"WEEPING FOR HECUBA":
IS IT A "BRECHTIAN" ACT?

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In the period between the two world wars, Bertolt Brecht constructed, both through his plays and stage-productions as well as through his theoretical writings, an elaborate model of dramaturgy and theatrical performance which he labelled "epic theatre." Its central tenets developed as a conscious reaction against the type of drama which he termed comprehensively "Aristotelian" theatre, denoting thus the Western theatrical tradition which goes back to fifth-century Athenian drama. In Brecht's evaluation the cornerstone of the Aristotelian theatre is the notion of "Einfühlung," i.e., the spectator's tendency to empathise with characters and action (see, e.g., Brecht 1964.87), while his own ideal drama appeals first and foremost to the viewer's reason.[1] In this type of theatre the indispensable prerequisite for understanding is the spectator's "alienation" from the stage-world (Brecht 1964.71):

> The spectator was no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play. The production took the subject-matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation: the alienation that is necessary to all understanding.

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1   See primarily Brecht 1964.23 (cf. 14, 15, 27; 1965.47, 50, etc.).

Lack of empathy on both the performer's and the spectator's parts enables the latter to envisage social alternatives (see, e.g., Brecht 1964.137), to explore the possibilities of building a different reality: "It [i.e., epic drama] must not believe that one can identify oneself with our world by empathy, nor must it want this" (Brecht 1964.25). It forces the viewer to take decisions, arouses his capacity for action and protest (cf. Brecht 1964.37), and therefore creates the conditions for social criticism. Moreover, "epic" theatre enhances the formation of class-consciousness, as its actor "does not address himself to everybody alike," but "allows the existing divisions within the audience to continue, in fact he widens them" (Brecht 1964.143; cf. 139).

As I have argued elsewhere (Lada 1993), Brecht's conception of empathy as lying at the opposite extreme to reason is dangerously misleading when applied to the workings of the classical Athenian drama. For, although Greek culture shapes the predisposition of Greek audiences as highly empathetic, in so far as we can get an insight into the Greek perception of representation-frames, many a time empathy and bewitchment seem to be considered as thoroughly compatible with cognitive processes. Taking therefore my inquiry a step further, I propose to focus on Brecht's conception of the *broader consequences* of the "Aristotelian" spectator's identification with the world of fiction, with a view to investigating whether the entire range of connotations that he perceived as corollary to the conception of aesthetic "Einfühlung" are applicable to fifth-century Athenian drama. For Brecht saw empathy as the principal obstacle to the spectator's social understanding; "involvement" with the stage-world blunts his critical awareness, obscures the lucidity of his judgement (Brecht 1964.26):

> If the seance is successful it ends up with nobody seeing anything further, nobody learning any lessons, at best everyone recollecting. In short, everybody feels.

By enwrapping the spectator in the web of empathy, the "Aristotelian" type of drama functions as a "pacifier," inducing him to accept unquestionably the play's world and the reality that it reflects (Brecht 1964.71):

> The dramatic theatre's spectator says: Yes, I have felt like that too—Just like me— It's only natural—It'll never change—The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are inescapable . . .

Furthermore, emotional response causes individuality to merge with the prevailing mood of the spectating body. Losing perspective on himself as a social entity, the viewer tends to forget what differentiates him from his fellow spectators (Brecht 1964.60):

> In calling for a direct impact, the aesthetics of the day call for an impact that flattens out all social and other distinctions between individuals. Plays of the Aristotelian type still manage to flatten out class conflicts. . . . A collective entity is created in the auditorium for the *duration of the entertainment*, on the basis of the "common humanity" shared by all spectators alike.

In other words, the "Aristotelian" audience is treated as "an undifferentiated mass"; it is conceived as boiled down "to a shapeless dumpling in the stockpot of the emotions" (Brecht 1964.143).

The main thesis of this paper, then, is that Greek drama lies at the *intersection* of "Brechtian" and "non-Brechtian" elements: disproving Brecht's evaluation of the "Aristotelian" tradition, the classical Athenian theatre surprises us by revealing itself to be quite close to Brecht's own ideal model. Nevertheless, the cognitive processes through which the classical spectator comes "to grips with things" (Brecht 1964.23), or even reaches self-awareness and socio-cultural self-definition, do not spring from the standpoint of Brechtian "alienation" but, on the contrary, are only set in motion through a series of empathic, i.e., anti-Brechtian, identifications.

I

(i) Empathy and Civic Discourse

Brecht's main thesis that the "Aristotelian" drama's empathic orientation is irreconcilable with the engagement of the viewer's social "self" in the performance cannot be justified when tested on classical Greek drama, where emotional response is inevitably a *social* response, contextually determined and culturally dependent.

To take just a few examples, the spectator's vicarious amusement with a variety of comic targets on the theatre's *skênê* implies a well-defined social stance: thus, laughing at the caricature of Cleon as Paphlagon in the *Knights* presupposes the tacit comparison of the play-world with the

backgrounded "social referent" (see Hutcheon 1985.49), i.e., the real-life context which underlies the fiction; laughter, in this respect, entails the reactivation of the viewer's "civic consciousness," sustained by the judgements that he forms as a participant in the body politic of the Athenian city. In other words, one's empathic "joining in" at the satire of the *dêmos* and Athenian politicians on the stage is inconceivable outside the frame of a "deep" intertextuality: the spectator's appreciation of the comic wit can generate fun and empathetic joy only through its dialogic interaction with the general discursive space of Greek culture. The same, of course, holds true for tragedy as well: pity and awe at Medea's infanticide, for example, are ultimately inseparable from an entire cluster of culturally determined questions, such as the meaning of a feminine voice "speaking out" for herself on stage, the meaning of the male viewer's witnessing the usurpation of his own male/heroic code by the feminine "other," and so on. Moreover, one should always remember that the empathic process can be further complicated by the fact that feminine figures on the stage are after all embodied by a male acting "self," required to enunciate a view of femininity which is perceived and shaped uniquely through masculine filters in the *polis'* gender-discourse.

Aristotelian drama therefore "engages" the spectator precisely by activating the wholeness of his intellectual panoply: models of the "self" and models of society, a host of socially determined predispositions and assumptions—in short, the entire cluster of one's cultural or "long-term" memory (see De Marinis 1985.15)—are dragged into the game of theatrical response. Furthermore, in the context of ancient drama, empathy should not be considered synonymous with monolithic, unilateral sentimentalism, for the texts themselves would not allow us to form the picture of an audience which simply "borrows its heart from one of the characters involved" (Brecht 1965.27) in the action: most of the plays do not encourage exclusive and unequivocal sympathy for *one* of the protagonists on the theatrical *skênê*.[2] Being emotionally engaged means throwing oneself imaginatively into the middle of the action in such a way as to be torn between conflicting points of view and to fluctuate between irreconcilable perspectives. Brecht's conception of a drama which would not subordinate "everything to a single idea" in such a way as to be "propelling the spectator along a single track where he can look neither right nor left, up

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2 Think, e.g., of the cases of Pentheus and Dionysus in the *Bacchae*, or Creon and Antigone in Sophocles' play.

nor down" (Brecht 1964.44) is already actualised on the classical Greek stage. Neoptolemus in the Sophoclean *Philoctetes* provides an adequate example: being caught between conflicting models of behaviour and incompatible conceptions of *gennaiotês* /*aretê* in man, he is required to struggle hard to find his own path. To empathise with his dilemma, correspondingly, is for the fifth-century Athenian spectator a truly Brechtian "exercise in complex seeing" (Brecht 1964.44).[3]

To conclude then, the very nature of Greek drama disproves the Brechtian concept of empathy as an intricately woven net entrapping the spectator in a self-contained game of theatrical response. Rather than constructing "a world unto itself," i.e., an emotionally fulfilling "space apart," insulated from social considerations and imposing on the viewer minimal demands for the adoption of a social stance, the Greek dramatic spectacle is deeply implicated in the *polis'* civic discourse. A great deal of modern work, pioneered by J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, has amply illuminated the complex links of Tragedy with social institutions. The results of such a line of inquiry are too well known to require restatement. Nevertheless, I do find it important to quote at this point in full the insightful anthropological remarks of Victor Turner (1982.103–04), as these could be taken as a starting point for much of my subsequent discussion:

> . . . the plays—Aristophanes' comedies as much as Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies—in Geertz' terms are "social metacommentaries" on contemporaneous Greek society, that is, whatever the nature of their plot, whether drawn from myths or reputed historical accounts, they were intensely "reflexive." If they were "mirrors held up to nature" (or rather to society and culture) they were *active* . . . mirrors, mirrors that probed and analyzed the axioms and assumptions of the social structure, isolated the building blocks of the culture, and sometimes used them to construct novel edifices . . . possible variants based on rules underlying the structures of familiar sociocultural life or experienced social reality.

