amăgi, stă dovadă duelul din final, când fiul ei va fi doborât. Acordurile muzicale de început sunt spaniole, de flamenco, iar în mai multe rânduri, este surprins în cadru cuțitul. În secvența inițială, rolul miresei este jucat de cătră mamă alături de fiu, ca o repetiție, mama dorind parcă să-și impună dominația asupra acestuia. Elementele de cinematografie fac diferența față de text, iar literatura și filmul se completează reciproc.

O altă scenă foarte importantă este scena căminului lui Leonardo. Atitudinea corporală a personajelor nu doar din această scenă, ci de pe tot parcursul reprezentației, anticipează tragedia. Leonardo apare ca un străin în acea casă, iar rupturile sunt evidente. Dansul semnalează dizarmonia cuplului. Elementele de pantomimă subliniază senzualitatea mișcării, sugerând, din partea unuia, chemare, dorință, iar a celuilalt, eschivă, fugă. Fuga este, de altfel, un alt simbol foarte bine evidențiat atât în text, cât și în reprezentație.

În scena nunții, Logodnica va intra în rolul de mireasă pe care, de fapt, îl refuză. La un moment dat, muzica se oprește, mișcarea devine fotografie. Este o interpretare cinematografică utilizată ca o figură de stil. Leonardo își va face intrarea în scenă, tensiunea fiind transmisă prin *zoom*-ul de pe fețele mirilor. Logodnica este copleșită de toate aceste evenimente și caută soluții de evadare. Soția lui Leonardo va observa absența celor doi, pe care o anunță printr-un gest teatral. Apare un element foarte interesant, și anume tic-tacul din degete al societății care pedepsește orice greșală. Taberele se organizează, iar apoi apar în prim-plan cei doi călare, urmați de

³⁰ Elif Shafak, *Cele patruzeci de legi ale iubirii*, Iași, Polirom, 2011.

mamă, care este un simbol, ecoul vocii colective, „gura” societății, figura dominantă pe tot parcursul textului și al reprezentației. Zgomotul pașilor este pus în evidență prin sunet, la fel și strecurarea în tăcere. Lumina lunii apare ca simbol, atât în text, cât și în reprezentația scenică.

Scena duelului este decisivă atât în textul lui Lorca, cât și în reprezentație. Figurile de inspirație cinematografică sunt puse în lumină prin *slow-motion*, iar coregrafia încetinește acțiunea pentru a lăsa observate detaliile confruntării dintre cei doi rivali. Moartea Logodnicului este stilizată. Figura tragicului este evidențiată prin însângerare. Așa cum arăta invitatul evenimentului, Profesorul Liviu Dospinescu, de la Universitatea Laval, în conferința sa, procedee de transmedializare a textului literar sunt, în secvența duelului, lentoarea (*slow-motion*), rotația camerelor în jurul celor doi logodnici, sugerând vârtejul care le-a luat celor doi mințile. Sângele care i se prelinge de pe palme o acuză pe Logodnică de vinovăție. Implacabilul este descris din nou prin lentoare, sângele apărând teatral, artificial, fiind vorba de o convenție, după cum remarca Liviu Dospinescu. Forța limbajului piesei se transferă transmedial la nivel vizual, auditiv, sonor și muzical.

Textul lui Lorca diferă considerabil față de reprezentația lui Carlos Saura, cea din urmă desprinzându-se de text, dar, în același timp, preluând elementele și scenele cheie din piesa de teatru. Piesele lui Federico García Lorca pot avea mai multe variante de interpretare, dar una dintre cele mai evidente este situația femeii din satul spaniol de atunci, supusă constrângerilor sociale.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

- Drimba, Ovidiu, *Federico García Lorca. Rapsodul*, București, Albatros, 1981.
Lorca, Federico García, *4 piese de teatru*, București, ESPLA, 1958.
Shafak, Elif, *Cele patruzeci de legi ale iubirii*, Iași, Polirom, 2011.

Webografie

<https://www.actualidadliteratura.com/ro/bodas-de-sangre/>

Miscellanea

ADRIAN MARINO. COMPLEXE VINDICATIVE

Adrian Marino. Vindictive Complexes

The drama of Adrian Marino's life was that of always living in environments he considered to be hostile, hence the numerous acts of non-acceptance and rejection that he had to suffer. Such circumstances led to the manifestation of his exacerbated pride, isolation and total lack of communication or intellectual dialogue. The scale of values in which the renowned theorist of literature believed, starting with cultural and ideological values, was clearly distinct from that of the social and cultural environments he went through, willingly or unwillingly. Adrian Marino confesses in his memoirs contained in the volume "The life of a lonely man" ("Viața unui om singur") that being born and living in a hostile environment, where he felt like an intruder, alienated him definitively from his family, from the world and even from himself. This is exactly what this work aims to capture.

