

Jan Fabre's *Prometheus Landscape II*: [De]territorialisation of the tragic and transgressive acts of arson

Demetris Zavros

A voice-over explains all the Health and Safety procedures in place at the theatre venue.

Lights off: two performers on either part of a rather corpulent alter-Prometheus [Bound] light their cigarettes with a match; the first little act of arson.

Belgian director Jan Fabre has been producing work in a variety of artistic disciplines ranging from drawing, painting, sculpture, performance art, opera, theatre, dance and film. Fabre has constantly problematized the boundaries of each one and challenged their communicative devices as well as the limits of what is widely considered acceptable and tasteful. Fabre's first attempt at the myth of Prometheus (*Prometheus Landscape I*) was a result of a ten-day workshop in Berlin in 1988. In his very illuminating paper for the Twelfth International Symposium of Ancient Greek Drama (Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute, 2012), Freddy Decreus explains that this first 'landscape' was very loosely based on Aeschylus' tragedy but delves into an investigation of the tragic through the creation of a liminal space/experience in several different waysⁱ. In his second attempt, *Prometheus Landscape II* (2011), Fabre directed as well as wrote part of the text; 'We need Heroes Now' was inspired by a group of protestors (photographed at Ground Zero the day after the history-altering events of 9/11) who held a banner with the inscription 'We need heroes now'. The second part of the text for the performance ('I am the all-giver') is written by Jeroen Olyslaegers (based on Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*)ⁱⁱ.

The myth of Prometheus has been used throughout the centuries as a symbol of rebellion against tyrannical and autocratic regimes; the selfless hero who is tortured in eternity for helping mortals to progress through his gift of fire which stands both for hope and technology (Ruffell, 2012: 35). Aeschylus' tragedy itself has been discussed and staged in relation to philosophical, political, religious

and technological interpretations over the centuries, and has also been a favourite of practitioners who identify their work within the field of less traditional approaches in the [performing] arts. It is ground-breaking in the rather anti-Aristotelean demands of its spectacular staging, its rather episodic structure (composed of speeches/dialogues between the 'visiting' characters and the 'bound' hero) and its unconventionally minimal plot.

This chapter will be examining Fabre's contemporary directorial adaptation of the Greek tragedy in relation to the notion of 'minorisation' suggested by Gilles Deleuze in his essay on the theatre of Carmelo Bene 'One Manifesto Less' (1979)ⁱⁱⁱ. Deleuze's suggestion of a 'critical theatre' in the staging of a classic will provide a context of investigation alongside other related notions that Deleuze and Guattari put forth in several of their writings (especially in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*). *Prometheus Landscape II* builds on as well as differentiates itself from the first 'landscape' in some very important ways that might prove instrumental in the discussion of Fabre's directorial adaptation of the Greek tragedy. However, I will argue that while they employ different strategies, both performances aim to create a theatre that re-imagines the tragic in a way that it delves back into its very roots in order to find its contemporary essence.

'Critical theatre': Minorisation, deterritorialisation and subtraction

Fabre is not interested in a museum theatre based on a reconstruction of the original tragedy any more than he is in a 'museum of the everyday' (Bene quoted in Deleuze's essay, Murray, 1997: 243). His staging is not contemporary in that it 'represents' everyday life outside the theatre any more than it represents the fictional cosmos encapsulated in the tragedy. He, like Carmelo Bene (albeit in different ways as I will argue) amputates elements of power and in essence re-imagines the 'theatrical matter' but 'also the theatrical form, which ceases to be a "representation" at the same time that the actor ceases to be an actor' (Deleuze in Murray, 241).

Deleuze discusses the notion of 'major texts' and explains that there is a double operation entrenched in our traditional approach: one of 'magnification/normalisation'. Deleuze supports that everything that is given a 'major' status

(whether it be an event, a text, a person, a mythic persona or a 'heroic feat') simultaneously undergoes a process of normalisation. 'One pretends to discover and admire but in fact one normalises' (p.243). He calls for an alternative, antidote treatment of classic (major) texts that 'would recover the active force of the minority'; a 'critical theatre'.

Fabre is what Deleuze calls an 'operator' rather than a director or author. He uses the Aeschylean text and 'minorates' it through a process of subtraction and 'what is subtracted, amputated or neutralised are the elements of power, the elements that represent or constitute a system of power' (p.241). Crucially, the elements of power in theatre are connected to the issue of coherence in terms of both subjectivity and representation. There are some differences in the way Fabre approaches the notion of 'subtraction' but these do not negate the minorisation process. Instead, as I will argue, Fabre's minorisation opens up a wider continuum in the experience of the performance which alludes to the strata as well as their deterritorialisation and makes the audience implicitly involved in the minorisation process.

Fabre's adaptation and directorial approach, is a very careful operation; a setting of 'fires' that aims to free the 'major' text from its tendencies to normalisation. He does not disregard nor a priori denounce the Aeschylean dramatopoiesis of the myth, but puts it in a spin, makes it stutter; makes it slip. Fabre 'lodges' himself on the tragedy and explores and experiments with the opportunities it offers; on all different levels. The tragedy is used as the territory to be deterritorialised through the opening up of its 'anatomy' into a 'landscape'; a landscape that is allowed to work like a desiring machine; a Body without Organs; a constitutive force that doesn't aim to represent the fictional cosmos of the tragedy but uses the existing 'model' in order to free it from its binding strata and its inherent (and normalising) systems of power.