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3   For a reading of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in meta-theatrical terms, see Lada forthcoming b.

In antithesis to Brecht's conception of "Aristotelian" drama as a "close-circuited" communication whereby the stage pictures would impress themselves upon the audience's perception and be passively absorbed, the interaction between "stage" and "social" drama (Turner 1990.16) within the context of classical Athenian culture should be considered as following a "spiralling" process (Turner 1990.17–18): playwrights constantly feed their work into the social frame, while the social drama in its turn "unconsciously, or perhaps preconsciously, influences not only the form but also the content of the stage drama of which it is the active or 'magic' mirror" (Turner 1990.16).

(ii) Empathy and Prosocial Action

One of the most pervasive concerns in Brecht's writings on the theatre is the association of empathy with social passivity. In Brecht's conception, to identify with dramatic characters as well as to empathise with the fictional reality of the dramatic game are psychological processes leading to acceptance of and to compliance with the conditions of social actuality. In other words, empathy within the playhouse acts as an impediment to one's prosocial motivation: "coming to terms with" through identification inhibits one's willingness to act in order to alleviate the ills of the world. As the "Philosopher" points out to the "Dramaturge" in the *Messingkauf Dialogues* (27):

> Those naturalistic images of yours were badly manufactured. The point of view you chose for your representations made genuine criticism impossible. People identified themselves with you and came to terms with the world. You were what you were; the world stayed as it was.

As has often been observed, Brecht's position on this point is clearly foreshadowed by Jean Jacques Rousseau,[4] whose famous *Lettre à M. D'Alembert sur les spectacles* complains that theatre "teaches us how to replace real sympathy with a painless representation or imitation of

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4   See Marshall 1988.143ff.; cf. Banerjee 1977.175–76.

sympathy . . . a false sense that one has fulfilled one's responsibilities toward others by responding in the playhouse" (Marshall 1988.143). Emotional reaction in the theatre is harmful, as it *substitutes for real action* in communal life (Rousseau 1975.141):

> En donnant des pleurs à ces fictions, nous avons satisfait à tous les droits de l' humanité, sans avoir plus rien à mettre du nôtre. . . . Au fond, quand un homme est allé admirer de belles actions dans des fables et pleurer des malheurs imaginaires, qu' a-t-on encore à exiger de lui? N' est-il pas content de lui-même?

> In shedding our tears for these fictions, we have satisfied all the claims of humanity, without having to give any more of ourselves. . . . Finally, when a man has gone to admire fine actions in fables, and to weep over imaginary misfortunes, what more can one demand of him? Is he not pleased with himself? (trans. D. Marshall 1988).

How does Greek society understand its double function as a passive, i.e., spectating, body in the theatre, and as a politically active, i.e., decision-making, organ in the city's public life? It would seem that the sundering of roles and responsibilities which worried Rousseau and Brecht was actually condemned as deviant and intolerable. Absence of sources makes the task of a detailed theoretical investigation futile. Nevertheless, some scraps of evidence may yield the impression that civic consciousness raises a voice of protest against the *lack of correspondence* between "theatrical," i.e., fictitious, identities assumed *within* the plays, and "unscripted," i.e., social, roles acted out on the real "stage" of the Athenian world. In other words, in an ideal social scheme, complementarity and contiguity are required for the dramatic and the public roles of both performers and spectators alike. To take one prominent example, one of the ways in which Demosthenes attempts to blacken Aeschines in the eyes of the judges is based precisely upon the exploitation of a *failed continuity* between theatrical and social acting-parts. For it would seem that in his political "performance" in the role of an ambassador to the king Philip of Macedon, Aeschines did not live up to the *polis'* morality, such as it was enregistered in the words of Creon, whom he himself had incarnated in the Sophoclean *Antigone*:

ταῦτα τοίνυν ἐν τῷ δράματι τούτῳ σκέψασθ᾽ ὁ Κρέων
Αἰσχίνης οἷα λέγων πεποίηται τῷ ποιητῇ, ἃ οὔτε πρὸς
αὑτὸν οὗτος ὑπὲρ τῆς πρεσβείας διελέχθη οὔτε πρὸς
τοὺς δικαστὰς εἶπεν (Demosthenes 19.247). [Soph.
Antigone 175–90.] Τούτων οὐδὲν Αἰσχίνης εἶπε πρὸς
αὑτὸν ἐν τῇ πρεσβείᾳ, ἀλλ᾽ ἀντὶ μὲν τῆς πόλεως τὴν
Φιλίππου ξενίαν καὶ φιλίαν πολλῷ μείζον᾽ ἡγήσαθ᾽
αὑτῷ καὶ λυσιτελεστέραν, ἐρρῶσθαι πολλὰ φράσας
τῷ σοφῷ Σοφοκλεῖ . . . (Demosthenes 19.248).

Now you shall weigh the merits of the verses which were
specially written by the poet for the character of Creon-
Aeschines, though he forgot to repeat them to himself in
connexion with his embassy, and did not quote them to
the jury. . . . Aeschines did not quote any of these lines for
his own instruction on his embassy. He put the hospitality
and friendship of Philip far above his country, and found
it more profitable. He bade a long farewell to the sage
Sophocles.[5]

The truth or the distorting bias of this accusation is irrelevant to my
discussion. What seems to me, instead, of primary importance is the fact
that an experienced orator who is anxious to defame his opponent can count
precisely on his effective exploitation of the *cleavage* between an individual's
dramatic "mask" and his adopted social *persona* in order to arouse the
indignation and the disapproval of the audience. Besides, Demosthenes'
direct address to Aeschines as a theatrical/political "performer" draws
together theatre and "social drama" as areas whose ideal complementary
relation is disrupted when a discontinuity of acting-modes occurs
(Demosthenes 19.250):

ὃς ἃ μὲν πολλάκις ἠγωνίσω καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἐξηπίστασο,
ὑπερέβης, ἃ δ᾽ οὐδεπώποτ᾽ ἐν τῷ βίῳ ὑπεκρίνω, ταῦτα
ζητήσας ἐπὶ τῷ τῶν πολιτῶν βλάψαι τιν᾽ εἰς μέσον
ἤνεγκας.

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5   Unless stated otherwise, all translations of Greek texts are taken from the corresponding
    Loeb edition.

You passed over the speech that you so often spoke on the stage, and knew by heart; you hunted up rant that in all your career you had never declaimed in character, and revived it for the undoing of your own fellow-citizens.

Along the same lines, orators take political spectators to task for the discrepancy between their social and theatrical response: the overflow of emotion at the stage dramas should ideally transmute itself in altruistic action (Isocrates 4.168):

> ὑπὲρ ὧν [i.e., social misfortunes] οὐδεὶς πώποτ᾽ ἠγανάκτησεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ μὲν ταῖς συμφοραῖς ταῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν συγκειμέναις δακρύειν ἀξιοῦσιν, ἀληθινὰ δὲ πάθη πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ γιγνόμενα διὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἐφορῶντες τοσούτου δέουσιν ἐλεεῖν, ὥστε καὶ μᾶλλον χαίρουσιν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀλλήλων κακοῖς ἢ τοῖς αὑτῶν ἰδίοις ἀγαθοῖς.

> Against these ills no one has ever protested; and people are not ashamed to weep over the calamities which have been fabricated by the poets, while they view complacently the real sufferings, the many terrible sufferings, which result from our state of war; and they are so far from feeling pity that they even rejoice more in each other's sorrows than in their own blessings.

By way of contrast, Aeschines presupposes the social sensibility of the political spectators to be much more intense than their suffering as part of their theatrical response (Aeschines *Against Ctesiphon* 153):

> γένεσθε δή μοι μικρὸν χρόνον τὴν διάνοιαν μὴ ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ . . . καὶ λογίσασθε πότερ᾽ οἴεσθε τοὺς οἰκείους τῶν τελευτησάντων πλείω δάκρυα ἀφήσειν ἐπὶ ταῖς τραγῳδίαις καὶ τοῖς ἡρωικοῖς πάθεσι τοῖς μετὰ ταῦτ᾽ ἐπεισιοῦσιν, ἢ ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς πόλεως ἀγνωμοσύνῃ.