Key-words: *complexes, memoirs, pride, loneliness, hatred*

Mediile în care s-a mișcat Adrian Marino i-au alterat profund acestuia caracterul și i-au „mizantropizat”, pe fondul unui temperament deja nervos și agitat. Cred că ar fi fost lesne de explicat această deviere comportamentală doar dacă ar fi fost vorba despre un bastard tolerat într-o casă vitregită, ori despre un copil născut într-o familie săracă sau cu totul înapoiată din punct de vedere intelectual. Or, Adrian Marino însuși consideră încă de la începutul memoriilor sale, apărute postum sub titlul *Viața unui om singur* (Iași, Polirom, 2010), drept un „accident fericit” faptul de a se fi născut într-o veche familie ieșeană de intelectuali care a fost de două ori menționată și în *Arhondologia* Moldovei. Aceasta ar putea explica, în parte, comportamentul aristocratic subțiat de timp și de aici este posibil să decurgă și disprețul total față de țărănime („Nu mă regăsesc și nu apreciez, în nici un fel, acest tip uman. Mai mult: îl detest. Și toată ideologia sămănătoristo-poporanistă mi se pare o mistificare grosolană, de proporții și o imensă escrocherie morală și socială. Iar agresivitatea sa obraznică, intolerantă” – p. 90).

Echilibrul afectiv și împăcarea de sine nu i-au fost date nicicând celui care se considera a fi un spirit iluminist. Vitalitatea eruptivă, și de aceea imprevizibilă, a temperamentului său orgolios și egocentric, s-a menținut nestinsă până la momentul scrierii memoriilor, spre sfârșitul vieții. Nicio fibră a emotivității nu i-a vibrat în ființa secătuită în privința afectivității, iar puterea de afecțiune, cât a avut-o, a risipit-o doar pentru sine însuși. Lirismul poeziei i-a rămas străin teoreticianului literaturii, la fel ca și mesajul operelor de ficțiune (exceptând textele clasice), literatura din perioada comunistă rămânându-i cu totul necunoscută: „Uneori îmi spuneam – dar, deocamdată, încă foarte confuz și fără bune argumente – că[,] față de bogăția

¹ Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău.

aspectelor vieții, ficțiunea literară este totdeauna depășită, neatractivă, în bună parte naivă și chiar « falsă »” (pp. 280-281).

Trăind cu infatuare donquijotescă într-o lume autotelică, unde s-a simțit suficient sieși, Adrian Marino a fost un sociopat impulsiv, tenebros și plin de complexe vindicative care au dat naștere la reacții antisociale, ce au avut numai repercusiuni nefavorabile asupra lui. Din cauza lipsei de autocontrol, cei din jur au fost mereu iritați de agresivitatea părerilor sale, exprimate fără menajamente și nu întotdeauna cu justificare. Trebuie crezut memorialistul când spune că, deși este un spirit profund laic, o trăsătură psihologică fundamentală a sa este de a fi larg tolerant și respectuos față de toate confesiunile religioase. Însă, înainte de aceasta, ar fi fost de dorit ca el să se fi arătat tolerant în general față de semeni.

Oare a fost cel mai adecvat modul de a fi evaluate fără nicio clemență și complezență toate categoriile mediului românesc traversat, din moment ce autorul cărții *Evadări în lumea liberă* s-a considerat un inadapdat? Cel mai grav defect personal, pe care și-l recunoaște, este dualitatea fundamentală – niciodată de conciliat – între un idealism abstract radical și realismul unui voluptos spirit critic nu numai rece, ci și brutal. Aceasta a dus la permanente dezechilibre și contradicții în formula sufletească, la treceri rapide și imprevizibile de la o extremă la alta ce i-au afectat atitudinea și comportamentul.

Lui G. Călinescu i se reproșează, de exemplu, că a scris *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* pentru a se ilustra pe el, pentru a-și pune în valoare incontestabilul talent critic. Este adevărat că orice ierarhie pretins definitivă poate fi iluzorie, dar nu se poate spune că „o istorie a literaturii nu se scrie, în primul rând, pentru a impune o scară proprii valori” (p. 51). Atunci, pentru ce se scrie? Pentru ce a scris Adrian Marino tot ce a scris, printr-o riguroasă disciplină autoimpusă? Nu pentru a se lăuda că, grație voinței puternice și hotărâtoare de a concepe sau de a scrie o serie de cărți, întreprinderea sa a rămas singulară în spațiul cultural și literar românesc?

Autorul *Biografiei ideii de literatură* a fost animat în realizarea proiectelor sale, ca și G. Călinescu, de credința că opera salvează, în ultimă instanță, toate slăbiciunile omului care o făurește. Doar lui își acordă absolvirea în fața posterității, nu și autorului *Istoriei...*: „Oricine se poate convinge ce contribuție pot aduce criticii « impresionisti », de tipul G. Călinescu, să spunem, în cele 8 volume ale lui René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950*, de pildă. Unul foarte, foarte redus, neglijabil” (p. 53). Dacă este vorba de impactul internațional al contribuțiilor, atunci nici Adrian Marino nu stă deloc bine și chiar se plânge de o astfel de lipsă de receptare a celor câteva cărți apărute în străinătate.