Landscape and Theatre as a Body without Organs

Fabre's approach to the tragedy is from the start divorced from Aristotelian hierarchies. He proposes to create a 'landscape' of the tragedy; a notion which is,

at first instance, connected to the visual component (*Opsis*), an element that Aristotle rated last in the art of tragedy. In her compelling argument about contemporary directorial adaptation processes in terms of metaphor, Avra Sidiropoulou notices that

the conceptualisation of space has been a paramount agent of revising the classics. In fact, for most directors, the re-imagining of space is the most obvious starting point in the adaptation process (2014:9).

While we could certainly not dismiss Fabre's connection/alliance to the 'visual'^{iv} which is abundantly infused in his unique directorial language, the notion of the *landschaft* here is used, I believe, as an agent of transcoding and transmutation on all levels rather than a visual metaphor.

As Una Chaudhuri notices in *Land/Scope/Theater* (2002), the initial binary of 'landscape as environment and landscape as discourse' (p.12) that existed in the systematic study of environmental sciences on one hand and the humanities on the other is superseded today and the post-structuralist dismantling has resulted in a variety of new (and often a lot more performative) understandings of the term (including Thrift's related 'non-representational theory' in the field of human geography).

According to Chaudhuri, the first use of the notion of landscape in theatre can be credited to Gertrude Stein in her 'Landscape Plays' (collected in her 1932 *Operas and Plays*). Stein crucially centralises the notion of 'composition' (as well as the sense of distance and perspective) in the text over a sense of narrative or representation of reality. Ever since, several different artists (ranging from Heiner Muller, *Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten* (1982); Heiner Goebbels, 'Text as Landscape'^v and his *Shadow/Landscape with Argonauts after Poe and Mueller; Cage, Imaginary Landscape IV* (1952), to name but a few) have utilised the notion of the landscape in their creative endeavours. Fabre, himself has explored the notion in his Performance art work at least since 1978 with *My Body, My Blood, My landscape* (1978) and later with *Sanguis/Mantis Landscape* (2004).

In 'From Logos to Landscape: Text in contemporary dramaturgy' (1997)

Lehmann discusses an emerging theatre practice (since the 70s) which opposes the antiquity-old logocentric approach to theatre. In this paradigmatic shift from *Logos* to *Opsis*, Lehman notices that Logos in theatre is inextricably bound to the concept of structure - or a certain 'architecture' that prioritises telos, unity, 'coherence in view of reason', order, causality. A non-logocentric form of theatre then would not only bring the *opsis* into a more prevalent position, but would re-invent the notion of structure or form that this new theatre practice would be based on. He sees the origins of this new theatrical space in Kristeva's *chora* (developed from Plato's 'khora' in *Timaeus*) and states that through this notion theatre's connection to its choral dimension is re-affirmed but critically in the 'rediscovery of theatre as *chora*' we find a space where fixed meaning and unity are no longer the building blocks. While both of Fabre's attempts at the myth can be considered under this line of investigation, *Prometheus Landscape II* approaches the choratic in a different way to the first landscape; one that can be rethought in light of Deleuze and Guattari's investigation.

Ronald Bogue traces the lineage of Deleuze's discussion of the 'sensible' and the 'aesthetic' on several pre-existing lines of thought, including Lyotard's figural as well as Maldiney's essentially phenomenological theory which is also based on Erwin Straus' distinction between perception and sensation (Bogue, 2003: 116). Deleuze takes on Lyotard's notion of the figural (as opposed to the figurative) as that which 'disrupts the clichés of coded representation' [...] but also makes possible "matters of fact," figures that bypass the brain and work directly on the nerves' (2003:130).

Straus differentiates between perception -which he relates to a geographical understanding of space- and sensation, which is something he relates to the notion of *landscape*. Based on Straus' discussion of sensations Maldiney identifies 'a primary generative chaos, in which world and self are indistinguishable' as well as systolic contractions which 'create a separation of 'here' and 'there', and diastolic ones where 'we do not possess the world but are possessed by it, filled by the interplay of light and dark, appearance and disappearance, whose rhythm instils an alteration of abandon and retreat' (Bogue, 2003: 141).

In such a landscape, we gain access to the *Mitwelt* of an unfolding self-world that knows no clear differentiation of subject and object. Deleuze and Guattari relate *Mitwelt* to 'The Body without Organs'; a concept that they borrow from theatre visionary Artaud. It pervades their general philosophical dictum and it works against the three strata that they consider the more pervasively binding: organism, significance and subjectification. The BwO is defined as 'the totality or plane of ...prehuman, prelinguistic and profound differences', which Western thought has tended to consider as deviations or distractions from existing categories of representation (Colebrook 2002a: 16 in Stalpaert 2005).

Deleuze and Guattari's BwO and the related notions of territorialisation and deterritorialisation can easily be related to Maldiney's 'primary generative chaos' and diastolic/systolic movements. 'Deleuze relates the *Mitwelt* to the BwO and the forces that determine 'provisional organs' on its oscillating surface. This, I argue, is essentially how Fabre approaches the minorisation process of the tragedy through his 'theatre as landscape': every provisional organ of the performance of the dramatic text i.e. every theatrical means and process normally used to re-create the fictional cosmos encapsulated in the dramatic text (as well as the phallogocentric ideologies that it represents) is reconfigured as 'a locus of deformation, a figural chaos, but also a graph or diagram for the development of a canvas whose function is to harness forces' (Bogue:130).