> I ask you to imagine for a little time that you are not in the courtroom, but in the theatre . . . consider whether

>   you believe the relatives of the dead will shed more tears
>   over the tragedies and the sufferings of the heroes soon
>   afterward to be presented on the stage, or over the
>   blindness of the city.

In short, it might be said that in Greek culture one would be naturally expected to feel embarrassed, "si les imitations du théâtre nous arrachent quelquefois plus de pleurs que ne le feroit la présence même des objets imités . . ." (Rousseau 1975.141). The well-known story about the tyrant Alexander of Pherae may aptly illustrate this point. For, although it has the strong flavour of an anecdote, it clearly reveals a deeply grounded awareness that, ideally at least, the social and theatrical arenas should be distinguished for their *complementary* relation as spaces for the manifesta-tion, the "acting out," of pity. According to the episode narrated by Plutarch, while viewing the misfortunes of dramatic characters enacted on the stage, the tyrant Alexander felt as if he had been himself transformed, in the middle of the auditorium, into a dramatic/civic "spectacle": his own appearance in the social role of a theatrical spectator constituted in the eyes of his fellow-citizens a political "performance," and he was deeply con-scious of the fact that they were bound to be struck by the *discontinuity* between the *excess* of his emotional involvement in the fiction and the *total lack* of sympathy which had been constantly the hallmark of his social actions (Plut. *Pelopidas* 29.5; cf. Plut. *Mor*. 334a–b):

>   τραγῳδὸν δέ ποτε θεώμενος Εὐριπίδου Τρῳάδας
>   ὑποκρινόμενον ᾤχετο ἀπιὼν ἐκ τοῦ θεάτρου, καὶ
>   πέμψας πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐκέλευε θαρρεῖν καὶ μηδὲν
>   ἀγωνίζεσθαι διὰ τοῦτο χεῖρον, οὐ γὰρ ἐκείνου
>   καταφρονῶν ἀπελθεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ **αἰσχυνόμενος τοὺς
>   πολίτας**, εἰ μηδένα πώποτε τῶν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ φονευομένων
>   ἠλεηκώς, ἐπὶ τοῖς᾽ Εκάβης καὶ Ἀνδρομάχης κακοῖς
>   **ὀφθήσεται δακρύων**.

>   Once when he was seeing a tragedian act the "Trojan
>   Women" of Euripides, he left the theatre abruptly, and
>   sent a message to the actor bidding him be of good
>   courage and not put forth any less effort because of his
>   departure, for it was not out of contempt for his acting
>   that he had gone away, but because he was ashamed to
>   have the citizens see him, who had never taken pity on

> any man that he had murdered, weeping over the sorrows
> of Hecuba and Andromache.

Besides, it would seem that pity in Greek culture could never be "une émotion passagère et vaine," "une pitié stérile, qui se repaît de quelques larmes, et n'a jamais produit le moindre acte d' humanité" (Rousseau 1975.140). Rather than being restricted to pure sentimentalism, pity in the Greek perspective is quite frequently interwoven with prosocial action. As Dover has expressed it, "the stronger 'pities' the weaker . . . when *he does what the weaker has asked him to do.*"[6] This is all the more evident in tragedy, where the victim's plea for *eleos* and *oiktos* is always a request for *practical* help, such as the securing of a refuge, the granting of salvation, and so on,[7] instead of unavailing tears. Euripides' *Suppliants* offers a good meta-theatrical example of dramatic empathy as mediating altruistic help. For Aethra's pity at the scenic "spectacle" (cf. the emphatic ἐς τάσδε γὰρ βλέψασ᾽, 8) of the elderly Argive mothers at the *polis'* altars (see esp. 34–35, 286–92) seems to be inextricably interwoven in her conscience with the urgency for remedial action. And it is primarily a model of empathic altruism that she attempts (297–331) to instigate upon the reticent Theseus, who is initially reacting "as a δικαστής (253) in an intellectual and unsympathetic manner" (Lloyd 1992.77). In other words, rather than resulting in the egoistic shunning of social responsibility and the concern to alleviate one's own sympathetically aroused distress,[8] the "internalised" spectator's empathy prompts the wholehearted assumption of one's social commitments and responsibilities (*Suppliants* 326–27):[9]

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6 See Dover 1974.195–96 (my emphasis); cf. Dover 1974.197 (on *eleein/oiktirein* in epitaphs); see also Belfiore 1992.186.

7 Consider, for example, Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, where Theseus' *oiktos* for Heracles (1236) takes the form of practical help (see 1323ff.), or Euripides' *Medea* 711–13; on a meta-theatrical level one may consider the dialogue between Euripides/Perseus and his Kinsman in the role of the captive Andromeda in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*; the latter's plea: ὦ ξένε κατοίκτιρόν με τὴν παναθλίαν (1107), answered by the former's: ὦ παρθέν᾽ οἰκτίρω σὲ κρεμαμένην ὁρῶν (1110), is inextricably linked with a specific plan for action, that is escape.

8 Cf. Rousseau 1975.141. For the possibility that empathetic helping may be motivated by the desire to alleviate one's *own* distress, see, e.g., Batson et al. 1987.180 with references.

9 Most psychologists are now willing to acknowledge empathy as "an affective motivator of prosocial behavior" (Eisenberg 1982.14, cf. Feshbach 1982.336, Hoffman 1982, and, for more references, see Eisenberg and Miller 1987.292), but this is still a fairly controversial issue; see, e.g., Eisenberg 1982.12–15, Batson et al. 1987.180–81.

οὐκ εἶ νεκροῖσι καὶ γυναιξὶν ἀθλίαις
προσωφελήσων, ὦ τέκνον, κεχρημέναις;

Child, will you not **help**
The dead, and these poor women in their need?
(trans. F. W. Jones in Grene and Lattimore).

Furthermore, due attention should be paid to the special role of Athens as the *philoiktirmôn polis* in the Greek world *par excellence*.[10] In idealised visions of the city, her readiness to *eleein* is not confined to words but is immediately translated into prosocial action, i.e., willingness to relieve the lot of the weaker and oppressed. As Demosthenes (24. 171) has put it, her spirit is "a spirit of compassion for the helpless (τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς ἐλεεῖν), and of resistance to the intimidation of the strong and powerful (τοῖς ἰσχυροῖς καὶ δυναμένοις μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν ὑβρίζειν)."[11]

(iii) Empathy and Challenge

Brecht's assumption that an audience's emotional engagement with characters and action results in mental slumbering and incapacity for critical response appears to be untenable when tested against the cultural and textual fabric of the Greek theatrical event:

(a) Plutarch (*Mor.* 10c) relates how Socrates, asked whether he was not upset at his derision in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, replied: "No indeed . . . when they break a jest upon me in the theatre I feel as if I were at a big party of good friends (ὡς γὰρ ἐν συμποσίῳ μεγάλῳ τῷ θεάτρῳ σκώπτομαι)."

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10 See Pl. *Menex.* 244e (φιλοικτίρμων . . . καὶ τοῦ ἥττονος θεραπίς); cf. schol. Soph. *OC* 258 (φιλοικτίρμων . . . καὶ ἱκεταδόκος).

11 Cf. also, for example, Soph. *OC* 260-62 or Eur. *Heracld.* 329–32. In particular, the protection offered by Athens to the sons of Heracles is one of the most standard *topoi* in any eulogy of the *polis* (see, e.g., the references given by de Romilly 1963.133 with note 3). Consider also in this vein the role of Aegeus in Euripides' *Medea* or the political dimension of Theseus himself who, in the plays revolving around him, "seems to be the very incarnation of Athens" (de Romilly 1963.133). However, it is equally important to stress at this point that such pictures are merely political *idealisations*, providing a stark contrast with the bleak image of Athens as a ruthless hegemonic power, such as seen by her allies before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war.

12 For the widespread conception of a theatrical performance as a feast of dishes, a δείπνου γλαφυροῦ ποικίλην εὐωχίαν (Astydamas II, 60 F4 Snell), see, e.g., Cratinus fr. 182 K-A, Metagenes fr. 15 K-A, Arist. *Knights* 538–39, Arist. fr. 347, 1 K-A.