G. Călinescu s-ar fi servit de mobilitatea spiritului inteligent și de marele talent pentru a salva multe aparențe și deficiențe formative. Memorialistul se întreabă și ne întreabă:

Când s-a ocupat G. Călinescu vreodată de critica ideilor literare, de teoria literaturii, hermeneutică, de comparativă? De reviste, publicații și cărți în străinătate și alte activități de acest gen, în care nu avea, de altfel, nicio orientare, lipsit și de lecturi de acest gen? O adevărată cultură teoretico-literară modernă, estetică și filozofică, nu avea².

² Adrian Marino, *Viața unui om singur*, Iași, Polirom, 2005, p. 53.

Desigur, este de dorit ca un istoric literar să se preocupe de critica ideilor literare, de teoria literaturii, de hermeneutică și de comparatistică. Însă G. Călinescu a făcut comparatistică atât cât îi trebuia pentru a scrie o istorie a literaturii, numai că, de la un punct încolo, doar Adrian Marino putea fi – nu-i așa? – *primum inter pares*. În ciuda acestor deficiențe de care este acuzat, marele nostru critic a realizat totuși ceea ce știm cu toții.

Cauza urii viscerale față de marele critic trebuie căutată în altă parte:

Se înțelege acum, cred, cu toată claritatea, cât de absurdă și umiltoare este caracterizarea, pe care mi-o mai fac unii, de „fost asistent al lui G. Călinescu”. Doar atât reprezintă eu în... cultura română? Aceasta este adevărata mea identitate culturală? Singura mea carte de vizită? O nedreptate și o eroare totală! [...] Eticheta de „călinescian” mi-a adus numai neplăceri. [...] Nu-i recunosc deci decât o singură influență benefică: efectul stimulativ al exemplului unei construcții critice. Dar orientată într-o cu totul altă direcție³.

Desigur, este o nedreptate și o eroare o astfel de caracterizare ce i-a fost făcută, însă nu mi se pare deloc umiltoare și, mai ales, absurdă. Memorialistul ar fi trebuit să fie mai îngăduitor cu G. Călinescu, fie și pentru faptul că a constituit pentru el un efect stimulativ pentru scris. Or, Adrian Marino a repudiat, din instinct, orice fel de profesori și de posibile modele, convins fiind că, pentru autoedificarea spirituală, contează doar adevărurile pe care le descoperi de unul singur.

G. Călinescu – „Cinic, oportunist, amoral și plin de lașitate. Fără nici o conștiință etică și civică. Predispus la simulare, duplicitar, farsă publică de mari proporții. Preocupat exclusiv de succesul și relizarea personală, fără niciun scrupul” (pp. 50-51) – nu ar fi avut nimic ce să-i ofere pentru a fi îndreptățit să-i fie drept model. Călinescian de formație și luând drept model pentru conceperea importantei cărți *Viața lui Alexandru Macedonski* biografia lui Eminescu, Adrian Marino a fost în același timp decepționat de oportunismul profesorului. De aceea, și-a canalizat cercetările spre domeniul criticii de idei generale și a disprețuit impresionismul călinescian și implicit felul de a scrie al unei întregi generații '60 de critici („Se cultiva, în continuare, cu tenacitate, mitul cronicii literare « frumoase », « beletristice », de « talent ». Cartea prezentată devenea doar pretextul punerii în valoare a calităților pretins literare ale cronicarului. De unde polemici, atacuri, adesea acerbe” – p. 284).

Lui Adrian Marino i s-au pus mari obstacole în cale din partea epocii: izolarea în stare larvară în închisoare, deportarea, multiplele dificultăți înfruntate pentru a reveni în actualitatea culturală și publicistică. Fostul deținut politic dă dreptate celor ce susțin că aceia care au fost buni de la natură au ieșit din închisoare și mai buni, iar aceia răi de felul lor au ieșit și mai răi, ultima categorie fiind, de departe, cea mai numeroasă. Se subînțelege în ce categorie se crede el însuși a fi de situat, dar, cu tot respectul pentru suferința pe care a îndurat-o, am impresia că a ieșit pe poarta închisorii cel puțin la fel de rău ca Ion Caraion, de exemplu.

În privința Memorialului de la Sighet, memorialistul era de părere că s-a comis un adevărat masacru muzeografic prin realizarea lui, înfrumusețându-se acolo o realitate ce ar fi trebuit să rămână elocventă, edificatoare și exemplară până la capăt, tocmai prin autenticitatea sa brutală. Celulele văruite, aranjate și colorate nu i se

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55.

păreau fostei victime a sistemului comunist a fi decât o enormă profanare, mutilare și falsificare a cruntului adevăr istoric. Citind astfel de opinii minimalizatoare, ai crede că se dorește anularea efortului imens depus de o întreagă echipă de păstrători ai unei dureroase memorii colective. Într-adevăr, dacă vrem să fim izbiți de realitatea barbară, primitivă și groaznică a regimului penitenciar comunist, nu avem decât să vizităm închisori lăsate în stare naturală de degradare, precum este aceea de la Râmnicu-Sărat, pe care eu am văzut-o în urmă cu aproape zece ani.