While he admits to differentiating between the different art forms and the 'languages' they speak^{vi}, in re-imagining the tragedy into a 'landscape' or a Fabre is inevitably creating another in-between, a hybrid, a liminality and a deterritorialisation of the theatrical text. And in this in-between Fabre 'forms alliances' (to use the Deleuzian terminology) between different milieus of different types of forces and intensities. Landscape and geography, diastole and systole, representation and its deformation by the lines of flight (that are already inherent in the mythic text) are all part of the performance and are made to co-exist in the experience of this rhizomatic in-between; the Tragic Body without Organs.

The notion of the 'landscape' (and its aesthetic, performative, socio-political and philosophical implications) could be conceived as an exteriority to the dramatic frame, the 'major' Aeschylean text (like any war machine ought to be

according to Deleuze and Guattari)^{vii}. In essence, Fabre ‘minorises’ the tragic text into a landscape that not only invites pure exteriorities existing but ‘curbed’^{viii} within the mythical frame, but in this very careful and intricate operation, he instigates and supports a new concept of the ‘tragic’ itself and the audience’s experience of it. Fabre minorises the ‘major text’ through a polarisation of some of those ingredients that are already implicit in it; both in terms of subject matter and form of expression.

Minorisation and organs/markers of Power

Deleuze and Guattari’s two volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is an attack on the regulating and normalising processes that pervade both the capitalist system and psychoanalytic exegeses of human behaviour. And on the level of subject matter, one can but notice that their aims are rather congruent to Fabre’s in this performance. In the second volume, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain that the State is defined by ‘the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve (2007: 394). The two heads of the State, the two poles of political sovereignty; its double articulation is the magician-king and the jurist-priest’ (p. 388, my italics).^{ix} Fabre’s ‘war machine’ works on the level of the subject matter (anti-capitalist, anti-psychoanalytical, anti-phallogentric) as well as the theatrical form and its communicative structures (postdramatic, non-logocentric, non-representational, rhizomatic, etc.).

The ways in which different institutions have regularized and normalized bodies and behaviors and the body in revolt is a recurring theme in Fabre’s work. Fabre celebrates the ‘war machine’ and sets it against the State apparatus through a variety of expressive and communicative devices, but more usually than not, he presents the normalization and its effects as a territory which is transgressed by the bodies in revolt. In *As Long as the World Needs a Warrior’s Soul* (2000)

[h]e shows the regulating processes of sexual discourses and their suffocating effect on disciplined and normalized bodies, bodies that are

molded and fixed to 'fit' into a class, a genus, a species. Yet, Fabre traces countermovements of the body in revolt and rebellion.'

(Stalpaert, 2005: 180)

In *Prometheus Landscape II* he looks at any form of normalization that falls under the phallogocentric curbing of desire and the policing of the body (entrenched in Judeo-Christian notions of guilt and *ressentiment*) as this surfaces from a re-imagination of the tragedy. In the process he questions not only how we have misused the gift of fire by overregulating 'safety' over our 'bound imagination' (as instigated by Hephaestus) but also the notion of the hero itself (Velle, 2011).

Fabre's 'We need heroes now' opening antiphonal prelude to Olyslaeger's text, is a questioning of our need for a hero as much as an admission of our conditioned yearning for one. And in the aftermath of 9/11 the 'desperate' longing for a hero acquires multiple meanings;

Where is our hero
Who would give his all for us?
Even his life
To make his uniqueness count
To give his mortality worth and meaning
To escape from oblivion

(Fabre, 2011)

By whose standards are heroes defined and where do we draw the line between a selfless heroic feat and a monstrous criminal act of egotism? This question will be revisited later in the performance when Bia (Violence) and Kratos (Power/Force/Strength but also 'State' in modern Greek) will transform from child-like figures (breaking the silence with their playful laughter and marching snare drumming) into painful emulations of expressions of a not-so-distant fascist totalitarianism with Hitler salutes and moustaches.

The second performer in Fabre's prologue unfolds a continuous waging of war against the psychoanalytical approach and the inevitably failed effort to 'understand' human nature (Decreus, 2012:140). The ever-growing list of

aphoristic 'Fuck You's' in the contrapuntal speech duet can be retrospectively read as a revolt against all those who demonised desire by categorizing it, symptomatizing it and medicating it; all those who understood 'BwO phenomena as regressions, projections, phantasies, in terms of an *image* of the body' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2007: 182).

But while in *As Long as the World Needs a Warrior's Soul* as well as some of Fabre's other performances (e.g. *Je suis sang* (2001), *L'Histoire des Larmes* (2005)) the regulatory normalization is both presented and dismantled on stage through references to oppressive mechanisms we recognise from everyday life, in *Prometheus* the *careful investigation* into the Aeschylean tragedy is what gives rise to the deterritorialisation of the text through lines of flight and creates conjunctions, connections with mythical, theatrical and extra-theatrical milieus. Fabre uses the dramatic text and wages a war against those organs of power that effectuate the normalization and policing of desire by exploring 'form' (and communicative devices used) almost inextricably from content (performance subject matter); through the re-imagination of the chorus and the polarisation of the visual.

Landscape and the re-imagination of the chorus

The notion of the choratic becomes essential in the re-imagination of tragedy into a landscape. My argument is that Fabre re-imagines the function of the chorus through the notion of the landscape in a way that it pervades the whole of the performance. And the two landscapes differ in the way the choratic is displaced as well as the way they negotiate the balance between the diastolic and systolic forces that pervade them through their relationship to the strata of the tragedy.