The parallelism[12] is a powerful expression of the close affinity between the nature of sympotic and theatrical exposure of the "self" to the incisive gaze of the "other." For if being a banqueter in the sympotic realm entails the risking of one's "image" and "self-representation" through a direct "confrontation with the group" (Pellizer 1990.183), being a spectator in the theatre means putting one's "self" as a fifth-century Athenian citizen at every moment "to the test" (Pellizer 1990.183): the *polis'*—and therefore the spectating body's—collective ideology is constantly subject to criticism and challenge through the infringement of a previous cultural substratum—sustained in the plays' mythical reality—upon the newly forged models of the self and of society which constitute the singular physiognomy of democratic Athens.[13] In other words, the Athenian spectator *individually and* a variety of groups within the audience *collectively*[14] *as well as* the Athenian state *in its entirety* are not participants in an experience which would allow them to "melt" uncritically in sympathetic tears, but are constantly *provoked* by the stage-world. This is an area well researched and therefore I don't need to take more than one example which, I suggest, could readily be sought in the much discussed and multifaceted model of the "unruly woman." Whether a "public" woman speaking out for her own rights on the stage or a whore like the Euripidean "Phaedras and Stheneboeas" castigated by the Aristophanic Aeschylus in the *Frogs* (1043) or a Dionysiac maenad, whose flight from the *oikos* to the wilderness of *orê* and of roofless rocks (see the carefully balanced antithetical images in Euripides' *Bacchae* 32–33, 35–38, 116–19), inverts the whole civilising "*process by which girls become the wives of citizens,*"[15] the female "out of her place" *challenges* the male spectator's self-definition as the dominant sex, i.e., the unquestionable protagonist in the *polis'* public arena, the head of an *oikos* perpetuating itself through stable patrilineal succession and the guarantor of his wife's permanent transition from her pre-marital "naturalness" into the realm of culture.[16]

   (b) However, challenge through involvement should be considered to form "two-way traffic." For, just as the spectator's own assumptions may

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13 For the uneasy integration of old values (as exemplified in the Homeric poems) into the new reality of the Athenian *polis*, see, e.g., Gould 1983.35. On the nature of such criticism and challenges, see Goldhill 1990.

14 See below, section (iv).

15 Seaford 1988.127 (his italics).

16 For the multiple questions arising from the unexpected "masculinisation" of the feminine in Athenian drama, see, e.g., Gould 1980, Foley 1981, Foley 1982, etc.

easily be put at risk, the stage-world is not immune from questioning intrusions of the auditorium either: instances are reported where the entire audience was said to have tumultuously protested against provocative enunciations of either dubious morality or irreligious flavour,[17] challenging thereby both the self-consistency and the authority of the fiction. Moreover, this last remark provides a link with cases where empathy entails an even deeper, more intricate and less than straightforward involvement of socio-cultural assumptions. Consider, for example, the spectator's sympathetic fusion with protagonists who, in a carnivalesque reversal of established polarities,[18] construct utopic counter-pictures of everyday life and social structure (e.g., *Ecclesiazusae*), outwit and humiliate the community's strong men (politicians, generals, priests, and so forth), or even turn cosmic hierarchies upside down by mocking or usurping the prerogatives and role of the divine. This kind of psychological involvement raises inevitably the question about the seriousness of the dramatic game, i.e., *its function on the plane of communal life*,[19] its potential "spillover" (Davis 1975b.143) into the world of everyday actuality.

Now, a primary characteristic of such theatrical reshapings of reality is certainly the celebrated "safety-valve" effect: within the larger realm of social structure, comic inversion need stand for nothing more than a carefree and playful reorganisation of basic cultural components in paradoxical or ill-assorted frames; the male Athenian citizen would thus have been allowed to have, even for a limited amount of time, the "upper hand," i.e., to get a fleeting feeling of *release* from social inhibitions and constraints, or even to assert himself against his military/political superiors (see Dover 1972.31–41). Ascending the status-ladder in this way need not be socially undermining for the simple reason that it is *not real;* as Clifford Geertz (1973.443) has put it with respect to other cultural expressions of reversal:

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17 See Pickard-Cambridge 1988.274–75.

18 For theatre and carnival as "neighboring institutions with similar logics of representation and similar orientations to social reality as a whole," see Bristol 1983 (quot. from 637–38) and, more extensively, Bristol 1985. It is primarily the *comic* genre which has been studied within the general framework of "ritualised license." For English comedy, see, e.g., Donaldson 1970, Barber 1959, and the fascinating study of Laroque 1991. For Greek comedy, see the seminal remarks of Carrière 1979, especially 43, and for the most extensive treatment up to now, see Goldhill 1991, especially 176–88.

19 Cf. Donaldson 1970.20 arguing that the game of comic reversals "compels us to attend to questions which are far from farcical, and which are concerned principally with problems about social order."

> *. . . no one's status really changes* . . . . All you can do is
> enjoy and savor . . . the concocted sensation of drastic
> and momentary movement along an aesthetic semblance
> of that ladder, a kind of behind-the-mirror status jump
> which has the look of mobility without its actuality.[20]

But "letting off steam,"[21] i.e., to "'burn out' or 'wash away' . . . the accumulated sins and sunderings of structure" (Turner 1969.185), is too restrictive an interpretation of audience-response to such a powerful and multivalent symbolic nexus as is the constellation of inverted images encoded in the texture of Greek plays. The psychological effect of empathising with a theatrically contrived picture of reversal in any of its multiple manifestations[22] staged as a spectacle on the Athenian *skênê* may also be an illustration of the "topsy-turvy" *at the service of "explicit criticism" of the existing order* (see Davis 1975b.131). For example, getting imaginatively involved in, and hence deriving pleasure from, the theatrical humiliation of demagogues and the derision of their tactics is also equivalent to raising a voice of protest against the often witnessed abuses of their power at the expense of the Athenian *dêmos*.[23] Similarly, putting oneself into the frame of mind of Trygaeus in his contest of *mêtis* with Hermes in the *Peace* may also signify—at least for the intellectually "avant-garde" spectator—one's sharing in the criticism against some facets of traditional, anthropomorphically based conceptions of divine nature.[24] In

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20 On the similarly ambiguous function of reversals in purely theatrical performances, cf. Bristol 1983.651–52.

21 I should state at this point that I follow Versnel 1987.137 in distinguishing the pure "Ventilsitten" interpretation of ritual reversal from the functionalist view which stresses primarily its stabilising, legitimising effect; as he has put it, "Of course, both functions can reinforce each other, but they are still distinguishable: neutralising potential aggression is not identical to legitimating the social *status quo* by means of the absurd."

22 See below, part II.

23 E.g., for the promotion of one's personal ambitions as potentially subversive of the foundations of the *polis*, see Thuc. 2.65.7, 2.65.10, 3.82.8, 6.12.2, 8.50.3, 8.83.3; Pl. *Gorg.* 502e; Isocr. 12.133; for accusations of embezzlement of public funds by demagogues see, e.g., Isocr. 8.127; Aesch. *Ctesiph.* 173; Arist. *Knights* 205, 258, 715f., 826–27, 1145ff., 1218ff., etc.

24 Such as, e.g., the lack of divine self-sufficiency (a traditional assumption vehemently attacked in the fifth century; see briefly, Guthrie 1971.230f.) which provides the background material upon which humour is based at many moments in the dialogue (see, e.g., 192–94, 378–79, 385–87, 423–25). I intend to treat this confrontation between man and god in detail elsewhere.

other words, empathising with society's weak in his/her reversed role as the play's strong is not only a participation in "a fantasy of structural superiority" (Turner 1969.168), but ultimately an opportunity to savour a wider range of "behavioral options" (Davis 1975b.131), to participate in the poet's suggestion of alternatives to the existing order (Davis 1975a.123).[25] As N. Z. Davis (1975b.143) has put it, inversion can "prompt new ways of thinking about the system and reacting to it."

(iv) Empathy and Social Differentiation

Brecht's thesis that in empathetic drama class differences are eliminated so that everyone is united in the "stockpot of the emotions" comes remarkably close to the Turnerian notion of ritual *communitas*, i.e., the feeling of homogeneity which arises among participants in ritual ceremonies,[26] the all pervasive psychic unity and the "generic bond" (Turner 1969.128) whereby ritual subjects are reduced to a raw "*prima materia*" (Turner 1967.98), an "unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus" (Turner 1969.96). Two important factors would *prima facie* argue for an understanding of Greek audience-response along these lines:

(a) The fact that spectators of Athenian theatrical performances formed a mass audience, for it would seem that Greek culture had always been intensely aware of the levelling effect a crowd could exert upon its members: the overwhelming power of the mass to dissolve the boundaries of individual distinctiveness and therefore fuse all deviant responses into the common line of prevailing sentiments and mood became very soon a *topos*, handled and expressed in a variety of interlocking ways in both high culture[27] and popular imagination alike.[28]

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25 Cf. Bristol 1983.653 on the "fundamentally subversive process" of theatre and carnival. Nevertheless, on the limited scope and the practically minimal subversive power of the "alternatives" presented on the classical Greek stage, see below, part II, section (b).

26 Such as, for example, during a sacred journey, a pilgrimage or any collective celebration, and especially in the "liminal" phase of "rites of passage."

27 See, e.g., Solon 11 West, 5-6; Arist. *Knights* 752–55; Gorg. B11a D-K (*Palamedes*). For crowd psychology in Greek collective gatherings, note, e.g., Thuc. 2.65.4, 4.27–28, 6.13.1, 6.24 (see Hunter's detailed discussion, 1988), Ar. *Rhet*. 1408a 34–36, and see in general de Romilly 1975.23–28, Finley 1974.10.

28 Consider, for example, at this point the well-known anecdotes on the collective tears, the *ekplexis*, or the awe and terror of the entire auditorium at theatrical events. Tears: Hdt.6.21.2 [=Phrynichus T2 Snell]; *ekplexis*: *Vit. Aesch*. 9 (p.34 Radt); awe and terror (at Euripides' *Cresphontes*): Plut. *Mor*. 998e.

(b) The integration of Greek drama into a larger civic framework, the "Great Dionysia" festival of Athens. For, as is well known, festivity in many social models[29] is believed to exercise an *integrative*, *cohesive* force, promoting social stability and public solidarity:[30] collective emotion functions as a primary impulse towards homogenisation,[31] while "the common affirmation and reinforcement of group sentiment" (Holton 1978.222) leads to the consolidation and invigoration of the social order. The majority of Greek civic festivals and processions can be profitably approached along these lines: independently of the tensions dramatised in their performative discourse, ritual substratum and political display of civic power cooperate harmoniously within their structure to produce a spectacle or a ceremony which aims at perpetuating and revitalising the celebratory communal body.[32] Thus, with a series of pre-play sacrifices, the Great Dionysia festival *unifies* the participants through its symbolic reaffirmation of the cosmic structure (separation of man, beast, and god), while the community's consumption of the sacrificial meat[33] re-enacts symbolically and reasserts the solidarity and the political equality, the "isonomic figure" of the city (Loraux 1981.620).[34]

Nevertheless, modern research has made us alert to the danger of approaching mass activities on the basis of the old precept of "collective mentality," i.e., the blind force transforming every single member of a crowd into "a grain of sand amid other grains of sand" (Le Bon 1977.33). Gustave Le Bon's "psychological law of the mental unity of crowds" (Le Bon 1977.26)[35] has been challenged on various grounds by historians such as G. Rudé and E. P. Thompson, who demonstrated that even in a riot—to say nothing of ordered assemblies, i.e., either ceremonial or audience

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29 The Durkheimian model holds pride of place among them.

30 For an historical application of this view, see, e.g., Phythian-Adams 1972. Cf. Shils and Young 1953.67.

31 See, e.g., Zijderveld 1983.47, Metcalf and Huntington 1991.44–48 (on Radcliffe-Brown's theory).

32 Cf. now Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992.106–07. However, for examples of festivity disintegrating into revolutionary political action, see, e.g., Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.2–5 (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 1. 7. 8), Diod. 13.104.5. See Connor 1987.41.

33 A communal meal—or, as Winkler 1990.37 puts it, a "general barbecue"—can probably be inferred from the huge amount of victims sacrificed (240 in 333 B.C. [see Pickard-Cambridge 1988.61 with note 4], although this does not necessarily reflect fifth-century practice). For the uncertainty over this issue, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988.63, Goldhill 1990.99, Seaford 1981.270 n. 164.

34 See also Detienne 1979.23–24, Durand 1979.154.

35 On Le Bon's work, see Milgram and Toch 1969.542–45, Moscovici 1985.49ff.

crowds—integrity of personality can often be retained and individual reason may not vanish, with the result that people may be acting not with blind fury but "with clear objectives" (Thompson 1971.78) and "discriminating purposefulness" (Rudé 1981.253).[36] However, similar remarks can be traced in the slim remains of ancient democratic theory as well, for the *topos* of the blind *plêthos* is often turned on its head:[37] individual distinctiveness, talents, qualities, characteristics, rather than being swamped by the anonymous homogeneity of the "collective conscience," are kept intact and interact by *complementing* one another.[38]

Moreover, anthropologists, sociologists, and social historians have all in their respective fields expressed warnings *against* the oversimplifying assumption that feasts and festivals and public ceremonials form always a straightforward exemplification of Durkheimian "collective effervescence," i.e., can be approached unequivocally as an act of "political rhetoric" which "embodies and reflects, upholds and reinforces, deeply rooted, widely held popular values" (Cannadine 1983.104). The notion of "consensus," understood as either moral or political or ideological homogeneity, tends to be seen as a precarious concept (see Harrison 1988.260ff.): even when not outrightly subversive, official public ceremonial may well intensify social conflicts (see Harrison 1988.262), enhance and stabilise class discriminations (see, e.g., Lukes 1975.302), consolidate the stratification of society by camouflaging hierarchy as consensus and disguising class dominance as class collaboration (see Hammerton and Cannadine 1981.114). More significant still is the observation that consensus and conflict, "collective effervescence" and "mobilisation of bias" (Cannadine 1987.4; cf. 15) may coexist within the boundaries of one single instance of festive collectivity to the point of "stubbornly and paradoxically" remaining "complementary rather than mutually exclusive" (Hammerton and Cannadine 1981.144). And I would like to believe that, if seen *in its context* rather than under the prism of a particular theoretical approach, classical Athenian drama can be found to *participate in both functions simultaneously*. For Greek drama is "liminal" not only as part of a carnivalesque festive frame falling at the

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36 In this same line, see also Burke 1983 and Davis 1975c, especially 154 and 187.

37 See, e.g., Thuc. 6.39.1 (κρῖναι δ᾽ ἂν ἀκούσαντας ἄριστα τοὺς πολλούς), Dem. 18.283, etc.

38 Most fully fledged, this theory of "cumulative qualification" (Raaflaub 1990.65 with note 62) is developed in Aristotle *Politics* 1281a 42–81b15; for the view that Aristotle is drawing on democratic theory in this passage, see Jones 1978.46 and Stockton 1990.177.

interstices of structured social time, but also as an event which cuts across the spheres of the sacred and the secular, i.e., *both* partaking of the strictly religious, ritual aura of the Dionysiac ἑορτή *and* expressing civic concerns to the body politic of the Athenian city. In the society of the classical Athenian *polis* where religion is basically unchallenged (at least by the majority of the population) and constitutes a strong cohesive force,[39] the ritual embracing-frame is there to guarantee communal stability and revitalisation and thereby to contain the tensions and transgressions generated by the inset narrative of the dramatic texts.[40] In this respect, audience participation in its collective and affective nature is such as *both* to recreate and reaffirm periodically the *polis'* corporate identity *and* at the same time to allow or encourage a rich diversity in the interpretation of stage-signs. In other words, Greek drama and its "realisation" on the reception-level should be approached *both* as a "liminal" phenomenon—with the *homogenising* tendency characterising the narrowly defined ritual liminality[41]—*and* as a "liminoid" (to borrow Turner's terminology)[42] manifestation, where the participants' individuality remains intact and active, rather than being submerged into group-consciousness and lost. Besides, seen from another angle and to the extent to which one tries to achieve a "thick" description of cultural layers,[43] the dynamics of the interplay between homogeneity and individuality in the dramatic festival of

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39 See now Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, especially 304–05.

40 On ritual as discouraging inquiry, see Moore and Myerhoff 1977.18. The stability of the religious frame in a given social context seems to be a factor of primary importance: for example, as studies in the Reformation in both Germany and France have shown, in times of major religious upheavals festivity becomes a powerful medium for the expression of undermining religious action (see, e.g., Davis 1975c, Scribner 1978). Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that stability of the religious framework is not unequivocally a guarantee of legitimisation, since religious festivals become the vehicle of popular protest even in places celebrated for their religious popular devotion (see Burke 1983, especially 9 on seventeenth-century Naples).

41 See above, n. 26; cf. also Turner 1977.45: "*liminal* phenomena tend to have a common intellectual and emotional meaning for all the members of the widest effective community."

42 Turner initiated the use of this term as the "functional equivalent" (1977.39) of ritual liminality on a much broader socio-cultural level; it was intended to characterise "artistic or religious forms" (1982.118) of leisure-time (such as carnival, spectacles, national theatre, folk drama, etc.) which, although having a great potentiality for giving rise to "collective" or "mass" effects, are produced and consumed by *known individuals* and lay special stress on *personal distinctiveness*. See, in general, Turner 1977 and Turner 1982.

43 See Geertz 1973.chapter 1.

Athens is the inevitable result of the tensions which arise from the translation of the Dionysiac psychology into the centre of the *polis*. For in the trance of the maenadic myth reign fusion and befuddlement, *communitas* and a "collective *psyche*," as man and beast, male and female, human and divine mingle,[44] while in the Dionysiac cultic worship many a time boundaries between social classes or age groups and sexes are forced to collapse.[45] Nevertheless, when the Dionysiac spectacle becomes entangled in the *polis'* most lavish pageantry and public show, civic structure and hierarchy superimpose themselves on the Dionysiac equality so that group identities are forged and reinforced rather than obliterated or blurred. Thus, in the City Dionysia festival, *metoikoi* and true Athenian citizens are assigned different functions (and even different robes) in the great procession, the *choregoi* are allowed to proclaim the splendour of their status in vestimentary extravagance, nobility of birth is represented in the person of the *eugenês parthenos* serving as a *kanêphoros*,[46] and so forth.

Some of the ways in which the interplay between homogeneity and dissent qualify the reflexive function of the Great Dionysia festival are well known. As a civic institution of a Panhellenic character and splendour, the *Dionysia en astei* ensures and reasserts the unity of the participating body by *demarcating its boundaries*[47] and voicing out the ways of its *deviation* from the practices and the experience of a variety of alien groups. Thus, the staging—through a rich pageant of both verbal and non-verbal signs—of the culturally overloaded concept of the barbarian "other" turns Greek drama into an important forum for the collective expression of Hellenic ethnic self-consciousness.[48] The Dionysiac dramatic festival,

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44 The *Bacchae* gives the fullest extant illustration of such Dionysiac mergings; see primarily Foley 1980, Segal 1982, Vernant 1986.

45 Social classes: see Eur. *Bacch.* 421–23 (cf. also 430ff. and 35–38 with Dodds' 1960 note *ad loc.*); see further Dodds 1960.128. Age groups: cf. *Bacch.* 206–09. Sexes: of course, cultic maenadism of the classical period excluded males (see Henrichs 1984), but in other Dionysiac ritual manifestations, such as the Rural Dionysia or the Anthesteria, the entire community was welcome to participate irrespective of sex. For the sphere of Dionysiac myth and iconography, see MacNally 1984.109–10.

46 See Pickard-Cambridge 1988.61 with note 6, 62–63 with note 1, 61 with note 5 respectively.

47 For this cognitive function of festive events in general, see Pierssens 1972, especially 12. A miniature example of such festive "fencing in" might be sought in the *prorrhesis* of the *Frogs* where the Leader of the Chorus sets the boundaries of the communal celebrating body: εὐφημεῖν χρὴ κἀξίστασθαι τοῖς ἡμετέροις χοροῖσιν, / ὅστις . . . (354ff.).

48 See Hall 1989, tragedy; Long 1986, comedy.

however, although a singular product of Athenian culture, is addressed not only to Athenians but also to a multitude of non-citizens, i.e., metics, visitors, sightseers from other *poleis*, and so on. This same occasion, therefore, becomes also the medium which *unifies* the Athenian civic body precisely by formulating, articulating, and highlighting the *distinctiveness* and superiority of the Athenian element within the larger framework of Greek civilisation. Besides, cognitive boundary-setting should be envisaged as operating not only between Athenian/non-Athenian audiences, but also *within* the body politic itself.

As studies in a variety of civic performances have shown, any public spectacle can be construed in very different ways by conflicting groups of the onlooking community.[49] It is, of course, true that, in general, fifth-century Athens was not troubled by political riots or any major class-conflicts. But, even so, there was still ample scope for differentiation,[50] and it is reasonable to think that some distinctions were even carried into the auditorium itself, as the seating arrangement reflected both the tribal division of the *dêmos* (lateral axis) and social hierarchy/prestige (vertical axis) (see Winkler 1990, especially 37–42). Keith Hopkins' remark (1983.18) on Roman gladiatorial shows is also applicable to the conditions of a Greek theatrical event: "It mattered where you sat and where you were seen to be sitting." Moreover, there are a number of other variables as well (e.g., level of education/literacy,[51] intellectual/moral avant-gardism or conservatism in values and world-view, age,[52] particular religious affiliations,[53] etc.) which should *not* be conceived of as eliminated by collective empathy, but rather as mapping out the auditorium in smaller groups of relatively homogeneous response.[54] Besides, having sprung up at a historical moment "fragile et menacé où, dans la cité, coexistent des valeurs hétérogènes" (Loraux 1973. 911), Greek drama in itself, i.e., in its textual dimension, is an intricately woven tissue of voices. As it takes birth from an archetypal *conflict* between

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49 See, e.g., Brewer 1979–80, Hammerton and Cannadine 1981.

50 See primarily Osborne 1990.267 and 275.

51 For the actual manipulation of the polarity between *amathia* / intellectualism in oratorical discourse, see Ober 1989.chapter 4, especially 182ff.

52 Cf. the different reception of Aeschylus/Euripides by the aged Strepsiades and the boy Pheidippides in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

53 For example, membership in the sanctuaries and calendars of different demes, initiation into mysteries, membership in various religious sects, or even subversive disposition, such as manifested by members of some private clubs (e.g., the *Kakodaimonistai*), and so on.

54 Of course, complete homogeneity—even within groups—is axiomatically impossible.

the remote legendary past, encapsulated in the corpus of dramatic myths and the cluster of new forms of juridical and political thought belonging to the City, the fifth-century democracy of Athens,[55] it is constantly nourished by a *clash*, an "interference" and an interaction of *muthos* and of *logos* (Loraux 1973.910).[56] Polyphony on the textual and performance-level, then, corresponds to polyphony on the plane of audience-response. To put it in another way, engagement and empathy with the richness of perspectives reflected in the tissue of the text and scenic spectacle entails the consolidation of a variety of voices of dissent within the space of the auditorium as well. To take a few examples:

Consider the conservative Athenians nourished with values such as those upheld by the "Just Logos" in the *Clouds* (961–83, 985–99, 1002–23). Their sympathy for the dramatic heroes who are driven to despair by characters exemplifying in both their rhetoric and action the Calliclean/Thrasymachean principle (see Guthrie 1971.101ff.) of "might is right"[57] entails an enhanced awareness of the bedrock of their own education, which is irreconcilable with the newfangled twists of *logos* and the disruptive moral relativism of the sophistic discourse.[58] From a different perspective, the Athenian country-dweller's empathy with rustic characters such as the Aristophanic Trygaeus or Dicaeopolis is closely bound up with his acceptance of a mode of social self-definition and a statement of differentiation. Thus, the Dicaeopolis/Lamachus antithesis, as constructed in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, crystallises into a model of a social polarity which could be shared by a vast number of onlookers in the auditorium (595–97):[59]

> Δικ. ὅστις; πολίτης χρηστός, οὐ σπουδαρχίδης,
> ἀλλ' ἐξ ὅτου περ ὁ πόλεμος, στρατωνίδης,
> σὺ δ' ἐξ' ὅτου περ ὁ πόλεμος, μισθαρχίδης.

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55 This is the fundamental tenet of the French structuralist view of tragedy, pioneered by Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981.

56 Cf. Loraux 1973.908.

57 Consider, e.g., Andromache as manipulated by Menelaus/Hermione (Eur. *Andromache*), Megara as bullied by Lykus (Eur. *Heracles*), etc.; Thucydidean pieces such as the so-called "Mytilenean Debate" or the "Melian Dialogue" illustrate the extent to which the "right of the stronger" argument pervaded or, better say, infected fifth-century Athenian discourse.

58 For the suspicion in which these new teachers were held among the aristocratic élites see de Romilly 1992.chapter 2; cf. Guthrie 1971.37.

59 Cf. Trygaeus' positive/negative self-definition in Aristophanes' *Peace* 190-91: Τρυγαῖος Ἀθμονεύς, ἀμπελουργὸς δεξιός, / οὐ συκοφάντης οὐδ' ἐραστὴς πραγμάτων.

> Dic. What am I? A decent citizen, no Mr. Placehunter, but
> ever since the war began a Mr. Combatant; while *you*,
> ever since the war began you've been a Mr. Wellpaid-
> post! (trans. A. H. Sommerstein 1980).

The "quiet farmer's" sympathy with this dramatically shaped construction of the self intensifies his alienation from a whole world of town-bred parasites, i.e., sycophants and busybodies, social climbers, political up-starts, and war-mongers,[60] all kinds of careerists and ambitious opportunists, whose tactics are well summarised in Euripides' *Suppliants* 232–37. In short, many a time in the plays shifting points of view and, therefore, shifting focuses of polarisation create a mechanism through which empathy becomes a social exercise in constructing, de-constructing, re-constructing the difference between categories of "us" and "them" (cf. Goldhill 1991.188). Needless to say, of course, this differentiation is at work on every plane. The whole spectating body, for example, is united in their pity for Pentheus' *sparagmos*, which is gruesomely narrated by the Messenger in Euripides' *Bacchae* (1043–152). Yet the ways in which Dionysiac *mustai* and non-initiates become empathically involved with characters and action are substantially divergent: the imaginative re-enactment of distinctive patterns of their own initiation[61] solidifies the links among the blessed *thiasôtai* of the god, while at the same time widening the gulf which guarantees their superiority over the *amuêtoi brotôn*.[62] Finally, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that the challenge which arises from the male viewer's empathy with characters exemplifying an "other" mode of being, e.g., females, ephebes, heroes, etc., is a twofold process: while putting to the test the limits and contours of the onlooker's personality, it may also work in such a way as to consolidate his own identity as *different* from the object of his empathy on the stage. In other words, dramatic challenge is not merely synonymous with destabilisation of identities, but may also lead to the reinforcement of self-definition and of culturally formed self-conception. Furthermore, in so far as one is willing to accept the possible

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60 For the perspective of the peasant farmer, see Carter 1986.chapter 4.

61 See the classic article of Seaford 1981.

62 For various formulae of mystical "makarismoi" emphasising the "happy lot" of the initiates, see, e.g., Hom. *H. Dem*. 480 (with Richardson 1974. *ad loc*., p. 313), Eur. *Bacch*. 72–75 (with Dodds 1960. *ad loc*.), Arist. *Frogs* 455–59, as well as the rich material found on the so-called bacchic gold leaves; see Tsantsanoglou and Parrássoglou 1987, Luppe 1989, Merkelbach 1989, Gigante 1990.

existence of female *theatai*, empathy with Phaedra's *pathos* is an experience fundamentally distinct for male and female onlookers. They may be "one heart" in their sympathy, and yet the cognitive processing of this sympathy differentiates them, as it can only prompt the reaffirmation of their socially conflicting roles as "male" and "female."

In conclusion then, we may say that far from causing social distinctions to converge to the point of their mutual neutralisation, "Aristotelian" empathy, such as experienced in the Greek theatrical context, does not fall very short from Brecht's own ideal of preserving and enhancing them.

II

The previous sections have drawn attention to the ways in which Greek drama *disproves* Brecht's evaluation of the "Aristotelian" theatre as a channel of communication which is neither socially oriented nor successful in sustaining a diversity in its audience's response. In other words, there are some very important respects in which Greek drama *approaches* Brecht's own ideal of dramaturgy and stage-representation. Nevertheless, some fundamental differences set the classical Greek model *radically apart*. The purpose of this final section is therefore to consider briefly these points of divergence.

(a) As has been shown up to now, Greek drama sustains a critical dialogic interaction with its audience's perceptions and assumptions. Nevertheless, rather than springing from the spectator's disengagement, this attitude of critical inquiry originates in the viewer's deep *emotional involvement* with the fictional reality of the play-world. To put it in another way, in the "Aristotelian" theatre, social critique and social understanding can be achieved *independently* of Brecht's demand for the spectator's "over-distancing." For "alienation" as the mechanism which paves the way for the onlooker's self-awareness and cultural self-definition cannot be set in motion without the mediation of a series of emotional and even empathic identifications. And I would like at this point to enlarge the scope of the discussion towards the Athenian drama's cultural *context*. For, ultimately, the viewer's emotional engagement with the play's world is a kind of symbolic sharing in the space of the "other"; and I suggest that this participation is similar in nature not only to the fusion of the stage performer with the character within his part, but also to a whole range of symbolic interplays between "self" and "other" within the wider frame-

work of Greek cultural experience and society itself, e.g., the symbolic identification of the masked priest with the divine, the immersion of the ritual actor in his role, and so on. Now, obviously, the required "holistic coverage" (see Cohen 1979.106–07) of all the relevant symbolic patterns lies outside the scope of this paper. Yet, even a brief inquiry into some aspects of symbolic imitations is sufficient to corroborate the special way in which dramatic identification/alienation interact in the fifth-century theatrical context. For it would seem that cultural identity-formation in its widest sense was *also* organised around the same norm, i.e., temporary *participation* in the nature of the "other" so that the nature of the "self" could be consolidated as *separate* and *different* from that symbolically appropriated "other." The phenomenon Rousseau would marvel at in the psychology of the theatrical spectator, i.e., that "in order to be temperate and wise" it is "necessary to begin by being furious and mad"[63] bears close resemblance to the fundamental mechanism at work in "rites of passage," i.e., those ritual patterns whereby pre-industrial cultures dramatise and effect either group or individual transitions into newly forged social selves.

Thus, in Greek society where gender roles are sharply polarised, male/female identities are not to be unequivocally assumed unless the "ritual subject" acquires symbolically—through transvestism—a share in the nature of the other sex.[64] For example, sporting a false beard and therefore participating in virility, the Argive woman recreates ritually and re-enacts for the last time that primordial situation of sexual ambiguity[65] she is required to abandon permanently thereafter (Plut. *Mor*. 245f). And in a broader perspective, whenever a ritual transition is at stake, "identification" constitutes the indispensable prerequisite for the achievement of symbolic wholeness, totality, perfection (see Eliade 1958.26) *before* the rigid sundering of roles and fundamental alienation from those codes of behaviour which form the exclusive properties of other modes of existence. For example, acting as the representatives of an entire age-group, the daughters of some aristocratic families in Athens are required to play the "untamed

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63 See Rousseau 1975.137: "Seroit-ce que, pour devenir tempérant et sage, il faut commencer par être furieux et fou?"

64 Participation in both male and female qualities at once is a feature both of festivals (e.g., the Athenian procession of the Oschophoria [Procl. *ap*. Phot. *Bibl*. cod. 239, 322a [Henry], 14–15; Bekker *Anecd. Graec*. s.v. ὡσχοί; cf. also the Argive Hybristica [Plut. *Mor*. 245e-f]) and of various isolated rites, esp. wedding rituals from all over the Greek world, e.g., Sparta (Plut. *Lyc*. 15.3), Argos (Plut. *Mor*. 245f), Cos (Plut. *Mor*. 304e).

65 See Vernant 1980.23; cf. Calame 1977.259.

bear" (*arkteuein*) in the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron[66] in order to shed their wild nature and exorcise forever their recalcitrant sexuality. It would appear, then, that a cultural participation in the negative polarities of social roles fulfils the function of eliminating and cleansing the transgression and deviation from the realm of civic life. Likewise, the audience in the theatre has to *follow* emotionally the tragic hero in his transgressive *hubris,* so as to learn eventually how to become *sôphrôn* and κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον φρονῶν. I should therefore like to believe that my understanding of an audience's response to Greek theatrical events has strong contextual support, for at the very basis of Greek culture lies an aesthetics of "participation": the social "self" is constantly being forged and gradually enriched through a mechanism of *alienation* which can only spring from prior *identification.*

(b) Greek drama may well present a challenge and express a critique, but it never comes to the point of fulfilling what Brecht considered to be the foremost function of the theatre, its ultimate "raison d᾽ être," i.e., to deconstruct to its constituents the edifice of socio-political reality in order to refashion it in new configurations. For, although within the frame of Greek culture stage and civic life amply cross-fertilise one another,[67] the dramatic vision, however challenging, disturbing, and unsettling it may be, does not materialise on the social plane in radical, subversive action. The fantasy of the play-world may cause society to be much more alert to its own ills and faults, may offer outlets or broaden its audience's behavioural horizons, but on the practical level it never crystallises in revolutionary explosions, in the way that carnivalesque festivities in more complex societies sometimes tend to do.[68] Despite the utopic bringing back of Peace, despite the vehemence of the satire in the *Knights* and *Wasps*, the war always drags on, people continue voting for Cleon, the situation in the Law Courts is unchanged, and so forth. More significantly still, it can be argued that a Greek audience's emotional participation in the fictive construction of social alternatives on stage serves the distinctively anti-Brechtian aim of reaffirming, strengthening, revitalising the civic "status quo," as the spectator is many a time required to share in this peculiarly ambiguous experience

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66 For the *arkteia*, see Kahil 1965, Kahil 1977, and, more recently, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988 and 1990b.

67 See above, part I, section (i).

68 See primarily Davis 1975a.119 on the Abbeys of Misrule and Mardi Gras festivities culminating in rebellion; Le Roy Ladurie 1980; Castle 1986.89ff. on Renaissance masquerades; Ozouf 1988 on the period of the French Revolution, etc.

of simultaneously undermining *and* reasserting[69] or, to put it in Bakhtinian language, of *burying and reviving* at once. Just as the ritually contested king in some traditional ceremonies is simultaneously "insulted" and "lauded as all-powerful" (Gluckman 1970.121), while "the general tone is as much one of rejection . . . as of triumph in his might" (Gluckman 1970.124), the dethroned Zeus and Hera retain their majestic superiority at the *exodos* of Aristophanes' *Birds*[70] and the ancestral faith is warmly vindicated in the closing scene of the *Clouds*. In short, Greek drama as a socio-cultural expression comes closer to Max Gluckman's model, as this is crystallised in its classical formulation (Gluckman 1970.109):[71]

> rites of reversal obviously include a protest against the established order. Yet they are intended to preserve and even to strengthen the established order; and in many rituals their performance is believed to achieve success and prosperity for the group which practises them.

In other words, putting the city on stage on display to itself is constant "playing with fire only not getting burned" (Geertz 1973.440), a dangerous game where *the balance must not get lost* if the community is to be safely allowed *both* to call its values into question *and* at the same time perpetuate them by maintaining its own "status quo" and order. Besides, it is needless to stress that tragedy as well participates in this game of reversals. For, if we understand symbolic inversion as "any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms, be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, or social and political" (Babcock-Abrahams 1978.14), Greek tragedy becomes a space *par excellence* where people, to use an expression of R. Needham, "turn their classifications upside down or disintegrate them entirely" (Needham 1963.xl). And yet, the function of this scenically contrived constellation of

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69 Cf. Greenblatt 1981.57 on the ambivalent function of Shakespearean drama.

70 Note especially *Birds* 1720ff.

71 I must stress at this point that I lay much more emphasis on the notion of *protest* (see above, part I, section (iii)) than Gluckman would allow his model to endure, for he argues that "rituals of rebellion" occur only within unchallenged socio-political settings, among people who "do not or cannot query their social rôles" (1970.134, cf. 116; see also Gluckman 1965.258, 260, etc.).

anti-structural reversals is precisely to clarify and intensify *the structure*.[72] In other words, there is a strong sense in which, by celebrating the negative, Greek drama clarifies the positive, and this again is a function of the audience's empathic identification. For example, to identify either with protagonists who operate through deceit and guile[73]—transcribing therefore on the civic space the inverted models of ephebic marginality—or with the maenadic mood of the Dionysiac plays which lies at the opposite extreme of *taxis* governing well-ordered communities, means ultimately to take part in a collective civic "celebration" of the temporary *collapse* of structure. Similarly, to experience an emotional *sparagmos* at, say, the Euripidean Pentheus' dismemberment which annihilates and subverts the civic sacrificial code, is to participate vicariously in a picture of confusion and disorder. Yet the utter havoc wreaked through calling the established civic frameworks into question has precisely the function of heightening the awareness of the rule, of reinforcing the very structure which has been violated[74] by making explicit one's unconscious assumptions about the indispensability of categorisation, discrimination, and order. Besides, the very idea of heroism which underlies the plots of all the tragic dramas is inextricably interwoven with transgression and subversion, as—by definition—a hero *does not* and *cannot* tidily conform to socio-cultural classifications. Lying precariously on the margins between nature and culture and therefore flouting restrictions, breaking rules, violating taboos at will, the classical dramatic hero—and, by consequence, the actor who incarnates him on the stage—fluctuates constantly between deviations from the "normal" male "self": either literally (i.e., through changes of costume) in Comedy, or metaphorically (i.e., through language, imagery, and action) in Tragedy, he cuts across the most important categories by which Greek culture organises itself into a coherent whole: bestial, human and divine, male and female, barbarian and Greek, and so forth. But, if the emotional process of empathising with such a stage-figure is a *challenge* to the male Athenian

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72 For this functionalist interpretation of rituals/periods of "reversal," see primarily Gluckman 1965, Turner 1969.chapter 5, Burke 1978.199–202 (although in 203ff. he also emphasises the subversive possibilities), etc. For short overviews of the debate, see, e.g., Babcock-Abrahams 1978, Morris 1987.246ff., Versnel 1987.

73 Odysseus in the *Philoctetes*, for example, or Orestes in the plays wrought around his mythical *persona* (for a typology of plays revolving around ephebic themes, see Winkler 1985.32–38), or even the comic "trickster" hero.

74 Cf. Castle 1986.88, cf. Davis 1975b.130.

self, it is also a process which forces back an *intensified awareness of the implied positive model*: that is, the one-dimensional, integral, masculine citizen-self.

Now, by way of a general conclusion, I should like to return to the key notion of Greek drama as a "liminal" manifestation,[75] for in any chronotope which lies "betwixt and between" categories of structure liminality is almost inextricably interwoven with "an attitude of mind that is interpretive, self-reflexive, self-conscious" (Myerhoff 1982.117):[76] borders are crossed, familiar roles and functions are suspended and inverted, the components of a culture are disassembled and recombined "in any and every possible pattern however deviant, grotesque, unconventional, or outrageous" (V. and E. Turner 1982.204).[77] Yet the function of this bold reorganisation of reality in new configurations is precisely to "encourage liminaries to ponder," startle them "into thinking anew about persons, objects, relationships, social roles, and features of their environment hitherto taken for granted" (V. and E. Turner 1982.205). To mention only one example, the ephebe who takes part in the rites of Artemis Orthia at Sparta[78] is confronted with a "play with forms" which includes both positive and negative examples,[79] i.e., both illustrations of the social *norm*[80] and figures of *déviation*[81] from which he has to learn to keep himself estranged.[82] Nevertheless, subversion of the norm serves only to induce self-conscious meditation upon the very structural categories which have been turned upside-down, and therefore ultimately to *stabilise* them. I

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75 See above, part I, section (iv).

76 See further Turner 1967 and V. and E. Turner 1982.

77 For comic and tragic remouldings of this liminal stage of reflexivity in Greek drama, see Lada forthcoming a and forthcoming b.

78 Interpreted as initiatory by Jeanmaire 1939.chapter 7, Brelich 1969, Vidal-Naquet 1986, Vernant 1991.chapter 13.

79 In the form of masks which must have been worn for ritual dances at the precinct of the sanctuary. Hundreds of votive copies of the actual ritual masks have been excavated in the area; see Dickins 1929, Bosanquet 1905–06.338–43, Dawkins 1905–06.324–26.

80 Masks of youths, warriors, as well as masks which could be described as realistic studies of the human face (i.e., types B, C, and D, respectively, in Dickins' 1929.176 classification), impress upon the neophytes the visage of their future integration into the society of adults.

81 Faces of old women, of bestiality, and of deformity (types A, E [satyrs], F [Gorgons], and G [Caricatures] in Dickins' classification, 1929.176).

82 See Vernant and Frontisi-Ducroux 1986.36–37 and now Vernant 1991.chapter 13 (esp. 243).

would like to suggest that the spectators' identification of the stage-heroes in their play with transgression and inversion bears striking similarities to this pattern of ritual liminality, as it is a constant and precarious poising "in between" the rule and its suspension; and just as it is the case in the ritual initiatory process, the function of the viewers' emotional fluctuation is ultimately to liberate and release their "reflexive speculation," i.e., their active thinking "about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain these" (V. and E. Turner 1982.205). In this way, while taking part vicariously in the play's imagery and action, the members of the audience community come to the point of realising "just how far they have fallen short of or transgressed their own ideal standards" (V. and E. Turner 1982.203). In other words, engaging themselves in empathetic dialogue with the subversive "otherness" of civically sanctioned reality, spectators of fifth-century theatrical events "renew themselves at the source of festal joy, having purified themselves through collective self-criticism and jocund reflexivity" (V. and E. Turner 1982.203).

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