După teribila experiență a detenției și a domiciliului obligatoriu în Bărăgan, nici ulterioara experiență a stadiilor din străinătate – unde totul i se părea a fi snob, diletant și foarte *à la page* – nu i-a adus mari satisfacții memorialistului, deoarece a suferit acolo dictatura unor orientări și metode critice unice aflate la modă. Participând la seminarele lui Roland Barthes, îl enerva pe profesor atunci când îi atrăgea atenția că au existat și alți critici care au spus, de fapt, același lucru înaintea lui și chiar mai bine: „Când am amintit odată de Benedetto Croce a izbucnit: « Interzic ca în seminarul meu să se pronunțe acest nume ». Intoleranță (ca să nu spun terorism intelectual) uimitoare” (p. 160). Trebuie să fim de acord că nu așa trebuie să se desfășoare un seminar, dar nu cred că Adrian Marino, aflat într-o inimaginabilă postură de profesor, ar fi reacționat mai puțin violent dacă vreun student ar fi pronunțat la seminar numele lui G. Călinescu, bunăoară. Din această pricină i-a fost cu neputință teoreticianului român să spargă blocadele, să iasă din izolare și să se facă remarcat în cursul colocviilor internaționale la care a participat.

Relațiile cu marile nume ale exilului nostru nu au fost nici ele mai cordiale, în primul rând din cauza boicotului realizat la Radio Europa liberă de cuplul Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca: „Să publici patru cărți la Paris, zeci de studii și recenzii în reviste franceze, să treci peste cenzură, să redactezi chiar o revistă francofonă și să nu amintești – măcar în trecere, o singură dată – și astfel de apariții rarissime și evident necunoscute reprezintă, orice s-ar spune, un boicot regretabil” (p. 188). Desigur că nemulțumirea îi este justificată și nu putem cunoaște cauzele reale ale celor întâmplate, precum nu știm nici de când datează (înainte sau după boicot) opinii precum:

Autoritatea lor se baza exclusiv pe aceste emisiuni, prin definiție, de o eficacitate imediată, maximă, dar inevitabil efemeră. Ele nu sunt suficiente pentru a face într-adevăr, o „operă”. Și o cultură anticomunistă se construiește totuși, în primul rând, prin „opere”. Prin lucrări de referință. Construcții solide antitotalitare în esență, pe care acest cuplu nu le-a oferit niciodată⁴.

Teoreticianul literaturii nu a putut nicicând înțelege că lumea scriitoricească este foarte diversificată și că o operă nu se poate realiza neapărat doar în felul în care vede el lucrurile, din perspectiva monumentalului. Fraza „Dacă-mi doresc libertatea de gândire și expresie, n-o pot refuza altora” (p. 384) devine de-a dreptul hilară scrisă de el. Dacă Monica Lovinescu și Virgil Ierunca s-ar fi apucat să facă în viață ceea ce i-ar fi fost pe plac lui Adrian Marino, ei nu ar mai fi avut timp să desfășoare impresionanta activitate de jurnalism cultural, pentru care memorialistul nutrește, de altfel, toată admirația. El însuși spune că

nimic nu mă obosea mai mult ca munca în zig-zag, a sări de la un subiect la altul. Am atenția concentrată și nu distributivă. Este greu de descris teroarea morală

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

(cuvântul nu este prea tare) de a te vedea solicitat în același timp în cele mai neprevăzute direcții: emisiuni, lansări de cărți, simpozioane. Ne mai vorbind de tot felul de colaborări, fără nici o legătură una cu alta⁵.

Prin urmare, pe militantul pentru proiecte grandioase îl oboseau asemenea activități, dar nu îi lăsa nici pe alții să obosească și în folosul semenilor.

Un savant precum Mircea Eliade nu iese nici el mai bine la evaluarea făcută. Autorul *Hermeneuticii lui Mircea Eliade* se plânge că marele istoric al religiilor, asemenea lui G. Călinescu, nu îl considera decât un discipol necondiționat și că nu accepta, în niciun caz, dialogul de pe poziții egale (în fine, să te consideri egalul lui Eliade...). Totodată, memorialistul îl critică sever că nu asculta muzică, deși o astfel de remarcă nu poate fi acceptată decât ca element de curiozitate în cazul unei mari personalități. Posteritatea nu este și nu va fi interesată decât de ceea ce a scris Mircea Eliade, nu și de hobby-urile lui, iar acesta este și cazul lui Adrian Marino însuși, nemaicontând niciodată dacă îi plăcea foarte mult muzica lui Mozart.

Numai că degeaba s-a așteptat ca limpezimea, arhitectura simfonică și superioritatea calmă a spiritului olimpien din muzica genialului compozitor să aibă un rol terapeutic: „« Cer » muzicii clasice doar să nu mă tulbure, să nu agite fondul obscur, tenebros, instinctual al ființei mele. Să mă calmeze, să mă echilibreze” (p. 39). Or, știm că muzica de multe ori acutizează stările depresive, iar eu bănuiesc faptul că aceasta i s-a întâmplat și me(ga)lomanului teoretician al literaturii, care acuza și accese de paranoia („Aș vrea să scot această țară din zona efemerului și relativului, a lipsei totale de absolut și radicalitate” – p. 452). Iată măsurile exterminatoare pe care le-ar lua împotriva spiritelor mesianice: „Vai de acești profeți himerici, lunateci, bombastici, care au făcut adevărate valuri în România, mai ales între cele două războaie! Ca să mă exprim în stil prăpăstios: i-aș... pune pe toți la zid și i-aș... împușca fără milă!” (p. 431). Cam așa, deci... Dacă fostul deținut politic Marino Adrian s-ar fi aflat după 1944 pe altă baricadă a istoriei, el ar fi putut deveni un temut torționar în închisorile comuniste sau poate chiar un adjunct al lui Alexandru Nicolski.