The chorus in Aeschylus' tragedy is comprised by the Oceanides (daughters of the God Oceanos) and their function in the tragedy exceeds conventional expectations. According to Ruffell, they deter from offering 'abstract reflections around the themes of the play' (p.42) and they act as characters who offer their opinion and advice; they are there to support Prometheus and they remain loyal to him until the end of the tragedy (even after the final threatening words of Hermes

which are directed at them). The chorus of Oceanides does not feature in Fabre's work but it is displaced at different levels in the creation of the landscape.

Olyslaeger's text 'I am the all-giver' is a series of 9 monologues separated by fragments of popular song relating to fire, heat and desire. Every song at the end of an 'episode'^x is a little act of defiance/arson and a 'poor' monodic anti-choros that is always interrupted, silenced abruptly with fire extinguishing material. On a surface level, the choral *stasima* are almost displaced in a monody of popular song - (a song of the populous) which is put out incessantly. But the choral (along with traditional notions of the functions of the chorus in Greek tragedies) is re-imagined in more ways than one. This staging is no longer concerned with a separate investigation of the ubiquitous enigma of the function of the chorus in the same way that it has repeatedly troubled contemporary theatre directors; it is a choratic approach to the tragedy as a whole.

In the first Landscape (1988), according to Decreus, 'the chorus of Prometheus characters (in different constellations, from one to seven) tried to find their place in "the ever unfinished book of the mortals", as the text mentioned, blaming the gods to be mainly "charlatans"' (2012: 137). What Decreus describes as 'the chorus of Prometheus characters' I would call a choratic multiplicity (or Deleuze's 'dividual') based on and simultaneously de-centering and de-subjectifying the heroic figure. The connection between this 'acoustic landscape' (and the connection that Decreus notices to Lehmann's much later discussion of the 'postdramatic') and Bogue's description of Debussy's attempt to create a new type of choral writing is pertinent here.^{xi} In essence, in the first Prometheus, Fabre conceptualises the choral attribute of the tragedy in a way that it permeates, floods and opens up the performance into a choral acoustic/visual landscape and this affects the language used ('the language was completely emaciated, the choirs were reduced to stuttering sounds' (Van den Dries in Decreus, 136)) as well as the way the landscape is conceived and organised.^{xii}

In the second landscape, however, Fabre reconceptualises this choratic treatment of the tragic text in a way that he deterritorialises the text by initially retaining a closer connection to it. This does not mean that he departs from the Deleuzian 'imperative' for non-representation/deformation; in fact he is using a closer relationship to the territory, the strata, to effectuate the

detritorialisation in the creation of his Landscape as a Body without Organs. In effect, he also broadens the continuum of a pool of connections and meanings and significations and affects that are inherent in the presentation of the myth.

So, while in the first landscape the choratic opened up the heroic character into a BwO that resembles the 'Dividual', in the second landscape, Fabre retains the differentiation between the central character and the rest of the composition very clearly, but only in order to prioritise and make more evident the in-between. And it is in this space in-between that everything exists in a constant process of 'ceaseless variation', on a continuum between signification and affect that constantly changes in a play between diastole and systole, a deformation of the provisional organs that comprise the language of 'clichéd representation'.

'Minorisation' through a Polarisation of the visual:

'Excess' and the continuum of reference and abstraction, representation and affect.

Prometheus Bound is a tragedy that relies on *Opsis* almost as a revolt against not only Aristotelian principles, but against contemporary staging standards. The viewers were almost invited to become complicit voyeurs of the suffering of the main character on stage. As Ruffell explains 'the emphasis on the act of viewing, the object of viewing and on emotional response in the viewer all encourage the audience (spectators, *theatai*) to reflect upon their own actions' (Ruffell 2012: 102)^{xiii}. And it is not suggested that the 'act of seeing' is something alien to Greek tragedy (Ruffell gives Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Oedipus Tyranus* as clear examples), but that this tragedy differs 'in the emphasis on the quality of the spectacle of one character, which is unusually extensive and blunt' (2012: 102)^{xiv}.

Ruffell suggests that the 'stark visual symbol' of Prometheus pinioned in the centre of the stage (echoing 'the Athenian punishment of *apotympanismos*' (p.85)) helps promote the core dramatic idea and the tension created between him and the characters/visitors who interact with him in the course of the tragedy. Fabre essentially polarises the visual aspect (the 'stark visual symbol') of the central image inherent in the staging of the Aeschylean tragedy in a way that its use exceeds its dramaturgical and representational logic. This polarity/centrality of the heroic symbol is adopted in a way that the heroic figure is not prioritised as

the 'centre' against the less important landscape that surrounds it (in the form of the binary that pervades traditional forms of landscape painting as well as the Aeschylean tragedy), but as one that is questioned and problematized through its own position as well as the choratic multiplicity that surrounds and engulfs it.

Fabre does not literally subtract the hero as a 'marker of power' (to follow Deleuze's suggestion) from the performance nor the visual arrangement he composes. Neither does the visual composition of his 'landscape' resemble the famous example of Breughel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* where the tragic hero is given an almost inconsequential role in a world that seems to pursue its own concerns as usual. So how is it that this marker of power is destabilised? Decreus notices that the notion of transcendence and the perpetual failing of 'man' to fulfill the image which he was made in ('In His image') as well as Western philosophy's split between the ideal and the material world (from the platonic Cave to later re-incarnations that pervaded Western philosophy and thought) are also part of the myth's semiological baggage. Prometheus dares to cross these two separate worlds and bring to earth that which was heavenly. The representation of the Promethean model in a way that resembles the 'Vitruvian man' is evidence to the fact that

[...] Fabre's answer no longer considers man the golden ratio (*section aurea*) nor the golden offspring of some overaged gods. His reversed humanism misses the age-old confidence in a finished state or definitive mission of the human (esp. Western) race and it therefore bound to create a new, and hence, personal, mythology.

(Decreus, 2012: 132)

Fabre has questioned and problematised this binary (high/low, heaven/earth, god/human) in a few of his works.^{xv} Yves de Maeseneer suggests that Fabre has also looked at destabilising notions of transcendence through a special type of 'disfiguration' in his work with angels (ex. *Wall of the Ascending Angels* (1993), *Angelos* (1997)). The 'hero' and the suspended 'angels' he created for a few of his works, might be traditionally connected to notions of soteriology, but, in both cases, the artistic work supersedes the transcendental model that these notions are embedded in. Fabre is not prophesying a 'provincialist regression into a mythical past' (de Maeseneer, 2003:382) with situating the heroic figure at the centre of the stage. While Fabre admits that he likes to use 'models' (angel,

Christ, (mythic) 'hero') he uses them in a way that negates their supernatural, theological, mythical origins and transcendental qualities and focuses on beauty,^{xvi} as a part of immanent reality. In the same way that De Maeseneer suggests that 'against today's aestheticisation, Fabre reveals the fragility of Beauty by stressing the materiality of art' (p.384), in this contemporary staging of the promethean myth, he reveals the tragic fragility of Beauty by stressing the corporeality in theatre at the same time that he destabilises 'recognition' through the process of 'ceaseless variation'. It is by using excess in the place of 'surveyability', unity and representation that he restores the 'tragic' dimension of theatre as a space of liminality; a space of multiplicity.

Fabre seems to follow the Deleuzian imperative to '[c]reate the 'continuum' of every utterance (1997: 246) far beyond its immediate linguistic associations. The centralisation of the visual (especially in its connection to the opening antiphonal prelude 'We need a hero') takes on and produces a multiplicity of significations and affect. Prometheus increasingly appears to become grotesquely intrusive in the composition of the landscape; the once ultimate 'model' of heroism becomes painfully romantic, irrelevant and superseded. This 'major marker of power' - itself previously considered a symbol of rebellion spreads open into a continuum at the same time that 'fire' (and desire) are shown to be constitutive as well as destructive.^{xvii} And this continuum contains the symbolic reference as much as its silencing; the glorification of its beauty as much as its deconstruction, its critique, its refutation and even its Brechtian distancing.^{xviii} This 'landscape' doesn't preclude in its amputation of power markers any more that it offers ready-made solutions to the questions it poses in the introduction. It puts the marker on a spin and allows the audience the potential, the choice to operate the subtraction alongside the director, the author of the new text and the performers. And the concretization of the symbolic reference to the heroic mythical figure in the use of the central image is of course but one extremity on the continuum that the landscape encapsulates.^{xix}

The rest of the 'characters' themselves (recognizable to varying degrees on stage)^{xx} are porous identities, already becoming molecular than holding onto their molar wholeness. With the exception of the elevated 'hero' the others spring instantaneously from a more indistinct choratic multiplicity. Characters appear as

instances of individuation in an everlasting perpetually changing chorus in variation; a chorus of bodies moved by the constitutive power of desire, endlessly at war with the State apparatus which tries to silence their song with buckets of sand and gradually oversized fire extinguishers. The bodies of the performers appear always in excess of the representation of characters at the same time as that reference is made implicitly or explicitly known. This is the sense of the choratic whence actors are constantly in flux between the characters they assume and the BwO they spring from and fall back onto; a choral body which doesn't sing with their voices but encapsulates the Dionysian energies that gave rise to the 'goat song' to begin with.

It is this game of diastole and systole that creates the rhythm of the performance and Fabre works very precisely as a director/operator who constantly negotiates the balance of those forces in the unfolding of the landscape in time. The structure of the performance approximates a rhizomatic 'form' which is more akin to the non-arborescent model that Deleuze and Guattari are proposing in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Each 'plateau' of this landscape might spring from a specific mythic character but allowed to take flight and deterritorialise in a way that endless points of connections ('circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity' (2007:177) exist between the 'plateaus' themselves (as well as other milieus and 'planes of consistency', inside the theatre and out). And this rhizomatic and molecular structure of the performance allows for intensities and energies that are marginalised within the tragedy itself to enter the new landscape (Athena, Dionysus, Epimetheus, and Pandora). Pandora as a force of desire is 'curbed' in the Hesiodic myth but arguably even more so in the Aeschylean tragedy. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Pandora is very much related to female sexuality and an array of miasmatic associations inferred through the ideological prism of Greek patriarchy. Fabre and Olyslaegers re-introduce her into the landscape and give her the last word. She is 'the all-giver'.

'Io' is one of those characters that we can recognise from the tragedy and she comes in direct opposition to the elevated heroic figure. Io's presence and monologue too offer a critique on a patriarchal society that has been permeated by the 'ethics' of a phallogocentric order; the State with its religious, moral and legalising institutions which normalise desire. Yet, it is in her performance and the

transgressive excess of her physicality that she punctures the institutionalised code of representation in a theatre that is driven by the rules of moderation and ‘safety’^{xxi} on all different levels.