Autorul *Dicționarului de idei literare* a refuzat orice formă de „colonialism cultural”, așa cum l-ar practica Livius Ciocîrlie și Alexandru Călinescu:

Cel dintâi, mai ales, traumatizat, mai bine spus speriat, de un stadiu de mai mulți ani la Bordeaux. Cu el am polemizat, demult, în Tribuna, atunci când m-a atacat pe tema eternului Roland Barthes, pentru el zeu intangibil. Îmi îngăduisem – oroare! – unele obiecții. Eu, un obscur, neînsemnat, balcanic, dintr-o critică inexistentă! Autor de interminabile pseudojurnale, afectate, sclifosite, fals literaturizate, în plus și veninoase. [...] Pe Alexandru Călinescu îl... „iert”, ca ieșean și fost (cel puțin) coleg civilizată, spirit cultivat, dar iremediabil inoculat de arondismentul 6 al Parisului. Pentru amândoi, nu există o altă cultură decât cea franceză. Iar cea română (dacă există) există numai în măsura în care este, într-o formă sau alta, ecoul culturii franceze. Cred, de altfel, că ei nici nu citesc (sau foarte vag) într-o altă limbă străină. În orice caz, semne de frecventare serioasă și a altor critici decât « noua critică » franceză n-am observat. M-aș bucura să mă înșel. Sincer spus, nu sunt însă deloc convins⁶

În mod întâmplător, cunosc foarte bine desfășurarea stagiului de patru ani de la Bordeaux al lui Livius Ciocîrlie și nu pot oferi niciun indiciu potrivit căruia

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 444.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 302-303.

profesorul timișorean ar fi fost traumatizat sau, mai bine spus, speriat de ceva anume. Tuturor de acolo care l-au cunoscut li s-a părut a fi un spirit calm, deloc agitat. Cât despre „pseudojurnalele” veninoase... Pe Alexandru Călinescu nu are de ce să-l ierte, fie el ieșean ori nu. Oricine îi citește textele își poate da seama de aberanta afirmație că eseistul ieșean ar fi iremediabil inoculat de arondismentul 6 al Parisului. Dimpotrivă!

Adrian Marino a dramatizat voluptatea singularizării și a împins-o până în pânzele albe ale intransigenței sale ivite din cel mai înflăcărat amor propriu. Cu fibra sa meridională infatuată și irascibilă, el a trăit într-o permanentă stare de tensiune, consumată în (auto)izolare austeră. Sever atât cu sine însuși, cât și cu ceilalți, memorialistul și-a asumat o parte din vină pentru faptul de a fi viețuit într-o izolare aproape lipsită de relații personale autentice, fără niciun dialog și schimb de idei. Înzestrat cu o fire predispusă la grandilocvență, Adrian Marino nu s-a lăsat furat nici de plăcerile boemei subțiri și nu a avut vocația pontificală de magistru. Stilul ceremonios al complimentelor primite sau făcute și aerul ipocrit al relațiilor sociale nu i-au surâs nicidecum. El a fost pătruns de convingerea că operele mari nu se pot concepe decât în mediu aulic, închis, prin concentrare deplină a spiritului, în vederea efectuării spectaculoaselor demonstrații de forță creatoare.

În crizele de grandoare ce i-au adâncit complexe egocentrice, Adrian Marino și-a considerat vocația pentru construcții de tip raționalist și eforturile de construcție teoretică, de departe, a fi cele mai importante ca amploare și rezultate din cultura noastră. Acesta a fost fortifiantul moral care i-a dat puțința trecerii senine printre sau peste obstacolele puse în calea lui de contemporanii considerați a fi ingrați. Asumându-și o parte din vină, deoarece nu poate respecta convențiile sociale minime, eternul exilat în lumea aceasta apreciază că la Cluj a fost cel mai umilit și mai insultat în viață.

Nu putem fi decât de acord cu mărturisirea lui Adrian Marino că singura carte care îi dă o anumită satisfacție este *Viața unui om singur*, pentru că aici își varsă năduful tuturor insatisfacțiilor resentimentelor și frustrărilor de o viață. Ar fi trebuit să-i adauge *Viața lui Alexandru Macedonski*, pe care nu în mod întâmplător a scris-o, deoarece multe date temperamentale și caracteriale ale autorului *Noptii de martie* se regăsesc în acelea ale exegetului. Memoriile din *Viața unui om singur* se constituie într-un riguros examen de conștiință dat de un intelectual cu spirit mereu în stare de ebuliție, venit în mod sincer în fața cititorilor cu toate ideile, reveriile, iluziile, revoltele și decepțiile sale. Adrian Marino a fost o ființă iremediabil singură și înrăită în toate momentele importante ale existenței sale.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

- Marino, Adrian, *Dicționar de idei literare*, vol. I, București, Eminescu, 1973.
Marino, Adrian, *Evadări în lumea liberă*, Iași, Institutul European, 1993.
Marino, Adrian, *Viața lui Alexandru Macedonski*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1966
Marino, Adrian, *Viața unui om singur*, Iași, Polirom, 2005.
Wellek, René, *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986.

Book reviews
Compte rendus

Alex Goldiș, *Zoom in/ Zoom out. Lecturi de critică și literatură contemporană*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, Colecția Metacritic, 2023

Polemic și cârcotaș. Tranșant și incisiv. Doxat și versat. Stângist și democratic. Open-minded și updatat. Cam așa arată, în câteva tușe, portretul unuia dintre cei mai vizibili și influenți critici pe care literatura română îi are actualmente. Să le luăm pe rând, așa cum ni se dezvăluie ele în cel mai recent volum pe care Alex Goldiș l-a publicat, *Zoom in/ Zoom out. Lecturi de critică și literatură contemporană* (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, Colecția Metacritic, 2023), o antologie care reunește texte considerate reprezentative pentru parcursul unui *scholar* care a parcurs, după propria mărturisire, din *Argument*, trei faze: critic literar, critic al criticii și, *lately*, autor interesat cu precădere de teoria literară internațională.

Polemic și cârcotaș

Mai toate cronicile semnate de-a lungul timpului de Alex Goldiș au un dinte polemic. Nu e nimic personal, nimic ostentativ sau vindicativ, ci parte a unui program (est)etic, asumat și pus metodic în practică. Pentru Goldiș, miza cronicii nu este a descrie o carte, ci, mai presus de toate, a combate puncte de vedere și, implicit, a-și demonstra superioritatea. Indiferent că scrie despre autori români sau străini, despre poezie, proză, critică sau orice alt gen, despre debutanți sau despre consacrați, el adoptă aceeași atitudine bătoasă, refuzând să se complacă într-o abordare colegial-prietenosă, presărată cu elogii suave, așa cum se întâmplă în majoritatea revistelor de profil de la noi. Din acest motiv, tonul encomiastic lipsește cu desăvârșire, inclusiv atunci când scrie despre cărți consistente, care îi plac. Goldiș nu se lasă dominat de asemenea porniri, rămânând consecvent unui „program” autoimpus, care presupune problematizare lucidă și, ca atare, să cauți punctele slabe, scăpările, neajunsurile. Poetul ca și soldatul, zice Nichita. Criticul ca și cavalerul, ar zice Alex. Fiindcă, în viziunea lui, cronica presupune cavalerism, având ceva din regulile unui turnir. Un turnir de idei, în care e important să-ți dobori adversarul elegant, cu sportivitate. Ceea ce se aplică nesmintit în textele sale, unde, după o serie de lovituri bine țintite, Goldiș recunoaște și calitățile cărții luate în discuție, dar, într-un dozaj bine calculat, merit a-l face pe cititor să nu uite, nicio clipă, cine deține controlul. Felul cum scrie despre *Cenaclul de Luni*, al lui Cosmin Ciotloș, mi se pare, în acest sens, relevant.

Tranșant și incisiv

Judecățile de valoare tranșante au făcut din Alex Goldiș un critic respectat. El nu se învârte în jurul cozii, ci spune lucrurilor pe nume, tăind nodul gordian fără ezitare, în fraze adesea memorabile, care fixează locul unei cărți și/sau al unui scriitor: „Frumoasă și instructivă în multe părți, *Istoria critică a literaturii române* ratează, prin neglijență și prin permanenta

schimbare de optică și de mize, tocmai perioada pe care Nicolae Manolescu a consacrat-o, de-a lungul a trei decenii, în calitate de cronicar literar.” Sau: „Deși are originalitate și atmosferă proprie, *Zilele regelui* e, din păcate, o carte semi-ratăată.” Sau: „Din păcate, însă, ultimul produs al lui Marius Ianuș dezamăgește – și nu, așa cum s-a spus, pentru că imaginarul bărbatului împlinit, cu copil și slujbă ar fi mai sărac decât tematica poetului-vagabond, ci pentru că volumul suferă de un evident deficit stilistic.” Etc. Etc. Cronicile lui Goldiș nu lăncezesc, ci problematizează în permanență, luând, cum se spune, taurul de coarne. Incisivitatea este, de altfel, una dintre notele definitorii ale scrisului său, un scris incomod, apreciat tocmai pentru franchețea opiniilor. Cu precizarea că, atunci când scrie despre cărți de critică/teorie internațională, tonul se îmblânzește, iar incisivitatea se relativizează.