The gadflies that pursue and torture her take on the form of religious figures who ritualistically inflict very precise stings with sharp axes^{xxii} and absolute coldness. The corporeal excess that is forced out of her every pore in the same way that spit escapes her mouth in the intensity of the moment is nothing but real. The stage becomes a space of a suffering female body (one that doesn’t have to be dressed ‘in men’s clothes in order to enter the pantheon of heroes’ as we hear in Fabre’s prologue); an Artaudian ‘tree-body’ or ‘pure body’ as Van den Dries defines ‘the body in its most pure and material form’ that ‘can only be achieved through pain and suffering, a process of disintegration and disruption’ (Crombez and Gronau, 2010: 41). There is a purely intense materiality in the production of her sounds and how this corporeal excess and the attack on the senses affects the audience. And it is interesting that this happens through a mediation of the voice^{xxiii} that engulfs the audience’s bodies (ears among other organs) with its amplified seismic vibrations. Every spasm, every moan and growling drenched in the anxiety of ‘pain’ or the anticipation of a blow, every scream, every pause joins her every word and they are all exerting axe-like blows to our own participatory senses. There is no escape for either us or her. Her act of arson is both a matter and a form of expression. The landscape furthermore proves to be a multiplicity once more; the audience a distanced observer as well as an immersed wanderer.

Fabre’s [Tragic] Body without Organs; an ‘encounter’

We see what Deleuze refers to as ‘a figure of the minority consciousness’ not only through the excessively affective corporeality in the performance of ‘lo’ (and the other performers) as opposed to the static concreteness of the heroic symbol, but also through the liminality inherent in the process of becoming. When rhythms and intensities are allowed to exceed the strata of dramatic representation, the sign is in a process of ‘becoming’ rather than a state of assignment and recognition; desire as a possible vector of deterritorialization (or a line of flight) becomes a constitutive force in the encounter as the Body-without-

organs of the performer becomes another landscape whereupon the war machine wages their battle against the elements of power in the theatre; those that insure 'both the coherence of the subject in question and the coherence of representation on stage' (Deleuze in Murray, 1997: 241).

In *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* Thrift questions the nature of the sign as a relationship between the signifier and the signified and supports that an alternative, more productive understanding would conceive of the sign coming 'into being *when thought is thrown into crisis* because the reassuring world of representation has broken down' (Marks in Thrift, 2007:115, my italics). As Laura Cull clearly explains, Deleuze also argues that objects of recognition "do not disturb thought" insofar as they provide thought with "an image of itself"; they reaffirm for thought, in other words, what it already thinks it knows. For Deleuze, instances of recognition do not involve genuine thought. We only "truly think" when we have difficulty in recognizing something' (Cull, 2009: 250). Theatre can be experienced as 'an encounter rather than as an act of recognition' in the same way that the sign comes into being when thought 'is thrown into crisis'.

Fabre is using the 'landscape' as a way of allowing the original text to produce what Deleuze calls a 'fundamental encounter' (2001:139) by revitalizing and subverting the codes of clichéd representation in a process of polarisation and disfiguration which nevertheless retains its connections to the strata that it deterritorialises and thus allows for a space of ceaseless variation to exist in the in-between. By creating a liminal space in the co-existence and the continuum between information and affect, through the minorisation of the dramatic text into a BwO, he puts our minds in a state of crisis, which is already always constitutive of genuine thought.

The ritualistic manner in which the performance is stylised pays tribute to its origins and opens up the continuum between the pre- and the post- tragic, essentially always extracting those transgressive energies and intensities that belong to the 'tragic' proper; the lines of flight that exist (however 'curbed') within the myth and the dramatic text take over in diastolic movements of disfiguration *but not* incomprehensibility exactly because of the fact that Fabre doesn't 'wildly deterritorialise' with no connections to the strata^{xxiv}. Deleuze and

Guattari make it clear that dismantling ‘the organism’ does not mean obliterating it: ‘You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signifiacance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it [...] and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality’ (2007: 178). The mind is made to participate into the transgressive and transformative act of approaching its limits because it is presented with a carefully organised/composed space that uses those ‘organs’ that were hitherto in the service of ‘drama’ in the tragedy as loci of deformation; however, in this continuum of ceaseless variation that creates the ‘canvas whose function is to harness forces’, Fabre does not completely obliterate the tragedy into an incomprehensible ‘abstraction’; he uses it to re-invent the experience of the tragic.

Discussing both of the landscapes, Decreus supports that in both instances the tragedy loses aspects of its tragic dimension because it is ‘no longer conceived as a climactic plot and text [...] The dramatic action did not come to the expected end, but lingers on, without the traditional *Katharsis* and *peripeteia*’ (2012: 142). I want to suggest that while the dramatic dimension is lost due to the minorisation process that results in the rhizomatic staging, a ‘new’ sense of the tragic arises and along with it a possible reconceptualization of the all-important notions of catharsis and *peripeteia*: Fabre’s ‘tragic’ is connected exactly to the ‘lingering on’. He doesn’t stage conflict in a way that it relates to action/plot, agon, reversal, etc. The conflict exists in the experience of the crisis that we undergo when representation and recognition no longer constitute the dominant mode of approaching theatre; and it is not so much as lack that we experience this, as much as a constitutive potentiality.

Fabre’s directorial adaptation is an example of those ‘contemporary performances of ancient plays’ that Erica Fisher-Lichte supports ‘trigger a state of liminality’ as well as one where the audience reception ‘is always an active, creative and transformative process’ (2010: 39-40). And this transformative process is inextricably linked to a re-imagination of catharsis. In ‘A Future for Tragedy? Remarks on the Political and the Postdramatic’ Lehmann supports that ‘tragic experience is bound to a process where we are taken to the edge of

normative and conceptual self-assurance, [...] [an] entering the twilight zone, where the sustainability of cultural norms which we adhere to is put into doubt' (2013: 99). The tragic seems to already always be connected to a state of liminality that is produced through a simultaneity; either in the inseparability of *phobos* and *eleos* (fear and pity) in the classic conception of the tragic or the unity of empathy and distance or the Hegelian *erschuttert/befriedigt*. Of course, here we are not discussing the creation of 'a deeper unity of the colliding opposites' that is imperative in the Hegelian ideal (2013: 92). It is in fact the disharmony that exists in the simultaneity that may prove productive and constitutive; a disharmony, then, that is not conceived as a 'lack' of harmony but as an affirmative force of production and creation. This conversion of the negative is what Nietzsche calls transmutation; 'the no stripped of its power, transformed into the opposite quality, turned affirmative and creative' (Deleuze, 1983: 191). This is the ultimate way that the notion of 'catharsis' can be conceived of in Fabre's re-imagination of the tragic. Not as 'moral sublimation and medical purging' in which the tragic is seen as 'the exercise of depressive passions and 'reactive' feelings' (1983: 200), but as a non-teleological process of affirmative and constitutive nature; one that opens up new ways of perceiving the world around us.

By decentering character, narrative, representation and recognition from the core of the performance Fabre reaffirms the transgressive quality of the tragic as well as its affirmative and constitutive qualities. In this case, the 'constitution and loss of the self' are experienced as the crisis of the mind in reception (of the 'unrecognizable' in terms of cognitive identification) is not (only) categorized as aesthetic but becomes a vital force of new cognitive explorations. This is yet an alternative way of looking at how the tragic still persists in its postdramatic 'reincarnation' through this process of minorisation. In this new reimagining of the tragedy, the closest we come to catharsis is through a process of purging our bodies of strictly cognitive and/or phenomenological ways of spectating and is a continuous process of re-configuring the brain in order 'to create new connections, new linkages, or vital 'transmitters'' (Rajchman 136). The audience of Fabre's performance experience the simultaneity and multiplicity inherent in the diastolic forces of the 'landscape' and in doing so they almost learn to experience anew. They participate in the dismantling of the 'here/there'; spectators to a theatrical

event and wonderers in the landscape; ‘distanced’ observers who ‘lose themselves in it’.^{xxv} In this sense Fabre also reinvents the narrative-related *peripeteia* into an experience that is more akin to the *peripatetic*.^{xxvi}

Fabre’s ‘minorisation’ of the tragic text isn’t only proof that tragedy is not dead (as heralded by Steiner(1961)), but it is re-imagined in a way that it (re)connects to a choratic space; a space that is open enough to include its pre-dramatic roots as much as the reference to the banal, the everyday and the popular. This is the true power of Fabre’s re-imagination of the tragedy: it does not obliterate the essence of the tragic in its critical reading and minorisation of the Aeschylean text. It offers a new contemporary experience of the tragic as a new, transgressive, constitutive and affirmative in-between.

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ⁱ The performance took place at four o' clock in the morning, 'during the "Blue Hour" in a completely blue room, "painted" blue by hundreds of ballpoint pens, an example of his new "balpen art", called from then on "Bicart" opposing traditional "Big Art" (Decreus, 2012: 136). This sense of liminality inherent in the space/time between night and day as well as the notion of finding alternatives through which to question 'major' artistic practices, is something that I will return to later in the chapter.

ⁱⁱ This chapter will not delve into claims that problematise Aeschylean authorship of the work (e.g. Griffith, M. *The Authenticity of 'Prometheus Bound'* (1977); Taplin, O. *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (1978), and M. L. West, 'The Prometheus Trilogy' (1979) among others).

ⁱⁱⁱ For the purposes of this chapter I will be using Murrays' translation of the aforementioned essay in his *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime* (1997).

^{iv} As Paul Huvenne and Bart de Baere state 'there is a strong continuity between Fabre's visual world and that of the old masters' (Huvenne and de Baere in Di Pietrantonio 2009: 30). Fabre admits to being influenced by Bosch and van Eyck and his work can be placed into a genealogy of artists traced back to earlier Netherlandish painters (arguably as far back as Patinir who developed the 'world landscape' genre/format taken up by Breughel and later adopted by Bosch).

^v For Heiner Goebells, treating the text as landscape means to open up all its layers and dimensions (rhythmical, structural, etc.) into a composition that can be experienced beyond interpretation and illustration.

^{vi} 'When I look back at my work, I realize that for the past 20 years I have been using a conciliatory language. By this I mean a merging of elements from different disciplines guided by theory and practice. [...] I have allowed the subjects that I have studied over the years to influence each other. I am not an eclectic artist, I am not a multi-media artist: I have always been very aware of what is performance, what is theatre, and what is visual art' (Fabre in Amy: 2004).

^{vii} 'It is necessary to reach the point of conceiving the war machine as itself a pure form of exteriority, whereas the State apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2007:390).

^{viii} Look at Zavros (2008) for a discussion of Deleuze's discussion of how 'anomic' phenomena (becomings) that pervade our world exist in myth but in a way that they are 'curbed' (p.58).

^{ix} This notion of the war machine seems to be almost entrenched in the myth itself and the tragedy by extension. However, both the phallogocentric power structures that the myth sprang from and the normalisation that happens in relation to major 'texts' have surreptitiously turned the

rebellious act of heroism into a controlled, 'curbed' force that eventually came under and is perpetually regulated by the State apparatus.

^x I will come back to how Fabre re-imagines the structure of the tragic performance into a more rhizomatic construct.

^{xi} For a more detailed description of this see Bogue (2003), and Zavros PhD thesis (2008:77).

^{xii} The second landscape is more modest in its exploration of the sonoric continuum of vocal sound and language. However, it is flooded by the use of different accents; the use of profanities; the use of the whole dynamic range (from whisper to incessant yelling and the expression of excruciating screaming pain); from very poetic, philosophical text to murmurs, childish mumblings, giggles and stutters; the use of microphone amplification and a text 'drowned' in water. Fabre plays with the physicality/materiality of sound to colour his landscape like he uses the lights and bodies of the actors. Oceanos' words are drowned in water not only in a metaphoric representation of the character but on a variety of levels. Water causes a certain variable musicality to protrude from an utterance that struggles to surface and always faces the limit of semantic obscurity. It is not only a metaphor, but a matter of fact, a reality that exists in the here and now, an event with whose unpredictability the performer deals in every single performance.

^{xiii} For a very illuminating discussion of the staging of *Prometheus Bound* see Ruffell 2012, pp. 80-104).

^{xiv} Aristophanes parodies *Prometheus Bound* and the hero's exhibitionistic almost tendencies in *Birds* where Prometheus is now presented to constantly (and in absurd manner) avoid being seeing. (Ruffell: 103)

^{xv} Decreas gives the very apt example of the fresco *Heaven of Delight* on the ceiling of the *Hall of Mirrors* in the Royal Palace in Brussels. The fresco which alludes to Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1510) includes the mounting of one million six hundred thousand jewel-scarab shells on the ceiling (2012: 134).

^{xvi} And Beauty is a recurring idea in his interviews. In relation to the particular performance in an interview to Ileana Demade for the Greek *Athinorama* he states that our 'faith in the power of beauty' can be the only way out of the economic, sociocultural and political crisis that Europe is undergoing (2011). We can all become Prometheus' if we don't choose to live like victims and revolt against our dangerous leaders, our corrupted leaders and the 'economic egotism' of our times. In the words of Pandora: You have to choose what you will be: heroes or victims' (Demade, 2011, my translation).

^{xvii} E.g. Epimetheus appears as the other side of desire; the one that admits to being 'wrong, wrong, wrong'.

^{xviii} In Brecht's *The Life of Galileo*, Galileo declares "Unhappy the land that needs heroes".

^{xix} As Murray explains in his notes to the translation of Deleuze's essay, 'Deleuze's notion of continuous variation puns on the biological term signifying a 'variation in which a series of intermediate types connects to the extremes' (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*)' (Murray, 1997: 256 -notes to the essay).

^{xx} The continuum will again vary between concrete references to the name of their character (e.g. Athena) to more poetic clues (on either a textual or visual level- e.g. Hephaestus) and certainly depends on individual prior knowledge of not just the tragedy itself but the relevant Hesiodic myths (Pandora, Epimetheus) and Greek mythology in general (Dionysus). Epimetheus and Pandora don't appear as characters in the Aeschylean tragedy. They are connected to the myth of Prometheus by Hesiod who recounts the story twice (in *Theogony*, 527ff; *Works and Days* 57ff).

^{xxi} And this of course connects to the realisation that Prometheus' gift to humanity has been made redundant through institutions that normalised, policed, regulated desire- theatre being one of them. Hephaestus made us implicit and aware of it early on in the performance: 'Fire exits are marked in green a colour chosen to induce a false state of tranquillity. You feel secure, yet you are locked up inside a pyromaniac's dream. Welcome. This world is staged to receive you in comfort. Rest assured, gods and goddesses. Actions have been taken. Drills and exercises have been done. Yet perhaps it is not safety that needs to be regulated but your own still bound imagination' (Olyslaegers, 2011).

^{xxii} The use of the props is also in a process of ceaseless variation. The repeated use of the axes in different parts of the performance, for example, creates a constant play within the continuum between signification and affect (they are iconic, symbolic, metonymic, metaphoric, musical, rhythmic, affective, etc.)

^{xxiii} Already a 'submersion' through a mediation which inescapably simultaneously underlines the actual distance between audience and stage/'landscape'

^{xxiv} 'It is through the meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO' (2007:178).

^{xxv} Just like Strauss explains in his discussion of the *Mitwelt*: 'the more we absorb it, the more we lose ourselves in it' (Strauss in Bogue 2003: 118).

^{xxvi} In 'The Pedestrian Gaze' Truniger explains that Aristotle had founded a school in Athens, called Peripatos, in which lessons took place while participants were walking. 'From Peripatos, a field of meanings and applications for the concept 'peripatetic' has emerged which, on the one hand, encompasses the act of being in motion without a goal and, on the other, includes the thinking associated with it. Someone who is often in motion can be described as peripatetic, as can a reader of a text that is not linearly structured, but instead works with cross-references. To follow a textual network of references and perhaps to lose oneself in the process is understood as a form of wondering' (Bolz in Truniger, 2013: 123).