Doxat și versat

De unde acest aplomb? S-ar putea da mai multe răspunsuri. Pe de o parte, el vine din erudiție, pe de altă parte, din experiența acumulată. Blindat teoretic, cu lecturi bogate, Alex Goldiș e stăpân pe subiectele abordate, ceea ce îi permite intervenții pertinente, greu de combătut. Doxat, el are capacitatea de a acoperi mai toate fațetele unei probleme, pe care o drămluiește, ardelenește, contextualizând-o, apoi descompunând-o, cu răbdare, și, după o analiză atentă, diagnosticând-o doct. Se vede aici nu doar o pregătire temeinică, ci și un stil bine exersat, criticul având reflexele interpretative deja create. El aplică, de fapt, un mecanism hermeneutic bine pus la punct, verificat încă din primii ani de cronică, mecanism pe care l-a perfecționat prin lecturi temeinice, care îi permit să pună în practică, simultan, clasicul *close reading* și modernul *distant reading*, găsind un echilibru între cele două tendințe aparent antagonice.

Să nu uităm că Alex Goldiș scrie de pe poziții de stânga, pornind de la premisa că ideologicul joacă un rol important în viața literaturii și, ca atare, nu trebuie omis în operația de interpretare și valorizare. O asemenea opțiune justifică, spre exemplu, interesul acordat unui volum colectiv neglijat, *Epoca Traian Băsescu* (Cluj-Napoca, Tact, 2014), precum și o serie de parti-pris-uri, evidente în atitudinea binevoitoare față de autori de stânga și mefientă față de alții, de dreapta. Din fericire, ele nu denaturează judecățile, fiindcă Alex Goldiș nu condiționează recunoașterea valorii prin poziționarea ideologică, ci doar manifestă o simpatie sporită față de cei cu care împărtășește convingeri. E, de altfel, normal să fie așa, fiindcă literatura nu (mai) poate fi discutată strict din perspectivă estetică, așa cum el însuși demonstrează, convingător, în câteva dintre textele incluse în volum. De aici derivă o abordare democratică și respingerea prejudecăților și a derapajelor extremiste, indiferent de natura lor. Asta vine la pachet cu o viziune democratică asupra literaturii, care-l face receptiv, în egală măsură, la opere scrise de bărbați și de femei, de tineri sau de bătrâni, de heterosexuali și de homosexuali etc. A nu condiționa recunoașterea valorii prin asemenea criterii mi se pare un semn de normalitate, care funcționează din plin în scrisul său.

Tocmai din aceste motive, Alex Goldiș este un critic *open-minded*, capabil să depășească modul convențional în care era privită anterior literatura, făcând pasul către o înțelegere elastică a conceptului, prin *upgradarea* instrumentarului critic folosit. Așa se și explică de ce, în ultimii ani, el a virat spre teoria literară internațională, încercând să-și asimileze noutățile și să se integreze în trendul *World Literature* și al studiilor cantitative, pe care le vede nu ca amenințări, ci ca oportunități pentru integrarea literaturii române (și, în general, a literaturilor mici/periferice în familia mare a literaturii universale). E suficient să enumărăm doar câteva dintre numele și cărțile despre care scrie (incluse în secțiunea a treia a volumului, „Critică/teorie internațională”), pentru a înțelege că Goldiș a simțit direcția din care bate vântul, poziționându-se pe un culoar favorabil, într-un efort de sincronizare pe care îl consideră necesar atât pentru cariera sa universitară, cât și pentru vizibilitatea literaturii române în străinătate, unde ideea de literatură națională este considerată, de unii specialiști, vetustă. Așadar, pariul lui Goldiș merge pe Franco Moretti, Matthew L. Jockers, Sean Cotter, Martin Puchner, David Damrosch, Stefan Helgesson, Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, Andrew Piper, Delia Ungureanu și alții, care fac parte din bibliografia obligatorie cu care s-a blindat, pentru a se alinia la direcția la modă astăzi în științele umaniste.

Ar fi multe de spus despre acest volum, însă cadrele unei recenzii nu o permit. Motiv pentru care aș încheia răspunzând întrebării lui Alex Goldiș referitoare la oportunitatea publicării unei asemenea antologii de texte critice. Da, fără doar și poate, da! Pentru că, grupate astfel, ele dau o imagine de ansamblu a unei activități consistente, de aproape două decenii, devenind un (auto)portret al criticului ajuns la maturitate. Apoi, pentru că, puse cap la cap, dau și imaginea dinamicii literaturii române contemporane, chit că Goldiș respinge posibilitatea ca această carte să fie citită ca o istorie a literaturii contemporane. Nu e o istorie, dar e o critică, secvențială, a literaturii contemporane și, chiar dacă nu îi surâde ideea, echivalează cu o Arcă a lui Noe, cu o listă a lui Goldiș, una utilă, fiindcă oferă cititorului repere credibile și necesare, într-un peisaj literar tot mai atomizat, în care vocile autorizate se aud tot mai stins.

Adrian Jicu¹

¹ Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău.

Comparatism și World Literature

Gheorghe Iorga, *Sfidarea secundarului*, București, Tracus Arte, 2023

Comparatismul suferă de sindromul „sfârșitului continuu”, cum spunea Caraion despre Bacovia. La mijlocul secolului XX, René Wellek anunța „criza” literaturii comparate, iar câteva decenii mai târziu, Gaiatry Chakravorty Spivak constatăta chiar „moartea disciplinei”, într-o carte cu acest titlu. În realitate, „criza” prin care trece literatura comparată este o criză de creștere – de adaptare la un nou context social, cultural, mediatic, tehnologic, ideologic, educațional. Noile abordări comparatiste sunt îndatorate științelor sociale și științelor naturii, statisticii (analizei cantitative), studiilor (post)coloniale, studiilor inter și transmediale, studiilor de gen etc. De altfel, literatura însăși (obiectul abordării comparatiste) traversează o perioadă de schimbări datorate aceluiași context, mai ales concurenței dintre textul tipărit și noile medii (BD, jocuri video, film etc.).

În hățișul metodelor și al încercărilor de a revizui chiar definiția literaturii, am apreciat echilibrul analizelor și comentariilor lui Gheorghe Iorga, care nu optează în exclusivitate pentru niciuna dintre ele. Dimpotrivă, Gheorghe Iorga cântărește justetea fiecăreia, avantajele și inconvenientele ei și o aplică prudent acolo unde este cazul, fără a deforma adevărul operei, numai pentru a-l așeza procustian în tiparul unei metode. Așa procedează, de pildă, Gheorghe Iorga într-un capitol dedicat metodei lansate de Franco Moretti, cunoscute sub numele de *distant reading*, literatura (văzută) „de departe”. După cum remarcă Moretti însuși, o astfel de metodă se servește de trei instrumente vizuale, preluate din trei discipline cu care „istoria literaturii nu a avut decât prea puțin ori nimic de-a face: graficele istoriei cantitative, hărțile geografiei, arborii teoriei evoluției”¹. Acestea sunt „rezultatul unui proces deliberat de reducere și abstractizare” în raport cu aspectul concret al textului. Moretti² însuși identifică avantajele și neajunsurile propriei metode. La rândul său, Gheorghe Iorga constată că prin recurs la imagine (grafice, hărți, arbori – reprezentări bazate pe analiza cantitativă), evoluția fenomenului literar poate fi mai ușor urmărită și înțeleasă. Inconvenientul însă, pe care Gheorghe Iorga îl semnalează în acord cu Moretti, este formalizarea excesivă. Aceasta face ca individualitățile (opera particulară) să se piardă în masa de elemente asemenea (modelul general, *pattern*).

Interesat de relevanța socialului în crearea și înțelegerea operei unui autor, Gheorghe Iorga revine, într-o secțiune a volumului, la diferența dintre metoda critică a lui Sainte-Beuve și opțiunea lui Proust care o contestă explicit pe prima. Mai exact, inovația lui Sainte-Beuve, în critica literară, este aceea de a trece „de la studiul operei pentru a înțelege artistul la studiul (vieții, n.n.) artistului pentru a-i înțelege opera”³. Tocmai această abordare o refuză Proust, preferând „să separe omul de operă”. Dintr-o perspectivă afină cu romanticii, Proust disociază tranșant, în *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, omul de toată ziua de poetul care îl locuiește: omul însuși „nu e decât un om și poate perfect ignora ce vrea poetul care trăiește în el”. De aceea, e „absurd să-l judeci (...)

¹ Franco Moretti, *Grafice, hărți, arbori. Literatura văzută de departe*, traducere de Cristian Cercel, Cluj, Tact, 2016, p. 4.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Gheorghe Iorga, *Sfidarea secundarului*, București, Tracus Arte, 2023, p. 22.

pe poet prin om ori prin vorbele prietenilor săi”⁴.

Pe urmele lui Pascale Casanova⁵ și, de asemenea, ale lui Gilles Deleuze și Felix Guattari⁶, Gheorghe Iorga se delimitează de interpretarea intimistă a operei lui Kafka, optând pentru înțelegerea acestuia ca „scriitor angajat”, „sensibil la o scriitură colectivă și politică”⁷, ținând astfel seama de felul în care opera i-a fost marcată de evreitatea sa (etnică, lingvistică, religioasă), de condiția sa de evreu ceh, vorbitor de germană la Praga.

Aș așeza acest volum al lui Gheorghe Iorga mai degrabă în zona *World Literature*, în accepția lui David Damrosch, în măsura în care el urmărește să aducă în atenție autori și opere din diferite zone ale lumii, nu numai pe cei deja intrați în „canonul occidental”. De pildă, autori din Orientul Mijlociu, precum Forugh Farrokhzad, poetă persană sau Severo Sarduy (scriitor, critic, artist vizual cubanez), așezați alături de nume mai familiare publicului occidental (Rousseau, Baudelaire, Nerval, Dostoievski, Tolstoi, Kafka).

Nicoleta Popa Blanariu⁸

⁴ Proust, *apud* Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁵ Pascale Casanova, *Republica Mondială a Literelor*, traducere de Cristina Bîzu, București, Art, 2016.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka*. Pentru o literatură minoră. *Traducere și postfață de Bogdan Ghiu*, București, Art, 2007.

⁷ Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁸ Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău.