1-1-2016

Mimetologies: Aesthetic Politics in Early Modern Opera

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Abstract

In recent decades, mimesis has become a critical term for rethinking relationality, difference, and affect, reconsidered against the notions of artistic autonomy and representation. While music—and sound in general—seldom feature in these accounts, issues of musical autonomy and representation (aesthetic and political) in music studies have given way to a concern with immediacy, relationality, and vibration that bypass a revaluation of the discipline's own accounts of mimesis, still understood largely as imitation. I propose a radical revision of mimesis away from its traditional understanding to bridge these various gaps and to reaffirm the necessity of thinking of alterity and difference in expanded conceptions of musical relationality. Music is more central in ancient Greek accounts of mimesis, especially in Plato's Republic, than current musicology acknowledges. In close reading of these texts and drawing on the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jacques Derrida (1975), I elaborate a critical methodology to analyze the logics of mimesis—the mimetologies—as they are deployed in theoretical works and artistic performances. I propose to understand mimesis in music not as imitation but as (1) related to the ancient Greek mousikē—the collective performance of sung poetry and dance; (2) the production of originals out of copies (and not the reverse); (3) the inscription of the ethos and laws of the community through musical practice; (4) a general process involved in the production and negotiation of value, identity, and difference. This revaluation of mimesis challenges narratives of emancipation and discontinuity that continue to privilege a Romantic philosophy of autonomous music and which fail to offer rigorous accounts of music's social inscription. In close dialogue with musicological and philosophical historiography, I focus on the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy, the Medici intermedi of 1589, and early operas, Peri's L'Euridice (1600) and Monteverdi's L'Orfeo (1607). As a mimetic performance, music does not mirror or represent social orders but participates in their production and regulation. I conclude that early modern spectacle and opera employed an ethos of allegrezza to inscribe the laws of a patriarchal society in which sovereign power was preserved across Europe through marriage ties and strictly male inheritance.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
Music

First Advisor
Jairo Moreno

Keywords
Mimesis, Monteverdi, Opera, Orpheus, Sovereignty, Spectacle

Subject Categories
Comparative Literature | Esthetics | Music

MIMETOLOGIES: AESTHETIC POLITICS IN EARLY MODERN OPERA

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A DISSERTATION

in

Music

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy 2016

Supervisor of Dissertation

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

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In recent decades, mimesis has become a critical term for rethinking relationality, difference, and affect, reconsidered against the notions of artistic autonomy and representation. While music—and sound in general—seldom feature in these accounts, issues of musical autonomy and representation (aesthetic and political) in music studies have given way to a concern with immediacy, relationality, and vibration that bypass a revaluation of the discipline's own accounts of mimesis, still understood largely as imitation. I propose a radical revision of mimesis away from its traditional understanding to bridge these various gaps and to reaffirm the necessity of thinking of alterity and difference in expanded conceptions of musical relationality. Music is more central in ancient Greek accounts of mimesis, especially in Plato's *Republic*, than current musicology acknowledges. In close reading of these texts and drawing on the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jacques Derrida (1975), I elaborate a critical methodology to analyze the logics of mimesis—the mimetologies—as they are deployed in theoretical works and artistic performances. I propose to understand mimesis in music not as imitation but as (1) related to the ancient Greek *mousikē*—the collective performance of sung poetry and dance; (2) the production of originals out of copies (and not the reverse); (3) the inscription of the ethos and laws of the community through musical practice; (4) a general process involved in the production and negotiation of value, identity, and difference. This revaluation of mimesis challenges narratives of emancipation and discontinuity that continue to privilege a Romantic philosophy of autonomous music and which fail to offer rigorous accounts of music's social inscription. In close dialogue with musicological and philosophical historiography, I focus on the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy, the Medici *intermedi* of 1589, and early operas, Peri's *L'Euridice* (1600) and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (1607). As a mimetic performance, music does not mirror or represent social orders but participates in their production and regulation. I conclude that early modern spectacle and opera employed an ethos of *allegrezza* to inscribe the laws of a patriarchal society in which sovereign power was preserved across Europe through marriage ties and strictly male inheritance.

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Introduction

Mimetologies

If Monteverdi does not have the (sole) honor of having invented opera, at least we could say he composed the first "mad scene" (and perhaps the first comic opera). Except, he never did. He found, while pondering the libretto written by Strozzi, that mimesis and music find their limit in madness, since,

> The imitation of this feigned madness [*l'imitatione di tal finta pazzia*] must take into consideration only the present, not the past or the future, and consequently must emphasize the word, not the sense of the phrase [*l'imitatione dovendo haver il suo appoggiamento sopra alla parola et non sopra al senso de la clausula*]. So when she speaks of war she will have to imitate war; when of peace, peace; when of death, death, and so forth.[1]

To be fair, it was a high bar: the task was not the imitation of madness through music, but of *feigned* madness—the imitation of an imitation of madness. Monteverdi tried to work around this abyssal project by requesting a virtuosic singer—"a woman capable of leaving aside all other imitations except the immediate one, which the word she utters will suggest to her"—and requesting Strozzi to modify his libretto at various points, "not so much on account of the poetry, as of the originality," so that "the crazy girl is not seen so frequently in action," and that "each time she comes on stage she can produce new moods and fresh changes of music, as indeed of gestures [*novi gusti et nove differenze di*

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[1] Claudio Monteverdi, in a letter (no. 93) to Alessandro Striggio. Venice, 7 May 1627. Denis Stevens, ed., *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 319; Claudio Monteverdi, *Lettere, Dediche, E Prefazioni*, ed. Domenico De' Paoli (Roma: De Santis, 1973), 244; For a close reading of Monteverdi's correspondence, documenting the various difficulties that forced the composer to abandon the project of writing "un' operina" for Mantua on a libretto by Giulio Strozzi entitled *Licori finta pazza innamorata d'Aminta* (Licoris, the Feigned Madwoman in Love with Amyntas), see Gary Tomlinson, "Twice Bitten, Thrice Shy: Monteverdi's 'Finta' 'Finta Pazza,'" *JAMS* 36, no. 2 (1983): 303–11. On *La finta pazza* and the development of the mad scene see Paolo Fabbri, "On the Origins of an Operatic Topos: The Mad-Scene" in Iain Fenlon, *Con Che Soavità: Studies in Italian Opera, Song, and Dance, 1580-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 157–195; Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice the Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 346–360.

armonie come parimenti de gesti]."[2] Strozzi complied, but Monteverdi still could not deliver. He fell ill.[3] His copyist had been delayed, and also fell ill.[4] Three months later, the project was cancelled.[5] Gary Tomlinson suspects that Monteverdi halted production in July and began lying to Striggio, feigning to be working and faking his, and his copyist's, illnesses.[6] Working for the Gonzagas seemed to summon unbidden memories of earlier hardships: as he had stated since the beginning of the project, he nearly killed himself writing *l'Arianna* for them twenty years earlier.[7]

I.

I will venture to say (not without irony) that perhaps we would not have learned as much from musical mimesis if Monteverdi had actually written the music for *La finta pazza*. His failure, his break with musical mimesis *avant-la-lettre*, shows everything. Not only does he state in his letters what we take to be the general principle of his poetics—that the libretto sets the rules for the music, that the words indicate what is imitated, and that the music follows, repeats, redoubles what the words imitate—but he also overturns this principle, asking for changes in the libretto, so that he can write new, more delightful music. He tells us that musical mimesis breaks down the sense of the text as it imitates it. In order to produce the intended effect, music must not imitate the entire clause, but single words. And with the text goes narrative time: there is no past or future, only pure present. Music, that is, pushes the text itself towards madness. And with this breakdown, one might argue, it is music itself that survives.[8]

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[2] Letter 94. Venice, 22 May 1627. Stevens, *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, 323.
[3] Letter 99. Venice, 3 July 1627. Ibid., 337.
[4] Letter 104. Venice, 18 August 1627. Ibid., 352.
[5] Letter 108. Venice, 18 September 1627. Ibid., 368.
[6] Tomlinson, "Twice Bitten, Thrice Shy," 310.
[7] Letter 108. Venice, 1 May 1627. Stevens, *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, 368.
[8] The passage recalls the antimimetic complaints issued by Vincenzo Galilei in the *Dialogo della musica antica, et della moderna*: "Our practicing contrapuntists say, indeed, they hold steadfastly to have expressed the thoughts of the mind and affections of the soul in an appropriate way and to have imitated the words every time when in setting to music a sonnet, canzone, romance, madrical, or such, in which is found a line that says, for example, "Aspro core selvaggio, e cruda voglia," which is the first line of one of Petrarch's sonnets, they cause the parts to make many sevenths, fourths, seconds, and major sixths and provoke with those means a coarse, harsh sound little grateful to the ears…Another time, if a text introduces ideas of fleeing or flying, they call it imitating the words when they make the music mover with

Is this a formulation of Monteverdi's poetics, of his late style only, or rather an extreme—paradigmatic—case, revealed by the imitation of madness?[9] In any case, what it reveals is that there is never just one mimesis: music imitates words, which imitate things in the world (war, peace, death, and so forth).[10] This is sung by someone who must imitate madness, thrice: firstly, a singer who plays a character, who ceases to be herself in order to be someone else; she gives up her identity for another—for a character—which (secondly) is herself playing at being someone else; someone deranged, who (thirdly), loses track of the passage of time; who fixates on words rather than on clauses; who sings instead of speaking. Exactly where, in this drift, do we place madness, or, to give it another name, hysteria? Even Monteverdi suffered from its contagion—did he not feign an illness? Did he not abandon his project because of an earlier trauma, caused by his patron's abuse?

In this contagion, in this proliferation of alterity, mimesis resembles madness. It imitates madness, and it finds its limit in madness, in extreme alterity.[11] After Monteverdi's failed attempt, Cavalli managed to write an opera on *La finta pazza* that became a success. Afterwards, opera thrived in "mad scenes," in representations of madness—feminine madness, more often than not—which made of this convention the privileged moment for staging the virtuosic and enthralling power of the voice. This is no small paradox: the dramatic enchantment of music seems to stop when madness appears on stage: in this instant, representation—mimesis—disappears to give place to the pure voice. When imitating madness, music becomes itself: pure, absolute music.

This story, and its variations, has been told. Its grandest stages are *opera seria*, German romanticism, Wagner. These are the endpoints of so many narratives of the history of

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such speed and so little grace that just imagining it is enough." Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*, Claude V. Palisca, trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 221-2.

[9] This issue was first raised by Ellen Rosand, "Monteverdi's Mimetic Art: 'L'incoronazione Di Poppea,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 2 (1989): 135; See also Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 205 n. 21.

[10] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 191.

[11] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 138.

music and mimesis where music—vocal virtuosity, harmonic profundity, organic development—is always the victor. Music, breaking free from the shackles of an "aesthetic" demand that kept it bound to language and representation, liberates itself and appears as it "properly is": pure music, with no admixture, subservient to no one, unhindered by representation, and abolishing narrative temporality to install its own present.

That "hysteria" is at the center of this story of emancipation gives us a first hint of what is at stake in the relation between music and mimesis. What is clear is that, for the emancipation to occur, a subjugation must be assumed. Because "hysteria" or "madness" are no more real than what they seek to exceed: there is no hysteria as such, only modes of exposing—by miming them—the demands of a patriarchal system which imposes its own norms of behavior to its other(s).[12] It is in this respect that mimesis imitates madness: it also does not exist outside of the strictures of power that define it. It also does not simply cover or conceal an essence that must be liberated, since it is in miming the patriarchal demands that hysteria appears in the first place.

In short, there is no mimesis as such. Yet, at the same time, there is nothing outside mimesis. It is impossible to exceed, overcome, or escape it.[13] There are only *mimetologies*, forms of regulating and determining what is proper and improper, pure and impure, original and derivate, model and copy. Mimesis is not a concept or a notion. Sometimes I refer to it as a "force," if only to emphasize, in a Nietzschean sense, that there is nothing substantial about it and that it must always be measured against other forces—if patriarchy, or more generally, power, can be said to be forces too. What matters is that they are relational: power is nothing without the apparatuses, disciplines, bodies, and techniques that distribute it, without the subjects it produces, and the resistance that arises from their interactions.[14] Similarly, mimesis does not exist outside of its relation to power, and to the same apparatuses, bodies and so on.

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[12] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2003).
[13] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 207; Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, p. 116. This statement, offered here axiomatically, will become clearer in what follows.
[14] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

But there is a twist, a complication, already evident in the fact that I am comparing mimesis to power, saying that mimesis resembles power, or as I said above, that it resembles madness. Mimesis is not only this relationality, this constitutive imbrication with power, but also, especially, its lack of any property other than the fact that it constantly seeks to become what it is not, that it seeks to resemble everything, that it is imbricated with everything. To speak of mimesis as contagion, however, is not simply to say that "everything is connected"—although that is one common mimetology. No sooner does one state that "everything is connected" than differences begin to appear: a center, a hierarchy, a tendency, a directionality, an origin or a destination. Mimesis is as much the connection as the difference that is thereby produced; it is both the connection and the separation, preceding and producing both. There will be much more to say about this anteriority and alterity below. What is important, for now, is to see that we can hardly speak of an overcoming or an emancipation from mimesis: to say that something is beyond or before mimesis would be to say that it is entirely isolated, disconnected, that it has nothing that precedes or follows it, that it is a pure presence and a pure event, pure identity without admixture or alterity, existing on its own instant or eternity, which in this case would be the same—the Same.

II.

The latest versions of the story of musical emancipation from mimesis invite us to experience pure vibration, the materiality of sound in its immediacy.[15] Beyond—or before—meaning, we are told, is the affective power of sound. This liberating and affirmative battle cry makes audible the end of hermeneutics, interpretation, and criticism. After decades of dissecting the canon searching for the marks of power, gender, race, or what have you, of treating musical works like cyphered texts, we are hailed to

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[15] References are too many to be mentioned here. I take Carolyn Abbate's 2004 "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" to be the first articulation of this turn, and recent works like Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*, 2015, and Volume 19 of *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* (2015) as clear presentations of the academic, historical, and political stakes of this turn (see for example the essays by Holly Watkins and Melina Esse "Down with Disembodiment; or, Musicology and the Material Turn" or Ryan Dohoney, "Echo's Echo: Subjectivity in Vibrational Ontology."

turn to the very real, material, and palpable forces that are only experienced in the act of musical performance. The tyranny of representation and meaning is over. Constructivism and deconstruction are *passé*. It is a matter now of attending to the very real bodies, technologies, and affects that, in their presence, make us love music itself or make us vulnerable to its powerful effects.

It would be necessary to write a history of mimesis in/as/and music to show that this latest turn to performance and materiality is but a return, a repetition of the call for the emancipation of music from its subservience to language, that is, of the triumph of absolute music. There is a certain madness in repetition.

But it would be equally mad to write such a history. One would need to begin with "Pythagoras" (in scare quotes since there was probably no such "historical figure") and explain what it means that music imitates the structure of the cosmos, which is itself musical. At the same time, one would have to explore what the ancient Greeks called *mousikē*—which, as is well-known, condenses the union of song, dance, and word—that fills the various roles of education, religion, politics, and spectacle in the Greek *polis*. One would need to deal with the obscure figure of Damon, who stressed the political and ethical effects of *mousikē*. But one would also, especially, have to reckon with Plato— Damon's student—and his banishment of mimetic practices (which he nonetheless described with unmatched insight), only to replace it with the "highest" form of *mousikē*—philosophy, as well as writing the first of a very long tradition of cosmological dream-myths about the "Harmony of the Spheres." One would then need to examine the work of poets and tragedians, especially Sophocles and Aeschylus, and also the comedies of Aristophanes. And this would only be the beginning. Since then it would be necessary to turn to Aristotle—who did not turn away from tragedy—and his reincorporation of mimesis into philosophy, into a *Poetics*, and seek the place of music in other assorted texts—tellingly, in the *Politics*, where he says that music imitates character, *ethos*, and that it produces those same effects on listeners. We would even have to look in those texts of a certain "pseudo- Aristotle." And none of this would be complete without elaborating on the various ways in which the Hellenistic tradition responded to these figures, with Aristoxenus, the Epicurean Philodemus—who may have been the first to

utter the cry of music itself—and Aristides Quintilianus, who formalized Aristotle's succinct remarks on music and collected all the musical knowledge of his time. And the madness of the task would just start to become apparent since, from a strictly historical perspective, there would be a break here, as all of these texts would have gone missing for centuries. Does one write a history of what has disappeared or of what remains?

We can imagine a second origin or a second beginning of our history then, taking off from the Early Christians, from Augustine and Boethius, that would make sense of their attempts to make sense of the Greeks: For example, by distributing the various mimetic powers of music into *musica mundana*, *humana*, and *instrumentalis*, a mimetic cosmo-musicology if there ever was one. Or in their continuation of the tradition of cosmological dreams and the development of harmonics, both extremely developed readings of the "Pythagorean" axioms. (I am already restricting this overview to the "West," which does not even properly begin here).

Not to mention the "invention" of musical notation, from the mimetic chiro-musicology of the Guidonian hand onwards, since writing is always a matter of mimesis. Soon, as we know, the schools of *Ars nova* and *Ars subtilior* began relishing in producing works where so many different types of imitation were the norm (fill in your favorites). And here—to judge from the common curriculum, although this is still pushing the margins—we would finally find ourselves in "properly musicological" terrain. Not that this would offer us more solid ground, as only here it would start to become apparent that the opposition between orality and literacy which would offer a way to distinguish between "secular" and "sacred" music, and thus to make sense of the music that "remains" in notation and the music that is "lost," is already compromised by mimesis. It is not surprising that the most promising works on medieval music seek to go beyond the limits of notation to recover the music itself, in all its sensuality.

One would need to start all over yet again, because those early texts (first Plato, then Aristotle, Aristides, and all the works on harmonics and tuning as well as the cosmological dreams about the harmony of the spheres) reappeared in an entirely new context, that is, de- and re-contextualized, torn from their origin and read as carrying the

most ancient—hence original—knowledge on music. From the most philosophical to the most esoteric forms of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, the connection between magic and music—which is none other than mimesis—was finally heard in the West. And perhaps here one of the largest paradoxes would show itself: that the Renaissance sought, with all its technical, mythical, magical, philological, and virtuosic resources, to model itself after—to imitate—the Greeks, to take up their knowledge, power, and authority, and carry it—magically—into the present. The Italian Renaissance is none other than a mad proliferation (and rejections) of mimesis. One would find at the same time affirmations of "good" kinds of mimesis over "bad" ones: imitation of the ancients; imitation of the masters; surpassing the masters by emulation; surpassing emulation by concealing emulation—and here (but not only here) it would have been the Church that rejected this mimetic madness.

The new thing in the Renaissance was to imitate speech, imitating the ancients, who never had polyphony. And then the "modern" constellation: imitating the affections; expressing the affections; moving the affections (which has often been a stumbling block for the historiography of mimesis: is expression a form of imitation, or its opposite?). Only, of course, there was nothing modern about this: it is what ancient music always was. Is this—the *stile rappresentativo*—as crazy as it might seem, the moment when music "first" became subservient to mimesis, to language, as many accounts would have us believe? Or is it the beginning of music's emancipation? At a time when hardly a single pronouncement was made about what mimesis was without it being contested—from a text by Ficino to a text by Aristotle, back to Plato or Plutarch—everyone was in search of the *via naturale alla imitatione*. And somehow within all of this madness, opera was born in Italy from the specter of Greek music.

We have circled back to Monteverdi and his "hysteric" where, in one and the same figure, music was the most subservient to words and the most emancipated. From here we would have to study the great early modern scientific treatises of Kepler, Mersenne, and Kircher, each of which attempts to portray the entire cosmos as a musical universe, bringing mimesis to unthought extremes and disquietingly close to modern

science—dare we call them "baroque"?[16] And we haven't even mentioned the idea of the imitation of nature that aimed to separate what these madmen had confused, now returning to the "true" Aristotle; establishing "Aesthetics" as the science of art which would become prevalent—as the story goes—in the eighteenth century; only to find its end "around 1800" with the rise of instrumental music, and to find that what better described these works was an "all-pervading" organicism, i.e. a total mimesis. This is where most accounts of the emancipation of music from mimesis begin and end. A very analytical reviewer of the eponymous book by John Neubauer,[17] still a classic telling of this narrative, found its strategy to be problematic:

> [Neubauer's] general strategy is to construe the notion of imitation so broadly that it is roughly synonymous with the term "refer." Having done this, expression turns out to be a species of imitation since arguments for representation, self-expression, or arousal of passion by music amount to so many theories about the

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[16] The Baroque enjoys a weakened reputation among historicist musicology which, starting with Palisca, sees it as lacking any stylistic unity as a period, holding instead that "if there is a common thread that unites the great variety of music within the period that we call baroque, it is an underlying faith in music's power, indeed, its obligation, to move the affections." Yet even if this concession stands today in the *New Grove Dictionary*, current doubts about the effectivity of the term are more widespread. Richard Taruskin's position is radical, as could be expected, and it seems to be an established one: "'Baroque' is a term that musicians do not need. Trying to justify it in any terms that actually relate to the music of the period has never led to anything but quibbling, sophistry, and tergiversation. All it is now is a commercial logo for a kind of 'classical music' that record companies and radio stations market as sonic wallpaper. Let's try to forget it." Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music. Volume 1,* (Oxford; New York: Oxford university press, 2010), 797. Not too distant from Palisca, then, Taruskin suggests referring to the period as "The Italian age," the "Galilean period," the "Cartesian period," the "theatrical age," or the "continuo age" depending, he holds, whether one wishes to emphasize aesthetics, philosophy, media or technique. Although recognizing that each of these characteristics remain in music today, the dismissal fails to identify a key problem in the history of music that arises precisely in this period, namely the appearance of a particular form of historical consciousness—modernity, for lack of a better name—that would begin to affirm itself more strongly and to impose the form of rationality that would produce the same attempts of periodization and hierarchization that Taruskin decries as "quibbling, sophistry and tergiversation." However nuanced, specific, and descriptive the new nomenclature may be, it remains within the same logic of inductive periodization and generalization—it even emphasizes its effect by pretending a more scientific accuracy in its observations at the cost of their universalization.
[17] John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

means of musical imitation. No new aesthetics is forthcoming since the concept of mimesis remains intact.[18]

As I see it, this is what Neubauer got right about such a project, although I am not saying that this is what he attempted to do.[19] Whether it is Neubauer's strategy to construe the concept of mimesis broadly, or that mimesis itself will not be easily reduced to a single notion, it could not have gone otherwise without ignoring "species of imitation" that do not cease to appear, without reducing them to a single narrative that makes such an emancipation possible.[20] In fact, my problem with Neubauer's work is that he does not take this strategy far enough, since what he locates beyond mimesis—the passage to formalism—is a "Pythagorean" conception of music, namely that music has its ground in number. But is this not another, if not the first, at least the most comprehensive, indeed cosmic, theory of music and mimesis, the one that started the whole story?

If, as this survey suggests, music and mimesis have been linked for most of their history, then to write a history of music and mimesis would mean to write an entire history of music. One could say that the madness lies not in attempting to write such a history, but

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[18] Philip Alperson, "Book Review: The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 3 (1988): 443.

[19] The reader may see here an example of my general strategy of reading secondary literature that deals with mimesis and its history: since, as I argue in detail below, historiography is inseparable from the theoretical problem of mimesis, secondary literature must be treated as primary, i.e., in need of commentary and critique, of double readings that will outline their limitations as part of the history we aim to write.

[20] Thus, I consider Neubauer's book—mainly its limitations—to still be central to the narratives of musicology, even as some attempt to dismiss it as outmoded. Further, the narrative of emancipation that drives traditional accounts of music and modernity has only been somewhat moderated by historiographical accounts that focus on discontinuity rather than progress or historic cyclicality. Both Michel Foucault's "epistemes" and Jacques Rancière's "regimes" identify a breaking point somewhere "around 1800" in which representation, already a restricted form of mimesis, would cease to organize thought (Foucault) and aesthetic experience (Rancière). The nature of this discontinuity in the case of music, however, is less easy to determine, and the few attempts to work it through have done so with the same restricted notion of mimesis in view, one which most conveniently suits well the modern narrative of an abstract or "formalist" absolute music. In this connection one can mention Mark E. Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). These works take Neubauer's work as their reference point with respect to musical mimesis.

in that no one has done it before. This is a good moment to interrupt this overview, which

perhaps has raised more questions than it should have. For example, what kind of history

is this presumed to be? What is the point of this rushed accumulation of names and

references? After all, simply because something is long and complex, and because one

knows which names to drop, does not mean that it is mad. Rather, the point of

historiography should be to offer a lucid narrative, a clean account that synthesizes a

manifold into manageable units, periods, or contexts.[21] What I have written above might

seem mad because it *appears* confused, but it does not mean history *is* mad. I would

agree. Yet, by offering here such an overview of the history of mimesis and music up to

c. 1700 under the form of a conditional, of a "would be," and stating that it would be

madness to write such a history, and by insisting in a presumed difference between what

seems and what *is*, I am suggesting that historiography itself is a mimetic affair.[22] It is not

so much that to write a history is to compose a fiction—however "real" its elements

might be. Rather, it is to say that to write a history is already to tell a story, to select a few

elements among an infinite amount of texts and events, ignoring others, and to order them

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[21] Such an account would look like what Carl Dahlhaus offers, a recollection of theories of *imitatio naturae* in music, which he extends as prevalent from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, locating the origin of mimesis in Aristotle, above all through the medium of dance and modified, almost beyond recognition, by *imitatio* in the Latin translation. He distinguishes six ways of imitation, which are presented first as types and then linked through a narrative of historical transformations. The types are:
 1. Imitation of non-musical sounds.
 2. Representation of spatial movement, or more generally the "habit" of using visual metaphors to refer to sounding events; these two merge in the concept of *Tonmalerei*: acoustic imitation on the one hand and the musical depiction of spatial movement on the other.
 3. Imitation of speech intonations.
 4. Depiction of emotion, closely and directly associated to (3), suggesting a correspondence with the former two (1 and 2), such that "the imitation of nature 'outside'—the representation of acoustic phenomena and the depiction of movement in space or time—can be compared with the imitation of nature 'inside', in the representation of intonations and the expression of affections and emotions." The latter, furthermore, can be distinguished as "an aesthetics of effect, a theory of imitation and a principle of expression."
 5. Early Modern musical symbolism that relies on etymology as the identity between the essence of a thing and its name.
 6. Pythagoreanism and Hanslick's formalism joined as the depiction of nature as a whole, a mirror of the structure of the world according to proportion, number and weight, or similarly as an organism, a complete and coherent nexus of functions. Dahlhaus, 1985, 21.
[22] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

in patterns that happen to be the same ones that literature employs. Historiography resembles fiction, it behaves mimetically towards it. Or else, as in the case of historical positivism, it imitates science. This is not surprising for anyone. What is surprising, even daunting, is to try write a history of mimesis even as one acknowledges that historiography is mimetic: this is what makes it mad, three times mad—like Monteverdi's *finta pazza*.

III.

But fear not. This dissertation is not such a history, not even a story or a series of them. It is also not an analytical classification of types of musical mimesis. Much less is it a poetics (or a *melopoeia*, if that word had kept its meaning outside of Pound's analysis), a theory of what musical mimesis is, or should be. We can say provisionally that it is all three. But it could be thought, perhaps, not as the combination but as their mutual exclusion, aiming to describe what is necessarily left out of each of these without being taken up by the others. In any case, it is an attempt to face the consequences of approaching historiography as being unavoidably conditioned by mimesis, by the play of doubling and referentiality that complicates the distance between an object of study and its historiographical framing.

In other words, what brings the attempt to write a history of music and mimesis close to madness is not its sheer dimension—encompassing the entire history of music in the West—but rather that there is no simple way of demarcating it, of precisely defining the limits of the matter and treating it objectively. One has to select boundaries, starting and ending points, which will appear all the more arbitrary as one gives more reasons for their selection, as they already imply the narrative—the mimetic framing—that one aims to present. Even the most detached, factual description is already caught up in the same problematic, namely that it assumes a simple relation between what is and what appears, where the description attempts to reproduce its object in all its faithfulness: to be true. Thus, either one follows every minute detail of the discussions (which we cannot assume were clear for its actors), or else one synthesizes and rearranges the statements to provide a reasonable account. There might be other possibilities but, again, each of these implies

a mimetology: realism, thick description, analysis—the choice between these is a decision, a determination of what mimesis is. The first result of attempting such a history is at least the recognition that it cannot be made under a traditional separation between a historical object and a historiographical presentation.

For Arne Melberg, the problem is the opposite: the task of writing a history of mimesis (in literature) is not only overwhelming, but it has already been done, once by Eric Auerbach in his 1946 *Mimesis*: *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* and again by two German critics, Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf. Both attempts, in his reading, reduce the multifarious nature of mimesis in their attempt to produce a neat narrative.[23] Auerbach's groundbreaking study works today better as the negative demarcation of what needs to be done. It was his insight that mimesis cannot be analyzed outside of its historical transformations insofar as it is the very process by which difference is produced. His work initiates the historical-conceptual approach to mimesis. Melberg, for one, finds that "his view of the very concept in question, *mimesis*, is simplifying in a way that makes [Auerbach] blind to differential movements."[24] Gebauer and Wulf, on the other hand, note that Auerbach "overlooks the question of power in history and thus fails to recognize the potential in having at one's disposal the means of symbolic expression, which entails the power of interpreting social reality and in that way endowing it with form and meaning."[25] This remark, incidentally, also encapsulates their own stakes and interpretation of mimesis: mimesis is not limited to art because "symbolic expression" is also what constitutes social reality, so that controlling one entails controlling the other.[26] Thus, they append to Auerbach's *Mimesis* a different subtitle: *Culture, Art, Society*. In this exemplary work, they manage to cover the relation between culture and power—in literature—from ancient Greece to Derrida. Not only do they provide insightful readings of their sources but they do so through a conceptually solid

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[23] Arne Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 9.
[26] A formulation that does not fail to call to mind Stuart Hall's best works, even if Gebauer and Wulf do not mention him.

account of mimesis that is able to describe the historical variabilities of their object through a large corpus of primary sources. Most importantly, they produce an integration of these concepts into their own reading. They attempt to produce a work that is halfway between history and theory, which is historically grounded but conceptually articulated. The formulation of their approach bears quoting at length:

> Our object requires us to confront processes of historical transformation; it calls for a specific kind of intellectual recapitulation of historical movement. But our undertaking only makes sense given a minimum degree of comparability among the various usages of the concept; we will introduce frame concepts to this end. The only concepts suitable for such a purpose are ones that have themselves been part of the historical processes, as the intellectual product of the persons involved. We shall develop our frame of conceptual reference out of the history of mimesis, which means precisely that historical reflection serves to establish the frame of reference without which the reflections would not be possible.[27]

And yet, even such an account finds itself compromised by the history it attempts to narrate. Again, Melberg identifies its limits: the need for periodization, their "frame of conceptual reference," requires that, for example, they organize their narrative through the successive "discovery" in the history of mimesis of concepts like "trace," or "simulacrum," or "time"—the latter reserved for Lessing—even though all of these can be found everywhere in its history. Melberg's solution is to bracket the question of the historicity of the concept: "the problems involved seemed overwhelming."[28] It is an elegant strategy. In place of a narrative where mimesis turns into repetition by the introduction of time, Melberg holds that "Mimesis is inherently and always already a repetition—meaning that mimesis is always the meeting-place of two opposing but connected ways of thinking, acting and making: similarity and difference."[29] In each of his four chapters, grouped under the names Plato, Cervantes, Rousseau, and Kierkegaard,

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[27] Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis,* 4.
[28] Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis,* 2.
[29] Ibid.

he accounts for the problems of time, repetition, similarity, and difference (and a large number of theorists), without having to deal with the messy problem of (meta)history.

IV.

I cannot promise that what lies ahead will be anywhere as clean as that. The problems involved in ignoring historicity (or politics) seem overwhelming (and, after all, the relation between literature and mimesis has been combed repeatedly, which is not the case for music). Stated simply, this dissertation maps critically the various ways in which mimesis is conceptualized and employed in musical discourse and under the emerging paradigm of sovereignty in early modern Italy, specifically the period between 1558 and 1650, that is, framed by Gioseffo Zarlino's *Istitutioni harmoniche* and Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis*, in Mantua, Florence, and Rome. But these frames are arbitrary. The *Istitutioni* appears within the controversy between Artusi and Monteverdi c. 1600, as the background against which Monteverdi declares the rules of his so-called Second Practice (Part II: Second Origins; chapters 3 and 4). The *Musurgia* appears in a concluding epilogue, where I argue that it played an important aesthetic and political role in modernity, in the elaboration of a total political theater of the universe, a mimetic cosmo-musico-politics. These two extremes turn around a large section (Part III: Orpheus' Modern Turn) dedicated to the figure of Orpheus in early modern spectacle, specifically in Rinuccini and Peri's 1600 *L'Euridice* (chapter 6) and Striggio and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (chapters 5 and 8). This section elaborates on the notions of allegory, performance, and sovereignty in the baroque and the mimetologies that organize their relations, paradigmatically in the Medici 1589 *intermedi* (chapter 7), where the crucial political figure turns out to be Machiavelli, precursor of opera. Parts II and III look back to Plato, arguably the most important figure in the history of mimesis. In order to develop a critical strategy and a vocabulary for understanding the multiplicity of forms that mimesis takes in the context of the humanist de- and recontextualization of ancient Greek musical thought, I devote two chapters to the important philological investigations of the notion of mimesis that led to Eric Havelock's postulation of the orality/literacy

paradigm to elaborate on the relation of music and mimesis in Greek *mousikē* and its transformations in Plato (Part I: Origins).

If I could describe the trajectory of these parts as a narrative, I would say, as everyone does, that it all began with the Platonic proscription of *mousikē* from the ideal republic. Hence it begins *before* Plato, for what is this so-called *mousikē*? It turns out that we can only approach it through its banishing and dismembering, under the sign of Dionysus (Part I). It begins again when Monteverdi declares that his music, which seeks to find new harmonies and new affections, is "second with respect to its use, but first with respect to origin," this origin being, presumably, Plato (Part II). This return to Plato did not deliver ancient music but a new, modern one. Now comes the twist: in aiming to recover the specter of Greek music, the humanists, and Monteverdi, resemble Orpheus. What they recovered, instead, was a new form spectacle with an aesthetics and a politics of its own: what Plato banished now returns and is made constitutive of the early modern Italian State (Part III).

The figure of Orpheus is an appropriate trope to characterize the birth of opera and modern music in various respects. *Figura* is one name for mimesis, and Orpheus is a common figure of *figura*.[30] As a trope, it is a repetition. But it is also a movement, a turn backwards, towards the past, which nevertheless moves forward in a particular way or mode—*tropos*. Moreover, the Orpheus myth stages a structural opposition between music (which enchants) and the gaze (which undoes the enchantment). The consequences of this opposition play out in important ways in early modernity, as the passage from an ancient, magical world to a modern, rational one. Instead of a transition, there is an inversion: vision, the spectacle, is affirmed, while music and magic are rendered invisible, marginal, and accessory—and yet constitutive. This is an important consequence of the specular-speculative-spectacular-spectral determination of Platonic mimetology. The audible and the invisible cannot be presumed to constitute a before or beyond representation, since

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[30] See "Figura" (1938) in Erich Auerbach, *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, ed. James I. Porter and Jane O. Newman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Orpheus figures here more as the musician in the myth than as the mythical author of the Hermetic "Orphic Hymns" that fascinated Ficino.

they are "always already" comprehended within the speculative and the spectacular.[31]
This inversion occurs upon the theatrical stage, but also in "the stage of the world," the
theatrum mundi, which actualized the old notion of the Harmony of the Spheres. This
entire story, of a recovery and transformation of ancient music, magic, and knowledge
into a modern—indeed baroque—spectacle organized by mimesis, which serves to figure
not only music but also the entire universe, is paradigmatically staged in Kircher's
Musurgia Universalis (epilogue).

The principal methodological tool employed here, which I developed as I wrote what
follows and which draws upon the work of Jacques Derrida and Philippe Lacoue-
Labarthe, is an analysis of mimetologies—to be distinguished from Gérard Genette's
mimology and narratology.[32] It is far from being a systematic approach, but could be
formulated in the following postulates:

> ❖   The task is to demarcate the logic (*logics*, since there is never just one) of
> mimesis—the *mimetologies*—which are the various ways in which one defines,
> under a specific form or figure, what mimesis is, how it behaves and what it does,
> often but not exclusively in terms of originals and copies. A mimetology,
> moreover, is also an *onto*-mimetology, defining what things so defined *are* as
> such.[33] My focus will be on two specific mimetologies: that of ancient Greek

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[31] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 117 n. 118.

[32] Lacoue-Labarthe uses the term *mimetology* to refer to the logic in which a philosophical formulation of mimesis exceeds its regulation at the same time as it is being formulated. Thus, he describes the "Platonic mimetology" in *"Typography"* and discusses the "Aristotelian mimetology" in *"*The Echo of the Subject.*"* In "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis," he offers the following definition: "The logic of the paradox [formulated by Diderot], the hyperbologic, is nothing other than the very logic of mimesis. That is to say, if I may again be allowed the formulation, *mimetologic*. This means simply that the logical matrix of the paradox is the very structure of mimesis. In general. It is not by chance that the law of mimesis should be enunciated, and should never be enunciated in anything but, the form of a paradox. But neither is it by chance, inversely, that the logic of paradox is always a logic of *semblance,* articulated around the division between appearance and reality, presence and absence, the same and the other, or identity and difference. This is the division that grounds (and that constantly unsteadies) mimesis." Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 260.

[33] The coinage of onto-mimetological is a crucial reference to Heidegger's onto-theology, a term that identifies the metaphysical forgetting of Being. Lacoue-Labarthe thus aligns himself with the project of the destruction of metaphysics, in which his reading of mimesis plays a large role to identify, precisely in

mousikē and the *Platonic* one, which is already multiple. *Mousikē* names a performative, embodied, enactive, and sonorous mimetology that grounds itself on myth. Contemporary names for it could be "Muse-ic," or perhaps "musicking."[34] Of the two, Platonic mimetology is dominant: its crucial marks are an emphasis on vision and theory, on spectacle and speculation, and an ontological claim about what truly is, and what only appears to be, where the product of mimesis is a debased copy of the appearance, three times removed from what truly is.[35]

❖ More importantly, Platonic mimetology aims to distinguish itself from that of *mousikē*, presenting itself as the "true" mimetology. The opposition between the two is irreducible to those between the audible and the visual, practice and theory, speech and writing, art and philosophy, physical and metaphysical, and so on. Yet it is everywhere imbricated in the production of these differences. Furthermore, since Platonic mimetology aims to come after *mousikē*, to follow it and replace it, Platonic mimetology reinscribes itself as being in opposition to *mousikē* and thus determines it as its other. Thus, it is never a matter of recovering one or the other, but of understanding their mutual constitution, their exclusive relationality.

❖ Mimesis is a productive force. What it produces in the last instance is alterity, or difference itself. Thus, every operation in which it is involved is political at the most general level. Insofar as mimesis is a mode of production, a type of "technology" or "culture" which is nevertheless "natural,"[36] one must always approach mimesis in relation to two fields, spheres, or forces: *economy*—

Heidegger, traces of this forgetting as a clue to the fateful outcome of the German philosopher in his involvement with National Socialism. Ibid.

[34] Muse-ic is the translation offered by Felicia McCarren, to translate Giorgio Agamben's *Musaïque*, which he proposed to Lacoue-Labarthe as a translation for Walter Benjamin's *Musische,* his German translation of *Mousikē. Ibid., 62 and 152 n. 28.* Musicking was suggested by Christopher Small as a verb that encompasses all musical activity from composing to performing to listening in any form or setting. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

[35] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 69.

[36] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993).

understood broadly as the production, circulation, and consumption of all types of value[37]—and *politics*—understood as the differential regulation of what is audible, thinkable, and doable within a specific distribution of the sensible in a community.[38] Mimetology, then, is a question of *political economy*. A mimetology does not only define how differences are produced, but distributes them among the various classes of a community (philosophers vs. artists; nobles vs. artisans; capitalists vs. proletariats; but also men and women; straight and queer; hysterics or madmen; scientists and magicians, and so on) while at the same time defining the place and function of these classes with respect to what such mimetology defines.

❖ But mimetology is also a question of *aesthetics*. In a restricted sense, namely that mimetologies are most commonly deployed in or through art, as theory or as practice, as description or prescription. But more generally, since among the fundamental operations of mimetology (especially, but not exclusively the Platonic one) is the distribution of what truly is and what appears, what is thinkable and what is sensible, and so on. It is this distribution of the sensible that I understand more generally as *aesthetic*. It is only because of this anteriority that art came to be defined as the object of the science of "Aesthetics" in the eighteenth century. It also helps us see that art, from the beginning, has been political in aim and nature: if politics names the distribution of the sensible, then we can conceive of mimetology as what organizes the set of discourses, practices, technologies, and bodies by which such distribution of the sensible is effected. As we know all too well, no art is politically innocent. This, far from being a casual

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[37] Jacques Derrida, "Economimesis," *Diacritics* 11, no. 2 (July 1981): 3–25; Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988); David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[38] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

or empirical matter, is an essential condition of art; it has been its highest ambition since it has been defined as such.[39]

V.

All told, Melberg does have a theory about the historicity of mimesis. Modern theorists, he writes, become modern by emphasizing "the differential movements of what earlier was called mimesis," that is, in opposition to earlier emphases on similarity and by a linguistic turn that is also an ontological turn.[40] Such an emphasis on difference, according to Melberg, appear first in Heidegger's definition of mimesis as *Nachahmung*, a "doing after," a production that comes afterwards and is hence marked by distance.[41] The linguistic turn (in its "poststructuralist" sense) complicates the conventional relationship between signified and signifier such that the capacity of literature to refer to the world (one sense of literary mimesis) becomes far from certain, whereas what is truly certain is that literature seems to turn upon itself. But this turn, Melberg notes, is not really new: both Plato (in the *Cratylus*) and baroque literature made it a point to demonstrate a certain autonomy in language: "[Shakespeare's] Feste declares that 'words are very rascals, since bonds disgraced them,' thereby providing us with something like a motto for the linguistic aspects of the never very stable relations between sign and signified."[42] What the "ontological turn" means for Melberg is less clear. Comparing Shakespeare's jester to Derrida, and succinctly summarizing his survey of the historical development of twentieth century theories of mimesis, Melberg writes that "the historical approach to mimesis outlined by Auerbach and emphasized by Gebauer and Wulf with the caesura of 'modernity' has—after Nietzsche and with Heidegger and Derrida—turned into different mimetic orders; and into a mimetical order of difference."[43] Except that, as he would recognize, such an ontology of sameness and difference was there since Plato.

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[39] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta: Figures of Wagner* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), xxii.
[40] Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis*, 5.
[41] Ibid. Heidegger's interpretation of mimesis, pursued more explicitly in his 1936 lectures on Nietzsche, is well elaborated in Lacoue-Labarthe's "Typography." See also Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), v. 1 pp. 162ff.
[42] Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis*, 5.
[43] Ibid.

The point being that we would not have been able to describe what happens in Plato as differential ontological orders of difference (instead of sameness) until the metaphysical notions of sameness and difference had been deconstructed.

What this means is that, with respect to mimesis, analytic and historical approaches become indistinguishable. The way we make sense of the history *of* mimesis depends, to utter the ultimate platitude, on how we understand "history" *and* "mimesis." In other words, theory comes first, to state the obvious. Melberg's nod to Derrida and Paul de Man, who cap his study under the name of Kierkegaard, shows well enough that even such a succinct account of mimesis is only possible today under the sign of deconstruction. Not because deconstruction is last in the history of mimesis, finishing, synthesizing, or accomplishing its historical development. Rather, because by refusing closure and speculative synthesis, Derrida has been able to show how to maintain at the same time the historicity of mimesis and the theoretical rigor that is required to preserve the openness of the historical. For this dissertation, Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe's most important move consists in making possible to show the difference between specific or *restricted* forms of mimesis (which aim for systematic closure or referentiality) and a *general* mimesis that makes the restricted ones possible while, at the same time, ruining their *restricted* systematicity by "remarking" their marks as being at the same time referential and self-referential, or in other words, a reference without referent.[44]

This point merits closer examination. In *Mimique*, Mallarmé writes about a booklet or libretto by mime Paul Margueritte, entitled "Pierrot Murderer of His Wife," where the author describes a mime that "mimes nothing."[45] The scene, Mallarmé writes, is "here anticipating, there recalling, in the future, in the past, under the false appearance of a present. That is how the mime operates, whose act is confined to a perpetual allusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a medium, a pure medium, of

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[44] Geoffrey Bennington, *Interrupting Derrida* (Routledge, 2014), 52.

[45] Having presumably murdered Columbine, Pierrot is seen miming "in the present" his preparation for the murder, the anticipation of all the actions that he will carry on, all the possible ways he might murder Columbine, miming each action and also miming her, until he decides on tickling her to death; except Columbine does not die; Pierrot does, in a hallucination.

fiction."[46] Hence, the mime is miming an act, in the present, that never happened. In other words, it has no referent and nothing to represent and yet *mimes* it, not unlike the feigned madness, the hysteria, of *La finta pazza*. We would be tempted to see this "pure medium of fiction" as a pure acting, of performance—a voice that breaks with its representational constraints and appears in its pure materiality, a voice and nothing more. The mime, imitating nothing, would seem "to go back, beyond imitation, toward a more 'originary' sense of *alētheia* and of *mimesthai*."[47] In other words, literature (or music) would allow for the unveiling of Being, of what *is*: of truth. That is, it would return to the Platonic mimetology, escaping one interpretation of truth (as *homoiosis* or *adequatio*) for another, equally metaphysical interpretation, as the presentation of the thing itself, as *aletheia*.[48] Thus, the important conclusion that Derrida reaches in "The Double Session" is that,

> Any attempt to reverse mimetologism or escape it in one fell swoop by leaping out of it *with both feet* would only amount to an inevitable and immediate fall back into its system: in suppressing the double or making it dialectical, one is back in the perception of the thing itself, the production of its presence, its truth, as idea, form, or matter.[49]

In fact, Derrida shows, with Mallarmé it is never a matter of producing a pure language, detached from the world, without referent. For this would only mean that language is a

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[46] Quoted in Derrida, *Dissemination*, 175.
[47] Ibid., 206.
[48] The two interpretations, that is, that Heidegger locates at the origin of metaphysics. Derrida's focus in the first part of "The Double Session" is the relation of literature and truth as determined by mimesis, which, as he shows, oscillates between these two interpretations. In fact, he shows, all the possible variations of the relation between mimesis and truth are programmed in the "logical machine" of Platonism, which he sketches in the following manner: Either one holds that
 1. the double simply repeats without adding or subtracting, thus
    a. the double is nothing;
    b. the value of the model determines the value of the copy;
    c. since it doesn't add anything to the model then imitation is bad in itself.
 Or else, 2. Whether like or unlike, the imitator is something, since mimesis and likenesses do exist. It follows that
    a. the copy supplements the model and ceases to be nothing or a non-value;
    b. In adding to the existing model, the imitator is unlike the model, even if the resemblance is absolute;
    c. as a supplement that replaces the model without being its equal, the imitator is in essence inferior even while replacing the model.
[49] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 207.

purely ideal (Platonic) entity—and Mallarmé is above all not an idealist. On the contrary, Mallarmé insists on the "materiality of the idea" but especially upon mimicry and the simulacrum: the mime does not simply act, he *mimes*—but there is nothing to mime. It is not a break with referentiality but reference without a (single) referent, without any first or last unit—without an original or an *arche*. Always at least double, or more than one, without having started from one. The crucial aspect, then, is that Mallarmé preserves the differential structure of mimesis—referentiality—but without the metaphysical interpretation that implies that something that *is*—either an act or an idea—is being imitated. It is not the simple affirmation of the simulacrum, but a simulacrum of Platonism: a mimesis of mimesis that preserves and exceeds simple referentiality.

In the same way, as Irigaray and Butler show, hysteria and queerness mime the roles that a patriarchal system assigns to woman: there is no 'Woman' that other women must imitate, and it is by imitating this imitation without a model, by displacing (exaggerating) the imitation, that the "hysteric" or the "queer" appear within the patriarchal system.[50] It is the displacement without reversal of a restricted type of mimesis, Platonism, made possible by a general mimesis. Instead of having a radical separation between signifier and signified on the one hand, or their collapse onto pure presence (both cases of a speculative solution that seeks to preserve meaning within a restricted economy), general mimesis shows how signifier and signified meet in a "medium," in the sense of middle, neither/nor, but also in the sense of element, "a presence both perceived and not perceived, at once image and model, and hence image without model, neither image nor model."[51] In "The Double Session," Derrida gives this a name culled from Mallarmé's text, the hymen; yet, emphasizing the non-closure of the system (the condition of general mimesis), Derrida also gives us a potentially infinite number of names which serve as non-synonymous substitutions for this non-ideal/non-

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[50] Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman;* Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 13–32.
[51] Ibid., 211.

material medium such as the "trace," the "pharmakon," the "*grammè*," the undecidable, and so on.

VI.

Acknowledging this reading, however, Lacoue-Labarthe notes that, in Mallarmé's *agon* with Wagner—where the poet challenges the composer's claim to a form of art that unifies all the arts under music—it becomes evident that Derrida's description of Mallarméan mimetology is incomplete. Where Derrida was concerned with the (philosophical) relation between literature and truth, Lacoue-Labarthe demands taking into account the question of politics, or "aesthetico-politics." In the end, he shows, Mallarmé is not unlike Wagner in assigning to art a political task, the "vocation" or the "mission" of defining,

> the mythological figure, where humanity, or perhaps a humanity (a people, for example), could recognize itself and get hold if its essence and its constitutive characteristic, less by 'identification' than under the direct effect—under the impression or mark—of the historial seal that is the type.[52]

Wagner, gambling on simple reference, sought this essence in the Nordic myths. Mallarmé, on the other hand, negates defining an essence, but nevertheless preserves the structure of a model, a type, that imprints or types the humanity that comes. The type, a "Figure that No one is," the pure presentation of a pure figure (yet modeled after Christ, as a post-catholic communion), represents the essence and the destiny of humans. This structure of the type, what Lacoue-Labarthe calls an onto-typology, is the form that the Platonic mimetology came to acquire in romanticism and up to Heidegger and which better describes the political stakes of mimesis: it is not just that a certain power dominates *de facto* the means of representation, but that art is assigned *de jure* the role of shaping or molding—giving a figure—to humanity in the future, a determination that puts not only Wagner or Heidegger but also Mallarmé and all such onto-typologies in an inescapable complicity with the Third Reich. What it shows is not that everything is

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[52] Lacoue-Labarthe*, Typography*, 60.

political, or that a certain power uses art as a political tool among others, but that such a definition of art is "art itself, since it has been defined as such, in its highest ambition."[53]

Moreover, in order to elaborate upon the difference between Wagner and Mallarmé, on the stakes of their shared onto-typology, Lacoue-Labarthe pays close attention to the place and function of music within their conflicting mimetologies. Mallarmé's objection to Wagner, Lacoue-Labarthe shows, is not just an opposition of poetry versus music. It is not that there is "too much theater," but rather "too much music." Music, that is, that gives itself too easily to fiction and enchantment. It only serves to maintain the illusion of identification, of characters, narratives, and stories. Wagner does not go far enough in his critique of opera or melodrama. For Mallarmé, reviving ancient tragedy is not an accomplishment, especially if it is only to suit the disposition of the German people, that is, to foreclose the political possibilities of art (or to overdetermine them).[54] Rather, what Mallarmé wanted Wagner to have done was to have used music in order to interrupt and suppress drama: music should push theater beyond mimesis, forcing it to say something else, to allegorize.[55] Monteverdi would have said: use music to imitate the word, not the sense of the clause; imitate the pure (feigned) present, not dramatic time. A single word imitates (allegorizes) war, peace, death or anything else. Rather, Wagner preserves what is most mimetic in theater and in music. It is a compromise between the decrepit form of theater and a determination of music that is too subservient to it: *musica ficta*.[56]

What is *musica ficta*? Here, it does not mean the practice of supplementing under-prescriptive notations in order to produce correct voice leading in polyphonic settings within hexachordal systems. Although it has everything to do with this, Lacoue-Labarthe means rather something like music-fiction, fictionalized or "fictioning" music. *Fingo, fixit, fictum* means to form, fashion, or mold, but also to feign, to act or contrive, to

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[53] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, xxii See also, by the same author, *Heidegger, Art, And Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).
[54] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, 69.
[55] Ibid., 68. Without this meaning, as we have seen, that Mallarmé's was not an onto-typology in its own form.
[56] Ibid., 63.

simulate: mimetic music. The solecism is not Lacoue-Labarthe's. Adorno used it in an essay on "Bourgeois Opera" published in *Sound Figures*, where he argues that "opera is governed by the element of illusion [*Schein*]," from which it cannot, and has not, been disassociated, even as modern opera aims to demystify it: "Schoenberg as an operatic composer [has] remained within the realm of expressive opera and thus of *musica ficta*, of illusion, both in aesthetic terms and in terms of its relationship to the text."[57]

Musica ficta is not simply the subordination of music to language or something like word painting, but music as it aims to mold or sculpt itself into something other than pure sounds (Adorno opposes it to the "musical economics of scarcity" of the avant-garde), shaping music into a magical illusion, enchantment, or affection. This fictional or enchanting power of music—which for Adorno signifies art's resistance to instrumental reason, the permanence of magic within a disenchanted world—is for Lacoue-Labarthe the essential complicity of art and politics, exemplified in the aesthetic politics of the Third Reich. Both authors locate its origin in the *stile rappresentativo*, a birth Lacoue-Labarthe calls a (re)composition—since the ancient music it was modeled on, of course, did not exist.[58] We know the story all too well:

> Either on the basis of ancient testimony about the art of song or on that of the principles of metaphysical linguistics inherited from Aristotle and the Stoics, music, putting itself at the service of the word to reinforce its power (imitating the poem), itself translated or expressed, that is to say imitated, the affects or passions, even ideas, whose verbal signifier was already understood as sensual presentation or expression. It was an expressionism.[59]

Lacoue-Labarthe easily avoids here the presumed opposition between imitative and expressive music. It is also notable that he fails to remark on the mimetic impulse of the

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[57] Theodor W Adorno, *Sound Figures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 17.

[58] The Second Practice, Lacoue-Labarthe writes, consisted in "[d]iscovering, first of all, that is, to say finding (again), what no discovery, in the sense of discovering a treasure, could give the hope of restoring: declamation in the antique manner…Modern music was discovered as the recomposition of ancient music. A banal program, up to romanticism and beyond, except for the fact that not a single score of this so-called ancient music remained. Consequently, let us talk about (re)composition. That essentially signifies that one subjects music to the "aesthetic" principle of mimesis, presentation or representation." Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, xvii.

[59] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, xvii.

Orphic turn of humanism in what he glosses over as the "banal program" of a re(composition) of ancient music, of modeling modern music after a music that has been lost. Does that not mean that modern music or *musica ficta* is also a mimesis without a model? Not only fictional music as illusion but also a music that produces the fiction of a past it never had, in a fictionalized present? But, more importantly, when writing that music "put[s] itself at the service of the word," or that this is "a strange constraint," does not Lacoue-Labarthe seem to imply that *musica ficta* is an accidental—not substantial or essential—determination of music, in other words, that somehow music is beyond or outside mimesis? Establishing whether this implication is true of Lacoue-Labarthe's interpretation would require engaging with his reading of Adorno and Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, which is far beyond our scope here.

But what this limit shows is that, in his concern with Wagner's role, which he sees—through Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Heidegger, Adorno, and Schoenberg—as the accomplishment of *musica ficta*, Lacoue-Labarthe has left untouched the narrative of music's relation with mimesis and seems to consider *musica ficta* to be an entirely closed system. Like Derrida, their almost exclusive focus on mimetology through modernism fails to show that what is considered to be the "origin," "birth," or even the "(re)composition" of music as *musica ficta* has the same multifarious, contradictory and supplementary traces that they find in later mimetologies. It appears that, caught within the perspective effects of a speculative historiography, a certain foreshortening makes it seem as if *musica ficta* had been a single act of submission and determination of an otherwise sovereign nonmimetic music.

Here, then, a strategy like Melberg's seems appropriate. One can assume, with Lacoue-Labarthe, that music submits itself to mimesis and turns into *musica ficta* around 1600, which remains the only musical mimetology to be fulfilled with Wagner, to whom all modernism is still bound, thus demonstrating the inevitability of aesthetic politics; or else one can hold that music is always already *musica ficta*, which redoubles itself by being simultaneously modern and ancient (without a model) and that, like mimesis, is never just one. In this sense, we have to say that the idea of a "submission" is part of the

ideology that wants to preserve the ideal of music (visualized in a past or future emancipation) as an essentially pure medium of pure presentation—of the body or the divine, it does not matter anymore.

Thus, if the deconstruction of modernism has shown that an escape out of mimesis is impossible given that 1. There is never just one mimesis and 2. All attempts to overcome restricted mimesis constantly reaffirm its dependence on a general mimesis; and if 3. *Musica ficta* is not a simple, restricted mimetology but is already the possibility of its own impossibility (as a closed system or a single determination), then in order to fully take account of the historicity of *musica ficta* one must attend not so much (or not only) to its presumed breakdown, emancipation, or fulfillment, but also to its origin—in the late Renaissance or in Plato—of an origin that never was one. Where to begin?

Part I

The Myth of/at the Origin(al)

> Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it is most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it.
>
> Plato, *Republic*

It has not always been true that one ought to begin in the middle of things. For a very long time it had been obvious, customary, and even necessary, to—as the King told Alice—begin at the beginning, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop." This basic principle has since long animated philosophy, history, and musicology as well. Begin with the simplest elements, with the primordial, with the origin. Everything important and crucial will be present at the origin and it will only be a matter of following the order of reasons or the evidence to arrive to a proper and complete end. To do otherwise, to begin by the middle, *in medias res*, is but a rhetoric device, a stylistic convention more typical of the *Illiad* or the *Nibelungenlied* than of philosophical or academic arguments— it pursues effects, not reason, even as when one distinguishes with the rationalists between the order of knowing (*ordo cognoscendi*) and the order of being (*ordo essendi*). The rational mind knows to begin with the beginning. Whether it be the simplest elements, or immediate experience, or the most well-known things, something always shows itself as the necessary beginning and displays the path to its own development. This beginning, the origin, contains in itself what is essential to the object, its law, such that the *arche* determines its development and defines its end, its *telos*.

To begin with the beginning, to look for the origin, is the mark of a rational, well-pursued investigation.[1] Or the mark of a delusion, Nietzsche would later say—and this is a turning point we attend to—, the idealistic whim of believing that origins are lofty moments of emergence; that we can locate them and return to the place where discourse and truth were once together; that things develop organically, rationally, teleologically; that the purpose of philosophy is to account for these developments.[2] Origins are only posited as an idealist trick that finds in them what it deposits: its own ambitions. Thus understood, origins are already the completion of the work, its foreclosure. Nietzsche's distrust of origins marks the beginning of a philosophy without origin, *an-archic*.

According to this Nietzschean argument, origin—pure origin—cannot be. An origin is never an origin without something that succeeds it and therefore contaminates it with its development. Development constitutes origin as the past of what is present and thus as nothing pure at all. If it is not pure, it thus never properly *is*, but is always becoming. An origin never is without already being underway and without receding in the past of its anterior futurity, its "it will have been." That is, an origin is only present if it has already become what it is the origin of, what it would have been—but by then the present has already become something else, namely the past of what in turn it will have been. Never having been in the present, origin receives its determination from what follows it.[3] These general ontological axioms translate into phenomenological experience. A sound, for example, does not begin without already having a duration, and hence a transformation, a development whose auditory spectrum characterizes it as a sound, whose relation to past and future sounds determine its rhythm, making the durationless origin of the sound an impossibility and, conversely, making the origin already a part of

[1] Although the two are not the same. Walter Benjamin distinguishes a "beginning", which is continuous with what it begins, from a true "origin" (Ursprung), which is discontinuous from what it originates. One could speak of the difference between an immanent and a transcendent start.
[2] *Cf.* Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality,* (Trans. Keith Ansell-Pearson, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History, in *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984,* (New York: New Press, 2003).
[3] Alternate versions of this logic can be found—with differences that cannot be explored here—in the Freudian model of *Nachträglichkeit* and in Hegel's *Logic of Science,* and especially in Lacan's articulation of the two. Cf. Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire," in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* (Trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 684.

its duration: "there is no durational part of the sound that has not already begun."[4] Moreover, the auditory spectrum of that sound, its timbre, is said to depend on the distribution of the partials produced by its fundamental: the fundamental produces overtones that allow us to perceive the sound as *that* sound, the "fundamental" being in no way audible by itself.

Nothing in this origin, moreover, preserves it from changing into something else. In fact, as origin of what becomes, it presents as necessary the possibility of it becoming other. It occurs just as much with repetition. Nothing is ever repeated without repetition constituting it as what is repeated. The origin is thus not only something which has already become something else, but also what is first repeated, a repetition that undermines the originality of the origin. Now, repeatability is structural to everything that is not a pure event. Further, it is the condition of possibility for something to be anything at all, instead of nothing. If something is, if it persists, it can be repeated. But this means that something does not have to be actually repeated for it to be determined as repeatable, a repetition which in fact alters it—by undermining its status as an event, by exposing its repeatability, constituting it as repeated and repeatable: repetition makes origin into original, an original which depends on the repetition that guarantees its permanence. Repetition and alteration, a repetition that alters, that makes origins derivate, that contaminates origins with becoming: this is the force of mimesis.

We cannot begin without emphasizing the necessary impossibility of the origin, and of repetition as a necessary possibility, insofar as here mimesis is considered to be essentially concerned with beginnings and ends, with the production of originals and copies, with sameness and alterity—categories or modes of being that are indispensable for writing the history of anything. But to begin by signaling this impossibility is also to cast a doubt on the very possibility of tracing "the history" of mimesis as such. It becomes impossible to offer, either at the beginning or at the end, a concept or definition of mimesis and then explain its transformations as progress, degeneration, deviations, or

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[4] Christopher Hasty, (*Meter As Rhythm,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 70.

even variations.[5] There is no proper to mimesis other than alterity itself, nothing that identifies it more than its permanent becoming other. Sameness, origins, and originals are rather like effects which, sometimes with powerful implications, have made it seem that we can even imagine a history of mimesis. If there is a history of mimesis, it is the history that mimesis has produced, what it has left behind: the idea of history that is the result of postulating and rearranging things and ideas in terms of beginnings and endings, origins and derivations, originals and copies. Where this history is lacking, an erasure has happened, and we know that mimesis has left its trace.

Thus it is only by attending to this history, to its historiography, explicit or under erasure, that we can know anything about mimesis. Lacking any self-identity and any originality, lacking any origin, any *arche*, and therefore any *telos*, mimesis is not outside the history that attempts to bind it and write it down. That is why we must engage mimesis as a historical matter, through its historiography. The strategy is not quite straightforward but it results from the "nature" of its object: mimesis is unoriginal, anarchic. It appears and disappears from our sources. It even sets the rules for its own disappearance. This movement of appearance and disappearance, its constant arrival and departure, is the truth (*aletheia*) of mimesis, as it shows itself by coming back from its concealment and returning to it.[6] This is the movement, the rhythm, by which we apprehend it here. We begin wherever we are.[7]

A seldom visited account of the origin of music involves mimesis: In Pindar's *Pythian 12* (490 BCE), Athena uses the dirges (*goos*) of the Gorgons to make a song (*melos*) for the

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[5] "There never was such a thing as Mimesis, yet it Insists" is the refrain in Mladen Dolar's presentation of the history of mimesis. Each of the historical forms mimesis takes, and the modes by which it was overcome, never were. At issue, therefore, is neither escaping mimesis not remaining within it, but to insist on it. Princeton University, April 15, 2015 https://soundcloud.com/non-all-4/mladen-dolar-april-15-2015

[6] Which, incidentally, might place mimesis before *aletheia*: mimesis produces the concealment/unconcealment of *aletheia*. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 206; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 79ff.

[7] "We must begin wherever we are and the thought of the *trace*, which cannot take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are*: in a text where we already believe ourselves to be." Jacques Derrida. *Of Grammatology*. (Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 162.

aulos.[8] The goddess hears a threnody (*threnos*) pouring forth from the snaky heads of the Gorgons who mourn Perseus's beheading of Medusa, and weaves them into a composition.

> [7][the art (*technas*)] which Pallas Athena once invented
>
> by interweaving (*diaplekais*) the fierce close-packed dirge (*threnos*) of the Gorgons
>
> that she heard pouring forth from under the unapproachable
>
> snaky heads of the maidens in their grievous toil,
>
> when Perseus cried out in triumph as he carried the third of the sisters (Medusa),
>
> bringing doom to wave-washed Seriphus and its people.
>
> …
>
> [19] the maiden (Athena) composed (*teuche)* a melody with every sound
>
> (*pamphonon melos*)[9] for pipes (*aulon*),
>
> so that she might imitate (*mimesaio*) with instruments the echoing wail (*goon*)
>
> that was forced from the gnashing jaws of (the Gorgon) Euryale.
>
> The goddess invented it, but invented it for mortals
>
> to have, and she called it the tune of many heads (*kephalan pollan nomon*),[10]

In this lesser-known telling of the invention of the *aulos*, Pindar brings the instrument back into Boeotia from its Phoenician origins by avoiding to tell the latter part of the myth.[11] In the common version, Athena disposes of the *aulos* as soon as she invents it. Marsyas—a Phoenician satyr—finds it, learns to play it, and challenges Apollo to a duel:

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[8] Additionally, this is one of the earliest extant uses of words belonging to the *mimēsis* word group. More examples of these early accounts and the problems associated with their interpretation are explored in the next section. For the present discussion, see Deborah Steiner, "The Gorgons' Lament: Auletics, Poetics, And Chorality In Pindar's Pythian 12," *American Journal of Philology* 134 (2013) 173–208 and Elizabeth Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion,* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 17-21.

[9] The adjective *pamphonon* may be ambivalent, expressing either a melos that includes "all sound" or a melos that "calls out to all."

[10] Pindar. *Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes,* (Trans. William H Race, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Translation modified after Steiner, "The Gorgon's Lament," 206.

[11] Steiner, "The Gorgon's Lament," 196.

Apollo wins and flays Marsyas as punishment for his *hubris*.[12] Here, Athena—who helped Perseus slay Medusa—crafts the melody for the *aulos* in order to "imitate" (*mimesthai*) the Gorgons' wail. We are not told anything about the instrument itself but rather about the melody she invented—indeed about a *technē*, a craft or an art—in which an *aulētes,* the *aulos* player Midas of Acragas and winner of a contest being eulogized by Pindar in the poem, "defeated Hellas" (6). Athena is still the archetypal *aulētes*, but also a composer, and a *mimetēs*, an imitator. In this event, this primal scene or tragic myth of origins, mimesis and *technē* are musically—or better, sonorously—involved with each other.

What should we understand by Athena's "imitation," (or simply her mimesis, since the translation is already problematic)? It does not mean that the *aulos* sounds like any cry in general nor specifically Euryale's cry, that it resembles it in any way. She crafts it "in order to 'mimic' [*mimesthai*]," not "in imitation of [*mimema*]." Why should Athena simply "copy" the cries of a monster?[13] There is a purpose in her crafting that *aims* towards some kind of mimesis, but this results in something different than what constitutes its object. In fact, Athena weaves together (*diaplekais*) the wails of the Gorgons into a song. Not just any song but a melody with all the sounds (*pamphonon*

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[12] Athena disposes of the *aulos* because playing it disfigured her face. Aristotle and Aristides Quintilianus offer other explanations of why this is so, namely that it was impossible to sing while playing, i.e. that the instrument hinders *logos* (for Steiner, Pindar affirms the a-logic nature of the *aulos* by ignoring the contest). Recent critics see it as the result of changing aesthetic and political ideologies which crystallize around the *aulos*. Richard Martin, "'The Pipes are brawling': Conceptualizing Musical Performance in Athens." In *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, (ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153-81; Peter Wilson, "The Aulos in Athens" in *Performance and Culture in Athenian Democracy,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Wilson, "Athenian Strings; Homeric Strings in Hellenistic Athens" in Wilson and Murray, eds. *Music and the Muses: The Culture of "*Mousikē*" in the Classical Athenian City.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Eric Csapo, "The Politics of the New Music" in *idem*. For the *aulos* in general, see Thomas Mathiesen, *Apollo's Lyre: Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages,* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 177; Evanghélos Moutsopoulos, *la musique dans l'œuvre de Platon,* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 81. See also Steiner, 195, who cites Pindar's poem as involved in the politico-aesthetic revision of the *aulos*. For a "structuralist" reading of the Marsyas myth in a musicological context and an extensive list of sources and other relevant information, see Maria Rika Maniates, "Marsyas Agonistes," *Current Musicology* (Spring 2000): 118-162. For a reading of the myth in connection to various themes of this dissertation, see John Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 35-41.

[13] Some authors propose, for example, to understand this mimesis as an expression of sorrow, or as a mythological account of the expressive capacities of instruments. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 19.

melos), a song with many heads (*kephalan pollan nomon*). This weaving and sewing together into song is a well-known motive in Pindar. The rhapsode, *rhapsōidos* is he who sews together (*rhaptō*) the songs (*aoidē*), a "recomposed performer," a *recomposer*.[14] By weaving or sewing the rhapsode combines the multiple into a single strain, into a fabric—a text—commonly described as *poikílos*, a word meaning varied or patterned and, in fifth-century writings about music, melic complexity.[15] The many-headed tune of Athena—named, not incidentally, after a musical form performed in Pindar's day, the *Polukephalos Nomos*—then, is one of these variegated fabrics, a text woven with an aim to mimesis by recomposing suffering into a song.[16]

     This creation or recreation, the product of a mimetic *technē*, is not "artistic" in the way we commonly understand it. Athena does not produce it for any "aesthetic" reasons. The *nomos* she crafts, in order to "mimic" the Gorgon, is not beautiful in any way.[17] For, again, why should she partake of the mourning she helped cause? The poem simply says that "The goddess invented (or discovered, *euren*) it [the many-headed song], but

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[14] Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61.

[15] Nagy, *Poetry as Performance,* 66 and Steiner, 183. Athena's iconic *peplos* is described as *poikílos* in *Iliad* 5. The nightingale's song in *Odyssey* 19.521 is described as *poludeukēs* and *poluēkhēs* (which Nagy translates as 'resounding in many ways,' having many echoes)*.* The scholiast Aelian explains this epithet by writing that the nightingale is "the one who makes imitation (mimesis) in a varied (*poikílos*) way. I follow the analysis of these passages offered in Nagy, *Performance and Poetry*, 44 and *passim*.

[16] Steiner, 184. Steiner shows how the poem incorporates other references that involve mimesis in diverse senses, among them to the "'Pythian nome' (*Puthikos nomos*) aimed to conjure up through sound the fight between Apollo and the snake guarding the Delphic site," that is, it produces the mimesis of a mimesis. The *Polukephalos Nomos* is described by Lysias, who attributes its invention to either Olympus or Crates, *auletes* of the seventh century BCE. Matthiesen, *Apollo's Lyre*, 62-3.

[17] Not because it resembles the Gorgon's cries or not, but because it is never said to be. Steiner's interpretation is, however, the opposite: she reads the difference between *goos* (v. 21) and *threnos* (8), as that of a "more primitive" sound and a "polished," "sanitized" or "artistic" one, 177. Despite the philological evidence she presents, I find this interpretation problematic, as it relies on the opposition animal/divine, uncultured/cultured, raw/cooked, matter/form, using *technē* as a teleological means of transforming the one into the other. Belfiore carries the point further, writing that "In Pindar's poem, imitation does not create a new reality, but instead gives meaning and order to human life by showing us the beautiful and beneficent aspects of what appears ugly and painful. The *aulos* music is beautiful and pleasant in itself, and it is at the same time an imitation of what is ugly and painful, the scream of a monster." 19. By immediately making a reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* (1448b10-12), Belfiore makes explicit the point I have been underscoring here: this idea of mimesis as artistic creation and imitation operating through a hylomorphic metaphysics is a much later construct, which she reinscribes in Pindar's poem.

invented it for mortals to have." In the poem, Perseus brings Medusa's head to Polydectes in revenge for raping Danae, his mother. Weaving sounds into the *Polukephalos Nomos*, Athena gives mortals the gift of a *technē* that repeats Perseus's heroic action. The cries of the remaining Gorgons are inscribed in a song that "mimics" them. This production preserves and carries over their cries. And in this preservation we see what "in order to 'mimic' them" might mean. This, I advance, is not the production of an aesthetic object out of the suffering of the Gorgon. Here, mimesis might rather mean the apotropaic incorporation of the monster's cries, a magical device to protect mortals just as Athena carries the likeness of Medusa's head in her shield.[18]

When, in book 3 of the *Republic*, Socrates, Adeimantus, and Glaucon set out to "purify" the city of the instruments, modes, and harmonies of "the city we recently said was luxurious" in the name of moderation (*sophrosune*, *Rep.* 399e), they reference just these musical elements.[19] After having reviewed the content of Homer and Hesiod, criticizing their portrayals of the gods and their ideas about death, they move on to the music that accompanies poetic performances. The interlocutors agree to banish from the ideal State all the harmonic modes besides the Dorian and Phrygian, "which will best imitate the violent or voluntary tones of voice of those who are moderate and courageous, whether in good fortune or in bad" (399c). Socrates continues,

> [Socrates] "Then" I said, "there'll be no need of polystringed or polyharmonic (*poluchordias ge oude panarmoniou*) instruments for our odes and melodies (*oudais te kai melesin*).

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[18] The similarity between the apotropaic shield and the many-headed tune has been noted by many commentators, see notably Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, "Athéna et l'invention de la flute." *Musica e storia,* vol. 2, 1994, 239–67; For Belfiore, the identification of mimesis and apotropaic magic in this passage is only "implicit," as she emphasizes, as Steiner, the transformation of a monstrous wail into a beautiful song (see note 17). Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures,* 19. The relation between mimesis and apotropaic magic is a classic theme of the anthropology of mimesis since James Frazer*, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic,* (London: Routledge, 1972). For a critical account see Michael Taussig. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993).

[19] While suggesting that Pindar's language seems to anticipate the "New Music" attacked in Plato, in both language, technical innovations, and emphasis on mimesis, Steiner warns against taking the poem as a manifesto *avant la lettre* of the New Music, moving on to underscore the more "classical" aspects of Pindar's work, Steiner, 194. Likewise, I am not signaling the importance of the ode as much as identifying a series of motives and associations to be further developed. I draw extensively in what follows from Eric Csapo, "The Politics of the New Music," in Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, eds.

[Glaucon] "It doesn't look like it to me," he said.

"Then we'll not support the craftsmen who make lutes, harps, and all the instruments that are polystringed and polyharmonic (*poluchorda kai poluarmonia*) instruments."

"It doesn't look like we will," he said.

"And what about this? Will you admit *aulos*-makers and *aulos*-players (*aulopoious he aulētas*) into the city? Or, isn't the *aulos* the most "many-stringed" of all? And aren't the panharmonic instruments themselves imitations (*mimēma*) of it?"[20]

"Plainly," he said.

The *aulos* is confirmed here as the model, the paradigm, of multiplicity, of complexity, *panarmonia* and *poikília* (399e).[21] Plato's criticisms to the new music share the language of his analysis of political institutions, of the entire enterprise of the *Republic*. The status of the *aulos* as irrational, opposed to all *logos*, "many-headed," and even barbarian, is summed up in Socrates's remark: "We certainly aren't doing anything new in preferring Apollo and his instruments to Marsyas and his" (399c). As the declaration of a conservative restoration, it might not be as innovative. As the explicit articulation of the political aesthetics that organizes the boundaries of what is proper and improper, natural and artificial, regulated and irregular, and so on, around the *aulos* and especially with mimesis as the "condition of possibility" for this articulation, it is not only an innovation but one that would preserve its power for centuries to come.

There are four tasks to be accomplished in the first part of this dissertation: (1) To offer a "philological" survey of some ancient texts dealing with the problem of mimesis, which include the Homeric Hymns, Pindar, Aeschylus, and Plato. These primary sources expose

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[20] Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968; translation modified. All citations from the *Republic* are from this edition, and are referenced using Stephanus pagination. For a similar indictment, see also *Laws* 2.669d–e; Steiner, 193 and Csapo, "The Politics of the New Music,"
[21] Cf. footnote 11 above.

the diverse conceptual and semantic networks traced in antiquity around the concept of mimesis. The sources are read here as the site of contention of various interpretive tendencies, bounded at the extremes by Plato and Derrida. The second task (2) consists of a double demand posed by the problem of origins exposed above: to account for the earliest appearances of mimesis as necessary to understand the multiplicity of meanings of the notion throughout the periods examined here while insisting on the impossibility—historical, philological, and philosophical—of reconstructing anything like an originary notion of mimesis: this double demand is covered under the motive of Dionysian fragmentation. (3) The main task is to offer a reading of the *Republic* and surrounding texts, in the context of a history of mimesis and with respect to music and the sonorous in general; the reading of pre-Platonic sources serves to prepare this reading and to introduce the corpus of secondary sources that complicate the attempt to locate and clarify the role of Plato in this history. (4) From this reading emerges the notion of *mousikē* as a performative assemblage of inscription and the notion of economimesis that will be used as a critical framework to situate both Plato's text and its seventeenth-century receptions, covered in Parts II and III.

CHAPTER 1

ARCHAIC MIMESIS

> We turn to the gods
> but the gods turn us
> we turn to gods
> and are torn apart
>
> Euripides, *Bacchae*

FRAGMENTS, DISMEMBERING

The many definitions that Plato gathers under the problem of mimesis, his ambivalence towards its powers and the zeal he takes to regulate them, all point to an abyssal logic, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe calls it, that characterizes the improper property of mimesis, an excessive force that is always in difference with itself. All of these traits are part of the history of mimesis, a history determined by what Lacoue-Labarthe identifies as Plato's onto-typotology. This onto-typology has programmed subsequent interpretations of mimesis as the imprint of a model, an *eidos* or a *tupos* upon a malleable matter (with the traditionally metaphysical identification of matter as feminine: *materia*/*mater*),[1] leaving only a restricted and regulated space where aesthetics as the philosophy of art finally took ground. The essence of mimesis—if it had one—lies in the fact that it doesn't have anything proper to it, that it doesn't have any essence other than "absolute vicariousness, carried to the limit (but inexhaustible), endless and groundless—something like an infinity of substitution and circulation."[2]

This is Lacoue-Labarthe's crucial insight into the nature of mimesis, as a result of finding Heidegger (but also Girard as well as Nietzsche) caught in the game, still programmed, of "simply" inverting Platonism and thus remaining incapable of escaping the Platonic onto-mimetology they aimed to subvert. Reflecting on the strategy that

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[1] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 126 n. 126ff.

[2] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 116.

organizes his "Typography," and with respect to the essence without essence of mimesis, Lacoue-Labarthe notes that, "the only recourse, with mimesis, is to differentiate it and to appropriate it, to identify it. In short, to verify it."[3] This is a strategic and programmatic demand, a necessary one for any attempt to come to terms with mimesis and its history for how could we presume that mimesis, in its dissemination and its alterity, could ever have something originary to it, if not pure transformation? And how to follow the traces of mimesis, how to avoid rehabilitating and generalizing Plato's mimesis—or any other's—over any other attempt to dominate it philosophically, over any other mimetology? And how to refer to mimesis outside of these mimetologies without again calling it "originary," when it is clear that mimesis cannot have an origin, that there is nothing original to mimesis? One of Derrida's suggestions is to use quotation marks around the word. The other is to go further, call it "triginary," born three times, like the god Dionysus. We will explore these possibilities in what follows, attending to an "originary" moment which, as will be seen, is rather a transformation without origin, a Dionysian metamorphosis by which a certain notion of mimesis appears after several dismemberments. Attending to the abyssal logic that folds mimesis upon itself in its historiography, this chapter follows its traces through their dissemination in the corpus of ancient Greek writings (along with the historians, philosophers, and philologists who have recovered and aimed to reassemble its dismembered body), finally focusing on Plato as the site of the first philosophical engagement with mimesis, a "triginary," and certainly definitive, transformation.

I define what the nature of this transformation is further below, yet before we delve into Plato's text we need to examine not only the history of mimesis before its philosophical debut, but more importantly its modern historiography. This gives us a first sketch of the multiplicity of meanings of mimesis, and puts us face to face with the challenges involved in making sense of this multiplicity. It also introduces us to the historical method used in this investigation, by which the object of study and the historical frame are co-constitutive: our notion of mimesis is the result of the modes of

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[3] Lacoue Labarthe, *Idem*.

constructing it in the historical documents, while simultaneously the frames themselves become a historical object of study.[4] Moreover, examining the "origin" of mimesis as the result of an initial dismembering and transformation already puts into question the notion of a "break" or a "rupture" with mimesis. If the history of mimesis is already the history of these ruptures, then no particular rupture can take preeminence over any other, no periodicity or development, no emancipation or departure from mimesis is possible, only transformations, only mimesis playing itself out, as history.

Although Plato has a prominent place at the beginning of the history of mimesis, he did not coin the term: words stemming from the root *mim-* are attested as early as the eigth century, in the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo*, dating from 600 BCE, while the etymology of the word itself—the oldest being most likely *mîmos*, is almost irrecoverable.[5] In the *Homeric Hymn*, mimesis is already a sounding phenomenon with enchanting as well as deceiving capacities. A chorus of Delian maidens bewitches their audience by their ability to represent the voices of men: "Also they can imitate [*mimeisthai*] the tongues [*phonas*] of all men and their clattering speech: each would say that he himself were singing, so close to truth is their sweet song [*aoide*]."[6] Among the earliest examples there are also three fragments by Pindar, and mimesis is related to sound or music in all of them. We already examined Pindar's *Pythian 12*. The most polemic instance of pre-Platonic usages of mimesis is a fragment from Aeschylus's *Edonians* (fragment 57, preserved by Strabo). It describes the arrival of Dionysus in Thrace:

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[4] Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 4.

[5] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 17. There are doubts as to whether *mîmos* even belongs to the Indo-Eurpean languages. The word is not part of the Ionian or Aeolian dialects. According to J.B. Hoffmann, it may be connected with the Sanscrit *māyā*, illusion or magic, an etymology that already locates an origin based in a meaning that is already at stake in the definition (J.B. Hoffmann, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen,* R. Oldenburg, Berlin, 1950). However, Hermann Koller rejects this interpretation based on the examples he examines, holding that whatever the original meaning is, it does not have anything to do with deception (*Täuschen*). cf. Else, 76. The problems with this interpretation and Koller's position are examined below.

[6] Anonymous. *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1914). Digital edition on perseus.tufts.edu; cf. Halliwell, 18. See below for an interpretation of this passage.

σεμνὰ Κοτυτοῦς δ᾽ ὄργι᾽ ἔχοντες

* * * * *

ὁ μὲν ἐν χερσὶν

βόμβυκας ἔχων, τόρνου κάματον,

δακτυλόθικτον πίμπλησι μέλος,

5   μανίας ἐπαγωγὸν ὁμοκλήν,

ὁ δὲ χαλκοδέτοις κοτύλαις ὀτοβεῖ

* * * * *

ψαλμὸς δ᾽ ἀλαλάζει·

ταυρόφθογγοι δ᾽ ὑπομυκῶνταί

ποθεν ἐξ ἀφανοῦς φοβεροὶ μῖμοι,

10   ἠχὼ τυπάνου δ᾽, ὥσθ᾽ ὑπογαίου

βροντῆς, φέρεται βαρυταρβής

And, practicing the holy ecstatic rites of Cotyto . . .

* * * *

One man holds in his hands

a pair of pipes, fashioned on the lathe,

and plays out a fingered melody,

a loud cry that brings on frenzy,

while another crashes the bronze cymbals

* * * *

. . . and the twang of strings resounds; and terrifying imitators of the sound of bulls

bellow in response from somewhere out of sight,

and the fearful deep sound of the drum

carries to the ear like thunder beneath the earth.[7]

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[7] Aeschylus, *Fragments,* Alan H. Sommerstein trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 57. Translation modified.

This passage is examined in a groundbreaking work that explored the archaic usages of mimesis to illuminate the multiplicity of meanings that the notion already displays in Plato and Aristotle, Herman Koller's 1954 *Die Mimesis in Der Antike: Nachahmung, Darstellung, Ausdruck*.[8] Koller recognized that the usual translation of mimesis as *Nachahmung,* imitation, was the result of a particular history, which not only over-imposed a modern notion of mimesis upon earlier texts, indeed over the entire conception of Greek antiquity, but also left us with a particularly reduced notion of mimesis for our own times.[9] Koller's polemic thesis was that the original meaning of mimesis was not *Nachahmung,* but *Darstellung* or *Ausdruck*, that is, presentation or expression, or even better, performance or enactment: "durch Tanz zur Darstellung bringen."[10] There is already a wide diversity of meanings in Plato and before him, but even more important is the fact that neither Homer and Hesiod used any word related to mimesis, especially not when referring to something like "imitation," "impersonation," and even less "deception." Instead, in its origin, according to Koller, mimesis is always used in connection with dance and music, *mousikē*—taking the *mîmoi* in the Aeschylus fragment as the original sense of mimesis, meaning "actors of a [Dionysian] cult drama."[11] Only later, in Plato and Aristotle, the meaning of mimesis shifted and was reduced to the sense of imitation as we find it in painting and poetry. For Koller, the original sense of mimesis appears already in the Damonian theory of music presented in book 3 of Plato's *Republic*, which the author reconstructs mostly through readings of Aristides Quintilianus.

    With this intervention, Koller began to historicize the Platonic treatment of mimesis while opening the possibility of relocating mimesis in the context of *mousikē* from which it had been displaced after centuries of post-Platonic "aesthetics." It brought attention to a wide variety of fragments that preserved scattered meanings of mimesis, which broadly expanded its accepted meaning and pushed scholars to think beyond the

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[8] Hermann Koller, *Die Mimesis in Der Antike Nachahmung, Darstellung, Ausdruck* (Bernae: A. Francke, 1954).

[9] Idem, 10.

[10] Idem, 119.

[11] Idem, 13, 119. Koller considers the earliest testimonies to be the *Homeric Hymn*, Pindar's *Pythian 12*, and the fragment by Aeschylus. I elaborate on the wider sense of *mousikē* below.

usual translation of mimesis as "imitation." In fact, it could be argued that it opened the

possibility for a history and a historiography of mimesis.[12] However, less because of its

revolutionary thesis than because of his method and sources, Koller's work was harshly

received, especially in English-speaking Classics departments, prompting several

refutations and mixed responses even today. Koller was accused of advancing "arbitrary

hypotheses," "misinterpreting" his evidence, and "neglecting" to include available

evidence in Plato and other sources, especially in his treatment of pre-Platonic authors.[13]

More paradoxically, the book and the subsequent polemic demonstrated the futility of

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[12] The ritual and performative aspects of *mousikē,* for example, have now been elaborated upon to show to what extent the musical practices of the Greeks constituted the type of enactment that Koller aims to preserve for mimesis, for example in the pragmatic and performative dimensions of the poems, which characterizes the performance not solely as a speech act but as "a true cult act." Claude Calame, "Choral Forms in Aristophanic Comedy: Musical Mimesis and Dramatic Performance in Classical Athens," in Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson (eds.), *Music and the Muses: The Culture of "Mousikē" in the Classical Athenian City* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). In addition to Murray and Wilson (2004), see especially Claude Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Function* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*; Eva Stehle, *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece: Nondramatic Poetry in Its Setting,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[13] J. Tate, "Die Mimesis in der Antike. Nachahmung, Darstellung, Ausdruck by H. Koller," *The Classical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3/4 (Dec., 1955), pp. 258-260; W. J. Verdenius, "Die Mimesis in der Antike by H. Koller," *Mnemosyne,* Vol. 10, Fasc. 3 (1957) , pp. 254-258; Gerald F. Else '"Imitation" in the Fifth Century,' *Classical Philology,* Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr., 1958) , pp. 73-90, and Else, "Addendum to 'Imitation' in the Fifth Century," *Classical Philology,* Vol. 53. No 4. (Oct. 1958), p. 254, are generally taken to have convincingly rebutted Koller's thesis as a whole (e.g., Halliwell, 17). Warren D. Anderson "The Importance of Damonian Theory in Plato's Thought." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* Vol 86 (1955): 88-102 argues against Koller's claims that Plato uncritically received Damonian theory. Mediating between Koller and Else, who sets out to expand and correct Koller's evidence, Göran Sörbom compiled an even more expanded list in an attempt to settle the discussion. Sörbom holds *mîmos* to refer primarily to a Sicilian dramatic genre, more precisely the works of Sophron, which usually portrayed an unvarnished, low life, and which, Else argues, carried a pejorative sense for Athenians. For Sörbom, then, the original meaning of *mîmos* is metaphorical: "to behave like a mime actor" (a definition where original metaphoricity nicely folds mimesis upon itself: to mime is to mime a mime; I will return to the problems of discussing mimesis as metaphor below). He then takes up Else's examples and reinterprets them according to his own definition, with varying results. See below. *Mimesis and Art: Studies in the Origin and Early Development of an Aesthetic Vocabulary* (Stockholm: Svenska Bokförlaget, 1966). Other works taking up the controversy that merit mention and which offer a more sympathetic reading are Eva Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), who accepts Koller's thesis although denying the limitation to ritual and dance, thus preserving the broader sense of "enactment" while also focusing on "the object" and not solely on "the medium" of mimesis, i.e. not only *how* but of *what* something is a mimesis (p. 11). Halliwell, among the most rigorous and important voices in the discussion until today, rejects Koller's position as resting on a wholly inadequate basis, and objecting in general to the possibility of reducing the semantic development of the concept to any neat chronology. He defines his position as more fluid than of Koller, Else, and Sörbom. (Halliwell, 2002, 15). Most of the criticism of Koller's book, in fact, seems to stem from such rigid interpretations, which focus exclusively on the philological aspects of his readings and take as definitive the schematic development that he aims to trace.

attempting to recover the original meaning of mimesis through an analysis of extant texts, whose fragmentary status and scarcity are only one part of the problem.[14] Besides the initial debate, mostly limited to philological minutiae and entirely dismissive of Koller's broader aim of recentering the role of *mousikē*, the polemic broadened the discussion on mimesis and its multiple senses even in archaic Greek usage, and brought to prominence a series of texts that merit examination here. Recall the polemic fragment by Aeschylus:

> and terrifying imitators [*mîmoi*] of the sound of bulls [*taurophthongoi*]
>
> bellow in response from somewhere out of sight [*aphanous*],

For Koller, the word *mîmoi* in the passage refers to the participants of the ritual, actors. Else's refutation is strong, and it has been accepted by most writers involved in the debate: Koller ignores the fact that the passage consists of a list of musical instruments and their corresponding sounds, including "the droning of bass flutes (*bombykes*), the clashing of cymbals (*kotylai*), and the twanging (*psalmos*) of stringed instruments."[15] Koller has no grounds to hold that *mîmoi* refers to actors or persons at all. In fact, doing so precisely writes back into the poem a Platonic meaning that is not necessarily there. The "terrifying imitators of the voice of bulls," Else advances, are rather bullroarers, called *rhomboi* in Greek, not unlike the *churinga* of Australian aboriginals but present worldwide in rituals of different types: a flat, thin piece of wood attached to a string, which the performer holds to whirl the piece of wood through the air. The device produces a deep, continuous sound that varies in pitch according to speed and the length of the string.[16] But moreover, Else continues, it doesn't even refer to the instrument as such but to the sound made by the instrument, "out of sight," "unseen" (*aphanous*). The

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[14] Thus Halliwell: "The search for origins is always an alluring but often a fruitless enterprise. Although several scholars have been greatly exercised over the origins of the Greek concept of mimesis, the thinness of available evidence has doomed their undertakings to at best the speculative, at worst the futile." 17.

[15] Else, 74. The passage in Strabo where the fragment is preserved, Else adds, argues that the rituals Thracian and Phrygian rituals are essentially Dionysiac, and does it by comparing the instruments used in the rite. Idem, 88 n. 8. The Thracian setting underscores the link between the aulos and Phrygia. The cult devoted to the Phrygian Cotys is eventually incorporated into the Athenian cult devoted to Rhea (Cybele).

[16] Idem. Else cites J. E. Harrison, *Thernis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 61-67; and others to defend this hypothesis. See Klaus Wachsmann. "Bullroarer." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed September 2, 2015.

"terrifying" effect is produced not by the instrument as such, itself quite unimpressive, but by the acousmatic effect—and acousmaticity, for Else, is crucial for all performances that employ the bullroarer: "In Australia [*the churinga*] is never shown to the women at all, to the boys only after they have completed the initiation, and then as a portentous secret."[17] Thus, the *mîmos* refers to the sound-effect of the bullroarers, a bull-like sound, which, Else finally concludes, probably underscores the sense of deception and mimicry. The Aeschylus play to which this fragment presumably belongs, *Edônoi*, is modeled after Euripide's *Bacchae*, in which Pentheus is dismembered by his mother in a Dionysian frenzy for accusing the cult of being an imposture. The *Edônoi,* Else holds, portrays Lycurgus in a similar position of disbelief and futile resistance to the god, who similarly ends up dismembering his own son.[18] The important point, the Else argues, is that the earliest appearance of *mîmos* gives precisely the sense of deception that is supposed to appear only with Plato. After reviewing all extant examples belonging to the mimesis word-group in the fifth century, Else offers three meanings of mimesis as current by 450 BCE:

> 1. "Miming" as direct representation of looks or utterances of animals or men through speech, song, and dance.
> 2. "Imitation [emulation]" of the actions and character of one person by another
> 3. "Replication" [only *mîmema*]: the image or effigy of a person or thing in material form.[19]

Others take it as a metaphor. Sörbom, sees in the *mîmos* a reference to the Sicilian mime (see footnote 13), a metaphor that was progressively naturalized. From this position, he takes issue with Else's classification which he finds unnecessary and even misleading, insofar as it places divisions in usages that are not clearly demarcated and blend into each other as the original sense of the metaphor fades out.[20] Against Else, Sörbom emphasizes that both in its usage in the fragments, and according to ancient Greek painting and

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[17] Else, 75. On the *churinga,* its function as totem and its connection with ritual, magic, and secrecy, see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields, The Free Press, 1995.
[18] Idem.
[19] Else, 79. Cf. Gebauer and Wulf, 28 for a gloss of this classification and an overview of the polemic.
[20] Sörbom, 20.

sculptures and other testimonies, both the Sicilian mime and the metaphorical usage of *mîmos* and its derivates aim not so much to realism or truthful reproduction (and hence neither deception) but to reproducing the general traits of the model, the universal, not the particulars of the individual.[21] The intention behind a *mimema* "is to be recognized as made similar to something else or is for some reason or other just performed in a similar way to something else."[22] Hence, to return to the Aeschylus passage, the *mîmoi* need not refer to the bullroarers but, as Koller held, to the performers and to the act in general, that is, of making bull-like sounds as part of the ritual.[23]

More recently, Halliwell joins Sörbom in maintaining a metaphorical sense in which the sounds of the bullroarers are personified as quasi-dramatic actors, offering the following translation for the passage: "terrifying, bull-voiced performers bellow from somewhere out of sight," thus maintaining both the reference to the bullroarers and to the *mîmos* as dramatic performance or impersonation.[24] Moreover, Halliwell preserves an association with musical performance (but not ritual dance) for the word *mîmoi* from which comes part of the force of the word in the passage. Citing the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* where the singers enchant their listeners by singing like them, so that "each would say that he himself were singing, so close to truth is their sweet song," Halliwell concludes that from its origin, the word possesses a wider sense than mimicry or simulation: Both musicopoetic and visual arts are included. In fact, "on its fleeting appearance in relation to an artform, mimesis already hints at complexities of representational style and effect that can hardly be captured by a jejune notion of imitation."[25]

As Halliwell holds, the dissemination that marks pre-Platonic appearances of terms from the mimesis word group make it impossible to reduce its development to any

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[21] Idem, 27.
[22] Idem, 33.
[23] Idem, 54.
[24] Halliwell, 2002, 17.
[25] Idem, 19. This position, however, itself outlines the limits of Halliwell's otherwise rigorous and comprehensive analysis, insofar as he is oriented by and towards a notion of aesthetics that, to my mind, is all-too modern, even if carefully elaborated. I will return to this problem below.

neat semantic chronology, as the philologists interested in the concept have harshly learned.[26] This vicariousness is present at the origin without origin of mimesis: Its meaning is marked by the absences, displacements, and erasures of its "archaic" history. It is disseminated through texts and bodies, *corpora*, or more precisely in fragments of bodies: the third birth of Dionysus comes after his dismemberment by the Titans—a dismemberment that is repeated by Pentheus and Orpheus.[27] We face mimesis as the repetition of these dismemberments: never whole, never complete, and always placing ourselves at risk of a dismemberment without reason. Present in all its fragments, constantly reappearing as something else, mimesis is Dionysian: born not once nor twice, but three times; thriving on metamorphosis, constantly becoming other; arriving as a stranger to transform and destroy the identities of those who mock them and those who welcome them as well. Of mimesis, as of Dionysus, we can only say that it is coming or that it has been there—we can only appropriate it, verify it—we can expect it everywhere or everywhere wonder and despair of what it has left behind, and we gather the fragments only in a ritual of apotropaic mourning, an attempt to fend off our impending dismemberment.

ORALITY AND ALTERITY

Another form of integrating the opposing views of Koller and Else is offered by Eric A. Havelock in a footnote to his *Preface to Plato*. For Havelock, Koller is right in recognizing an element of "expressionism" or "re-enactment," while Else is right in showing that it extends to the voice, gesture, dress, and action generally, not narrowly to ritual dancing and music.[28] However, by generalizing these activities as a "direct

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[26] I thus pass over in silence the extensive list of fragments analyzed by these authors. A discussion of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* would be necessary insofar as he anticipates some of the crucial aspects of the Platonic position yet, insofar as they are limited to sculpture, they fall outside the limits of this dissertation. See Gebauer and Wulf, 29 and Halliwell, 124 and *passim*.

[27] William Storm, *After Dionysus: A Theory of the Tragic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 21.

[28] Eric A. Havelock *Preface to Plato*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1963), 59 n. 22. Along with Walter Ong, Marshall McLuhan and Jack Goody, Havelock's work is central in the discussion around "the literacy thesis," whose work elaborates on the research made by Milman Perry and Albert B. Lord on the oral nature of Homeric poetry. See Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word,* London; (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013) (1983); Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg*

representation," Else effectively reinscribes the Platonic sense of mimesis as it appears in book 10 of the *Republic* into the very texts whose "original" meanings he is attempting to rescue.

The function of mimesis in Plato, and thus its pre-Platonic meaning, is of crucial importance for Havelock's general claim that there is a radical difference between orally-based cultures and those which appeared after the general adoption of writing—specifically Greek alphabetic writing—and that Plato's works are an attempt to come to terms with the transformations his own age is experiencing on account of writing (Plato's written dialogues and his mode of arguing being already evidence of the influence of writing in his own thought). For Havelock and the proponents of the orality/literacy theory, the difference between an oral and a literate culture, which amounts to two

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Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962). The bibliography on the topic is broad and diverse. For an account of Havelock's work in the history of mimesis along the lines traced here, see Gebauer and Wulf, 45 and ff. From a musicological perspective, the "orality thesis" has attracted the most interest in studies of medieval music, see especially Leo Treitler, *With Voice and Pen: Coming to Know Medieval Song and How It Was Made,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Anna Maria Busse Berger. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*. (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2005). It also forms an important theoretical underpinning approaches focusing on the history of the book as material object after Roger Chartier, in *The Order of Books* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); see Kate Van Orden, *Materialities*: *Books, Readers, and the Chanson in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Van Orden, "Children's Voices: Singing and Literacy in Sixteenth-century France," *Early Music History* 25 (2006): 209-256. For an application to popular musics, see Paul Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006). For a general account of the status of the question in musicology, see Francesca R. Sborgi Lawson, "Rethinking the Orality-Literacy Paradigm in Musicology." *Oral Tradition* 25, no. 2 (2010); For a critique of Ong and McLuhan with relation to the opposition between ear and sight, "the audiovisual litany" that emerges from positing the orality/literacy split as Ong does and especially its theological and Catholic underpinnings, see Sterne, Jonathan. "The Theology of Sound: A Critique of Orality." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 36, no. 2 (2011): 207–25; Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 16; and further, Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). For Havelock's late position on the orality/literacy debate and his relation to the so-called "Toronto School of Media Theory," see Eric Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). For a current adoption of Havelock's theories to the analysis of ancient Greek poetry, see Gregory Nagy. *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) and Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); for a critique John Halverson, "Havelock on Orality and Literacy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1992), pp. 148-163.

different "states of mind" is absolute, although its establishment took a long time since the invention of writing and its dissemination and adoption.[29]

During the first two thirds of the fifth-century, Havelock holds, Greece was in a state of semi-literacy, an unequal adoption of literacy that saw no increase in fluent reading and hence experienced the persistence of the oral state of mind.[30] This generalized oral culture, its formation and preservation, was under the monopoly of the poets whom Plato attacks in the *Republic*. For Havelock, all the diverse senses in which Plato uses the term mimesis in book three of the *Republic*— elucidation of which prompted Koller's research—refer to various experiences which have in common the oral transmission of poetry as education in Greek culture. As attested by Plato's text itself, the content and function of these poems was educative and political, not just aesthetic, and its public consisted of listeners, not readers. For Havelock, Homeric poetry is a repository of knowledge, an encyclopedia, which has the task of preserving and transmitting customs, values and laws, as well as practical, i.e. technical knowledge (*ethē*, *nomoi*, and *technai*).[31] Now, according to Havelock and based on Parry's and Lord's analysis of Homeric verse, the preservation and transmission of this poetry in the oral state of mind depends on rhythmic and formulaic repetitions which exploit rhyme, assonance, and echo to articulate ideas and rhetorical figures and clichés with physical movements from the throat and mouth (singing) to hands and feet (dancing and instrument playing), enabling both the recollection of the formulas as well as the introduction of variations and changes in the ongoing composition of the poems. This acoustic assemblage of rhythmically-organized physiological, affective, linguistic, and sonorous performance aiming to the

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[29] Ong (2012), in fact, claims it was not entirely completed until the advent of print, and even still there are cases of "secondary orality," a mostly oral-based state that is nevertheless permeated by writing. This is as good place as any to note the problematic ethnocentrism of Ong's account, even if it is meant to broaden an understanding of oral cultures. The more he qualifies his position the clearer it is that "literacy" is a phenomenon restricted to a very limited sociocultural milieu, even hardly coextensive with "the West" as such. For an assessment of this problem, especially Ong's role in the development of "Americanism" and its consequences, see John Hartley's introductory chapter in Ong.

[30] Idem, 40.

[31] Idem, 87ff. Halverson "Havelock on Orality and Literacy,", however, objects to each of these claims, especially to the specific type of knowledge that the Homeric poems in fact preserve, and the effective authority they could have had during the Classical period, pointing out that no statements remain that attest to the authority of Homer except for the skepticism or antagonism of a Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Plato himself. (Halverson, "Havelock on Orality and Literacy," 155).

preservation and transmission of customs and laws is commonly referred to as *mousikē*.[32] Ancient Greek poetry is a performance, an enactment, in a way that eliminates the difference between the poet and the poem, as well as that between the performer and the listener.[33]

Thus, Havelock writes, the effectivity—the production, retention, and power—of oral-based poetry in ancient Greece depended on the poet's capacity of identifying with the poetry. "You threw yourself into the situation of Achilles, you identified with his grief or his anger. You yourself became Achilles and so did the reciter to whom you listened. Thirty years later you could automatically quote what Achilles had said or what the poet had said about him."[34] Archaic mimesis, from Havelock's perspective, consists not in copying or imitating the aspect, sound, or behavior of something else, but rather in *sympathetic behavior*, in the "power to make [the poet's] audience identify almost pathologically and certainly sympathetically with the content of what he is saying."[35] Moreover, Havelock adds, all the early testimonies examined by Else *et al*. testify to the fact that mimesis, even in this earlier usage, reveal a type of skill that associate it with *mousikē*, but more generally to a skilled practice, a *technē*, another aspect of mimesis which comes under Plato's attack.[36]

Mousikē was thus a form of sociocultural performance that exploited the affective possibilities of poetic performance in a continual re-enactment of tribal folkways, laws and procedures, and which required of the listener to "become engaged in this re-

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[32] Idem, 150. On the notion of "acoustic assemblages" see Ana Ochoa, *Aurality*, 22. For various approaches within classical studies to the notion of *mousikē,* see Murray and Wilson, eds.; Henrichs, Albert. "'Why Should I Dance?': Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy." *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 3, no. 1 (1994): 56–111; Wilson, Peter. "Euripides' Tragic Muse." *Illinois Classical Studies* 24/25 (1999): 427–49; *Mousikè et Aretè: La Musique et L'éthique, de L'antiquité à L'âge Moderne: Actes Du Colloque International Tenu En Sorbonne Les 15-17 Décembre 2003,* (Florence Malhomme and Anne Gabrièle Wersinger (eds.) Paris: J. Vrin, 2007). For an adaptation of the concept of "musicking" to a broader sense of practices that includes that of *mousikē,* Gary Tomlinson, *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*. (New York: Zone Books, 2015).

[33] Cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Image et apparence dans la théorie platonicienne de la mimêsis," *Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*, n° 2, April-July, 1975, pp 133-160, English translation in Vernant, J. P., and F. I. Zeitlin. *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. (Princeton University Press, 1991).

[34] Idem, 45.

[35] Idem.

[36] Idem, 59 n. 22.

enactment to the point of total emotional involvement."[37] Understood in this way, Havelock notes, mimesis is far from having any meaning related to copying or imitation, since in fact these performances had no "original." The poet reenacted the doings and sayings of heroes, not so much "imitating" them but re-enacting them in the present, losing himself in the performance and making his audience participate in the rehearsal of the tradition.[38] Let us return for the last time to the Aeschylus fragment:

> and terrifying imitators [*mîmoi*] of the sound of bulls [*taurophthongoi*]
>
> bellow in response from somewhere out of sight [*aphanous*],

Another important thesis of the orality/literacy paradigm holds that there are no abstractions in oral culture, there is no *theoria* or contemplation, in fact, no distinction between "subject and object," and although effectively preserving cultural wealth, the laws and customs of a people, the form it is stored in is different than the "knowledge" of a literate culture. The oral mind, the theory holds, conceives of everything in flux, in action. It knows no universals, its formulations are always "time-conditioned," which keeps them from becoming abstract or "eternal," and barely uses the verb to be as a timeless copula, employing instead constructions where abstract concepts are personified and presented as engaged in some sort of sequential, meaningful action conveyed by other verbs and grouped in a chain of autonomous units joined by the conjunction "and

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[37] Idem, 159. Wilson confirms this interpretation of *mousikē*, as "especially public performances of word with music, and often also dance and song which served vital social, religious, educational and what might be called political or parapolitical functions…. *mousikē* is analogous to the rituals of sacrifice, while much more variegated than they. Both should normatively serve as institutions promoting social, political and religious order and stability. Wilson, "Euripides's Tragic Music," 429-30. Henrich elaborates on its Dionisian dimension in Henrichs, "'Why Should I Dance?': Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy," 1994.

[38] Even to the point of becoming a witness. Moreover, insofar as each performance introduces changes and transformations at "combinatorial and permutational" levels, each performance has to be considered an "original" in its own right, itself nevertheless repeatable. See Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*. In a profound analysis that cannot be summarized here, Nagy elaborates on Koller's and Havelock's positions, emphasizing the coextensive senses of re-enactment and imitation: "If you re-enact an archetypal action in ritual, it only stands to reason that you have to *imitate* those who re-enacted before you and who served as your *immediate* models. But the *ultimate* model is still the archetypal action or figure that you are re-enacting in ritual, which is coextensive with the whole line of imitators who re-enact the way in which their ultimate model acted, each imitating each one's predecessor." Nagy, 56.

next…"[39] Oral poetry, then, presents everything in action, and only considers abstract relations in terms of activities realized by personified actors.[40]

From this perspective the *mîmoi* in the Dionysiac rituals of Cotyto may well be the human actors (Koller), as well as the bullroarers they play (Else) or even the sounds themselves, outside of any weak metaphorical sense (Sörbom and Halliwell). In any case, the word *mîmoi* is a personification, naming terrifying, "unseen" entities that sound like bulls (*taurophtongoi*) as they "bellow in response," beings that are not themselves, that are something in addition to what they already are, a terrifying bellowing. The *mîmoi* are "terrifying" because they enact a "devocalization"—eradicating the human voice (*phōnē*) and supplanting it with inarticulate sound (*phthongos*). The other instruments in the list are referred to by the sounds that they make, the crashes of cymbals and the twang of strings, but the sound of the bullroarers exceeds their nature as instruments, hence they need to be called and identified as other. The omission of the instrument in the verse, its replacement by the *mîmos* is significant in itself and not "merely" metaphorical: mimesis displaces the particular, it takes the place of the particular, or rather presents the particular as being constituted by something other than itself. If it is a metaphor, it is because it effectively carries something else over to the place where it is not (*meta* + *phorein*), because it opens the space of its happening to the alterity that constitutes it. To be a *mîmos* is to become other, to make alterity a constitutive part of identity—hence it

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[39] Havelock, 180 and *passim*; See also Ong, 49 and ff. In another influential work, Havelock examines the "history" of the verb "to be" by comparing the pre-Platonic and Platonic notions of justice. Eric Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[40] Havelock, 1986, 100ff. For a criticism of the problems with this divide between the aural and the visual along orality and literacy lines especially for its problematic theological overtones as expressed by Ong, see Sterne, 2003, 15-19. There, Sterne presents Derrida's position as "an inversion of Ong's value system," stating that "deconstruction inverts, inhabits, and reanimates the sound/vision binary, privileging writing over speech and refusing both speech-based metaphysics and presence-based positive assertions." Idem, 17. Sterne's move is thus to abandon both deconstruction and the Christian identification of sound with interiority, aiming finally to "redescribe sound." Indeed, that Havelock and Derrida were writing about Plato and the invention of writing during the 1960's, unknown to each other and that no real engagement between the two ever took place is a remarkable coincidence, but the situation with deconstruction is quite more complex and it will be more useful to overcome the "audiovisual litany" without any simple inversion, but rather taking up the role of writing and mimesis in the constitution of the very dichotomy, as I suggest below.

matters little if the beings in question are "properly" human actors or bullroarers insofar as they are named by the terror that exceeds them.

Moreover, what the word *mîmos* emphasizes—and here we find the first trace of an issue that will be crucial further on—is that what is terrifying about the bullroarers is their effect which, as Else rightly notes, greatly exceeds the object that produces it. That is, when something is called a *mîmos*, or more generally a *mîmema*, a difference is posited between such effect and the object that produces the effect, in other words, the medium that enables it. But attending to the effect of mimesis means ceasing to attend to such media. Thus, in addition to producing the difference between original and copy, mimesis also produces the difference between an effect and the medium in which it takes place, and forces us to ignore, even to repress, the latter for the sake of the former. Precisely this is what gives rise to the uncertainty around which the foregoing commentaries turn: we know of the effect of the "terrifying and "unseen bull-voiced" bellowing, but we know nothing about what produces them, and this ignorance is at the root of the effect.

Crucially, without being the origin of mimesis, these earlier examples function as models for mimesis itself. They not only give us "archaic meanings" of mimesis but also themselves define what mimesis is and how it operates—we will explore this below as the abyssal paradigmaticity of mimesis. For Gregory Nagy, the chorus of maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* shows "the way for others to re-enact all other peoples, in all their varieties. These Maidens are models of mimesis by way of practicing mimesis: they can repeat everyone's voice, *mimeîsthai* (*Hymn to Apollo*, 163), and everyone who hears the repetition will think that it is his or her own voice."[41] By repeating the other's voice, the Delian Maidens take their place and in turn place the others in their place. Similarly, these bull-voiced *mîmos* model mimesis by re-enacting the undoing of the presumed self-identity of beings, by dramatizing in a terrifying way their displacement and the emptying-out of their materiality for the sake of expression. Thus, it is not enough to analyze this as an acousmatic sound when the effect of the word *mîmos* is

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[41] Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*, 57.

effectively to displace, to detach and reattach sounds and sources, to engage affectively with a sensorial compound of sight and hearing and transform it. Mimesis is the production of the synesthetic assemblage that allows for Dionysus himself, the bull-headed god, *Taurocephalus*, to appear on stage—as the actor in the tragedy re-enacts an act which itself re-enacts the coming of Dionysus—while at the same time keeping the materiality of the media that enables his arrival to remain unseen.

There is a contagious "double mimesis" at stake in these performances.[42] On the one hand, the poet's reenactment of the heroic actions, his becoming Achilles; on the other hand the audience's identification with the performance, indeed *their own* becoming Achilles. What is contagious in this case is not so much the model of Achilles or any other hero, it is not simply that "everyone acts like Achilles," but more importantly that everyone's identity is exposed to and penetrated by divine alterity. A similar duplicity is described by Nagy as a paradox, namely that "the archetype to be re-enacted must re-enact, not just enact, in its own right."[43] And later, emphasizing a sense of continuity in mimesis that is crucial for his argument, and that can be read here next to—or as part of—contagion, and in general as the consequence of the penetration of identity by alterity that undoes the self, that "from the standpoint of mimesis, the rhapsode is a *recomposed performer*: he becomes recomposed into Homer every time he performs Homer."[44] The mimetic performance is an epidemic because it falls equally upon [*epi*] everyone in the *demos,* divesting the participants of their individuality and affirming the communal nature of the ritual. To participate of the gods is to abandon the identity of the self. Mimesis is the condition for this (dis)identification, of the opening to alterity, which now becomes necessary.

And it is against this Dionysian experience of poetry, or more precisely against its institutionalization and monopolization by Plato's rivals in Athens—the poets as well as the Sophists (whom we haven't mentioned yet)—that the discussion of mimesis in the

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[42] Gebauer and Wulf *Mimesis*, 47.
[43] Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*, 57.
[44] Idem, 61.

Republic is marshaled. Whatever we can make of the status of archaic mimesis and its relation to music, dance, imitation, and deception, all the authors we've examined agree in one thing: Plato's intervention is definitive and, in the words of Gebauer and Wulf, it marks a break and a transformation in the history of mimesis.[45] In the most general sense, this just means that Plato is the first writer to take up mimesis as a problem, to philosophize about it—the assessment of his statements about the matter is a different matter altogether. He brings mimesis into prominence, and his sustained engagement gives the notion a depth and complexity it never showed before, even if it never arrives to a unified meaning. The dissemination that characterizes archaic mimesis is by no means eliminated in Plato's text, but it seems that we can still talk about a certain transformation. Having explored the problem of origins and archaic mimesis we know not to approach Plato's text as an origin for mimesis. We know this is not its origin—or rather, it is not an origin. It is neither its origin nor an origin at all. We approach it as the site of a transformation, a metamorphosis—a third birth—that programmed the history of mimesis from then on.

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[45] Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis,* 31.

CHAPTER 2

PLATONIC METAMORPHOSES

> They sought to bind him with rude
> bonds, but the bonds would not hold him, and
> the withes fell far away from his hands and feet:
> and he sat with a smile in his dark eyes.
>
> *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*

WRITING (AND/IN) THE HISTORY OF MIMESIS

For Gebauer and Wulf, the Platonic transformation cannot be understood without an awareness of the changes brought about by the introduction of writing as analyzed by Havelock.[1] Not only do we encounter a new or specifically philosophical treatment of mimesis with Plato but, in fact, after his reformulations "the entire complex of language, bodies, images, medium, and social control underwent a change from the ground up."[2] Through writing, the acoustic medium of communication changes into a visible object with the quality of being quotable and verifiable as fact. Its outcome is the very idea of theory, contemplation, *theorein*. The Platonic transformation, in this reading, consists in leveling a critique of the earlier modes of communication, gathering the diverse practices and their content under the name of mimesis for the first time, and isolating the conceptual knowledge that remained conditioned to time and the senses in these practices, by distinguishing between true knowledge (*episteme*) and received authority (*doxa*), between pure thinking (*noesis*) and sensorial experience (*aesthesis*).[3] The result, in their reading, is that the type of practices associated with mimetic production—specifically with *mousikē*—appear as a concern with becoming instead of being, with the many instead of the one, and with the visible instead of the intelligible. Moreover, they

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[1] Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 45.
[2] Idem.
[3] Idem, 50.

argue, the monopoly held by the poets and the sophists of this type of knowledge leads Plato to relegate it to "a sphere of its own, aesthetics, which yields only a qualified form of knowledge."[4]

This transformation, however it is defined, appears as the non-origin of theory, of aesthetics, of philosophy as such. It also seems to begin a chapter in the history of mimesis in which the sounding and performative aspects of *mousikē* have a progressively limited role to play, being quickly overshadowed by painting, poetry, and especially tragedy. We can begin to talk then, even, of a redistribution of the sensorium, of a displacement from the aural to the visual, and from the visual to the intelligible. The most important transformation involved by this displacement, however, is that we encounter for the first time an unambiguous distinction between a models and copies, along with a hierarchization of their value and a regulation for their production. And this, in Havelock's reading, would not be anything like an epistemic change nor an aesthetic revolution, as much as the unavoidable consequences of the rise of literacy.

Thus far, we have entertained Havelock's theory in the context of archaic mimesis and with respect to his discussion of Homeric poetry, but we haven't engaged with his treatment of Plato. What is crucial in Havelock is that Plato's text is, at the same time, a testimony—a document for the historian—of the general passage from orality and literacy as well as a crucial actor—an author for the philosopher—in the transformation as the regulator, codifier, and in fact programmer of the subsequent conditions for understanding and judging archaic and classical mimesis. Considering Plato's role in the history of mimesis along these lines poses a fundamental question about the place of mimesis in the theory of literacy in general. How can we account for the privilege that Plato seems to have of being aware at any level of the massive transformations that are said to be taking place during his time? In other words, are we to read Plato symptomatically as a document of the transformations, or as the author of a doctrine of mimesis that rides upon these transformations while at the same time exposing the conditions for its own possibility? A more immediate version of the same question is

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[4] Idem.

suggested by Havelock himself with respect to Plato's own awareness of the transformations he was experiencing. The problem Havelock poses is, how was Plato able to reject the culture that had raised him or, in other words, "if the educational system which transmitted the Hellenic mores had indeed relied on the perpetual stimulation of the young in a kind of hypnotic trance, to use Plato's language, how did the Greeks ever wake up?"[5]

In approaching these questions, we encounter what is at stake in the Platonic transformation for the history of mimesis, as well as securing the place that we assign to Plato's text in the entire scheme. We engage Plato as just that, a text, in which what is at stake is nothing other than its very condition as text, as a written text. That is to say, we seek to understand the role of writing in the history of mimesis by questioning the very notion of writing that is written into the history of mimesis. This is because writing is already in a problematic relation with mimesis, and the type of writing that has been taken as the condition for such transformation is already a result of the history it attempts to write: To write about the history of mimesis is to ask about the place of writing in that history. But questioning their relation might just jeopardize the entire possibility of understanding the nature of such transformation and thus of making sense of the history as a whole. Let us move more slowly.

Havelock contends that philosophy is only possible through the type of reflexivity afforded by the growing literary culture, by the mediation that writing provides. Writing is a condition for the possibility of abstraction and logical thought, indeed for the emergence of abstract ideas as such, and it parallels the displacement of an acoustic orientation without fixity to a visual, static one. According to the "literacy thesis" in Havelock's account, the very distinction between subject and object, between the knower and the known, is a result of the introduction of writing. Only poetry as written could be truly examined and analyzed with the sense objectivity which we know today and which was beginning to be experienced in Plato's time. But this is not all. The entire mindset of

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[5] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 208.

ancient culture was transformed by writing, specifically by the Greek alphabet which represents all sounds, not just consonants, thus presumably requiring no interpretation (the filling in of the vowels) for its decoding, freeing the mind from the task of memorization. Freed from this task, the "soul" becomes autonomous, independent of the content of what is memorized. Thus, Havelock claims, the very notion of a soul, of *psyche*, is at odds with the experience of the "Homeric mind," and it does not emerge until Plato.

The *Republic* is, as we said, both a testimony and the first articulation of the notion of soul. Or to be more precise, as Havelock writes, Socrates affirms and exploits a notion which was the slow creation of thinkers like Heraclitus and Democritus, a development which involves not only the semantics of the word *psyche* as opposed to "body" or "corpse," but the very possibility of articulating the notion of a "self," of an "I" that remains unchanged throughout its affections, a self-governing consciousness.[6] This is because, in the Homeric mind, the self is inseparable from what it does, from its enactments and re-enactments—the self is simultaneously constituted and exceeded by alterity in a mimetic epidemic. The poem as a cultural repository exceeds the individual in order to be preserved and communicated. The educational experience of Homeric poetry, the identification of poets and listeners, implies that the content of the poem exists only in its embodied performance, it does not preexist it and it does not exist outside of it. Insofar as the entire acoustic assemblage is deployed for the preservation and distribution of the poem, the poem is coextensive with all the participants of the performance, from the memory of the poem to the affective engagement of the audience that ensures the actualization of the mores and customs it preserves and aims to maintain.

The "identification" of the poet and the audience with the content of the poem in its re-enactment is necessary for the poem's preservation, for its effect. From this follows that there is no way of understanding what the actual "content" of the poem is, since "its acceptance and retention are made psychologically possible by a mechanism of self-surrender to the poetic performance, and of self-identification with the situations and the

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[6] Idem, 200.

stories related in the performance."[7] This means that the poem cannot be properly "understood" by the poet or the audience because both poet and audience remain within the mimetic epidemic, insofar as they merge with it, or are co-constituted by it. There is no way of remaining "outside" of the performance, just as there is no way of attending to the poem without getting carried away in its flow. And conversely, there is no way of maintaining any unified notion of a "self" or an "I" that is not in a constant becoming-other, a self that is not at once a poet in performance and the hero he performs, who is not bound to the constraints of time that make up the poetic performance. The transmission of ethos mores and customs in this way implies that there is no interiority in which to ponder and reflect what these customs are and what they signify by themselves, outside of their daily application—there are no timeless, abstract laws, only the right thing to be done, the proper way to honor the gods.

By the time of Plato, this poetic culture was already at odds with the mindset that emerged with the spread of alphabetic writing, with the experience that the text as a self-standing object afforded the reader. The written text enabled the reader to "dispense with most of that emotional identification by which alone the acoustic record was sure of recall."[8] The ability to return to a statement, evaluate it, and compare it with others depends, for Havelock, on writing only. In fact, the Socratic method of dialectics, he holds, is already a result of this experience. When Socrates demands of his interlocutors to repeat, explain, and rephrase their statements, he is effectively interrupting the identification of the speaker with the spoken and isolating specific issues for careful examination.[9] Dialectics "was a weapon for arousing the consciousness from its dream language and stimulating it to think abstractly,"[10] yet this capacity had been already enabled by the written text—even if Socrates, famously, never wrote a word.

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[7] Idem, 198.

[8] Idem, 208.

[9] In fact, we will argue below, Socrates is exploiting the possibility for iteration that already belongs in speech, a possibility that is characteristic of writing but not in the sense that Havelock understands it here.

[10] Idem, 209.

All the essential elements of Platonism—the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, the one and the many, being and becoming—can thus be explained as a result of the possibility of stopping the mimetic flow of the poetic performance to examine it outside of its sensorial and temporal constraints.[11] Plato's fundamental aim in the face of these changes, as presented in the *Republic*, is to secure theoretically the force of a thinking, self-identical subject and the affirmation of an abstract, timeless object of knowledge against the poetic experience that still dominates his sociocultural milieu, emphasizing the separation between the listener and the poem. In Havelock's words, Plato demands of Athenians that,

> They should examine this [poetic] experience and rearrange it, that they should think about what they say, instead of just saying it. And they should separate themselves from it instead of identifying with it; they themselves should become the "subject" who stands apart from the "object" and reconsiders it and analyses it and evaluates it, instead of just "imitating" it.[12]

The strategy consists in presenting the poetic experience as a confused and contradictory form of knowledge (he calls it *doxa*) that cannot reach the type of knowledge, the *episteme*, that the new mindset requires. Plato points out a type of cognitive dissonance between the operations of the mind as he now understands it, and the way mimesis engages with them, finding those of mimesis to be limited, misguided, and dangerous. But this means that the definition of mimesis as presented in the *Republic*, the recollection and analysis of the Homeric poetic experience, is made possible by the appearance and spread of writing, and it is advanced in order to establish Platonism, philosophy as such, as its counterpart, as its vanquisher. The philosophical *episteme* is precisely what mimesis can never offer. What mimesis does offer, the rich, complex and contradictory experience of human action, *aisthesis*, and becoming, is what threatens philosophy from all flanks.

Without exaggerating this polarization, it is already clear that the account of archaic mimesis that we find in the *Republic* is constituted by philosophy as its other, it is

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[11] Idem, 218.
[12] Idem, 47.

the outside of philosophy, it is what philosophy is not (sophistry is another other of this other of philosophy, the charges against both are very similar). Each formulation in the text is already outside the experience of orality as Havelock wants to describe it (he will say the same about the *written* Homer we possess), and thus it is only constituted *by* philosophy, it derives from it.

Placed in opposition to philosophy, mimesis might be said to belong to it. There is therefore nothing original about archaic mimesis. We should be suspect, then, of Plato's account as a document, as a historical record, as what it can tell us about the "original" experience of archaic mimesis and *mousikē*. But, paradoxically, this makes philosophy *itself* be constituted by the exclusion of what is established as mimetic by *mousikē*. Philosophy appears by differentiating itself from *mousikē*, by creating the scaffold of what will allow it to distinguish itself from it. Thus, *mousikē,* and hence mimesis, are already *in* philosophy, they are part of it as its outside—that is to say, they are the origin of philosophy, its motivation. Mimesis, being outside of philosophy, is constituted by the philosophy of which it is the origin without belonging to it.[13] It is rather unarchaic and anarchic: unoriginal.

We can easily see how this interpretation attracted the attention of deconstruction. To understand this paradox, we will have to distinguish, further on, between a *general* mimesis that, without being itself original, originates the *restricted* mimesis that we find in Plato. This points us to the general structure of what I call, after Lacoue-Labarthe, a *mimetology*, a philosophical elaboration of mimesis that attempts to set down and define its limits and boundaries. Paradoxically, however, a mimetology is grounded in an experience that already does not belong to it but everywhere affects it. Mimesis gives mimetology this possibility from without, with the effect that "the more it resembles, the more it differs." This mimetology introduces a historical aspect; it marks a break, a

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[13] This analysis, and what follows, is based on Derrida's reading of Saussure in the first part of *Of Grammatology,* where the system of writing is defined as exterior and yet constitutive of the system of language that pretends to exclude it. The formulation towards which we are approaching is that "writing [and mimesis are] at the same time more exterior to speech, not being its "image" or its "symbol," and more interior to speech, which is already in itself a writing." Derrida *Of Grammatology*, 46. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*. Stanford, (CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

distinction between what used to be and what now is and should be. In defining itself as present, it defines the past from the perspective of its present and rewrites the past as *its* past, a past with which it wants nothing to do. Thus, for instance, the infamous "expulsion of the poets" does not only function as a regulation for an ideal city, for a utopia, but also, or moreover, it has the effect of banishing mimesis *retroactively* from its own history—we say moreover because this banishment was in fact more effective than the one "prescribed" for the future, to which Aristotle was already quick in replying.

Mimesis, then, is outside of philosophy, and yet somehow inside it. The abyssal logic of this formulation will be made clearer by returning to the problem of writing, as writing is also at the origin of philosophy, according to Havelock. Does this mean that *mousikē* and writing are in the same position with respect to philosophy? Certainly, insofar as they both constitute it from the outside and are in turn constituted philosophically as its exclusion. This does not mean that mimesis and writing are equivalent in any simple sense. For, as is well known, Plato is in what we could call a complicated relationship with writing, an ambivalence that led him to formulate attacks in the seventh letter and the *Phaedrus*.[14] Havelock, in fact, devotes very little discussion to these texts and to the problem in general of accounting for Plato's self-awareness of the definitive role of writing for his philosophy. Plato's "preference for oral methods was not only conservative but illogical, since the Platonic *episteme* which was to supplant *doxa* was being nursed to birth by the literate revolution."[15] Coming close to begging the question, Havelock here makes clear that he denies Plato any self-awareness of the effects of writing upon these transformations, yet by this move his theory falls into a simple technological determinism, exaggerating his claim about the influence of writing in problematic ways, starting with the very formulation of writing as a "technology," as a

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[14] On writing and the *Phaedrus,* see Derrida, *Dissemination*. See also Jasper Neel, *Plato, Derrida, and Writing*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

[15] Idem, 56. In *The Muse Learns to Write*, he refers to Aristotle's choice of the word *theoria*, contemplation, as a "subconscious" choice to signal a passage from the acoustic to the visual, and subsequently refers to the *Phaedrus* as Plato's attempt to "give the oral message priority over the written, though with ambiguous result." Havelock 1986, 111.

technē that is implicitly opposed to *phusis* insofar as he does not elaborate the point further.[16]

Writing is therefore also outside of the philosophy that it produces and, conversely, philosophy has its origin in the writing that, like *mousikē*, it excludes. Writing and the mimesis of *mousikē*, however, are not in this case anything alike. Yet the problem is, precisely, that in its Platonic formulation, and to an extent that shall be decided later in Havelock, writing was conceived *as* a form of mimesis. Here, I suggest that an elaboration of Plato's conception of writing (as suggested by Derrida) will show him operating with an awareness of a certain notion of writing that, however, is determined by mimesis in ways that exceed his attempts to delimit *both* writing and *mousikē*.

In Havelock's argument, it will be recalled, the importance of the affective, mimetic experience of *mousikē* was the possibility for externalizing and storing the mores of the tribe, for memorization. It should not come as a surprise to recall that Plato's attack on writing in the *Phaedrus* relied precisely in questioning its effects upon memory. In the myth told by Socrates, the god Theuth presents Thamus—King of the Egyptians—with the gift of writing, which he says "will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion (*pharmakon*) for memory and for wisdom."[17] The king, however, disagrees with Theuth's description and rejects the gift. His response is well known:

> O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only
> another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And
> now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you

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[16] Cf. Halverson "Havelock on Orality and Literacy," 163. This, however, is not more problematic than to charge Plato with full self-consciousness of his relation to writing such that he could "use the most powerful system available to humanity, the system of writing, to steal the most powerful voice of Western civilization, the voice of Socrates, and then he tries to negate the system itself, leaving himself with both the voice of authority and absolute control a system that after him will be corrupted, unable to regain a position of authority, unable to begin the search for truth." Neel 1988, 6.

[17] Plato, *Phaedrus,* trans. by A. Nehamas and P. Woodroof, in Plato*, Complete Works.* (Ed. John M. Cooper and Hutchinson D. S. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), 274e. All subsequent citations from Plato, except from the *Republic*, are from this edition and are cited with inline Stephanus numbers.

describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion (*pharmakon*) for remembering (*mnēmē*), but for reminding (*hupomnēseōs*); you provide your students with the appearance (*doxan*) of wisdom, not with its reality (*alētheian*). Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so (275e – 276b).

The effects of writing, he shows, are precisely the opposite of what Theuth claims, and what results from writing is not remembering (*mnēmē*), but reminding (*hupomnēseōs*), it provides students with the appearance (*doxan*) of wisdom, not with its reality (*alētheian*). The passage identifies memory (*mnēmē*) and truth (*alētheia*), on the one hand, and reminding (*hupomnēseōs*) with appearance (*doxa*), on the other. Memory is interior, it is autonomous and present to itself without any mediation, and it alone is true. Writing is exterior, it is dependent on signs (*graphēs*), and is deceitful—these by now familiar oppositions form a system with all the structural oppositions of Platonism.

As Derrida has shown, these oppositions attempt to dominate an ambiguity in the Greek word *pharmakos* that in fact gives the possibility for the entire schema, allowing Thamus to reveal writing to be precisely the opposite of what Theuth intended.[18] In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida traces the diverse meanings of the *pharmakos,* its multiple usages in Plato and terms that are closely related, to expose the impossibility for the closure of any system based on oppositions, specifically language and writing. Left untranslated, *pharmakos* might mean both remedy and medicine as well as drug and poison as, presumably, decided by the context. But for Derrida this means that, caught in a chain of significations, its contextual meaning escapes control by the author, not just

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[18] Derrida *Dissemination*, 103.

because of ambiguity but also because of an activation of the play of referentiality that annihilates the system of differences that constitutes textuality.[19] The task for the reader, in the face of these ambiguities, is to produce an interpretation which, instead of pinning down the unambiguous meaning that the author might have intended, or of aiming to locate it in some transcendental signified outside the text, lets the play of the text run its course to bring forth—and collapse—its general structure.[20]

In this passage, moreover, there is more at stake with this ambiguity: it allows Thamus to invert Theuth's statements in a wordplay that accentuates the exteriority, artificiality and harmfulness of the *pharmakon*, characteristics that Plato aims to assign to writing as well. Initially presented as a gift, the *pharmakon* is a remedy for memory, an enhancer, a supplement that will make up for its natural deficiencies, yet it turns out to be the very opposite of this, it becomes a drug that introduces forgetfulness and makes the soul dependent on the exteriority of signs. This is the inversion that Plato would have intended, yet the ambiguity imposes another consequence: no matter how exterior the *pharmakon* might turn out to be, it still has the possibility of infecting and poisoning the interior soul. Plato ends up being forced to affirm both senses at the same time: "Thus, even though writing is external to (internal) memory, even though hypomnesia is not in itself memory, it affects memory and hypnotizes it in its very inside."[21] Writing is exterior yet it has the power of affecting the interior, it is a "dangerous supplement," arriving to infect the natural closure of the system that pretends to do without it.

This reading renders Havelock's account more complicated. Besides maintaining the relation between memory and writing, Havelock's theory parallels the myth in the *Phaedrus*, showing writing to be aligned with exteriority and artificiality, as well as

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[19] Derrida notes that, with certain modifications, "*pharmakon*" plays a similar role as does "supplement" in his reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* (as well as, we may note, other "hinge" concepts such as "hymen," "specter," etc.). The supplement is something that is external and secondary but which artificially completes what would otherwise be natural thus corrupting and violating it. This makes the supplement a constitutive part of what is supplemented, presence being therefore always already infiltrated by alterity, in a structure that Derrida takes to be the rule of textuality in general, which Rousseau inscribes in his own text.
[20] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.
[21] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 110.

reaffirming its effects on the interior.[22] Consequently, he is also forced to uphold both the exteriority of writing, its status as a technology, as a supplementary element that comes from nowhere and is somehow capable of transforming everything down to the core, in fact of producing a "soul" that resembles writing, predicated on separation and exteriority more than it ever resembled itself: writing, in Havelock's account, not only poisons the soul but makes it be like writing itself. But now, in Havelock's tally, truth resides on the side of writing and exteriority, of objectivity, not on the full self-presence of interiority. We must not rush into drawing the conclusion that with this inversion Havelock already effectuates the necessary inversion of Platonism by showing it to be essentially correct about the power of writing, with only a matter of orientation making the difference. One could say that Havelock here gives the truth to Plato's system, it shows it for what it's worth in the way it shows the truth even when doing the opposite. This, however, does not amount to the transvaluation of truth, it is simply an inversion that keeps everything in its place: interior speech and exterior writing, memory as immediacy and writing as mediation: truth simply changes sides to mark a break, a transformation that authorizes the narrative as history. What is needed is to show truth *as* value, and to expose the way Platonic mimetology already conceives of truth as value, the production of which is the matter of economimesis.

Here, we still need to return to the relation between writing and mimesis as it operates in the Platonic text, for it will show the common ground between Havelock and Plato. Besides maintaining the relation between memory and writing, Havelock's theory parallels the myth in the *Phaedrus*, showing writing to be aligned with exteriority and artificiality, as well as reaffirming its effects on the interior. Havelock writes under the shadow of Platonic mimetology, outlining a transformation that is in fact programmed by the same mimesis it is attempting to define. In all of this, *mousikē* has seemed to be in the periphery, in fact, as we saw, it *is* the periphery, the outside, the motivation and hence the

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[22] It is, in fact, a sophistic strategy from the beginning, as Derrida shows, elaborated by Gorgias, Alcidamas and Isocrates (presumably the motivation behind the entire dialogue). The sophists placed writing lower than *logos*, but not because the latter was a *pharmakon* but because the *logos* was a more potent one, a persuasive enchantment, magical indeed. Plato, in Derrida's lectures, imitates and takes over the strategy of the sophist (itself a sophist strategy, in Plato's condemnation) to invert it, "the dialectician [simulates] him whom he denounces as a simulator, as the simulacrum-man." Idem, 112.

origin of everything that does not include it. But, paradoxically, as we encounter it, it is constituted by the same philosophy that its exclusion originated.

Writing in Plato's text is conceived as mimetic in various senses. In Thamus's account it is mimetic in the sense that it is deceitful, writing shows the appearance of a truth residing elsewhere. Writing provides the students "with the appearance (*doxan*) of wisdom, not with its reality (*alētheian*)." This "imitative" deceptiveness is also contagious, it infects the soul and makes it itself deceitful: "they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so." Further on, Socrates confirms what we already expected, that writing is an imitation of the *logos* in the soul, which, as living, is alone legitimate and true. In opposition to the living *logos*, a lifeless image that looks alive but cannot answer back "it continues to signify just that very same thing forever" (275d). It is thus a repetition, a pure repetition, always the same thing, like a pictorial image, lifeless and irresponsive. The relation between painting and writing is mimetic. "They have faithfulness as their model," writes Derrida, "the resemblance between painting and writing is precisely *resemblance itself:* both operations must aim above all at resembling. They are both apprehended as mimetic techniques, art being first determined as mimesis."

> SOCRATES: Now tell me, can we discern another kind of discourse (*logon*), a legitimate brother of this one? Can we say how it comes about, and how it is by nature better and more capable? PHAEDRUS: Which one is that? How do you think it comes about? SOCRATES: It is a discourse (*logon*) that is written down, with knowledge, (*epistēmes graphetai*) in the soul (*psuchē*) of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent. PHAEDRUS: You mean the living, breathing discourse (*logon…zōnta kai empsuchon*) of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image (*eidolon*) (276a).

This means, however, that archaic mimesis as presented by Plato is conditioned by a specific conception of writing, one that assumes it to be the image of speech, a secondary substitute for what is first and foremost, originally, in the soul—that is, it conceives of

writing as already mimetic. The transformation at the "origin" of mimesis is the result of the mediation of writing, but only if we understand writing to be the kind of mediation that interrupts the presence to itself of idealized thought, as "the mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning"[23]

How to read, then, Havelock's account of Platonic mimesis with or after his 1960s contemporary Derrida? After acknowledging that the "event" of the invention of writing cannot be taken to be a pure origin but rather as the regulated re-inscription of inscription itself? And what happens to the narrative of affective communication and philosophic reflexivity when the event that separates them only makes them fall back into each other? Finally—and this is the most important strategy to be adopted here—, what happens when one takes contagion into account and asks about the role of *mousikē* in the deferrals that separate and re-join these various modes of mimesis?

We read it, Plato's account of the mimesis of *mousikē*, not as if there was something originary in mimesis before the Platonic intervention, not as if this pre-Platonic mimesis was original, true, the truth of mimesis, or the proper mode of accessing truth in mimesis, of which Platonic mimesis was a false postulation made in the name of truth. Not as if the "poetic state of mind" was true, the true origin, true mimesis. For this origin is postulated in retrospect, assumed as originary to explain and justify as history the very logic that it aims to historicize, through that very logic. This is to say, but not only, that Havelock's account is logocentric—he cannot avoid it. More importantly, it means that by interrogating archaic mimesis as a myth—a convenient myth, just like the myth told by Socrates in *Rep.* 5 that would allocate the classes in the ideal State according to the metals they emerged from—we get a glimpse of the groundless logic that (un)grounds all operations of grounding, of the origin of the idea of origin, of the paradigm of paradigmaticity. The abandonment of "archaic" mimesis in Plato is explained as a cultural transformation produced by the invention of writing. We must then give an account of this transformation that does not assume writing to be new while at the same

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[23] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 13.

time showing how a particular notion of writing, a logocentric writing, appears and motivates these transformations. That *mousike* is at the origin of this myth should be no surprise—its modern form is familiar since Rousseau and Herder. To inquire into this paradigmatic origin, into this origin of paradigmaticity, is thus to ask about the possibility of understanding anything about the origin of music from within the frame of a logocentric history. It is also, moreover, to ask about the value of this myth, about the logic of its value, about the economy built around this value and the means of producing, preserving, and monopolizing this value.

PLATO AND THE PARADIGM

Most readers of the problem of mimesis in the *Republic* focus on poetry, tragedy, and painting, even while acknowledging the importance, complexity and semantic breadth of ancient Greek *mousikē*.[24] Philological inquiry into the development of the word is often undertaken as an attempt to account for the polysemy—or rather, dissemination—of the meanings of mimesis in the Platonic text, and especially to explain the relation between books 2, 3 and 10, of the *Republic*, as well as to understand the nature, reasons, and extent of Plato's so-called "banishment of the poets" from the ideal State.[25] The strategies adopted towards this aim are as varied as can be imagined, and most often rely in making historical or conceptual distinctions about the meanings of mimesis that join or divide the discussions of *technē*, *mousikē* and *poiesis*. Thus, for Stephen Halliwell, one of the most rigorous figures in the discussion, Plato never offers anything like a "doctrine" of

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[24] The classic work on music in Plato is Evanghélos Moutsopoulos, *La musique dans l'œuvre de Platon*; See also Edward Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). For a more recent account, see Francesco Pelosi, *Plato on Music, Soul and Body,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). The relation between mimesis and music has been recently addressed in Séline Gülgönen "La Mimesis Musicale Dans Les Dialogues Platoniciens." *Phoenix* 68.1/2 (2014): 97–111.

[25] The discontinuity between the opening and closing books of the *Republic* is a traditional theme of Platonic criticism, and any reconstruction involves a position between those who argue about continuity, and those who argue about for discontinuity; for a concise account, see Jera Marušič, "Poets and Mimesis in the Republic" in *Plato and the Poets*, (Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Georg Hermann, eds. Leiden and Boston; Brill, 2011). The one elaborated here draws on, but departs in crucial points to be noted below, from Halliwell, *Mimesis,* For a reassessment of the so-called banishment, see Stephen Halliwell, "Antidotes and Incantations: Is There a Cure for Poetry in Plato's *Republic*?" in *Plato and the Poets*.

mimesis and all his pronunciations on the matter are to be taken as conditional, progressive elaborations on a concern which, above all, invite—and have effectively produced—further engagement by subsequent readers.[26] For Halliwell, any single statement on the matter has to be contextualized, contrasted with other similar pronouncements that attest a concern with both the ethical and ontological gravitas of the problem of mimesis.[27] Plato's true legacy in this matter, in short, can be taken as a general demand not to take mimesis lightly. Risking to get ahead of myself, I would venture that this oversight is itself a consequence of the very terms in which our ideas of poetry and music have been programmed by the discussions from the *Republic*, from an especially Romantic perspective. Thus, to restore the place of music in the dialogue involves working against—without ignoring—centuries of discussions centered around the problematic ideas of "art" and "aesthetics," a critical balancing act that is almost impossible to perform successfully, as Halliwell's work itself shows.

If mimesis is primarily a concern with paradigms and copies, with the conditions and ontological status of what is made after something else, and of what it means that something is like something else, then it is crucial to understand what the paradigm is that is being used to understand what mimesis is in general, what it is like. It is Plato's key strategy, the astounding artistic and philosophical feat of the *Republic*, to define mimesis mimetically, to exploit the resources of paradigmaticity to expose the difficulties of thinking mimesis in general.[28]

The logic of the paradigm inverts or interrupts the traditional logic that moves from particulars to arrive to universals (induction) or from universals to particulars (deduction). Instead, the paradigm moves form particular to particular. For Agamben, it is not deductive knowledge but analogical, where each particular element might be taken up as a representative of the whole. What is more, the logic of the paradigm has a double ontology, or rather a topology, of inclusive exclusion: the paradigm belongs to the group

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[26] Halliwell, *Mimesis*, 38.
[27] Idem.
[28] I draw on the classic work on paradigmaticity in Plato, Victor Goldschmidt, *Le Paradigme dans la dialectique Platonicienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947) as well as Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method,* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2009).

and is separate from it at once—as exemplar. So, says Agamben, it is never possible to separate its exemplarity from its singularity. Similarly, insofar as the opposition between universals and particulars is neutralized, it suspends any dialectical attempt at sublation or subsumption of one by the other. The tension that remains, given this duplicity, is further complicated when this operation is said to be mimetic, as simultaneous singularity and exemplarity of the paradigm is further posited as a model—when it might have been just as well the copy. What mimetology does, in the end, is deciding upon this duplicity, fixing it and determining one element over the other. From a multitude of singulars, one is posited as being a model in addition to being a paradigm. This does not destroy either its singularity or exemplarity, but redistributes the relation that it has to the other elements in the paradigmatic group, which are thus defined as copies.

In fact, there is a mimetic strategy involved in Plato's approach to mimesis itself. Like other words in Plato's vocabulary, mimesis has a diverse range of pre-philosophical meanings that progressively take on a technical signification in the course of the dialogues. As with other concepts, Plato discusses mimesis using models, paradigms, to think what mimesis itself is. My first thesis here is that Plato's mimetology is a folding upon itself of mimesis, explaining mimesis with respect to a paradigm that models it, through things that are said to be mimetic. In books 2 and 3 of the *Republic*, where Socrates and his interlocutors are concerned with evaluating and censoring the types of myths to be used in the education of the guardians and the (mimetic) modes of telling these myths, the paradigm used to understand mimesis is *mousikē,* which defines mimesis as an affective contagion that works on the body and soul of listeners and performers. In book 10, when the question of mimesis returns, the paradigm is painting and the productions of craftsmen, whose representations barely approximate the models they attempt to reproduce, while *mousikē* is not discussed anymore. Consequently, we get a very different concept of what mimesis is in book 10. This is not to say that there are two—or more—essential types of mimesis; rather—and this will be my second thesis— different paradigms produce different ideas of what mimesis is—different mimetologies.

This amounts to saying that the copy precedes and produces the model, and not the other way around.

This "paradigm shift"—from *mousikē* to the productions of demiourgs and painters—is accompanied, or perhaps based on, the movement from a "restricted" account of mimesis to a "general" one, which, in the *Republic* is determinant of any successive understanding of mimesis and the mimetology that aims to explain it while reducing it. Even when asking about general mimesis, the discussion is carried out only in terms of a restricted mimesis, which then passes as general. This movement is mentioned explicitly in the text: when the problem of mimesis returns in book 10, Socrates asks: "Could you tell me what imitation in general (*mimesis holos*) is? For I myself scarcely comprehend what it wants to be" (595c.).[29]

A crucial question to be asked about this passage and the answers that follow it, in my view, is why, and with what consequences, is mimesis "in general" approached through another form of mimetic production, which is restricted? And if the paradigm defines the idea, then there is a sort of contagion between paradigms and ideas: visual mimesis—a restricted mimesis—becomes mimesis "in general," which in turn defines the performative mimesis it is supposed to replace, the former determining the latter as its opposite. As visual mimesis is presented as containing the logic of mimesis "in general," we lose account both of the initial performative mimesis of *mousikē* and of the general mimesis that (un)grounds both types. General mimesis, as opposed both to restricted mimesis and to mimesis "in general," names the economy of this contagious conceptual determination, which we encounter in Plato in the form of a mimetology that opposes being and appearance.

This is the logic that we need to understand: a *restricted* form of mimesis is replaced by another *restricted* form to elucidate what the *general* form of mimesis is. Yet the strategy continues to be that of using a *restricted* form as paradigm for the *general* form. The explanation involves the logic it is trying to explain, a folding upon itself of

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[29] Halliwell translates *holos* as "as a whole" or "in general". Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis,* 133f.

mimesis, explaining mimesis with respect to a paradigm, that entirely opens its definition and exposes its excessive groundlessness.

What makes a visual paradigm better for defining what mimesis (and hence paradigmaticity) is? Why is it "more general," or what makes the definition "general" when the paradigm is changed? What happens with this originary re-inscription of the visual into the logic of the paradigm? What consequences does this hold for mimesis, music and painting? Is it not the case that to us the reason why visual paradigms seem more appropriate to think mimesis is precisely that Plato himself made the displacement, paradigmatically defining the history of mimesis from this point on, around a visual paradigm?

The move, as Lacoue-Labarthe describes it, is a placing *en abyme* of the theoretical itself.[30] The first move, he says, consists in asking not "who is the mimetician" (as is done in the *Sophist*, to surprising results), but rather a purely theoretical question: "what is mimesis, in general." Asking this "theoretical" question means defining mimesis "according to the old habits," in terms of what is seen and what is not seen, of what appears and of what does not appear, in short, within the visible realm, within the realm of *theory*.[31] Once this is done—which is in fact just the preparation of the turn (the pre-turn)—once one restricts "general" mimesis to the theoretical, that is, the visual, the rest follows easily: The real turn, for Lacoue-Labarthe, consists precisely in redoubling the operation, placing the theoretical *en abyme*. Socrates' suggestion is fantastic (and highly ironic): one can fabricate ideas.

> "It's not hard," I said. "You could fabricate them quickly in many ways and most quickly, of course, if you are willing to take a mirror and carry it around everywhere; quickly you will make the sun and the things in the heaven; quickly the earth; and quickly, yourself and the other animals and implements and plants and everything else that was just mentioned" (596d).

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[30] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 92. Halliwell, on his part, says that "the mirror analogy stands for the threat, not the final assertion, of a reductive conception of visual mimesis.". *The Aesthetics of Mimesis,* 139.
[31] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 91.

As Lacoue-Labarthe says, this is not just any mirror, it is a false mirror or a two-way mirror. What the mirror shows, first and foremost, is not what it reflects (the ideas it creates) but what the mimetician is presumed to do. The mimetician has become perfectly visible. That is, his operation, his "work," has been revealed to be as working in and with the visible. It is indeed a magical trick by Socrates the sorcerer. The mirror, moreover, is an apotropaic object: just as it turns the medusa into stone, it immobilizes the mimetician, turns him into an image of himself (or the inverse, perhaps, animating him, turning him into a puppet. In any case, it is a turn or trick (they are same in French) of conjuring and illusionism: theorization, Lacoue-Labarthe says, is a *thaumaturgy*, but one in which the illusionist himself is the victim. If the mimetician is said to be an illusionist himself, this mirror is "an anti-thaumaturgic thaumaturgy (*a mise-en-abyme* that neutralizes the mirror) destined to contain the thaumaturge."[32] The trope of the mirror consists in revealing that mimesis rests in simply turning a mirror around, a play of mirrors, and therefore nothing.

> This latter would consist in doing everything without doing anything, in pretending to know how to do everything when one does not work and is content to imitate or 'double' (or, in the language of the theater, *stellvertretung)* the one who does something by fraudulently substituting oneself for him and by using, in order 'to produce the illusion,' a material that lends itself to this in advance (or that others have already prepared in advance) and that one need only *divert* from its own *proper* use, or use generally and *improperly*. In the face of the *Unheimliche*, the improper-mastery becomes possible only by taking it still further, by outdoing it with the *Unheimliche*. This is what speculation is.[33]

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[32] Idem., 94. Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of this passage occurs during his questioning of Heidegger's ontotypology in the 1936 lectures on Nieztsche, where Heidegger turns to the *Republic* to demonstrate how Nietzsche failed to accomplish the overturning of Platonism. Lacoue-Labarthe, on his part, questions whether Heidegger was able to overcome Plato's mimetology and did not reaffirm it instead. Although I cannot reconstruct his demonstration here, Lacoue-Labarthe shows that one crucial omission in both Plato and Heidegger's reading is precisely the problem of *work*—which Heidegger reinscribes as pro-duction, *her-stellen,* as his way of "dealing with Marx") as if "it was a question to prevent *worker* from being heard within "demiurge"; that is to say, as we will see in a moment, a problematic of *work* within the question of *poiesis* and *mimesis*." Idem., 83.
[33] Idem., 94.

But there is another turn that concerns us. What happens to the definition of music, or *mousikē*, when it is used to define mimesis and is defined by mimesis in turn? That Plato does not take up the relation of *mousikē* and mimesis "in general" at the end of the *Republic* is a telling symptom of the pervasiveness of the abyssal logic of mimesis. Should we assume that everything that is said about mimesis in book 10 applies retrospectively to book 3? In it the case, as it often is with concepts in the *Republic* and other dialogues, we would be tempted to reread the opening with respect to what has been accomplished in the end. We could read back the ontological arguments about mimesis into the legislation that organizes the disposition of *mousikē* in the polis and that disposes of poets, modes and rhythms. Why is this task left for the reader? Are the consequences of this rereading necessary and univocal?

This is the logic, rather the magic, of contagion that un-grounds mimesis: whatever is used as paradigm to define mimesis ends up itself being defined mimetically. Plato's strategy consists in out-doing mimesis by assigning to mimesis the means of specularization ("the trick of the mirror"), by reducing mimesis to a "theoretical" practice that operates on the visible. From here on, mimesis is defined as re-presentation, reproduction, imitation, and so on. There is no escape from this. But this epistemic epidemic continues: since there is no origin, no original definition, either of *mousikē* or mimesis, then the (restricted) visual paradigm that defines mimesis "in general" folds back to define *mousikē* as well. We lose any account of the "original" meaning of *mousikē*, we cease to be able to talk about *mousikē* without defining it with respect to this mimesis "in general" which is visual.

There are broader consequences, since with the *Republic* we are not talking simply about *mousikē*—or painting or poetry—as artistic forms that correspond to a specific sensorial field (for lack of a better word for *aisthesis*). Rather, we attend to a re-definition of the sensorium in general, to what it means for something to be sensible, as opposed to the intelligible, and with respect to differences between sensorial fields, between the visible and the audible etc. Mimesis is involved in the description and prescription of our modes of hearing and seeing, seeing and touching, touching and

hearing, the hierarchy and relations between them, as much as it uses our aesthetic experience of them (in music or painting) to define mimesis itself.

"LEAVE US THAT MODE"

What is mimesis, then, as defined according to the paradigm of *mousikē*? The first explicit mention of both terms occurs simultaneously, in book 2, in the transition from "the city of sows" towards "the city of luxuriousness." This feverish city will be "gorged with a bulky mass of things, which are not in cities because of necessity—all the hunters and imitators (*mimetai*), many concerned with figures and colors, many with music (*mousikē*)" (373b). *Mousikē* reappears shortly after (376e), introducing the long discussion about the education of the guardians. These must be properly reared so as to be "philosophic, spirited, swift, and strong," (376c) and presumably the best means to accomplish this is the traditional *paideia*: *mousikē* for the soul, firstly, and gymnastics for the body. In stating the primacy of *mousikē*, Socrates also expresses a crucial aspect of mimesis as the capacity of *something*—not yet a person but always already a person—to become like its model.

It is a question of beginnings, and *mousikē* must be first: "Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it is most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model (*enduetai tupos*) whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it" (377b). This point is repeated in similar forms throughout books 2 and 3. Without actually mentioning it, onto-typology—a hylemorphic mimetology according to which a shapeless, feminized matter is imprinted by an ideal form, a type—is here in full, including the idea of the mind, but also the body, as being imprinted by a model, a type (*tupos*).[34] The relation between mimesis and habits is explicitly mentioned in a similar passage in book 3: "Or haven't you observed that imitations (*mimeseis*), if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established as habits (*ethē*) and nature, in body and sounds and in thought?" (395d).

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[34] Lacoue-Labarthe develops this description of onto-typology in his reading of Heidegger in "Typography."

This passage, which appears in the course of the discussion of the types of discourse, *lexis*, appropriate for poetry (mimetic, diegetic, and mixed), considers mimesis as a performance, as an enactment made by the poet, which has effects on the constitution of the body of the listeners and his own. Notably, it is not restricted to young children anymore, it is considered as having effects from "youth onwards," that is, on anyone who engages in mimetic performances, most crucially the guardians and well-educated men.

More importantly, the passage combines three apparently different aspects of mimesis: (i) The process of plastic formation in education; (ii) The difference between diegetic or direct narration and mimetic narration or *lexis*; (iii) The effects that performing mimetic poetry has on the actors and listeners, of "becoming others," that is, like the models they imitate. In this third sense, especially, there is no distinction between actors and listeners with regards to mimetic effects. In all cases, mimesis is defined as a potentially unbound contagious performance, an affective communication that not only persuades but that also shapes and transforms the listener's soul and body according to a model. In close connection here are the magicians and enchanters, even Socrates himself according to the *Symposium*, a better musician than the satyr Marsyas—whose instruments will be soon shunned from the ideal State—and a magician, a *pharmakeus*. (Recall that book 2 opens by Socrates complaining that Thrasymachus had been enchanted *too soon*).[35]

While stated here as a prohibition, this definition of mimesis grants it powerful capacities. It determines the plasticity of the human body and soul to be boundless, to be able to take on the character, the imprint, of diverse types of people, and even of "horses neighing, bulls roaring, the crashing of the sea, thunder," and so on (396b). By defining the limits of mimetic performance, Plato hints at a dangerous, multifarious mimesis in need of control. Crucial to this control is the axiom about the division of labor in the ideal State, which is directed at imitators and sophists as well and which organizes a whole

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[35] On the relation between music and magic in Plato, see Moutsopoulos, *La musique,* 13-17. This taxonomy, of course, is not exhaustive. It can be compared, however, to the one advanced by Else as presented in chapter 1, above.

political economy, a political economimesis. In any case, mimesis passes from being simply a problem of education or epistemology to being a problem of political economy in the widest sense.

After discussing the parts of *mousikē* that concern "speeches and tales" (*logos te kai muthos*, 398b7), Socrates and Glaucon set out to do the same for "song and melody" (*odes kai melon*, 398c1-2). Unlike the previous discussion, the legislation of the "musical" aspects of *mousikē* is taken up under a veil of ignorance. Socrates initially assumes that "everyone could by now discover what we have to say about how [song and melody] must be if we're going to remain in accord (*sumphonesein*) with what has already been said." But we shouldn't be misled to think that this presumes that the association of musical modes and types of behavior was common sense in ancient Greece. Laughing out loud, Glaucon replies that he shouldn't be included amongst "everyone": "At least I'm not at present capable of suggesting what sort of things we must say. However, I've a suspicion" (398c). As it turns out, Glaucon, unlike Socrates, is trained in music, and so it will depend on him to legislate what modes and rhythms are to be accepted in the city.

Mousikē, as presumably everyone in Athens knew, "is composed of three things—speech (*logos*), harmonic mode, and rhythm." For Socrates, sung speech doesn't differ from speech that isn't sung, insofar as it must conform to the same models (*tupoi*) as had been discussed before. Harmonic mode and rhythm come to supplement logos, conforming to the same regulations, thus adding nothing, if not the suspicion that the previous regulation is not complete. If sung speech is the same as unsung speech, and if *mousikē* in any case is always sung to musical accompaniment, then there should be no need for further regulation: it is the content of the tales, the nature of the models and the correctness of the imitation, which presumably distinguishes between good and bad mimesis. Why then should harmony and rhythm be regulated separately, yet still following what is said for logos?

This introduces further difficulties. When regulating the content of speeches, where it was the legislator's role to know the models to which poetry should conform, Socrates had no trouble quoting passages from the poets and censoring what was

inappropriate for the education of the guardians. In the discussion on song and melody, however, Socrates declares himself ignorant of music and must delegate to Glaucon:

> (399a) I don't know the modes. Just leave us that mode which would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents of a man who is courageous in warlike deeds and every violent work… (399b) And again, leave another mode for a man who performs a peaceful deed, one that is not violent (*biaio*) but voluntary (*ekousia*), either persuading someone of something or making a request….(399c) These two modes—a violent one and a voluntary one (*tautas duo harmonias*, *biaion*, *ekousion*), which will produce the finest imitation of the sounds of unfortunate and fortunate, moderate and courageous men—leave these.[36]

Socrates's musical ignorance points to a crucial aspect of musical mimesis. As a *theoretician*, as having something to contemplate, something with a visible aspect and an *eidos*, he is perfectly happy to follow the dialogue wherever it takes him. With *mousikē*, he posits his ignorance from the start instead of reaching it as an aporia. Concerning speech there was never any doubt as to the content of tales. The media of speech and bodily performance offer no distortion, no ambiguity. Insofar as the model is the correct one, its mimetic counterpart will be equally good or bad—speech places no mediation between model and copy. Thus, the only regulation to be made is according to good and bad models. In this case, imitation adds nothing, and its value depends entirely on the nature of the model. Rhythm and harmony, on the other hand, are multifarious and ambiguous. There is a multitude of modes and rhythms, and a multitude of instruments, which are themselves "panharmonic" and "many-stringed."[37] Out of this multitude, only

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[36] Translation modified.

[37] See the introduction to Part I of this dissertation. See also Richard Martin, "'The Pipes are brawling': Conceptualizing Musical Performance in Athens." In *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration,* (ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153-81; Peter Wilson, "The Aulos in Athens" in *Performance and Culture in Athenian Democracy,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Wilson, "Athenian Strings; Homeric Strings in Hellenistic Athens" in Wilson and Murray, eds. *Music and the Muses: The Culture of "*Mousikē*" in the Classical*

those corresponding to the two ideal temperaments for the guardians, a violent one and a moderate one, are to be preserved in the city. The founders don't innovate in preferring the music and instruments of Apollo over those of Marsyas (399e). But how to choose them is not as easy. First, the modes are discussed as being something, e.g "the wailing modes," (*tines oun threnodeis harmoniai*, 399d1). Then, Socrates—who doesn't know them—asks Glaucon "what modes are soft and suitable for symposia," and so on (398e9). Only later he asks about a mode "which would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents of a man who is courageous." We see, then, in the course of the legislation itself, the ambiguity of musical mimesis and the challenges it poses: modes are, or are appropriate for, or lastly imitate, different types of life and activity, but it is not so clear how this happens.

When turning to rhythms, Glaucon also ends up declaring himself incapable of seeing the correspondence between these and the types of life to which they presumably correspond. "But, by Zeus, I can't say," says Glaucon, "There are three forms out of which the feet are woven, just as there are four sounds from which all the modes are compounded—this I've observed and could tell. But as to which sort are imitations of which sort of life (*opoiou biou*), I can't say" (400a). Socrates then defers to Damon, who is cited as the authority on musical knowledge: "Let these things be turned over to Damon. To separate them out (*dielesthai*) is no theme for a short argument" (400c).[38]

Here we find a general condition for the legislation of *mousikē*: the poets are ignorant of types, only the founders know them. Earlier, Adeimantus asked about the models [*tupoi*] for tales about the gods that would be allowed, and Socrates replied that, "we are not poets right now but founders of a city. It's appropriate for founders to know the models according to which the poets must tell their tales. If what the poets produce goes counter to these models, founders must not give way; however, they must not themselves make up tales" (379a).

Athenian City. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Eric Csapo, "The Politics of the New Music" in *idem*.

[38] On the historical as well as the Platonic figure of Damon see Robert Wallace, "Damon of Oa: A Music Theorist Ostracized?" in Murray and Wilson, eds.; Tosca Lynch, "A Sophist 'in disguise': a reconstruction of Damon of Oa and his role in Plato's dialogues", *Études platoniciennes*, 10, 2013. Web. Access Oct 29, 2015.

If mimesis in speech is transparent, the copy being no obstacle to understand the nature of the model, musical mimesis is the opposite, but in a baffling way. Musical modes and rhythms correspond to modes of life, but this correspondence is entirely opaque. This depends, on the one hand, on the "indistinction" between subject and object as Havelock presented it. Further, as Séline Gülgönen argues, modes and rhythms are inseparable from the things they are presumed to be copies of. Gülgönen joins scholars like Anne Wersinger in arguing that Greek experience tends not to differentiate between the sense and the sensible that is used to perceive it, such that, for example, the term *akoè* means both the audible, the organ of hearing, and that which is heard.

In the *Cratylus*, *Laws* and book 3 of the *Republic*, the use of genitives and adjectives (as in "the wailing modes" *threnodeis harmoniai*, *Rep.* 3.398e1; or "these two modes—a violent one and a voluntary one" *tautas duo harmonias*, *biaion*, *ekousion, Rep.* 3.399c1) to account for the relation between modes, rhythms, and their models, indicate that models and rhythms confuse themselves with the affections (*etats d'âme*) that are presumed to be their models. Not, crucially, because there is any resemblance or similarity between affections and their musical forms, but because modes and rhythms are *themselves* affections.[39] Beyond any distinction between essence and appearance, then, mimesis is defined as a potentially unbound contagious performance, an affective communication that not only persuades but that also shapes and transforms the listener's soul and body. And it has the strongest effects on listeners, especially when they are young—when their souls and bodies are supple—but also later on.

If we still hold that they are "copies," these are of a strange kind: they entirely duplicate and replace the model. The copy is no copy, for it does not clearly express its subordinate relation to the model, and hence escapes the regulation that had been made for *logos*. The interlocutors assume that modes imitate characters, types of life, but upon examination they find them to be indistinguishable; these modes imitate so well that they cease to imitate at all. If Socrates and the others were to approach the matter

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[39] Séline Gülgönen, "La Mimesis Musicale Dans Les Dialogues Platoniciens." *Phoenix* 68.1/2 (2014): 106.

"dialectically," they would have to decide whether the relation between modes and types of life is conventional or by nature. But what shows the relation between them, the *signatura*, as the Latin tradition will call them, is hidden—we don't know the modes. This is the aporia that they do not reach, but presuppose. In either case (natural or conventiona), the modes cannot be sorted out, their divisions cannot be made evident through *diairesis*—they are irrational, neither conventional nor natural, and they can only be verified after their effects on listeners and performers make it evident. Instead, they are simply classed according to grace and gracelessness (*euschemosyne kai aschemosyne*), a general categorization that groups them according to their shape, their schema (what in German is called *Gestalt*), or what they appear to be, and not truly according to their model, their type.

If the relation between modes and sorts of life isn't clear, and if the effects of these are so dangerous for whoever engages in them, they should be a matter of serious concern, but Socrates does not want to hear of it. He resorts to a legislation based on an empirical and dogmatic classification, taken entirely from Damon, and to this previous regulation Socrates entrusts the rearing of guardians, who as children would learn to recognize in this way "what isn't a fine product of craft or what isn't a fine product of nature" (401e). Likewise, "when reasonable speech comes, the man who's reared in this way would take most delight in it, recognizing it on account of its being akin" (402a). This affective familiarity with grace and gracelessness before the advent of logos is "the most sovereign rearing," which repeats the idea of ethical education as a stamping of the soul mentioned before, "because rhythm and harmony most of all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite" (401e).[40] I will return to this passage later for, it seems to me, this opinion on music gets modified through the dialogue, especially after the division of the soul, the definition of philosophy, and, most importantly, by the discussion of mimesis in book 10.

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[40] For music and education in Plato, see Moutsopoulos, *la musique dans l'œuvre de Platon,* 175 and ff; Moutsopoulos, "Beauté et moralite musicales: une initiative damonienne, un idéal athenien" and Anne Gabrièle Wersinger, "'Socrate, fais de la musique!' le destin de la *paideia* entre musique et philosophie" in *Mousikè et Aretè*, Malhomme and Wersinger, (eds).

In fact, the issue of *mousikē* almost disappears as a concern in the dialogue after Glaucon, in book 7, recalls that music is the "antistrophe" of gymnastics, concerned with the education of the guardians "through habits, transmitting by harmony a certain harmoniousness, *not knowledge*, and by rhythm a certain rhythmicalness" (522a; emphasis mine). There is nothing in *mousikē* that orients itself towards what is, as philosophy must do. Unless, that is, we consider only harmony—and not the whole of *mousikē*—as the "antistrophe" of the revised approach to astronomy that make up the third and fourth parts of the curriculum presented towards the end of book 7. Both are concerned with the logos behind the apparent motion of objects and "the movement of harmony" (*enarmonion phoran*, 530d). As part of the education of the ruling guardians, music will be approached only insofar as it is useful, as long as it rises towards problems, "to the consideration of which numbers are concordant and which not, and why in each case." (530c).

This would be a good moment to turn to the famous opening of the *Phaedo*, where Socrates calls philosophy the highest kind of music (*megistes mousikēs*, *Phaedo*, 61a). However, I want to remain within the text of the *Republic* to consider the role of music in the course of the dialogue. After the passage on the curriculum of the guardians in book 7, lack of good musical education is mentioned only three times, always in connection to the different forms of corruption of the cities. Finally, *mousikē* appears only once in the important discussion of poetry and mimesis in book 10, a passage to which I will come back later. Thus, I note a progressive distancing from *mousikē* in the discussions of mimesis and poetry, which appear initially to be thoroughly intermingled in book 3. If commentators are still puzzled by exactly what kinds of poetry are banished from the ideal State and how to interpret Plato's intentions and arguments, despite the rivers of ink that have flowed on the matter, the case of *mousikē* is even more dismal. However, I argue, restoring some centrality to *mousikē* may serve to further illuminate and rethink the diversity of meanings of mimesis in Plato and to readdress the multiple traditions of mimetic thought that have Plato's text as their keystone.

The passages I have mentioned all portray musical mimesis as an affective communication that occurs without any mediation. Performers and listeners are all similarly affected, outside or before logos. Rhythms and harmonies correspond to forms of life so precisely that it is hard to tell them apart. They are copies that entirely duplicate and replace the model. And all of these have the strongest effects on listeners, especially when young but also later on. These define habits and dispositions, in a thoroughly erotic way: "musical matters should end in love matters that concern the fair" (403c.)

THE *PHARMAKON* OF THE PHILOSOPHER

When the issue is taken up again in the opening of book 10, we hear Plato's war cry—or rather the conspirator's whisper, whose conception of "the most sovereign rearing" has changed, "now that the soul's forms (*psuches eide*) have each been separated out":

> Between us—and you all won't denounce me to the tragic poets and all the other imitators—all such things seem to maim the thought of those who hear them and do not as a remedy (*pharmakon*) have the knowledge of how things really are (595b).

What is this remedy, this antidote, that has the capacity to fend off mimetic contagion? It is a *pharmakon* that nevertheless requires the banishment of the poets, thus an ineffectual drug, or one that is in the end not distributed to everyone equally. The *pharmakon*, in fact, had been announced as early as book 2, where it described the use of lies as "a preventive, like a drug, for so-called friends when from madness or some folly they attempt to do something bad" (382c. cf. 389b). We are justified in suspecting such a *pharmakon*, especially in the face of the second passage, where it accompanies the first mention of mimesis in the dialogue. "Now what I was just talking about would most correctly be called truly a lie—the ignorance in the soul of a man who has been lied to. For the lie in speeches is a kind of mimesis of the affection in the soul, a phantom of it that comes into being, and not quite an unadulterated lie." (382b) Here Socrates is defending the idea that the gods never lie since "none of the foolish or the mad is a friend of the gods" (382e). There is nothing more hated by both gods and men than to hold lies in the soul. The *pharmakon*, the lie in speeches, therefore, is here something that makes

lies agreeable in certain situations, it qualifies mimesis, interrupts it, so that lies cease to be hateful, without them ceasing to be lies. It is significant, additionally, that mimesis is here introduced along with falsehood and phantasms, even before it begins to be thematized as such.

This *pharmakon*, we are now justified to suggest, is not unlike that in the *Phaedrus* (cf. p. 60ff, above). It is both a medicine and a poison, a helpful remedy that turns out to be harmful, but in what way? In a similar way—precisely in imitation—of writing, which is here always considered as a mimesis of speech: a drug to counter another drug, a *pharmakon* for the *pharmakon* of mimesis. Already in book 2, speech was presented as an imprint, a kind of writing in the soul.

Mediation replacing immediacy, reflexivity instead of repetition, sober analysis over affective identification: this is a demand for a different type of mimesis than the one discussed in book 3, but it requires a change of paradigm, one which introduces mediation by emphasizing the difference between models and copies, the paradigm of images, paintings and mirrors.

The *pharmakon* against mimesis, then, is knowledge of how things really are. But what are things as they really are? What follows in the dialogue (at 596a, the same place as the "trick of the mirror") is the famous clinic scene, the model of mimesis according to the three types of bedframes (*klinai*).[41] Socrates introduces the discussion of mimesis as a question over "mimesis in general." This makes us presume that the discussion in book 3 was a type of restricted mimesis. Yet, as we have seen, book 10 doesn't discuss "mimesis in general" but rather another type of restricted mimesis that then passes as general and overdetermines the restricted mimesis of book 3.

The use of a visual paradigm to discuss mimesis, the "turn or trick of the mirror," is thus a crucial strategy to bind the multifarious mimesis of book 3. Analyzing this

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[41] Halliwell, on his part, warns about the rhetorical tone of the exposition, the satirical tone of the passage, especially in the choice of tables and bedframes (instead of beauty and justice, for example) and the irony with which the mirror is presented, which should call for "constant alertness in its readers to the presence of 'subtexts.' Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis,* 134. This, in Halliwell's interpretation, points to a retain reticence in Plato (characterized by Halliwell as a "romantic puritan") to entirely reject "art."

mimesis "in general" which is not more general, nor is it general mimesis, Socrates makes the crucial distinction between three kinds of producers who preside over three forms of bedframes: first is god, the producer of a bedframe that simply is and of which there is just one. Second, the one produced by a craftsman, which is multiple and is made according to the one made by the god; and third, the one produced by a painter. The painter's bedframe, they agree, is third-removed from the couch that "truly" is: it is made in imitation of the craftsman's bedframe. It is necessarily partial and limited, static and useless.

Let us now consider what this scene looks like according to the logic of paradigmaticity. Before bringing in the mirror, but already within the "theoretical" method of questioning, their habit, Socrates says:

> we are, presumably, accustomed to set down some one particular form (*eidos…hekaston*) of the particular "manys" (*hekasta ta polla*) to which we apply the same name. Or don't you understand?
>
> "I do." Then let's now set down any of the "manys' you please; for example, if you with, there are surely many bedframes and tables." "Of course."
>
> But as for *ideas* (*ideai*) for these furnishings, there are presumably two, one of bedframe, one of table." (596a-b; translation modified).

The strategy is not simply to say that there is one eternal form or idea that serves as a model for all the material things in the world. Various commentators, including Halliwell, warn about taking this model as an exposition of Platonic metaphysics as a whole. What is paradigmatic in the scene, the place where the paradigm or the logic of the paradigm appears, is precisely in showing that the relation between the one and the multiple is one of paradigmaticity. Socrates does not say that we have to look at all the particular bedframes to see what they have in common to arrive at the idea; neither does he say that we can know what the many bedframes look like by simply contemplating the "idea of bedframe." But also, he does not say that the "one" is the paradigm of the "multiple." The one and the multiple are juxtaposed and then compared with respect to

what their "being" is. More precisely, what their *eidos,* their aspect, is: how, or in what way they appear and how the one and the multiple relate to each other.

Further, the question turns out to be to how they are produced since, after all, mimesis is a form of production, of *poiesis.* The clinical scene is not a paradigm of epistemology or metaphysics but one of production and economy—of economimesis: "Aren't we also accustomed to say that it is in looking to the idea (*idean*) of each implement (*skeuē*) that one craftsman (*demiourgos*) makes (*poiei*) the bedframes and another the chairs we use, and similarly for other things? For presumably none of the craftsmen fabricates (*demiourgei*) the idea itself. How could he?" (596b). The question, then, is how are these implements made, and by whom. The "craftsman" here is not simply a *poietes* or a *technités*, but a *demiourgos*: someone who works for the people, the *demos*, by making implements, day-to-day artifacts. He makes things that, as Heidegger points out, are "not simply present-at-hand (*Vorhanden*), but are at our disposal to use (*Zuhanden*)."[42] What the carpenter makes is not an object of theoretical contemplation but one which is used by the *demos*.

And further, the demiourg makes the implements "looking to the idea." This is where the traditional readings of this passage, which both Halliwell and Heidegger resist (although for different reasons) supposes that things in the world are "copies" of pure ideas that exist as such. Rather, as Heidegger interprets the passage, at this point it is not a matter of copying, of fashioning-after (*Nachahmen*) but of pro-ducing (*Her-stellen*): "Making and manufacturing therefore mean to bring the outward appearance [*eidos*] to show itself in something else, namely, in what is manufactured, to "pro-duce" the outward appearance, not in the sense of manufacturing it but of letting it radiantly appear."[43]

As complex as it might seem, Heidegger's idiosyncratic translation of *eidos* as outward appearance, meant to emphasize that it is not a matter of ideal/material, also helps us see how mediation is at stake here. The difference between the bedframe that

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[42] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 174.
[43] Idem., 176.

"is" and the one that the demiourg makes is not of model and copy but of withdrawal and appearance. The demiourg brings out the bedframe from unconcealment, makes it ready-to-hand, *zuhanden*, because he knows how the being of the bedframe "is." This knowledge of how a thing is, gathered through its use and manufacture, is what distinguishes each type of demiourg: the carpenter makes tables, the shoemaker shoes, and so on.

When Socrates, in the ironic turn remarked above introduces the mirror, by supposing that there is someone who can produce the *eidos* that the demiourg cannot, the point is to show that the imitator does not have the same familiarity with the things he produces. "It is all a matter of observing *tini tropōi poiei*, in what way he produces."[44] This *tropoi* is a way or a manner: "how one is turned, in what direction he turns, in what he maintains himself, to what he applies himself, where he turns to and remains tied, and with what intention he does so."[45]

We have already seen how this goes on with the "trick or turn of the mirror." The difference is not that the demiourg makes real objects and the imitator or mimetes only simulacra. Manufacturing and placing a mirror are forms of *poiesis* in the sense that both are modes of pro-ducing an outward appearance, but in each case the *tropos* differs: the demiourg pro-duces a house that shows itself in stone and wood, while the other shows the house in a mirror. The difference of *tropos* is what we would call a difference of media. So, there are three forms of products, or three ways, three *tropos* in which the *eidos* of the bed appears: by itself; in wood; and in a mirror or a painting. The first are called the ones that truly "are" because they show themselves without mediation, in self-showing: *eidos* as *idea*. These, as Socrates says, are made by the god and appear by nature, *phusei*, that is, as self-producing. The second are produced by the demiourg, and the latter are made by the mimetes.

Heidegger insists in showing that all three are "real." The difference between the first and the others is that the latter are "a dim thing compared to the truth" (597a). Only in the bedframe that is self-producing does the *eidos* of the bed shows itself as true, as

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[44] Idem.
[45] Idem.

aletheia, while the other two appear through the mediation of something else and reduce its *eidos*. Finally, the difference between the demiourg and the mimetes, in Heidegger's interpretation, is not that the mimetes copies what the demiourg produces. Both are modes of pro-ducing, of bringing forth the *eidos* of the same thing. Rather on the one hand, what the mimetes produces is not for the *demos*, he does not participate in the public uses of things and in communal life. Compared to the one made by the demiourg, the table that he produces is useless. On the other hand, the painting darkens the *eidos* even more, since it only shows one aspect of it, one perspective: "What he pro-duces is consequently but *one* aspect, *one* way in which the table appears. If he depicts the table from the front, he cannot paint the rear of it. He produces the table always in only one view or *phantasma* (598b).

Reading this passage with Heidegger's interpretation has been useful for sidestepping the problems of more traditional readings that insist on models and copies, as well as showing the importance of mediation in the passage. With Lacoue-Labarthe, on the other hand, we have seen that Heidegger still preserves and repeats the trick of the mirror, he falls in "the mimetic trap" while attempting "to outdo Plato."[46]

Lastly, Lacoue-Labarthe signals the way that Heidegger and Plato slowly assimilate work to *poiesis*, moving mimesis out of its economical context towards an "aesthetic" one. In addition to determining mimesis as visual and conditioned by a mediation that obscures the *eidos*, Plato also determines it as a matter of property. This is one of Lacoue-Labarthe and Derrida's most important reformulations of mimesis, namely of reinscribing it as an economical problem.

Thus, one can also read this passage as a theory of labor.[47] There are better and worse types of labor. These do not so so much follow the distinction between mental and manual labor but between the types of products they create, according to their usefulness

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[46] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 89.
[47] Besides the texts I employ here, there do not seem to be many works that approach Plato form this perspective. To my knowledge, the most incisive ones are Rancière, Jacques. *The Philosopher and His Poor*. Translated by Andrew Parker. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004, and *Disagreement: politics and philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

and the "transparency" by which they display their *eidos*. Since after all the passage is most often read in terms of models and copies, in fact as the paradigmatic definition of what a model and a copy is, especially in the texts that I will examine later on in this dissertation, we can examine this theory of labor in these terms, keeping in mind Heidegger's reading so as not to assume that model and copy are ontological determinations. Rather, I argue that we can see how in this passage the "use-value" of these objects (fashioned by the demiourg for the *demos* to use) can also be thought of in terms of "reproducibility-value" and their capacity to pose as originals. This capacity, in Heidegger's terms, would correspond to the degree of darkening that occurs in their production. The further removed such production is from the pure, self-showing, the less reproducibility or originality it will have. Thus, god's labor is highest because he creates the *eidos* that shows itself.

The demiourg produces objects which still have the capacity to be determined as models, since after all they do not obscure the *eidos* nor reduce it to a single perspective. Thus, while it is not necessary that the artist considers the works of the demiourg as model, nothing prevents him from doing it. Further, the originality of the demiourg's productions is a non-issue: no one would object to them being "less original" unless they were explicitly copying another one, (and hence producing in a different way). The demiourg is then second best.

Painters and poets fit nicely in the third category, since the entire system is built to show precisely how useless and unoriginal are their products. They possess no reproducibility value since they are "third-removed," and no one, presumably, would think of using them as models.

With the affective labor of the musicians, the issue is more problematic. Affects have no paradigm, emotions are always completely original and completely derivate. They belong to everyone and no one and are dispersed easily; they can only be regulated by a metaphysics of the soul, by dividing the soul into parts and assigning emotions to the part that needs to be controlled. To this paradigm of the soul corresponds a paradigm for music given in the *Timaeus* and a notion of harmony that organizes its economy.

It is this affective haunting that prompts the triple-copy model and the mimetology that ensues from it. After the value of affective mimesis has been analyzed, a new value, a whole new theory of value, an economy, must take place. The scheme of mimetology and the criticism it levers upon poets and sophists guarantees a monopoly upon the regulation of the paradigms accepted as legitimate in the State. More precisely, it determines the whole economy and regulates the modes of production of those listening bodies and, finally, of the very paradigms that come to be inscribed in bodies. It produces the paradigm of their production and the paradigms produced. This is a thoroughly idealist, or rather speculative operation, the paradigm of speculation itself: reason gives itself its own rules and principles, and takes everything that is not itself to be a copy or derived from itself, or at best something like itself. Because of this, reason must posit the existence of a pure medium, of the very notion of immediacy, whose model it takes paradoxically from affective mimesis.

It now becomes clear why *mousikē* and the painters are banished from the State: in book 3, as we have seen, Plato constantly warns about the risk that they pose by threatening the division of labor that the triple model seeks to justify. In book 2, the initial State becomes "luxurious" precisely with the entrance of the poets and *mousikē,* an entire army of imitators, painters, sculptors, poets, rhapsodes, actors, dancers, theater agents, make-up artists, and so on (373ff). Along with this comes money, the market, prostitution, violence, and so on. As Lacoue-Labarthe writes,

> From the very moment that money intervenes, there is a generalized
> depropriation, the risk of a polytechnics or of an uncontrollable polyvalence, the
> exacerbation of desire, the appetite for possession, the triggering of rivalry and
> hatred. In fact, almost "Capital"; and the entire political orthopedics has finally no
> other object than to reduce (economically) this senseless expense of the proper
> that comes along with the "general economy," that is, the mimetic economy.[48]

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[48] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 124.

"General economy," as Bataille presents it in the *Accursed Share*, aims to show that the traditional sense of economy, where the aim is to maximize profit, is restricted: It presumes to be closed on itself and rejects any expenditure, any useless production. Similarly, in texts such as "Economimesis" and "From Restricted to General Economy" Derrida has shown that speculative philosophy, exemplified in Kant, works upon the same principle. Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of the political orthopedics of the *Republic* follows this line as well.[49]

Restricted mimesis thus corresponds to restricted economy and to speculative philosophies that aim to maximize profits, to regulate excess and control the multifariousness of mimesis. Here, then, we see the relation of general mimesis to restricted mimesis: the trick of the mirror aims to show that what seems to be a productive activity is in fact a useless expenditure. However, in order to accomplish this the philosopher must have recourse to mimesis itself, to the logic of paradigmaticity, to show that what holds for one, a mirror, holds for mimesis in general.

Now, we have seen that the first type of pro-duction, self-showing, has almost an infinite reproducibility value. Socrates makes the point in book 10 of showing how it would be impossible that there were two of these entities, since immediately one of the two would appear to be secondary: "Because" I said, "If he should make only two, again one would come to light the form of which they in turn would both possess, and that, and not the two, would be the couch that *is*" (597c). Now, although this is not mentioned by Socrates, the philosopher imitates god in this exact respect, but his place is never determined in the hierarchy: as Lacoue-Labarthe shows, he is holding the mirror to protect himself. In the eighteenth-century, aestheticians would often talk of the work of genius as being an imitation of *natura naturans*, not *natura naturata*.[50] In the *Republic* the philosopher king has exactly this role. Not only he invents the myths that are suitable for the the education of the guardians (which would be a product with some use or reproducibility value) but he in fact creates the paradigm of the State itself: that is, in the

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[49] Derrida, Jacques. "Economimesis." *Diacritics* 11, no. 2 (July 1981): 3–25; "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve" in *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge, 2001.

[50] Derrida, "Economimesis," 9; Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 255ff.

end, what the entire work is about. It consists in creating a global—but restricted—economy in which the creation of paradigms—and its fundamental means of production, mimesis—is completely monopolized by the philosopher. Later on—even starting with Aristotle—this productive power of mimesis would be recognized and seized by artists: they would call it *imitatio*.

To summarize, some "originals" have infinite reproducibility value, which is never exhausted no matter how many copies are made. These, the first kind, tend to appear as abstract, general, or universal things: sonata form, courageousness, the circle, the piano. Likewise, they do not claim dependence no other things as copies of them, but appear as models of themselves.

Other things claim such dependence to an original, accruing from the value of the original itself, and preserving some reproducibility value. This is the second kind. A Steinway is not an abstract piano but a particular one, and yet there are potentially infinite Steinway pianos. Yet, their reproducibility value is more limited: it does not permit for something else to claim them as their model—whatever attempts to do it is a "counterfeit" or a "fake." This is the third type, which not only partakes of the limited reproducibility value of the second type, but also has a minimum reproducibility value: no one makes copies of copies.

Mimesis produces these three types of objects (or more specifically, the difference between them): some are abstract originals, others are particular originals, or legitimate copies of these originals, and others are counterfeits. Each mimetology has a specific way of distributing reproducibility value among the different types of objects and, more importantly, between the different social classes that produce these objects. For Plato, for example, the first two types are good, while the third one is problematic—and it so happens that all artistic creations fall in the last category. For the mimetologies that developed during the Renaissance, on the other hand, an artist was required to show what its original model was in particular terms, either a previous artist with great reproducibility value, or "nature" which most often was of the first kind.

As presented in the *Republic*, mimesis appears split between that which corrupts the soul immediately and that which shows how things really are, namely copies, things that are but not entirely, since they are separated from what really is. A model of mimesis based on immediacy is replaced by another that emphasizes mediation, which presumes to be mimesis in general, but which shows itself depending on—because opposed to—the earlier mode which is now silently dismissed. General mimesis, like the *pharmakon*, is never entirely in sight: distributed into good and bad, harmful and productive, musical and visual, mimesis both poisons and heals—it is, and is not.

In my reading, this ambivalence works through and produces the opposition between immediacy and mediation which the analysis of *mousikē* helped establish but that book 10 erases. The "banishment of the poets" of book 10 is not as scandalous as the undetermined state in which the whole of *mousikē* is left as presented in book 3, and even less than the political effects of this banishment. If the text distributes *mousikē* and painting according to the opposition of immediacy and mediation, this is only in order to preserve the affective, ethical and political powers of *mousikē* while maintaining control of its multifarious productions. It is preserved, most crucially, in the "noble lies" told to the citizens of Kallipolis to maintain the social order and keep citizens in their "natural" place.

Such is the effect of mimetology: a political economy that passes as ontology, inaugurating a long history of readings and interpretations in a field too hastily called "aesthetics" and which overwrites the specific context of this transformation at the origin. The values, qualities, and characteristics we normally associate with the "arts" of music, painting, sculpture, and poetry, are programmed, with long lasting effects, in this moment.

AFFECTIVE INSCRIPTION AND ITERATION

When Havelock described writing as producing the distinction between the knower and the known that pitted *mousikē* and philosophy against each other, we said, he was following the program of the debasement of writing inaugurated by Plato's text itself. But, at the same time, he allows us to see a multitude of means by which the Greeks were

thoroughly familiar with writing before the letter. Havelock was, in a way, advancing a similar thesis as Derrida, his 1960s contemporary. In the first part of *Of Grammatology,* Derrida distinguishes between writing "in a restricted sense," which is spatially and geographically—Eurocentrically—located, and a more general writing which comprises, in addition to the traditional writing, "all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing … All this to describe not only the system of notation secondarily connected with these activities but the essence and the content of these activities themselves."[51] In fact, Derrida says, one might even speak of military or political writing.

With this sense of writing as general inscription, an archi-writing defined as the quasi-transcendental condition of possibility for permanence and spatialization as such, we may easily invert the thesis of orality and literacy: the multitude of practices performative enactments of *mousikē,* is already a general assemblage of inscription. The contents of *mousikē* are not simply "memorized" by the performer and then repeated. Rather, a heterogenous collation of material means, dances, temples, figures, instruments, modes, metrical feet, and so on, serves to preserve and transmit, in short to re-compose, the customs, mores, and laws of the community, its *ethos* and *nomoi.*[52]

What allows for the permanence of these mores and laws across such a heterogeneous medium is what Derrida calls *iteration*, namely the possibility for any mark to be removed from its context and still necessarily preserve the possibility to be read and deciphered as a mark of any sorts.[53] Understood as iteration, the repetition that takes place in *mousikē* does not consist so much in the ritualized movements and practices that are bound to specific times and places, as it does in the fact that this

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[51] Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 9.
[52] On the "ethos theory," see Warren Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music: The Evidence of Poetry and Philosophy,* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1966); Wallace, "Damon of Oa," and Peter Wilson, "Athenian Strings" in Murray and Wilson, eds., 259, 292.
[53] Derrida discusses the notion of *iteration* in "Signature Event Context," published in *Writing and Difference,* a close reading of J.L Austin's theory of the performative, and further elaborated it in *Limited Inc.* and other places. Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988.

repeatability is in fact possible, given that no place and time are ever identical. What the performative accomplishes, understood as iteration, is not so much to produce a transformation in the world, but to demonstrate that language and all marks have a certain permanence that exceeds their immediate location and time (their context), without this excess constituting any sort of ideality.

Rather, what we call repetition is precisely the necessary transformation of these presumably context-bound units into marks that have the possibility of being everywhere "iterated," presented as the same and different at the same time, altered in its repetition. For Derrida, what is crucial about this is that marks do not retain any intentionality or "original" semantic meaning, they can be break with every given context and "engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion."[54] When the performative assemblage of *mousikē* exploits this necessary possibility, on the other hand, what is at stake is not the dissemination they engender but rather that these units, exemplary the musical modes, cease to be strictly bound to a musical context and attain a reproducibility that links their simultaneous identity and alterity across media and across time.

An account *mousikē* as archi-writing can, in fact, be read directly in book 3 of the *Republic*, in a passage that we already examined. The first site of inscription is the body: "Or haven't you observed that imitations (*mimeseis*), if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established (*kathisthantai*) as habits (*ethe*) and nature (*phusis*), in body (*soma*) and sounds (*phonas*) and in thought (*dianoian*)?" (395c). In this passage, Plato neatly summarizes the roles of mimesis and repetition in making the body a site of affective inscriptions for habits and mores. Mimesis performs a double task: on the one hand, it ensures the identity of what makes the imprint and what is imprinted in the body—this is covered under the sustantive "mimeseis." On the other hand, it affirms repetition as a mode of producing the identity between the two.

The task of the legislators in the *Republic* is not only to make sure its citizens are good and virtuous, but to preserve the state apparatus, the means of reproduction of the

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[54] Derrida, "Signature Event Context", 320.

conditions of production. This occurs, I argue, through the famous "ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (*Rep*. 607b5-6).[55] Much ink has flowed upon this quarrel, which is arguably longer after Plato mentioned than it was before him, but here we can suggest seeing it by placing the body as an inscribable medium—as the object of an onto-typology—at the center of Plato's "quarrel" with *mousikē*. The body must be shown to be plastic and susceptible to the imprint of the legislator, hence the emphasis on education both in music and gymnastics. Likewise, the mimetic mechanism of its inscription, *mousikē* also must be preserved, wrested away from its current holders, the poets and the sophists. The difference between immediacy and mediation, which produces (alphabetical) writing as secondary, serves to accomplish this displacement just as much as the indictment to poets and sophists that they "do not know what they say."

The bulk of book 3 is concerned with a "purging" of the words, harmonies, and rhythms which have turned the "city of sows" into a "city of luxuriousness." The passage offers several complications. As we have seen, the fact that *mousikē* was composed of logos, harmonic mode, and rhythm entailed that two different legislations had to be undertaken. One for logos, which worked undisturbed insofar as it was possible to distinguish between true models—the gods—and the things the poets said about them as true or false appearances. But in the case of modes and rhythms, which correspond to modes of life to an extent that they confuse themselves with them, the regulation not only has to be repeated, but reaches an aporetic point, expressed by Glaucon: "as to which sort [of rhythms] are imitations of which sort of life, I can't say" (400a).

Picking up in our discussion of economimesis, it now becomes more evident that the problem with modes and rhythms is not simply that these fail to conform to a model-copy system, but rather that they introduce a sort of multifariousness and ambiguity that threatens what I called the "theory of labor" that upholds the entire system. Matters of ontology—and this is a general thesis that will accompany in the next chapters—depend on matters of economimesis.

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[55] For a broad overview of the issues see the essays in Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, *Plato and the poets* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011).

What Socrates finds most problematic in this confusion is that the practices of the poets and musicians are panharmonic and many-stringed, that they do not keep to their own job but instead they aim to "imitate" everything, "a polytechnics of uncontrollable polyvalence" in Lacoue-Labarthe's words, that turns the city of sows into a luxurious city. There is no room for "'double man among us, nor a manifold one, since each man does one thing'. 'No, he doesn't harmonize'" (397e).

Out of this multitude, only those corresponding to the two ideal temperaments for the guardians, a violent one and a moderate one, are to be preserved in the city. The founders don't innovate in preferring the music and instruments of Apollo over those of Marsyas (399e). But how to choose them is not as easy. First, the modes are discussed as being something, e.g "the wailing modes," (*tines oun threnodeis harmoniai*, 399d). Then, Socrates—who doesn't know them—asks Glaucon "what modes are soft and suitable for symposia," and so on (398e). Only later he asks about a mode "which would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents of a man who is courageous." We see, then, in the course of the legislation itself, the ambiguity of musical mimesis and the challenges it poses: modes are, or are appropriate for, or lastly imitate, different types of life and activity, but how this is so, is not clear.

This ignorance—to employ a hermeneutical commonplace—is strategically ironic. Its main purpose is concealing the way in which an identity between musical modes and modes of life, already established as part of Greek culture, is adopted and integrated into the ideal State. It is not by coincidence that the harmonic modes are named with geographical names: Dorian, Ionian, Lydian. It matters little to know which mode corresponds to which *ethos*—it can be left to Glaucon and even to Damon (*in absentia*) to decide—insofar as their identity is announced and taken up as subject of legislation. This is the second type of inscription, of what Derrida calls writing *avant la lettre* (very literally "before the letter"), advanced by Plato. A harmonic mode is not simply a collection of pitches. It is, in addition or concomitantly, a set of regulations about the employment of these pitches, their hierarchy and tendencies, the instruments

that may or may not employ it, and in the Damonian theory appropriated by Plato, the codification of social customs.[56]

These modes are everywhere inscribed: in the instruments but also in the mathematical proportions by which they come to be conceptualized; that one of them is "material" and the other one is "ideal" does not negate that they are different means of inscription—it is only the difference between them that creates this "metaphysical" distinction. Before Aristoxenus and the latter tradition, there was no fully "abstract" conceptualization of independent pitches and their mathematical relations.[57] The modes existed nowhere outside of their inscriptions, and in them they are already "identical" with the customs they are supposed to correspond to. Their codification, undertaken years later, would complicate this identification and produce further problems for the tradition of mimesis in music, which will be explored in Parts II and III of this dissertation.

Crucially, then, the text invokes and affirms a series of identifications: the Lydian and "tight" Lydian are wailing; the Ionian and some Lydian are soft—presumably for being "slack," i.e. not tight in the lyre. The Dorian and the Phrygian are the ones that "would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents of a man who is in courageous in warlike deeds… etc." Thus, harmonic modes, codify, preserve, and transmit the *ethē* of the community that employs them, using mimesis in a diversity of senses: some are said to "imitate the sounds," or to "be" soft since they are produced by lax strings, others simply for conventional associations which in the end correspond to their geographical origins. The main mimetic operation, however, is to produce an ideal entity, "a harmonic mode," out of empirical practices, stabilize the ambiguity it entails—make it natural— and legislate its usage. When, in what was later taken up as the "ethos theory" of musical modes, a certain mode was said to move a listener towards one disposition or another, the

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[56] This is attested further, for example, in Aristotle's *Politics.* In this account we see the inseparability of instruments, genres, and mode. When attempting to compose a dithyramb, which "is by general consent held to be a Phrygian thing," on the dorian mode, Philoxenus was forced to abandon the attempt since "the nature of the genre forced him back into the proper mode, the Phrygian" (*Pol.* 1342a32–b12). What links them is their foreign provenance, which further delineates the conflict between the national and the foreign prompted by the New Music. *cf.* Csapo 2004, 232–35; and Steiner 2013, 197.

[57] For the role of Aristoxenus in this context see Andrew Barker "Aristoxène et les critères du jugement musical" in Malhomme and Wersinger, eds. *Mousikè et Aretè,* 68.

means of production of this ideality was concealed by affirming the mode to be first and to "cause" affections in their listener. The structure was inverted, the copy produced the paradigm.

Inscription is always a form of power, which does not mean that it is a violent irruption but simply the expression of and means for the exercise of power. It is not because there is writing that there is violence; rather, inscription always bears the trace of the powers that be, while these powers are in rigor nothing without the inscription that they effectuate. Inscription less writes the decrees of power than inscribes the will of power itself. Inscribed with this power, the violence of music appears then through its regulations and rationalizations.

The third element advanced by Plato is the theory of the soul, presented as a theory of forms of musical inscription in the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, in addition to the *Republic*. Here, and not in the regulation of modes, we find the importance of mathematics as ensuring stability and identity over the multifariousness of musical experience.[58] The soul is presented as the ultimate site for inscription. As with the other inversions by which the secondary takes the place of the primary—the paradigm taking the place of the copy—the soul comes to be the model for all other types of inscription, taking the place of the body. In the *Republic,* the things said to be imitated come to be more and more "abstract," and "ideal": Grace and gracelessness, harmony and lack of it: these are affectively communicated to the body of the infant, of the being without logos so that, "when reasonable speech (*logos*) comes, the man who's reared in this way would take most delight in it, recognizing it on account of its being akin" (402a.). This affective familiarity with grace and gracelessness before the advent of logos is "the most sovereign rearing," which repeats the idea of ethical education as a stamping of the soul mentioned before, "because rhythm and harmony most of all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite" (401e).

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[58] Anne Gabrièle Wersinger, *Platon et La Dysharmonie: Recherches Sur La Forme Musicale.* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2001).

Most importantly, the soul and the city are identified. The city is just if each part performs their own function with respect to affections and habits that correspond to the forms [*eidoi*] of sobriety, courage and wisdom, (435b); therefore "we shall thus expect the individual also to have these same forms in his soul, and by reason of identical affections of these with those in the city to receive properly the same appellations" (435c). Thus the analysis of the parts of the soul into the appetitive, the spirited and the rational corresponds to the three classes found in the State, "the moneymakers, the helpers, the counsellors" (441c). Music—and gymnastics—ensure that the rational rules over the irrational, "to render them concordant, intensifying and fostering the one with fair words and teachings and relaxing and soothing and making gentle the other by harmony and rhythm" (442a). We find a musical definition of justice, to attain "self-mastery and beautiful order within himself, and ... [harmonize] these three principles, the notes or intervals of three terms quite literally the lowest, the highest, and the mean, and all others there may be between them, and [bound] all three together and [make] of himself a unit, one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison…" (433e).[59]

Plato thus draws the modes of inscription of *ethē* from the body, through the soul, and into the city. All of these come to be regulated by the transcendent paradigm of mathematical order called the "world-soul" in the *Timaeus,* famously—and obscurely—organized according to the musical proportions associated with the Pythagoreans.[60] The "perfection" of these musical harmonies and the correspondences they preserve counter the multiple displacements operated in the social field. The *ethē* must become regulated, they must become or turn into law, *nomoi*. For this reason, the guardians are to be trained to be watchful of transformations or changes in the musical order,

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[59] Csapo also emphasizes the musical origin of the negative adjectives used to criticize political regimes, namely *polueidos* and *poikilos*. Csapo, "The Politics of the New Music," 239.

[60] For the relation between music and the *Timaeus*, see Sergio Zedda, "How to Build a World Soul: A Practical Guide" and Andrew Barker "Timaeus on music and the liver" in Wright, M. R. (ed.) *Reason and Necessity: Essays on Plato's Timaeus,* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2000) and Wersinger, *Platon et La Dysharmonie.* See also Gretchen Reydams-Schils, "Myth and Poetry in the *Timaeus"* in Destrée and Hermann, (eds.) *Plato and the Poets,* 358.

"they must beware of change to a strange form of music, taking it to be a danger to the whole. For never are the modes of music (*mousikēs tropon*) moved (*kinountai*) without the greatest political laws (*politikon nomon*) being moved, as Damon says, and I am persuaded."

"Include me too," said Adeimantus, "among those who are persuaded."

So it's surely here in music, as it seems," I said, "that the guardians must build the guardhouse."

"At least, he said, "this kind of lawlessness (*paronomia*) easily creeps in unawares.

"Yes," I said, "since it's considered to be a kind of play (*paideian*) and to do no harm."

"It doesn't do any, either," he said, "except that, establishing itself bit by bit, it flows gently beneath the surface into the dispositions (*ethē*) and practices, and from there it emerges bigger in men's contracts with one another; and it's from these contracts, Socrates, that it attacks laws (*nomon*) and regimes with much insolence until it finally subverts everything private and public (424c).

The fascinating wordplay in this passage affirms an association that is repeated in the *Laws*: The modes—*tropoi,* turnings, idiomatic instrumental gestures—are not moved or changed without affecting the political laws. Songs become laws. The pun is made clearer in Adeimantus's response: *paranomia*, lawlessness, emphasizes the double meaning of *nomos* as song and law. In the *Laws,* the Athenian calls this a paradox: "our songs have turned into 'nomes' (apparently the ancients gave some such name to tunes on the lyre—perhaps they had some inkling of what we're saying, thanks to the intuition of someone who saw a vision either in his sleep or while awake) (*Laws*, 799e; cf. 722d, 775b)."[61] This is the most permanent mode of inscription. Songs composed in specific

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[61] For a philological analysis of the relation between *nomos* as musical form and law, see Barker, *Greek Musical Writings*, 249. Csapo documents other references and explanations for this recurrent pun (in pseudo Aristotle, Aelian, Pseudo Plutarch, Plutarch, and the Sudas). Csapo, "The Politics of the New Music," 239. He frames his discussion in terms of an opposition between "Old Oligarchs" and "New Democrats." Whether the explanation is repetition as mnemonics, the "immutability" of musical laws and social laws, or derivation, the general notion of inscription is the same and is not limited to Plato. The most recurrent of these in the seventeenth century, or at least the most exemplary, is perhaps Pseudo-Aristotle,

modes inscribe and incorporate the *ethē* they come to be associated with; by their repetition and mobilization they become laws. They preserve and inscribe the nature and social conditions of the community.

In summary, then, the mimetology of *mousikē* is a *performative assemblage of inscription*. Performative here means that, as Havelock shows, this type of mimesis is primarily enacted by the musician-poet, who does not simply tell or act a story but re-composes it and makes the audience participate of it as well. Now, *mousikē* does not only involve the musicians and audience, but also the myths that are told, the instruments, the harmonic modes and rhythms, the stage, the places, the times of the performance, and so on. It articulates a widely distributed, heterogeneous multiplicity of elements where none have priority over the others: it is an *assemblage*. It is performative also because in repeating such an enactment it does not only articulate the assemblage as a "show" but also has real effects upon the world, it accomplishes something. What it accomplishes is the *inscription* of the laws and customs of the community that participates of the performance. Through performances of *mousikē*, or more precisely through the iteration of its mores, the community becomes what it is and distinguishes itself from those that are not like itself, those that do not use the same musical instruments or modes, that tell different myths and honor different gods, and so on. What this comes down to is distinguishing between Athenians and barbarians, or natives and foreigners or, in the most basic terms, self and other. By regulating what types of *mousikē* are allowed in the State, these distinctions between what is proper and improper to Athenians becomes naturalized as law. This is why Plato would say that changing the modes of music entailed changing the laws of the community. This is what is commonly known as the "ethos theory."

Problems XIX.28: "Why are the *nomoi* that people sing called by that name? Is it because before they learned writing they sang their laws, so as not to forget them, as is the custom even now among the Agathyrsi? And they therefore gave to the first of their later songs the same name that they gave to their first songs." Barker, *Greek Musical Writings,* 198.

But this is where it is important to distinguish the different mimetologies that are at stake. Under a traditional mimetology, which distributes things between originals and copies—mimesis as imitation—one would tend to imagine that such a performance consists of seeing actors behave in a particular way, play different types of music, specific modes and rhythms, that are presumed to correspond or resemble love, anger, happiness, sadness, and so on. The "contagious" aspect of the performances would be the emotional response in the audience, so that one repeats or imitates the emotions that the musical performance is supposed to communicate. In fact, this mimetology is very much present in popular accounts of the meaning of music that understand music as an expression of emotions.

But as we know well, it is not very clear how a particular type of music or musical element, say a major triad, resembles or imitates happiness. Or, when it becomes a matter of national character—still an issue of *ethos*—what distinguishes for example Italian from French or German musics in terms that are not just conventional. Or, on the other hand, how is it that the formalist approach that presumes that music has no meaning outside itself, that it is pure sound, seems to have been replaced by theories of vibration and affect in which music does not represent but immediately makes us feel or react in particular ways. In other words, if today we can say that some kind of music is aggressive, or sensual, or "so German," or anything else, this is because of a certain convention has become established to an extent that it seems to be natural. What is mimetic about such a relation is not that music resembles or imitates an emotion, but that something that is just conventional now appears as natural.

The passage from the conventional to the natural is what I call inscription, and what accomplishes this inscription is the performance of *mousikē* that involves such a heterogeneous assemblage. As we can see, inscription is not so much related to writing in the sense of musical notation or alphabetical writing, but a more general sense: scales, rhythms, sounds, and the movement of bodies in space are all forms of inscription. In the performance of *mousikē*, the entire assemblage serves both as a means and medium of inscription. What gets inscribed are modes of behavior and forms of regulation, *ethē* and

nomoi, which are iterated, externalized, and preserved across the assemblage as a collective memory.

It is difficult to say what Plato's role—as an author—was in the re-codification of *mousikē* and mimesis that I have presented. We can only deal with its consequences. In what follows, I will elaborate on the notion of a performative assemblage of inscription as it would have been taken up by Italian humanists in the musical and intellectual revolution that would lead to the imitation without a model of ancient Greek *mousikē*.

Part II

Second Origins

> To read what was never written
> *Theses on the Philosophy of History*
> Walter Benjamin

As examined in Part I of this dissertation, mimesis is unoriginal. It threatens origin and makes every origin derivate while conversely making it possible to claim an origin for what is always already derivate. The risk, as always, is to end up building castles in the air: to attempt to ground without grounds. Take that exemplary moment at the origin of modern music, the declaration made by Claudio and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi as a defense against the conservative whip of the dialogue penned, in 1600, by the now infamous disciple of Zarlino, Giovanni Maria Artusi.[1] In this and subsequent works, as is well known, Artusi attacked the harmonic transgressions, musical allusions to improvised counterpoint and ornamented singing, and the adoption of rhythms derived from dance that began to characterize the style of madrigalists like De Rore, Marenzio, Gesualdo, and Luzzaschi. Since the musical examples under attack were taken from Monteverdi's as of then unpublished madrigals, the composer eventually responded to Artusi's attack with a well-known letter, addressed to the "Studiosi Lettori," and a subsequent line-by-line gloss on that letter written by his brother Giulio Cesare, in which they declared the style under attack to be based on a different aesthetics than the one upheld by Artusi. The new music, they came to argue, privileged the expressive power of the text over the abstract

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[1] Giovanni Maria Artusi, *L' Artusi, ouero Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica ragionamenti dui* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1600; Facsimile reprint Bologna: A. Forni, 2000; Digital edition in Andreas Giger, *Saggi musicali italiani*, Bloomington, IN: CHMTL. http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/smi/seicento/ARTIMP_TEXT.html. Partial translation in Oliver Strunk, ed. *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 393-404. For a reconsideration of Artusi as a theorist see Chadwick Jenkins, "Giovanni Maria Artusi and the Ethics of Musical Science", *Acta musicologica*, 81 (2009), 75–97 and Claude Palisca, "The Revision of Counterpoint and the Embellished Style," in *Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 3-29.

harmonic rules of traditional counterpoint.[2] But moreover, as I show here, what the Monteverdi brothers finally called a "Second Practice" depended throughout on a disagreement upon origin, upon the authority of *arche*, its power of regulating musical and social experience, and on the means of securing and deploying this authority. At stake in the controversy was primarily the question of sovereignty and law. Its outcome was a transformation of the relation between music and law—musical as well as social laws: *nomoi*—to call them by their common Greek name. This transformation depended on the redrawing of the political economy of mimesis in musical practices that regulated the rationality of hearing, the nature of dissonance, the relation between music and text— and the place of subjectivity in both. Furthermore, it reorganized the relation of musical practice to the compositions and theories sanctioned by tradition, and the place of music as a representational dispositive in the social space of the court. All of this depended upon a transformation of the sense of *imitatio* or *imitatione* and its regulation. The controversy, in sum, effectively reinscribed *mimesis* onto the *nomos* of economy (*oikos-nomos*), producing a new and modern *economimesis*.[3]

An account of the economimetic transformations involved in the emergence of opera is crucial to understand the status of mimesis in the seventeenth-century in its other main formulation, the passage from similarity to representation. According to the groundbreaking Foucauldian model introduced by Tomlinson in the early 1990s, there is a significant transformation around 1600, that can be summarized as the passage from an episteme based on "similarities" to one based on "representation," or more precisely, as

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[2] Claudio's letter was published in the *Fifth Book of Madrigals* (1605). Giulio Cesare's *Dichiaratione* was attached to a compilation of Claudio's *Scherzi Musicali* published by Ricciardo Amadino in 1607. Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, "Dichiaratione della Lettera stampata nel Quinto libro de suoi madrigali," in Claudio Monteverdi, *Scherzi Musicali a Tre Voci, raccoldi da Giulio Cesare Monteverde suo fratello* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1607); Both pieces are transcribed in Claudio Monteverdi, *Lettere, Dediche, E Prefazioni*, ed. Domenico De' Paoli (Roma: De Santis, 1973) and translated in Strunk, *Source Readings*, 405-412. For Monteverdi's careful avoidance of any reference to "new music" in the controversy, see Tim Carter, "Cerberus Barks in Vain: Poetic Asides in the Artusi–Monteverdi Controversy," in *JAMS,* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Fall 2012), pp. 461-476.

[3] I borrow the term from Derrida, who employs it in his reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, elaborating it as a concept that accounts for the political economy of mimesis—the assignation of what can be imitated, under which conditions, and towards what means, with an aim to control the productive power of mimesis (see Part I of this dissertation).

the end of the discursive formations that affirmed the notion of hidden interconnections (similarities) between things and which gave song (in addition to hermeneutics and semiotics) the capacity to uncover and manipulate these similarities. Mimesis, in this world of sameness, is for Gary Tomlinson limited to this magical function—uncovering and manipulating similarities—which constitutes the archeological ground of signification in Renaissance madrigal. In *Metaphysical Song*, moreover, Tomlinson emphasizes the "invisible," "transsensual," "immaterial," in short, "metaphysical" nature of these correspondences.[4]

In his gloss of Teodato Osio's *L'armonia del nudo parlare con ragione di numeri pitagorici* (Milan, 1637), Tomlinson writes that this form of mimesis, translated as "imitation," brings us into contact with the supersensible, operative force behind such surface likenesses. While representation stands at one remove from the harmony that resonates through the cosmos, imitation, instead, taps that harmony and puts it to emotional use…it is the reflection in this human harmony of higher concordances that allows song to attain ethical and emotional powers.[5]
In a similar way, in his original *catabasis* into the archaeological substratum of madrigal in *Music and Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others*, Tomlinson presented Osio as offering a "simplified," "disenchanted" version of Ficino, one which aimed to reconcile natural magic with the rising Aristotelianism of the academics and especially of the association of poetry with painting upon the rediscovery of the *Poetics*. Osio, Tomlinson showed, conflated Ficino's *furor poetico*, with an interpretation of *imitatione* according to which the essential feature of imitation was "the expression of *costumi*."[6]

While this interpretation may be far from Ficino, it is much closer to Plato's text (not to mention Aristotle's) and its late sixteenth-century deployment, from Zarlino to Artusi, as the following chapters will elaborate. Yet there is another important element

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[4] Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[5] Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, 16.
[6] Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 226.

that goes unmentioned in Tomlinson's reading of Osio which is important in this context. Osio's distinction between *imitatione* and *rappresentatione*, in the passage quoted by Tomlinson, in fact concerns their "specific difference" which in scholastic philosophy is understood to depend on matter—form being the universal, generic element. Thus, as Osio writes, "the specific difference between the poet and the painter will not be verse itself [that is, the form], but rather verse as what [the medium, or matter] introduces imitation with its musical proportion."[7] This passage is a reference to the problematic opening of the *Poetics*, in which Aristotle distinguishes the types (*eidoi*, or species, as opposed to *genus*, genre) of poetry, according to "three ways, by using for the representation (1) different media (*en heterois mimesthai*; literally, doing mimesis in other things), (2) different objects (*to hetera*; other things) or (3) a manner (*tropon*) that is different and not the same (*to heteros kai me ton auton*; or otherwise)."[8] Aristotle, however, goes on to discuss only (2) and (3), setting aside the question of media, as John Guillory notes, "for two millennia."[9] It seems that Osio, *pace* Tomlinson (and Guillory), is here making a point about media, and not so much about the object of representation: the painter imitates surfaces because his medium only permits imitating, or more precisely, *representing*, the exterior of its objects; the poet and musician imitate the internal qualities—the *costumi*—of their objects because sound is able to penetrate into the soul of the listener. Or as Osio writes in the passage just before the one quoted by Tomlinson,

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[7] Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, 227; translation modified. "Di maniera, che la differenza specifica dal poeta al pittore non sarà il verso dà sè, mà più tosto come introducente l'imitatione co'l suo numero Musico; perche del pittore, & del mascherato è ufficio di con lo rappresentare i segni, & le figure dar à vedere con li segni, & le figure stesse, quale fosse nell'esterno quel soggetto rappresentato: & del poeta con l'espressione de'costumi dare ad intendere qual'essere dovea nell'interno. Onde quella differenza, la quale occorre dalla rappresentatione alla imitatione sarà quella medesima, la quale dal pittore farà dissimiliante il poeta."

[8] Aristotle, *Aristotle, Poetics I with the Tractatus Coislinianus, a Hypothetical Reconstruction of Poetics Ii, the Fragments of the on Poets*, trans. Richard Janko (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987),1447a16-18. As the translator notes, there are no abstract nouns corresponding to our words for media, object, and manner; an absence that is also evident in Osio's text, and for which Tomlinson adequately—but silently—supplies the crucial word: medium.

[9] Clifford Siskin and William Warner, eds., *This Is Enlightenment* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 56.

Thus it is familiar to the poet that Music, due to the variation of its part-movement, can rouse the affects and perturbations of the human soul. He [the poet], imitating with nothing else but [music] itself, will be able to better represent the mores convenient to the people introduced in his poems. For the modulation of the verse for that person—furious or lascivious, fearful or cruel—ephemeral by nature, will succeed not only in expressing those perturbations, but also to penetrate the souls of the those who are listening, and by accident rouse in them the same affects and passions.[10]

Music, as a medium, is more adequate for imitating the affects and the movements of the soul (*gl'affeti, & perturbationi dell'animo dell'huomo*) due to the variation of its part-movement (*mercè la variatione delle modulationi*).[11] The distinction depends not in a difference in object, "of what" is imitated, but in medium, "in what." The object may be more or less appropriate, but it is the medium that provides the specific difference. The problem of mimesis has been troubled, since Plato, by the question of object: what are the are appropriate and inappropriate models for imitation, and how can they be known? Or as the Aristotelean neoclassicists would ask, what is the "nature" that art is supposed to imitate? Should its object be a beautiful, idealized nature, or nature such as it is? With music, as we have seen, the problem grows much larger, as the "objects" of musical imitation are not by any means clear. In this passage by Osio we encounter yet another opposition that complicates the question, that between imitation and expression, which has a history of its own. Thus, an account of mimetological transformations concerned with a question of object will remain limited and trapped within the same Aristotelean mimetology.

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[10] "Perche dunque della Musica, mercè la variatione delle modulationi sue è proprio di suegliare gl'affeti, & perturbationi dell'animo dell'huomo, è famigliarissima del poeta. Il quale imitando, non quindi con altro, che con la medesima potrà meglio nelle persone introdotte ne' suoi poemi rappresentare i costumi à quelle convenienti; perche la modulatione del verso di quella persona od irata, o lasciva, o paurosa, o crudele per sua natura conface volissima riuscirà non solamente per esprimere quelle perturbationi, mà per penetrare altresì ne gl'animi de gl'ascoltanti, & per aventura gli stessi affeti, & le stesse passioni destare in quelli." Teodato Osio, *L'armonia del nudo parlare, con ragione di numeri pitagorici, discoperta da teodato osio* (Milan: Carlo Ferrandi, 1637), 178.
[11] For the translation of *modulationi* as "part-movement" see Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, *The New Monteverdi Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 140-142.

Moreover, Tomlinson's schema not only operates on such an assumption that there is a transformation in object for musical mimesis—which changes its nature as a whole—but further makes of this change first into an aesthetic transformation (in *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance*) and later into an archaeological one (in *Music and Renaissance Magic*). Both accounts presume a specific medium which is transformed by a change of object from the "supersensible" of natural magic to the "objects" of the disenchanted world as presented in the poetry of Marino.

If this passage in Osio serves as evidence of the persistence of the Renaissance episteme in 1637, I am more inclined to read it as the reappearance, the return, of the question of media and materiality for the problem of mimesis. If the problems of media and materiality already appear in an "all-but forgotten Milanese magus," they will become central for the self-styled cosmopolitan star Athanasius Kircher (examined in the epilogue, below). For now, the important point to be stated is that the change in object (or a passage from imitation to expression) may not be as fundamental for the history of mimesis as the problem of media and mediation as we find it here. Further, it bears emphasizing that the role of the "supersensible" is by no means as clear as Tomlinson presents it, at least not in this passage of Osio—where it is clear that he refers to the *costumi* as taken from Aristotle's reading of Plato and transmitted by Aristides Quintilianus and into Zarlino, as I show below.

The object, as seen above, is rather a matter of economimesis: what is chosen as an object—a model, an original—for mimesis is not so much a question of archaeological transformations but of very material decisions, bearing upon the value and profit of the originals. If there is a passage in object (from Ficino's interest in the *signatura rerum* to Osio's *costumi*) this is not only limited to the discursive formations available to each, but more directly by the specific conditions under which these discursive formations were tested for their effectivity. In fact, as Foucault states, the question bears not on the change of content nor a change of theoretical form,

> It is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern
> each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically

acceptable…In short, there is a problem of the regime, the politics of the scientific statement. At this level it's not so much a matter of knowing what external power imposes itself on science, as of what effects of power circulate among scientific statements, what constitutes, as it were, their internal regime of power, and how and why at certain moments that regime undergoes a global modification.[12]

Thus, it is not enough to describe the archaeological difference between late Renaissance and Baroque monody as a change of object, even if this change illuminates a certain difference between imitation and representation. Not only that. For the history we trace here, and especially for Foucault, it is misleading to do so. Knowledge does not exist in a void, neither as the private exchange of readers and commentators of philosophical works concerned only with the truth of their syllogisms, nor in the underground substratum which in Tomlinson's account changes in a somewhat autonomous fashion. Knowledge, at all times, is traversed by power; not so much as the manipulation of a certain body of knowledge by a specific source of power, or located in particular laws, but rather in an internal, constitutive fashion: a "regime of power." Foucault refers to this relation between knowledge, power, and the social body as a productive network, operating not in terms of pressure and repression, but rather as a circulation across bodies and things, an economy in which power "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse."[13]

It is in this productive economy of power—a general economy—in which I locate the econommimetic transformations of seventeenth-century musical production: before being the subject of literary criticism, or the techniques and prescriptions for the composition of works—before being an aesthetics or a poetics, before being a matter of regulation, of law—mimesis is a productive force, it establishes relations between subjects, bodies and things, realms and machines, constituting them now as originals now as copies and distributing them along a continuum of value and power in which pleasure, or more generally affect, makes these connections perceivable as effects upon the body.

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[12] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 59.
[13] Idem., 61.

Mimesis constitutes and exceeds the restricted domains of aesthetics and poetics which employ propositions, schemas, and regulations grounded on its productions, but it exceeds them just as soon it constitutes them. There is, thus, not so much a history of mimesis but rather the historically determined results of the transformations, displacements, and reorganizations of knowledge formations that are produced by the work of mimesis. And the context of these transformations, the stages of its metamorphoses, continues to expand.

CHAPTER 3

NOVEMBER 16, 1598, A FANTASTIC MUSICAL SERATA: LISTENING TO THE MONTEVERDI-ARTUSI CONTROVERSY

Artusi's first dialogue, divided in two parts, is set in Ferrara, November 1598, during the visit of Margaret of Austria for her wedding to Phillip III of Spain. The "First Discourse" [Ragionamento primo] relates the the conversation between an Austrian musical amateur named Signor Luca and the Bolognese erudite Signor Vario after a visit of the royal entourage to hear the famous *Concerto* of the nuns from the Convent of San Vito, which took place on the 15th ("Era quasi giunto il fine dell' Anno 1598… Ma la Domenica mattina, che fu il giorno quintodecimo, giorno memorabile;" fol. 1r). In the "Second Discourse," which takes place on the 17th ("Spontava l' alba del giorno decimo settimo." fol. 39r), Luca tells Vario of the music he heard the previous night at a concert at the house of the Ferrarese Nobleman Antonio Goretti, in company of Luzzasco Luzzaschi and Hippolito Fiorini.[1]

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[1] There seems to be no register of these events other than the account given by Artusi, yet what is told in the dialogue has been presumed to be true as a historical document. For a historically informed reading of the events, including the context of Margaret's presence in Ferrara and Artusi's attendance to the convent of San Vito, see Tim Carter "'E in rileggendo poi le proprie note': Monteverdi responds to Artusi?" *Renaissance Studies* (Vol. 26 No. 1, 2012). Carter, moreover, deduces that Monteverdi was not present given that he was in Mantua at the time, for a performance of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* in November 22. Tim Carter, "Artusi, Monteverdi, and the Poetics of Modern Music" in *Musical Humanism and Its Legacy: Essays in Honor of Claude V. Palisca,* Nancy Kovaleff Baker, and Barbara Russano Hanning, eds. (Stuyvesant NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 172, n 2; Iain Fenlon, *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), i. 149-61. The historical evidence for these claims is, in my view, problematically limited to Artusi's own telling of the events (it is indeed surprising that scholars like Anthony Newcomb, Paolo Fabbri, or Carter have not found any other record of the event at Goretti's). One hypothesis, presented by Tomlinson, relates this musical *serata* to the 1598 Mantuan performance of the *Il Pastor fido*, suggesting that this performance inspired Monteverdi to compose the madrigals that set the Guarini play. Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 107. The Mantuan performance would have in turn raised interest in Ferrara for Guarini settings, thus drawing attention to Monteverdi's pieces, so that, "indeed, one such presentation in neighboring Ferrara *may be* memorialized in Artusi's description of the concert where Luca heard Monteverdi's *Pastor fido* madrigals." Tomlinson, *Monteverdi*, 118 (emphasis mine). In these readings, moreover, Artusi is cursorily identified with Vario, an assumption that readers familiar with the genre of the dialogue should be ready to distrust. The setting of the dialogue, the wedding between Margaret and Philip, is important enough, since it displaces the event from a purely aesthetic situation to an eminently political one, even if the boundaries of this "political context" are hard to define. For what, in fact, places the conservative priest Artusi in a private performance of *avant-garde* music?

Luca complains that, insofar as the new madrigals violated the good rules [le buone Regole] and introduced "new rules, new modes, and new turns of phrase, these [compositions] were harsh and little pleasing to the ear."[2] Luca offers the music to Vario for examination, presented as nine "*passaggi*," nine exemplars—exemplars that rise to the level of the exemplary, of the paradigmatic—taken from Claudio Monteverdi's "Cruda Amarilli, che col nome ancora," "Anima mia, perdona," "Che se tu se' il cor mio," and "O Mirtillo, Mirtillo anima mia."[3]

The exemplars, only a single bar in each case and, crucially, without their accompanying text, are identified with numbers and laid out in a sequence without interruptions, placed in the course of the dialogue—a veritable mashup of Monteverdian dissonance that Signor Luca transcribed "for [his] amusement" [per mio diporto] (Figure 1).

Approximating Artusi to the Goretti house seems, moreover, a counter-evidence, in the light of the political and religious tensions between the conservative church and the secular courts remarked by Tim Carter and Seth Coluzzi, in which musical modernism in Ferrara seems to stand in for Mantuan secularism during the papal occupation, such that "the whole affair at Goretti's home has the air of a show of resistance by the Ferrarese and Mantuan courts against the Vatican's control." Seth J. Coluzzi "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro': Monteverdi's 'O Mirtillo, Mirtillo Anima Mia' And Artusi's Offence" *Music and Letters*, (94: 1, 2013), 28-30; Carter "'E in rileggendo,'" 142. An especially daring interpretation of the dialogue suggests that "[i]t seems possible, given the surviving evidence, [that is, *L'Artusi* and the fourth and fifth madrigal books, DVV] that all the pieces heard at Goretti's house were by Monteverdi, and that all were from *Il Pastor Fido*, which may have provided an element of thematic continuity for the evening." In this hyperrealistic account, which is interpreted as a precursor to the later integration of the *Accademia degli Intrepidi* in 1600, other "unnamed intellectuals" that also attended the concert are "represented in Artusi's dialogue by his interlocutor, 'Luca.'" Massimo Ossi, "Monteverdi, Marenzio, and Battista Guarini's 'Cruda Amarilli,'" *Music & Letters*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (Aug., 2008), 334 and *passim*. Some attempts have been made to correlate an account that places—rather circumstantially—Luzzaschi, Fiorini, and Queen Margaret together in a performance by two members of the *concerto delle done* on November 15, 1598, that is, the day the court is said to have visited the convent in *L'Artusi*. See Coluzzi, "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro,'" 30. n. 59; Suzanne Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music: Thoughts on the Monteverdi-Artusi Controversy", *JAMS* (46:1, 1993), 10 n. 19; Anthony Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579-1597* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), i, 184.

[2] Strunk, *Source Readings,* 394.

[3] See the authoritative essay by Claude Palisca which places the attacks in the broader context of late sixteenth-century madrigalism, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy" in *The New Monteverdi Companion*. eds. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (London: Faber and Faber, 1985). For a relation of sources and a close analysis of the attacks, see Paolo Fabbri, *Monteverdi* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 34.
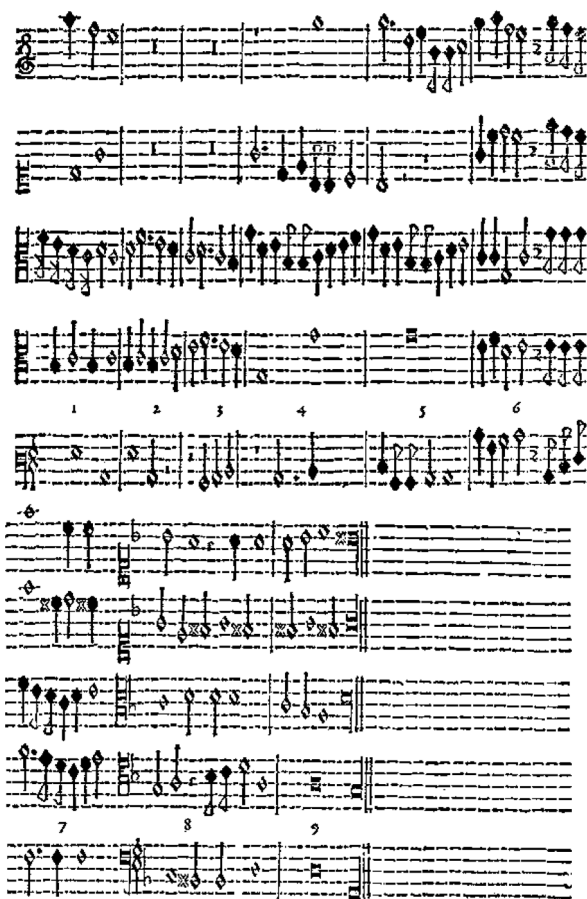
Figure 1: Artusi, L'Artusi, ff. 39v-40r. CHTML.

The unpublished madrigals circulated presumably in manuscript form and travelled widely, reaching Ferrara at a time when Monteverdi was still relatively unknown, even before he had been appointed at the Gonzaga court in Mantua.[4] They would be later published in the fourth (1603) and fifth (1605) books of madrigals—the latter of which also included the first public response of Monteverdi to Artusi's attacks.[5]

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[4] Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 128. Monteverdi's music reached Ferrara as early as 1594, sent there by Valeriano Cattaneo to Duchess Margherita Gonzaga, sister of Vincenzo and wife of Alfonso II d'Este. Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, 32. Monteverdi, in fact, had not published any new music since the third book of madrigals of 1592, besides four canzonettas included in an anthology published by Antonio Morsolino, *Il primo libro delle canzonette a tre voci* (Venice, Ricciardo Amadino, 1594). The third book of madrigals would be reprinted in 1594 and 1600. Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, 29.

[5] Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 129.

The interlocutors meet "in a room sufficiently remote and conveniently free from disturbing sounds."[6] Luca introduces the music as "certain new madrigals" [certi Madrigali nuovi] that he heard at the musical *serata*. Luca, however, does not give the name of the author [ma tacciuto il nome dell' Auttore]. The consequences of this concealment, along with the removal of the text, cannot be underestimated. Giulio Cesare, of course, would later point out that everything depended on the omission of the words.[7] Devoid of text, the music is reduced to a series of intervallic relations to be analyzed into consonances and dissonances—which are of two entirely different natures, as Vario will later state—whose treatment by the composer is then evaluated against the canonic rules of the musical tradition.[8]

As objects of study, these exemplars represent all of the "imperfections" of the new music, but to do so they must become simple and timeless harmonic relations. They must give up everything that is particular in them to stand in for the universal, abandon their novelty to become timeless. Devoid of author, the music shows itself for what it is: "Pure, anonymous counterpoint, abstract webs of musical lines" in the words of Claude Palisca.[9] Absolute music *avant la lettre*, without author and without words—without recognized origin or authority, orphans incapable of defending themselves, as Socrates says of the written logos.[10] As we read in the preface to the reader of *L'Artusi,*

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[6] "In una Camera assai remota, et da' strepiti lontana, per la loro maggior comodità." *L'Artusi,* fol. 39. Strunk, *Source Readings*, 494.

[7] "But if, in the 'passages' noted as false, he had shown the words that went with them, then the world would have known without fail where his judgment had gone astray, and he would not have said that they were chimeras and castles in the air from their entire disregard of the rules of the First Practice." G.C. Monteverdi, "Dichiaratione" Strunk, 407. I return to this passage below.

[8] *L'Artusi*, 42v. "Vario: I do not deny that dissonances are employed as nonessentials in compositions, but I say none the less that, being by nature contrary to consonance, they can by no means agree in the same way and should not be employed in the same way." Strunk, *Source Readings*, 400.

[9] Claude Palisca, *Music and Ideas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 162.

[10] "When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support." Plato, *Phaedrus,* trans. by A. Nehamas and P. Woodroof, in Plato*, Complete Works*. (Ed. John M. Cooper and Hutchinson D. S. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), 275e.
On writing in the *Phaedrus,* see Derrida, *Dissemination*. See also Jasper Neel, *Plato, Derrida, and Writing*.

Nevertheless, if you and everyone who is dedicated this Art will be pleased to read carefully these few pages, and that far from every passion will be willing to consider my words in the way I pronounce them, and take hold of the truth: *be aware that I have argued universally, without mentioning anyone in particular*.[11]

Making the author anonymous, then, is a strategy to universalize the attacks. Monteverdi's response, identifying himself as the target of the attacks, aims to counter this strategy by localizing—historicizing—the universalist claims of the priest, to mark the specific differences that make this music what it is: to appear as author, father, and defender of the new music. As if signing the music once was not enough, the operation is repeated two years later: Giulio Cesare's signature remarks Claudio's re-claiming of the music.[12] Especially since the previous response to Artusi, issued under the pseudonym of

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(Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988). Artusi alludes to this passage, without quoting it, as part of his sarcastic reply to the anonymous L'Ottuso Accademico in the second part of *L'Artusi*, published in 1603: "Ne di questo si deve alcuno meravigliare, perche accade per il più, che quando alcun libro esce fuori delle stampe, et che come peregrino se ne va per il mondo, capita alle mani d'huomini talamente de pensieri varii, et dalla intentione de Scrittori lontani, che necessariamente viene in diversi modi ricevuto, et visto." Giovanni Maria Artusi, *L'Artusi Delle imperfettione della moderna musica, Parte Seconda,* (Venice, Giacomo Vincenti: 1603; Facsimile reprint in Artusi, *L'Artusi* Bologna: A. Forni, 2000), 1.

[11] *L'Artusi,* IVv; Emphasis mine. "Tuttavia se voi, et tutti quelli che attendono à questi Arte, vi contentarete di leggere attentamente queste poche di carte, et che lontani da ogni passione vorrete considerare le mie parole per quel verso, che io le dico, et appigliarvi al vero; *restando serviti ch'io habbi ragionato in universale, senza nominare alcuno in particolare*."

Why did Artusi (on top of his continued bout with theorist Ercole Bottrigari) choose Monteverdi, the youngest of the composers under attack, is a problem that has attracted some musicological attention. Tim Carter suggests Artusi might have perceived him as a "relatively easy target" in comparison with Fontanelli, Gesualdo, Luzzaschi, or de Wert. Carter, "Artusi, Monteverdi," 173. The controversy produced by Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* which provides the text to both madrigals might also be an issue. Cf. Carter "E in rileggendo," 149 and Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music," 18-19. Seth Coluzzi expands on these points by showing that "O Mirtillo" in fact holds to scrutiny, while displacing reasons for Artusi's attack on the perception of Monteverdi as "ignorant," his allegiance to the Gonzagas—and thus his unstable political position in the eyes of the clergy—where "Monteverdi would have stood directly in the middle of this political and ideological conflict between the secular courts of northern Italy, with their extravagant and 'modern' tastes, and the conservative-minded Pope Clement VIII" (28). He advances this possibility by elaborating on Cusick's reading of the gendered dimension of the controversy to suggest that on top of the political controversy, Artusi felt threatened by the extreme sensuality of the new music and its performance practice. I return to this argument below. Seth J. Coluzzi, 'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro': Monteverdi's 'O Mirtillo, Mirtillo Anima Mia' And Artusi's Offence," *Music and Letters*, (94: 1, 2013) 1-37.

[12] Although Artusi refers by name to two of the pieces in the *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi* (1603), the identity of the pieces and their author was only acknowledged in print five years later, with the famous *Lettera* by Claudio Monteverdi in the 1605 fifth book of madrigals. In the *Discorso secondo musicale* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1608) published under the pseudonym of Antonio Braccino da Todi and directed explicitly to Monteverdi, Artusi complains that he addressed letters "full of warmth and civility" [amorevolezza et civilità] and that, instead of responding in the same way, Monteverdi chose to reply with

L'Ottuso Accademico, whose identity is still a mystery, ended up being incorporated into the second part of the dialogue.[13] I will come back to L'Ottuso and the response of the Monteverdi brothers below, but first we need to situate the aesthetic and philosophical stakes of Artusi's criticisms beyond strictly musical issues.

HARMONIC CASTLES IN THE AIR

Luca judged the madrigals as little pleasing to the ear [al udito poco piacevoli], consisting "of deformations of the nature and propriety of true harmony," [deformi dalla natura, et proprietà dell' Harmonia propria] violating the good rules which were "in part founded upon experience, the mother of all things, in part observed in nature, and in part proved by demonstration."[14] The indicted passages, Luca holds, go against "what is good and beautiful in the harmonic institutions." The "harmonic institutions" are of course those of Zarlino, who stands in the text for that assemblage Artusi presents as founded in part upon experience, nature, and demonstration, handed over by tradition, and affirmed by

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anonymous letters and through a third person (presumably l'Ottuso but also possibly Giulio Cesare). Artusi, *Discorso secondo*, 6. The rhetoric effect of the anonymisation of Monteverdi is all the more evident if one takes into account the end of *L'Artusi*, in which Vario presents Luca with a motet by Costanzo Porta (copied in the book in its entirety), extolling its invertible counterpoint which permits the piece to be sung as two, three, four, and five parts. For Palisca, Artusi withheld the identity of the composer and expressed his opinions through the fictitious characters Vario and Luca to avoid making a personal argument against Monteverdi. Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy", 128-9. Tim Carter analyzes the complicated etiquette of courtly debates, noting that it was Monteverdi who first broke protocol by mentioning Artusi by name in the *Lettera*, and that Artusi's complaints in the *Discorso secondo* evidence the priest's lack of understanding of such conventions. Finally, Carter analyzes the indirect ways by which Monteverdi chose to respond to Artusi in the fourth book, before the publication of the letter, since, as Carter writes, accepting a challenge amounts to legitimizing it. Carter, "E in rileggendo," 146.

[13] With respect to L'Ottuso and the question authorship, it bears remarking that the first usage of the expression "seconda pratica" occurs in the letter by l'Ottuso to Artusi transcribed in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi,* fol. 16. cf. Palisca, The Artusi Monteverdi-Controversy," 143). Giulio Cesare and Claudio would claim that "questa voce [seconda prattica] essere sicuramente sua," referencing only Artusi's latter mention of the term "questa seconda Pratica, che si può dire con ogni verità, che sia la feccia della prima." (fol. 33). If, as it seems, the term was "already current in oral, if not written discussions" (Palisca, 143) then it becomes clear that questions of authorship and inscription are entwined in the controversy from the beginning. Palisca considers and rejects the possibility that L'Ottuso might be either of the Monteverdi brothers, Ercole Bottrigari, Antonio Goretti, or a composer from Ferrara or Mantua. He leaves open the possibility, advanced by John Harper, that L'Ottuso is Artusi, who "concealed his own name in the similar sounding 'Ottuso' as an *inganno*." Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 136-7 n.17; See also Carter "E in rileggendo," 141 n. 11 and Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, 42.

[14] "[S]i trasgrediscono le buone Regole, parte fondate nella esperienza Madre di tutte le cose: parte speculate dalla Natura; et parte dalla demostratione demostrate." *L'Artusi*, fol. 39v.

the practice of great composers and which guarantees the mutual intelligibility of artistic practice.[15] In the tradition that Artusi defends, music is a science that develops rationally through the investigation of generations of theorists in their aim to explain, illustrate, and codify what are ultimately immutable natural laws. For Artusi, Zarlino constitutes the pinnacle of this development, and nothing else can be added to it.[16] These natural laws, however, must constantly be manifested in practice, in the production of musical compositions which express these laws and their immutability.[17] Music, as a science and as practice, constantly strives towards achieving its perfection, as Zarlino finally stated in the *Sopplimenti musicali* of 1588.[18]

There is, however, a further dimension to this metaphysics of scientific perfection, which comes out clearly in Artusi's text. As true conservatives, the interlocutors in the dialogue see nothing wrong with things being "new" as such, as long as what is "new" sticks to the old rules. The real threat in these "novelties," for them, is rather the corruption of the institutions whose order and borders [ordine e termine]—however founded upon nature, experience, and reason—are everywhere susceptible of being penetrated "by confusion and imperfection of no little consequence," by barbaric irruptions which use the same rules to excuse themselves, their licenses and licentiousness, confounding themselves with what is pure. Capable of making the pure indistinguishable from the barbaric, they deserve blame, not praise.

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[15] "Do you not know that all the arts and sciences have been brought under rules by scholars of the past and that the first elements, rules, and precepts on which they are founded have been handed down to us in order that, so long as there is no deviation from them, one person shall be able to understand what another says or does?" Strunk *Source Readings,* 400. For a reading of Artusi's position in the tradition of Zarlino which locates musical science within a philosophical and "ethical" tradition, see Jenkins, "Giovanni Maria Artusi and the Ethics of Musical Science," 77-91.

[16] Massimo Ossi, *Divining the oracle: Monteverdi's seconda prattica* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 2003), 36. For a more general account of the development of the Renaissance notion of musical perfection starting from Netherlandish polyphony and its transference to Italy, see Leo Schrade, *Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music* (New York: Norton, 1950), 11-48. Especially significant in Schrade's classic account is the parallels he suggests between Zarlino and art historian Giorgio Vasari, and the role of Vincenzo Galilei in the realignments of ancient and modern music and practice, where antiquity is presented as "something apart, not a period in history, one among others, but the measure of all things artistic, the expression of the very essence of beauty in art." Schrade, *Monteverdi*, 36.

[17] Jenkins, "Giovanni Maria Artusi and the Ethics of Musical Science," 77.

[18] Idem, 85.

Luca's anxiety about the purity and reasoned order of the harmonic institutions is truly symptomatic: what are these institutions, what is their ground and reason, if their authority can easily be threatened by a few bars of musical novelties? The possibility, announced by Luca, that the "beautiful" style may become indistinguishable from the "barbaric"—a possibility that is actualized as soon as it is announced—puts into question the self-evidence, the authority of "laws" that are otherwise presumed timeless and natural.[19] To understand how this is possible, and the historical consequences of this formulation (consequences for history, consequences that imply history, that enact history), we need to take Artusi's attack to Monteverdi beyond any limited sense of "aesthetics" as a matter of style or taste. We can begin to approach it as the putting to test of two competing acoustemologies,[20] a matter of defining grounds, of affirming the possibility of establishing a reasoned correspondence between what is sounding and what is understood and judged by the listener—and by extension, the very nature of what sounds, which is under the regulation of the composer.[21]

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[19] The relation and problems between music theory and nature as its ground is explored at depth in Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (eds.) *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). As the editors write in the introduction to the volume, "insofar as natural order reflects the position of the human in society, as Raymond Williams indicated, nature's seemingly objective command is in the first place our projection onto it." According to the theory of mimesis elaborated here, moreover, this reflection is not only a projection of the human *in* nature, but the very constitution *of* nature through the postulation of laws and the creation of works that claim to imitate it.

[20] Acoustemology, as Stephen Feld defines it, joins acoustics with epistemology as a way of knowing the world through sound. Stephen Feld, "Acoustemology" in *Keywords in Sound* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2015), 12; See also Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Feld, (*Jazz cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five musical years in Ghana* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Samuels, D. W., L. Meintjes, A. M. Ochoa and T. Porcello "Soundscapes: Toward a sounded anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* (39, 2005), 329–345. Feld, "Waterfalls of song: An acoustemology of place resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea." In S. Feld and K. H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), Feld, S. (1996), 91.

[21] For Ossi, the controversy is a "symptom of an incipient process of experimentation" that was transforming aesthetic concerns "from the rational basis for aesthetic judgment to the proper relationship between invention and imitation." Ossi, 36. In my reading, however, what Ossi locates as the motivation for the symptom is however equally symptomatic of more important transformations, namely an epistemological and social transformation—modernity—and more specifically the crisis of princely sovereignty that defines the European seventeenth century, which extends to the register of what scholarship still wants to preserve as the autonomous realm of the "aesthetic." The need, then, is to understand the "aesthetic" and the "political" as competing claims upon a shared sensorium, without

In the dialogue, Luca shows that the sovereignty of musical institutions must not only be upheld by the production of works that express the "immutable laws" that define it, but also with the extermination of what exists outside the laws. Their existence poses a complicated topological problem: whereas the laws serve to protect the borders of "the beautiful," these borders must be without an outside, for as soon as what is outside is recognized, it is incorporated into the inside, the two made indistinguishable. The task for the theorist is not only to demonstrate that canonical compositions follow or express these laws, but moreover to denounce those compositions that do not follow the laws, even if they seem to do so. It should be possible, Vario assumes, to show that the new music is lacks all rational grounding, even if it might resemble it. Not only is the new music offensive to the ear, it also threatens the institutions that are presumed to be well grounded: the purified style will become indistinguishable from the barbaric, and in so doing the musical institutions will be found to be as ungrounded as the compositions that threaten them. That this possibility is stated, that Luca identifies—in aiming to defend it—the scandal that grounds music theory, namely that the institutions that protects it may as well be chimeras, susceptible of being penetrated by barbarians who use the same rules, "in conformity with the style," to bring decadence into purity. The disagreement, thus, is not a matter of conservatism against experimentalism, as it has often been styled to be, but about the very possibility of affirming and preserving the rationality of music *as* science.

> Vario: Signor Luca, you bring me new things which astonish me not a little. It
> pleases me, at my age, to see a new method of composing, though it would please

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assuming one or the other to be derivate of the other. This critical reading can be expanded based on the gendered dimension of the controversy, as examined in Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music" as well as Susan McClary, "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music" *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Nov., 1989), pp. 203-223. See also Coluzzi, "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro,'" 1-37. Returning to Susan McClary's suggestion to critically examine the original social purposes of the new politics of "representation" in early-modern cultural productions, the readings I present here are prompted by the need of developing modes of critical analysis that lay bare the mechanisms of the new politics of representation. Doing so, however, involves a departure from the New Historicism that characterizes these works which is, ultimately, still motivated by a hermeneutic need and a concern for the "musical object" and authorial intention behind them. See Tomlinson, *Music and Renaissance Magic,* 230ff and *passim.* For the relationship between politics and aesthetics as a shared sensorial distribution, see Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009) and *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004).

me much more if I saw that these passages were *founded upon some reason* which could satisfy the intellect. But as *castles in the air, chimeras founded upon sand*, these *novelties* do not please me; they deserve blame, not praise. Let us see the passages, however.

Luca: Indeed, in the light of what little experience I have in this art, these things do not seem to me to entitle their authors or inventors to build a four-story mansion (as the saying goes), seeing that they are contrary to what is good and beautiful in the harmonic institutions. They are harsh to the ear, rather offending than delighting it, and to the good rules left by those who have established *the order and the bounds* of this science they bring confusion and imperfection of no little consequence. Instead of enriching, augmenting, and ennobling harmony by various means, as so many noble spirits have done, they bring it to such estate that *the beautiful and purified style is indistinguishable from the barbaric*. And all the while they continue to excuse these things by various arguments in conformity with the style.[22]

The image of a castle built in the air follows a fairly traditional distinction between a sensuous appearance and a rational grounding, but there is much more at stake. The analysis is rather motivated by the immunological need to reground the rationality of the institutions, by showing that the new music is ungrounded and undocumented, without law or right.[23] That one of these is called "beautiful" and the other "barbaric," of course, shows that what is at stake is a continuity between what has been attained and established as "proper" of Italian humanism—even if this means overlooking the inheritances of the Netherlandish style—and thus timeless, from what exceeds its self-established delimitations. This logic, it bears reminding, is by no means proper of sixteenth-century

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[22] Strunk, *Source Readings,* 394-5; emphasis mine.

[23] In his influential analysis of Western politics as defined by an immunitary paradigm that organizes society according to what belongs to it and what is foreign, Roberto Esposito points out how the immune system is often conceived of as a military device, "defending and attacking everything not recognized as belonging to it" so that its "biological function is extended to a general view of reality dominated by a need for violent defense in the face of anything judged to be foreign." Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: the protection and negation of life (*Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 11.

Humanists: it already characterizes the Greeks after which they sought to model themselves—that is, it belongs to the Italians insofar as it does not belong to them, insofar as it belongs to the model they claim for themselves—and which they produce by "imitating." This operation, determining the boundaries and limits of the "proper" goes hand in hand with the negation of the historicity of musical practice, with the rationalist—and now empiricist—affirmation of the identity between the musical practice of certain "models" and a "musical nature" that is expressed by laws that must be timeless. By invoking these laws to attack the new music, Artusi effectively naturalizes Zarlino's musical science, he removes it from the course of history and presents it as a given, with all the empiricist experiments serving to reaffirm their certainty. Yet, by appealing to the rules to defend the institutions against "novelties," Artusi also outlines their closure, making them once again a historical formation. Coming on the heels of Vincenzo Galilei's philological research on all things Greek, the moment we are examining is effectively the irruption of history in the field of music theory. In fact, Zarlino had already undertaken a reorganization of the field of musical knowledge in the *Supplementi* of 1588 as an attempt to deal with his critics (Galilei's, in particular) and the evident transformation of music in his time by distinguishing between art as science and practice: his concern—as Monteverdi would also affirm—had only been with the practice of the moderns. There is, in fact, a difference between truth and method, inevitably mediated by history. Thus, "Zarlino's compromise, such as it is, gives a hint of a turn toward manipulative knowledge that already and inexorably had been initiated."[24]

History, it can be argued, never ceases irrupting within the fields of the arts and sciences. The particular form of this irruption towards the end of the sixteenth century would be definitive in one respect: it would be the irruption of modernity itself, the disenchantment of the world as perceivable in first music theory with Galilei, as Daniel Chua argues.[25] The conflict, then, was between two opposed claims to origin and law, to *arche*: the

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[24] Jairo Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects: The Construction of Musical Thought in Zarlino, Descartes, Rameau, and Weber* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 37-41.
[25] Chua, Daniel K., "Vincenzo Galilei, modernity, and the division of nature," in Clark and Rehding (eds.), *Music Theory and Natural Order*, 17-29.

natural and rational grounding of Zarlino's science, on the one hand, against the historically inflected musical revolution triggered by the Florentine Camerata on the other. If, as we have been arguing, this revolution was not "merely aesthetic" but inseparable and consequent with the crisis of the humanist project that aimed to fashion itself after the model of a Greek ideal, then it is no overstatement to say that Monteverdi's response to the attacks would have been programmed by these opposing claims.

The characteristically modern nature of *L'Artusi*, its appeals to experience, to musical practice, to an immediate now that becomes absolute, can be glimpsed from the beginning of the dialogue. Vario's first attack consists in holding that "the high is a part of the low," taking issue with the famous unprepared seventh and ninth between the *bassus* and *cantus* in bar 13 of Monteverdi's "Cruda Amarilli." Vario explains how, as proven experimentally by the monochord, intervals are produced by dividing a string into smaller sections, so that a low sound effectively produces "higher" sounds. More complex intervals are conceived as being contained in the simpler ones, and only those that are derivable through harmonic division, namely thirds, fourths, fifths, and octaves can be called "rational" and be used structurally. All the others, the sevenths and ninths in the first example, insofar as they cannot be derived harmonically, are alien. The experimental demonstration replaces or reinscribes the opposition, in nature or *as* nature, between consonance and dissonance. It affirms, as a matter of experience, what the tradition of harmonicists have discovered rationally, and restates an opposition between "reason" and "the senses" as old as the rules themselves.[26] The authority of harmonic derivation authorizes sounds over and above the ear's judgment. The simplest sound is the beginning and origin, principle and reason, the *arche* that structures the entire composition as a system and determines what belongs in the composition and what does not belong, what is pure and what is barbarian.

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[26] For an analysis of the theoretical traditions involved in this opposition of reason and sense in the controversy, see Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 36ff.

A synesthetic metaphor without precedent explains this acoustemology while gathering all the terms under which we have analyzed the historical and philosophical stakes at the opening of the dialogue. The composition is said to be a majestic, closed system [Sistema massimo], a hierarchy, in which the fundamental judges all the parts—each individual interval—as an eye [un' occhio] that sends forth diverse visual rays [diuersi raggi visiui], to observe—to judge (but not to listen)—that all proportions are in rule, that they belong to the composition, that they are not extraneous, foreign, barbarian. This panoptic system is so powerful and regulated that the fragments, taken out from their sources, still exhibit their lawfulness—or lack of it—under the gaze of the sovereign eye. Harmonic proportion or correspondence is the sole guarantee for the solidity of the architectonic construction that is a madrigal:

> And, for the first argument against them, I tell you that the high is a part of the low and is born from the low [l'acuto è parte del grave, e nasce dal grave] and, being a part of it, must continue to be related to it, as to its beginning or as the cloud to the spring from which it is derived. That this is true, the experiment of the monochord will show you. For if two strings of equal length and thickness are stretched over one and the same equal space and tuned perfectly in unison (which is regarded by the musician as a single sound, just as two surfaces which are throughout in contact with each other are regarded by Vitello as a single surface), and if you cut off a part from one of these or bring out a high sound from it by placing a bridge under it, I say that beyond doubt the high will be a part of the low. And if you would know that a part produces the high sound, strike the whole and then the part which is high with respect to the whole, and it will necessarily be related to the low, as the part to the whole or *as to its beginning*. At the lowest note of the complete system, or of any composition, [Sistema massimo; o d'alcuna Cantilena] there may be represented *an eye*, sending forth various visual rays and regarding all the parts, [viene dipinto, un'occhio, dal quale uscendo diversi raggi visuisi, và mirando à tutte le parti] observing in what proportion they correspond *to their beginning and foundation*. How then will the first, second,

fourth, fifth, and other measures stand, if the higher part has no correspondence or harmonic proportion to the lower?[27]

Speaking on behalf of the composers he is attacking, Luca explains that the A in the cantus (of "Cruda Amarilli")—which forms an unprepared ninth with the G in the bassus—may be understood as resulting from an upper neighbor to a G that is left out to create a little more harshness, while the F is a passing note ensuing from the same presumed G. These alterations, Luca argues, are the product of "accented singing," the written record—the inscription—of an improvisational practice.[28] These alterations, which Luca later admits to find "not unpleasing" are, in Vario's account, an attempt to confound the ear by presenting it with sounds that do not have a real existence. Thus, by employing the "same" rules of counterpoint, the offending dissonances can presumably be justified—that is, until the ear, and not the all-seeing eye, comes into the scene: for the empiricist Vario there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses, and no appeal can ever be made to entities like those that would later be called *sous-entendre* sounds.

> Vario: Good! I follow you perfectly, and answer that *the sense of hearing does not perceive what it does not hear* and, not perceiving it, cannot present it to the intellect, there being nothing in the intellect that has not first been perceived by the senses. How absurd it is to say that the tenor sustains a note in one register while the soprano, immediately afterward in a higher register, produces the effect the tenor should have produced! Especially after the rest, how much more evident it is to the ear that the soprano sings a sixteenth and then a fourteenth!

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[27] *L'Artusi*, 40v. Strunk, *Source Readings*, 396. Translation modified after Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music," 10; emphasis mine. As will be clear below, the analysis presented here follows closely some of the reading strategies and results of Cusick's ground-breaking essay, while aiming to press her point further: insofar as the difference between "rhetoric" and "substance" is itself gendered (Cusick, 5), an analysis of the gendered nature of the argument is still important not just for our understanding of the period, the work, or the composer's "intentions," but also of the large-scale ideological structures that condition the very terms of the discussion and place it well beyond the presumably restricted realm of the aesthetic.
[28] Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 130.

A PHANTASTIC SERATA?[29]

One could begin to suspect, in the context of what is heard (and not heard) against what is understood, what is available to the senses and what is not, of the authenticity of the musical *serata* at the house of Antonio Goretti, for which no other record exists (see note 1, above). Neither of the Monteverdi brothers makes any reference to the event nor to how Artusi got hold of the unpublished music. In the dialogue, Luca says that they "were sung and repeated*"* [Fuorono Cantati una, et due volte], and he presents it to Vario: "[in] order that you may see the whole question and give me your judgment, here are the passages, scattered here and there through the above-mentioned madrigals, which I wrote out yesterday evening for my amusement." [...eccovi li Passaggi che sparsamente, sono sparsi per entro alli sudetti Madrigali; li quali distesi per mio diporto hiersera sopra questa carta.][30] How Artusi got hold of the music is an open question, quite interesting from a historical perspective, and even more important from the philosophical perspective pursued here. At stake is the status of the musical object and the notions of listening defended by each camp, issues which lie at the crux of the controversy and

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[29] My spelling of "phantastic" aims to evoke the psychoanalytical theory of the "phantasy" as a protective/productive formation for the subject, operating not so much as wish-fulfillment but as "the support of desire" through which "the subject situates himself as determined by the phantasy." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Norton, 1978), 184-6 and *passim*. In this respect, addressing the *serata* as phantasy aims not to cast doubt about the veracity of Artusi's telling of the events, nor to offer an analysis of his psychology as subject. Rather, it makes the event readable as constituted in a broad field which also constitutes Artusi as subject and writer, thus broadening the perspective from where the controversy can be critically addressed. The phantastic scene locates that which the subject position occupied by Artusi lacks and everywhere desires, namely the self-coincidence of presence to itself and authority, self-sovereignty. It is, once again, not a psychological lack of Artusi as subject, but that which defines him as subject in its lacking.

[30] *L'Artusi,* 39v. Strunk *Source Readings,* 394. Palisca assumes that Artusi knew the pieces from manuscript copies, without making reference to the fiction of the musical *serata*, which he takes as part of the theorist's attempt to "soften the blow" of his criticisms of Monteverdi. Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 128. Ossi goes as far as suggesting that the criticisms in the dialogue in fact reproduce the discussions that ensued after the performance of the madrigals, with Vario standing in for Artusi, and Luca for other unnamed interlocutors. Ossi, "Monteverdi, Guarini, and Marenzio's *Cruda Amarilli*," 334. One problem with this interpretation is that Luca is the one who transcribed the music and issues the first concerns about their errors, yet he also voices some defenses of the passages—rhetorically presented to allow for Vario's sharpest attacks. Once again, even if Artusi is no master of the Platonic literary form (and its paradoxical mimetology), as readers we should have learned by now to approach the dialogic genre as a means for the contestation of the historiographical presuppositions of accuracy, psychological representation and not as a straightforward means of communication, of a writing that faithfully reproduces the author's intention. From this perspective, the problems addressed in this chapter demonstrate what a rigorous criticism of mimesis contributes to the practice of historiography in general.

which mark a historical transformation. In the dialogue, Luca, a musical amateur, hears the madrigals performed twice and writes them down afterwards. The verb is '*distendere*,' (from the Latin *extendere*, meaning 'to spread out,' 'to place upon,' to 'expand' or 'dilate,' or even 'to relax.'[31] In the seventeenth century, moreover, it could mean "to elaborate," "to explicate thoughts by means of writing"—not, however, in the sense of 'copying' or 'transcribing' (that is, from another manuscript source). It implies not only a re-presentation or making the music into an object, placing an idea upon a surface and in front of someone (*obicere*), but moreover a spatialization, an inscription that first and foremost inscribes its distance from its origin. The suggestion, then, is that Luca identified, analyzed, memorized and later transcribed all of Monteverdi's "faults" that he heard and judged over the course of two performances during a social event.

The mode of listening imagined here highlights the relation between hearing and reasoning that forms the aesthetics, or better, the metaphysics, through which Vario criticizes the exemplars. For Vario, perception is deceptive and is helpless without the aid of reason. "Sense without reason, and reason without sense, cannot render an accurate judgment of any object that involves learning. They can only do so when they are joined together."[32] The new musicians, however, disregard reason and the rules it upholds, aiming to satisfy only the senses.[33] Luca's perfect hearing demonstrates—necessarily needs to demonstrate—that the ear of the theorist is a rational ear—a sovereign eye—that *understands* in addition to, or instead or, taking delight on sound. He needs to prove that any transgression of the rational rules of harmony is already comprehended within a purely rational listening, such that he can understand it immediately.[34] As we will see, however, this necessity leads him into an untenable position which exposes the metaphysics of the system he invokes and its limits. Not that its metaphysics is in any

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[31] "Distendere", *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca*, First Edition (1612), 293; http://www.lessicografia.it/ Accessed 14 December, 2015.

[32] *L'Artusi*, 12. The translation is from Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 44. For an analysis of the relationship between reason and sense in the controversy, see Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 36-57.

[33] *L'Artusi*, 42.

[34] Carter, on a different context, uses the hypothesis of Monteverdi's "aural memory" to account for a misreading of the Rinuccini's "Zefiro torna, e di soavi accenti" in the *Scherzi musicali* setting (1607). Carter, "Two Monteverdi Problems, and Why They Still Matter," *JAMS*, (19:3, 2002), 422, n. 9.

way concealed: citing Ptolemy, Vario divides the "Harmonic faculty" [facoltà Harmonica] into two types of judgment, hearing and reason:

> The sense judges those things that pertain to matter; reason applies itself to form. From this one gathers that since matter is given perfection through form, so judgment makes it possible that the apprehension of any object is made perfect by reason… What the sense knows in a confused fashion from unstable matter, reason judges in the abstract, divorced from matter.[35]

We have thus the metaphysical underpinning of the type of listening that corresponds to Artusi's tradition: an Aristotelean hylomorphism which considers matter to be the passive, irrational and unstable component in all substances which receives from form its principle and its telos: its 'for the sake of which.'"[36] The division of the senses corresponds to a similar division in the musical object itself. Specifying what the "corpo sonoro" is, Vario sketches the division of sound into form and matter, citing Aristotle's *Physics*:

> The musician calls sounding body that thing from which it is possible to have and obtain a sound apt for harmony. By this fundamental, we can say with Aristotle in the second book of the *Physics*: Ipse proportiones sunt forme, aut cause formales intervallorum, et consonantiarum. The proportions are the forms, i.e. the formal cause of the intervals and consonance. Thus every interval has its form, and those forms are different from each other, just like every interval is different in size from each other.[37]

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[35] *L'Artusi*, 44. Translation in Ossi, *Divining the Oracle,* 45.

[36] Ossi, *Divining the Oracle,* 45. Incorporating the previous discussions on the role of tradition and the purposes of science in Zarlino, Ossi specifies that "'form,' in this context, is the aggregate of the principles derived by theorists from the natural laws that determine the basic materials of composition (pitches, intervals, etc.) together with the examples gathered from the works of past masters who, through experimentation, have perfected the art of music." As explained below, this interpretation fails to identify the crucial recourse to Aristotelean hylomorphism and its consequences, especially within the theoretical tradition of Zarlino. For such an analysis of hylomorphism in Zarlino, see Jairo Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects,* 37-41.

[37] "Chiama il Musico corpo sonoro, quella cosa, dalla quale si possi havere, et cavare suono atto all'Harmonia. Stando questo fondamento potiamo dire con Aristotile nel secondo della Fisica. Ipse proportiones sunt forme, aut cause formales intervallorum, et consonantiarum. Le proportioni sono le forme, overo cause formali de gl'intervalli, et delle Consonantie; ciascuno intervallo adunque ha la sua

The proportions are the form, or the formal cause of intervals and consonances, and each interval possesses its own form which differentiates it from others. As Chadwick Jenkins rightly points out, Artusi understands the consequences of this hylomorphic metaphysics of listening to be ethical, insofar as preference for the sensual aspect of sound—its irrational "matter" over the ideal aspect of intervals, its "form"—means abandoning the rational and scientific nature of music and the possibility it offers of reaching truth as the telos of the intellect.[38] The necessity for a hylomorphic model is already posed by Zarlino, where it functions as the rational legitimation for music, it suffuses music with the "authority" of Nature and marks it with "the imprimatur of reason."[39] The new music, in Jenkins formulation, is rather "anti-music," the aberrant product of the new musician's vanity which threatens not only musical and scientific but also moral institutions by producing sounds that refuse to communicate rationally: as Vario says, the institutions ensure that "by not deviating from the principles and good rules one can understand what another says or does."[40]

Such an emphasis on communication pervades Artusi's theory of music, which places vocal music as the natural form of music, making all other forms derivate as imitations of it.[41] Artusi's "science of music," presented in his *L'Arte del contraponto* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1598), divides music into three kinds: 1) Music that moves the sense alone; 2) Music that moves both the sense and the intellect; 3) Music that moves the intellect alone. The type of music that "moves the senses alone" is called irrational insofar as it lacks any semantic content, it produces sound but not voice, which has sense in addition to mere sound. As is well known, the difference between sound and voice goes back through Zarlino to Aristotle's division in the *Politics* between *phonē* and

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forma, et sono differenti l'una all'altra; si come gl'intervalli sono differenti di grandezza al'uno dal l'altro." *L'Artusi*, 44v.

[38] Jenkins, "Artusi and the Ethics of Musical Science," 91.

[39] Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects*, 45.

[40] *L'Artusi*, 41v. cf. Jenkins, "Artusi and the Ethics of Musical Science," 91.

[41] Jenkins, "Artusi and the Ethics of Musical Science," 92.

logos, a distinction advanced to justify the notion of man as a political animal.[42] The third type, which "moves the intellect alone," stands in for the traditional *musica mundana* and *musica humana* which it conflates. Of the three types of music, then, only one is "true music," the one that moves both sense and intellect. This, however, under the condition that only the intellect might preserve the right and power to judge it.[43]

It is the "communicative nature" of this second type of music, which moves both the senses and the intellect at the expense of the sensual, what Artusi's phantasy of perfect listening aims to secure: the capacity to understand and preserve the "form" of sounds and to protect the listener from their corruptible, sensuous, and deceptive—in sum, feminine—"matter."[44] By having Luca attend the musical *serata* and easily identify

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[42] "For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech [logos]. The mere voice [phonē], it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another), but speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state." Aristotle, "Politics," in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 21, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1944), 1253a10; Digital edition in Perseus Digital Library. 1253a. For a criticism of the philosophical and political problems associated with the distinction between voice and speech as presented in this passage, see Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 2006. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

[43] This ostensibly simple division is as rich as it is problematic, and more attention could be devoted to it. Of particular interest to our purposes is the claim that, as paraphrased by Jenkins, the first type "derives from the sounds of animals such as nightingales and blackbirds; it is irrational in that it owes its existence to irrational animals." The theory that music's origins are to be found in the imitation of birdsong go as far back as a fragment in Democritus, which states that "We have become pupils in the most important things: of the spider for spinning and mending, of the swallow for building, and of the songsters, swan and nightingale, for singing, by way of imitation." DK 154. Lucretius echoes Democritus in *De Rerum Natura,* which Zarlino cites in his discussion of technics in the first book of the *Sopplementi*, 13. The *Discorso Secondo Musicale* (Giacomo Vincenti, 1608; rep. Forni 2000), Artusi's last work involved in the controversy, issued under the pseudonym of Antonio Braccino da Todi in response to Monteverdi's *Dichiaratione*, opens with the argument that "la voce humana fra quelle de tutti gl'animali, ottiene il primo luoco, et l'huomo solo propriamente potiamo dire che parli et Canti; è tutti gl'animali si dicono nell'esser su cantare, non che propriamente sia il vero che cantino, ma per una certa analogia, et similitudine." *Discorso Secondo,* 3.

[44] Cusick correctly identifies the opposition between form and matter as gendered (in the tables of gendered oppositions, pp. 4 and 8), yet devotes to it little attention in her essay. In the passage in the *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi* where "Cruda Amarilli" is compared to a "monstrous birth," which Cusick makes reference to (7), Artusi quotes Aristotle's *History of Animals*, to hold that "more consideration must be given to form than to matter." (*Seconda Parte*, 21). By pointing out the centrality of this hylomorphic metaphysics, this reading hones into a crucial issue in Cusick's reading of the controversy. The problem is not only that

and write down the music without even mentioning the manuscripts he in fact possessed, Artusi simultaneously aims to secure the phantasy of the sovereignty and incorruptibility of the musical institutions he seeks to defend as well as the sovereignty of the listening, rational subject that grounds these institutions.

This omission of the written, or better, its repression, fits squarely with the logocentric metaphysics he upholds and with the aversion to mediation he evidences elsewhere in the dialogue. For example, citing Aristotle in the "Ragionamento primo," Vario distinguishes the objects capable of being perceived by the senses between those that can be perceived immediately, as in touch, and those that require mediation—air, in the case of hearing. Without mediation, the sense would judge accurately its object, but there always happens to be something that impedes truth, either in the sense, the sensible, or in the medium itself, such that the true cannot be immediately judged entirely.

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music was gendered rhetorically—however seriously we take rhetorics as a means for the construction of gender—but that in fact we can read such rhetorics as one side of a pervasive metaphysics that permeates even the attempts to transform such rhetoric, as shown below in the response of the Monteverdi brothers. For a classic account of the unavoidably gendered nature of hylomorphism, see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). Developing a point from Charles S. Brauner's response to Cusick (*JAMS*, 47: 3, 1994), where Artusi might reveal a fear not of the feminine as such but of sexuality, Coluzzi's reading of "O Mirtillo", a tour de force of Schenkerian, new historicist, and hermeneutic analysis of the controversy, emphasizes Artusi's reactions to the sensuality of performance, concluding that "more than the music itself, it may very well have been his precarious subjection to (and participation in) the open display of erotic-like passion and arousal, staged by adversaries of the papal regime from the Este and Gonzaga courts, that provoked Artusi to target Monteverdi, and not another *moderno*, as the figure of modern music." Coluzzi, "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro,'" 37. However, this very rich analysis, to my mind, ends up missing the point of the gendered reading began by Cusick et al. by excessively psychologizing Artusi's response (as well as diverting the much-needed feminist critique of the values and discourses of Western European culture that their work continues to make possible). Specifically, Coluzzi's reading reduces the possibilities that an analysis of the controversy opens for a thoroughly critical reassessment of the values and power relations preserved in the several institutions engaged in the conflict by reducing everything to the reaction of a victimized priest by music that "threatened his own moral fortitude," (30) "who must now separate himself from the 'sfacciata meretrice' through public chastisement, backed by reason and tradition, as a means of self-purification." Coluzzi "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro,'" 37. If, in the terms I have been suggesting here, the Goretti event is Artusi's phantasy, this is not meant in a psychologizing sense of this type, but rather as a larger symptom of the crisis of subjectivity and institutionality of his time. From this perspective, the attacks to Monteverdi can be read beyond limited issues of authorship and psychological intentionality, even if the *serata* turns out to have been a real event—hence my insistence on considering what is philosophically at stake in the account. The undecidability of the historical event produced by the dialogue becomes a powerful motivation for historical analysis alongside the positivity of historical data.

> Of the perceivable objects, some are mediated, others are immediate; I call mediated those which cannot be heard without the means of another thing, such as sound, which cannot be heard without the means of air in which the sound is made (or as Artusi named them at the end of the *Arte del Contraponto*, 'convenient conditions'). I call immediate perceivable object that which is understood by the senses without the intervention of another means, such as tangible things which the sense of touch receives without any mediation. Now, if objects that are mediated were to reach the senses under the appropriate circumstances (i.e. that the aire was pure, that the sense was not impeded by any obstructions that could keeping from doing its job, that the object was appropriate to the sense), then you would almost believe that what [Francesco] Salines says could be absolutely true [namely that if one has an acute sense one can judge accurately its objects]. Yet there always occurs something that impedes truth [il vero], either on the side of the sense, or the sensible, or the means, in such a way that it cannot itself judge the true entirely.

The phantasy by which touch becomes the highest, the truest and infallible of the senses is by no means proper to Artusi. It marks an entire metaphysical tradition from Plato to Merleau-Ponty that Jacques Derrida has called "humanualism."[45] By mobilizing touch as the paradigm of infallible perception, Artusi seeks to ground the possibility of true sensible knowledge, of the coincidence and intuitive plenitude—of direct immediacy— that he denies for other senses. But this leads him into a contradiction, as he conceives of reason, which judges form, under the phantasmic model of an infallible sense. In a typical move, the presumed primacy of reason is reinscribed by modeling it on the opposite it seeks to replace: the copy, here as well, produces the paradigm.[46]

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[45] Namely the tradition that defines humanism and what is proper to the human as *animal rationale* with respect to the hand, to touch and its exemplary capacity to know immediately, without the intervention of anything else, an ultrasense yielding a pure knowledge that distinguishes the human from everything else: "Human beings touch more and touch better. The hand is properly human; touching is properly human: it is the same proposition." Jacques Derrida, *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 152.

[46] The exemplary example of this operation is the modeling of memory as a writing in the soul, which takes writing (presumably a mediate copy of immediate speech) as a model for what is supposed to be primary.

This phantasy completes—or exceeds—that of Luca's perfect listening capacities: they both aim to ground and localize sensorial experience as immediate and self-present. To put the question in its simplest and most paradoxical terms: If Luca (only) heard the madrigals performed twice, how could he judge the improper, ungrounded, and inexistent sounds so accurately, that is, as if he possessed immediate access to them? Is not their irrationality as quickly available to the ear as it is to the intellect that grasps them in the instant of their fleeting existence? Or, on the other hand, if the harmonic transgressions so radically escape rational justification as well as judgment by the all-too-fallible ear, what then is so threatening about them in their instantaneous disappearance? The paradox relies on the opposition between the instantaneous and the permanent, the fleeting improvisations of "accented singing" and the eternal, immutable laws of the "harmonic institutions." Their instantaneity, then, is perhaps what is more threatening: Artusi's anxiety may not be not so much a fear against the masculinity of the institutions being penetrated by a feminized and barbarian sensual music. Rather, as the symptomatic erasure of the written shows, Artusi perhaps knows that the "Second practice," as it will have been called in 1603, has already—always already—penetrated and inscribed—as practice, as a practice of inscription—the institutions he seeks to defend.

At stake in Artusi's attack on the new music is then not only a question of style or aesthetics but rather the affirmation and verification of the metaphysics of sovereignty— the humanism in a strong sense—that is concomitant with the harmonic institutions he defends. What the phantasy of the musical event at Goretti's and Luca's capacity to memorize and transcribe the music accomplish, in addition to the omission of the words and the author, is to cover over the mediations necessary to ground Artusi's attack. Monteverdi's madrigals effectively circulated as written manuscripts and in this consisted

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See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981). See also Part I of this dissertation, chs. 2 and 3. One further example of Artusi's logocentrism is found in the preface to the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi* where, in addition to the already cited reference to the wandering letter of the *Phaedrus*, (see n. 13 above) he references the Seventh Letter, writing that "Di chi è che Platone Regola, e norma de gl'huomini sapienti imitando Pitagora disse, che non voleva publicamente dire di suo cosa alcuna, accioche gli pensieri suoi, non fossero soggietti al giudicio d'ogn'uno, et restassero senza difensore, et protettore; conoscendo sino à quei tempi quanta fosse la malignità dell'animo humano, che più tosto, talvolta si dovrebbe dire inhumano." *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, 3.

their true danger: they did not threat the musical institutions as fleeting musical events that could be misperceived and misjudged by casual listeners: they were inscriptions with their own autonomy, subject only to their own laws and prone to fall in the hands of anyone, as in the Socratic paradigm of the wandering letter that Artusi alludes to in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi* (see note 13 and 50 above).[47]

The paradox, then, is that Artusi's phantasy reveals rather than obscures the mediations he seeks to hide: Luca's perfect pitch imitates the writing it seeks to debase. Recall, finally, the setting of the dialogue (so important in Platonic dialogues): the interlocutors meet the day after the performance—after the fact, then, separated by the inexorability of time—to discuss the music "in una Camera assai remota, et da' strepiti lontana, per la loro maggior comodità."[48] To say it once more, the possibility that Luca in fact transcribed them from memory is not at stake, but rather the rhetorical strategy by which Artusi intended to obscure the real threat of the new music.

The judgments advanced by Luca and Vario constitute the signature of Artusi's listening of Monteverdi, a signature that constitutes the music as repeatable and citable, necessarily extracting it from its context and from its addressee.[49] What is more, Artusi's inscription makes not only music repeatable but also constitutes listening itself as repeatable. This moment exemplifies musical analysis as a signed listening, as the communication and transmission of an experience that is presumed intimate and unique, that possesses a type of duration and permanence outside of the phenomenological instant of listening. Yet this permanence is necessarily separated from that moment of coincidence between the hearer and the heard: from the moment Artusi signs his

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[47] Further proof that Artusi was in possession of the manuscript madrigals beyond the Goretti event is that he refers to them again, naming both "Cruda Amarilli" and "Era l'anima mea"—the first bars of the latter are even reproduced in the text—in the reply to L'Ottuso included in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi* (pp. 6 and 11), an exchange he claims occurred in 1599. Recall, also, that when "O Mirtillo" is discussed in *L'Artusi*, Luca says that he "heard a madrigal not many days ago which began on a note [corda] of the twelfth mode with B flat; then, *if I remember it well*, it was changed through B natural and became the first mode; and it seems to me that the words of the madrigal were 'O Mirtillo' by Guarini, taken from *Il pastor fido*." *L'Artusi,* 48v. Trans. Carter in Fabbri, 36.

[48] *L'Artusi,* fol. 39.

[49] On the notion of "signing a listening," see Peter Szendy, *Listen: A History of Our Ears* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) and Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

listening—thus constituting it as such—it ceases to belong to him: the moments of production and alienation coincide, threatening the authority and sovereignty of the listener in the very moment of its constitution *as* listener.

It was precisely by taking advantage of the iterability of the musical—the possibility of any inscription of being repeated and cited meaningfully outside of its context, a citation that threatens and transforms the "original" meaning of the event—that Artusi was able to isolate and present these exemplary exemplars as evidence of the current musical decadence of the composers in Ferrara, demonstrating, moreover, that he was as aware as Monteverdi was of "the power of print to establish, market, and preserve his works, and therefore, in some sense, himself."[50] Perhaps he was even more aware than the composer, at least in two counts: firstly, besides mastering possibilities of citation, circulation, and the play of pseudonyms, he seems to have perceived that the "power of print" by no means depends on the printed or on what is printable, but on the iterability of what comes to be inscribed in whatever form—including listening itself. Secondly, he mistrusts that power as a means to "preserve" anything, much less to "preserve himself": insofar as a text depends on its being readable in the absence of its specific addressee and sender, a mark always inscribes their future absence, their death.[51] Iterability is rather the dispersion, the dissemination, of authorship. Print less constitutes an author than de-constitute her, exposing her to the outside, to all its possible appropriations and misreadings—as Artusi, channeling Plato, complains (see notes 13 and 50, above). Not that this mistrust would have preserved Artusi, who nevertheless went on writing as those he attacked began to defend themselves, so that the mistrust is evidenced more clearly in the constant attempt to overcome it through the very means—writing—that brings it about.

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[50] Carter, "Musical Sources" *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, 20.
[51] Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1985), 316.

DOUBLES, MASKS, AND GHOSTS (SHADOW BOXING)

Before we examine the responses from the Monteverdi brothers, let us examine the various shadings in Artusi's signature and its shadows. Two characters in the dialogues are entrusted with the task of defending the new music: the musical amateur Luca in *L'Artusi*, and the anonymous intellectual L'Ottuso for the *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*. Luca speaks with familiarity of the arguments, motivations, and reasons behind the errors he himself brings under Vario's consideration. His defenses, however timid, are revealing of the thinking of the time.[52] The amateur speaks of "accented singing"—that is, extemporized ornaments such as appoggiaturas, rapid coloratura, and avoided notes— which he finds attractive.[53] In another passage, he alludes to *contrapunto a mente* (the practice, described by Tinctoris, of improvising counterpoint for a *cantus firmus* in which all voices are in accord with the tenor while not necessarily with each other) suggesting that some of the passages under examination seem to imitate the effects of this improvised practice.[54] Besides these references to contemporary musical practice, however, Luca's excuses do little to aid Monteverdi's case, and end up prompting even more severe attacks by Vario.

A more significant defense came from L'Ottuso Accademico, presumably a well-known musician from Ferrara or Mantua who wrote in private to the priest even before

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[52] Palisca "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 130.

[53] These are closely analyzed Fabbri, who remarks that "is significant that the 'moderns,' in their search for expressiveness, should have availed themselves of techniques *specifically associated with vocal performance* (this also applies to Luzzaschi) as regularly used by singers as extemporized ornamentation of a given melodic line to underline a word, a conceit or an interjection." Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, 37. Besides highlighting the centrality of the voice in the discussion, this passage is interesting for the desire, expressed by Luca, for a "universal sign" (un segno universale) by which composers could indicate to performers that such ornaments were to be realized. The problem, for Luca, is not that there is no way to accurately write and prescribe these effects, but rather that there are many ways, which thus lead to confused realizations. Vario's retort effectively associates these improvisational practices with the "corruption of the senses" and the entire metaphysical apparatus under examination here. *L'Artusi*, 41v-42r.

[54] That is, as in the case with accented singing (see above), Luca describes Monteverdi's music as capable of recording—inscribing—improvisation. Palisca quotes Tinctoris's description of *contrapunto a mente* as well as Adriano Banchieri's fascination with the effects produced by that practice, which prompted him to make up "a set of ten instructions for counterfeiting such counterpoints in writing. The trick, he shows, is to write each of the parts against the bass independently of the others." Palisca "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 133; Fabbri, 37-40. In this respect, the Banchieri text is an important document of the history of musical inscription in the seventeenth century. Adriano Banchieri, *Cartella musicale nel canto figurato, fermo et contrapunto… novamente inquesta terza impresione ridotta dall'antica alla moderna pratica* (Venice, 1614), 230.

L'Artusi was published in 1600.[55] If Luca and Vario are the doubles of Artusi, the anonymous Ottuso mirrors and distorts him like the audible mask of his name distorts the priest's. The identity of L'Ottuso's ghost thus haunts the controversy, his letters inscribed in fragmented form within Artusi's publications, issuing defenses which only buttress the attacks of the priest—who will not cease to scream at the shadow—and motivate more and more text, to the point of setting the terms for the eventual participation of the Monteverdi brothers in the controversy. He provides the fetishistic face to the material forces of the printing industry which effectively fueled the controversy.[56] It is from this deliciously mimetic character that some of the most important turns of the controversy issued: first, as noted above (note 15), he is the first to use the expression "seconda pratica" in print (in his second letter, which Artusi reproduced the in *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, 16)—even if, as the Monteverdi brothers claimed later, it belonged to the composer alone and it "may not be appropriated by anyone else."[57] Not only does he coin the banner but also voices what will have been its ideology, arguing that the new harmonic rules obeyed to entirely new purposes:

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[55] In the *Seconda parte*, Artusi reports that the first anonymous letter under the pseudonym of L'Ottuso was given to him in Ferrara in 1599. The pun on Artusi's name has only been alluded to in the scholarship around the controversy by Susan McClary, for whom "our Wagnerian hero of 1600 actually punned on his Hanslickian opponent's name, twisting it to Ottuso —'the obtuse one.'" Susan McClary, *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). This assumes that L'Ottuso is either Claudio or Giulio Cesare, possibilities that Palisca already dismissed (as for the reasons of Palisca's dismissals, however, these are limited in that they are advanced in terms of divergences of style, as if style was itself coextensive and identical with its author, especially when in the context of a veiled public polemic like this one). Palisca also notes that the self-derogatory form of the pseudonym matches others at the time, and notes also the existence of two academies named "degli Ottusi." Palisca "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 137. See note 15, above, especially—in this context—the suggestion by Harper that Ottuso hides Artusi's name under a similar sounding *inganno*. For an analysis of the musicological and historiographical issues at stake see, in addition of Palisca, Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 39-57.

[56] I am referring to the suggestion by Tim Carter that behind the entire controversy might have been the economic interests of the two rival Venetian printers, Giacomo Vincenti (who issued all of Artusi's books) and Ricciardo Amadino (who published Bottrigari's *Il Desiderio* 1594—one of the earliest motivations for the controversy—, all the incriminating music, prefaces, and letters by Monteverdi, as well as music by other *seconda pratica* composers. In fact, as Carter writes, "The reticence of the chief duelists, and the use of (real or imaginary) seconds, gives a curious impression of shadow boxing; the only names that constantly recur are those of the printers emblazoned on the title pages of these various treatises and music prints." Carter, "The Poetics of Modern Music," 177.

[57] In the *Letter* of 1605. I examine this text below. Strunk, *Sources*, 410.

> This being a new song [*modulatione*], it finds with its novelty new *concenti*, and new *affetti*, and without leaving reason in any way, it nevertheless departs in a certain way from some of the ancient traditions of some excellent musicians.[58]

L'Ottuso, whoever he was, set the terms for the musical aesthetics of the coming years by making an identification that, to judge by Artusi's resistance, was entirely unheard of in 1599. As the analyses of Palisca and Ossi show, by proposing that novelty in *concenti* had as its consequence novelty in *affetti*, and that the search for both was the purpose of the new music, L'Ottuso wholly redefined the meaning of *affetti* as it had been used in the sixteenth century. From this moment on, we are in the terrain of the modern "theory of the affections." This is effectively a redistribution, the identification and regulation of a certain relation between a sonorous event ("*concenti*," which for L'Ottuso means, in Palisca's translation "consensus" or more loosely, "harmonic combination") and a certain transformation in the listener—that ranges from the physiological to the psychological and the moral—called an *affetto*. In fact, this redistribution involves posing a new notion of the "listener" as *subject—subiectum*, the underlying and self-identical substance of transient affections—and not the judge, the "all-seeing eye" that verifies that the rules of counterpoint are followed correctly. Sound, in this model, is not a substance (composed of matter and form), but a force, a means by which an effect can—and must—be produced. This relation, which comes to be interpreted as that of cause and effect (*concenti* produce *affetti*) is by no means straightforward, and in the critical reading we are attempting here it should be seen more as a result, a product, than a departure point.

Diverse forms of mimesis produce these distributions. The distance between Artusi and L'Ottuso is not that between a conservative and a progressive but rather that created by the transformations that changing notions of mimesis produce in all the terms involved in the relation. This is the period, in fact, the moment, when a transition that is now taken as commonplace and straightforwardly descriptive occurred, the passage from a presumed injunction in Renaissance music to express the affections, *affectus exprimere*,

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[58] Essendo questa modulatione nova, per ritrovare con la novità sua novi concenti, et novi affetti, ne discontandosi in niuna parte dalla ragione, se bene s'allontana in un certo modo dalle antiche traditioni d'alcuni eccellenti Musici. *Seconda parte dell'Artusi,* 6. Translation in Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 39.

to arouse them, to "move the affections," *affectus movere*.[59] We take it for granted that music "moves" or "affects" us, and we equate "affection" with our contemporary emotions, entirely used to as we are to the results of a long history of which Ottuso's letter is only one—however crucial—chapter.

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[59] Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln and London: U. of Nebraska Press, 1997), 32. For a survey of authors writing on the relation between music and the affections see Palisca, *Music and Ideas*, 179-202; for the continuation of this tradition into 1650, analyzed from the perspective of affect theory, see chapter 5 of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4

SIGNOR &C: AUTHORSHIP, INSCRIPTION, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE *SECONDA PRATTICA*

IMITATIO, EMULATIO, AND NEW AFETTI

This is also the history of the return and further repression of mimesis in the history of music theory, a history that is inseparable from the history of humanism in a weak sense—the revival of ancient philosophy, literature, and arts—and in a strong sense—the determination of the *humanitas* of man with regard to an already established metaphysical interpretation of nature, history, world, and of beings as a whole.[1] In both senses, mimesis is the unthought ground by which this humanism is made possible. The fascination of Italian "humanists" with the accounts of the power of music over human feelings and its capacity to shape moral character—mainly those in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*—is mimetic: it identifies them as models for something that is or is not reproduced in their own time. The erection of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds as moral, political, and artistic paradigms to which the Renaissance humanists looked up to, produced a rigorous and long lasting notion of mimesis—translated as *imitatio* and more specifically as *aemulatio*—a "poetics" in which the purpose of art was to attain the greatness of that unique moment of artistic perfection, as in the models advanced by Vasari and Zarlino.[2] As educational practice, Ciceronian *emulatio* was conceived as the

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[1] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'" in *Pathmarks,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 245.

[2] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: New American Library, 1960), 145; Schrade, *Monteverdi*, 34. See note 18 above. The mimetic dimension of the self-fashioning of Italian humanism is also, in Terry Pinkard's reading, the running thread of Hegel's analysis of early modern Europe—in the "Bildung" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—where it is trough culture (Bildung) that the individual acquires actuality (Wirklichkeit) through the sublation (Aufhebung) of its "natural self." This process is mimetic in two ways: first, it involves the positing of the Roman world as a model to be imitated, and specifically the conceptualization of *Bildung* as a self-fashiong determined by "types." As Pinkard writes, "to remain in the state of one's 'natural self' was to be 'base'; to become an aristocrat was therefore to *alienate* oneself into becoming that *type* of person who is 'truly' noble." Terry P. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 151.

imitation of authors who had already demonstrated their mastery, as well the attempt to further surpass them.[3] Artusi references this very tradition in several places, for example when writing that innovation should not trump imitation, "massime di quelli, che sono eccellenti cosi dice Quintiliano nel Libro Decimo."[4] In the case of music, however, the fascination with ancient perfection—in the absence of anything that could be recognized as "music"—was mostly focused on understanding and accounting for what appeared as the almost miraculous power of music, in combination with the attempt to unearth and decipher the few scattered, fragmented, and contradictory ancient writings on music they could find.[5]

Besides the mimesis of *aemulatio*, however, the fascination with the effects of music, especially in Plato's model, puts mimesis in a central place, where it remained out of sight for centuries. As this dissertation argues, the account of mimesis and *mousikē* in book 3 of the *Republic* is all but straightforward.[6] Palisca has noted how Ficino's

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This analysis of the "tornness" (Zerrissenheit) of European modernity is carried to its last—comically mimetic—consequences in *Rameau's Nephew,* addressed in Part IV of this dissertation. See also John Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 107-120.

[3] Thus Artusi writes that Josquin, Clemens non Papa, Willaert and De Rore are themselves models of imitation, "Non sono questi imitati da tanti, e tanti? Non s'attende adunque alla imitatione in questa facoltà? Alcuni imitano il Palestina [sic], altri Cipriano, altri il Porta, altri il Gabrielli." *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 42. For Zarlino, in turn, the composer must "emulate nature—and with it all that nature stands alongside in the unbroken continuum of all things (history, *scientia*, etc.)—which fuels the engagement of the *Institutioni* with *musica prattica.*" Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects*, 44. As is well known, Zarlino's *non plus ultra* model for imitation is Willaert, he elevates the composer to the level of paradigm, such that the purpose of music theory, as a whole, can be understood as a mimetic mechanism for the production of such paradigms, of exemplary models worthy of imitation, and of the codification of the means of imitating these models. For *imitatio* and *aemulatio* in literature and poetry during the Renaissance see Luiz Costa Lima, *Control of the Imaginary: Reason and Imagination in Modern Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 62-88; G. W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* (33:1, 1980), 1-32.

[4] *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, 42.

[5] Palisca, *Music and Ideas,* 3-12.

[6] The relation between music and mimesis in ancient Greek thought up to Plato is explored at depth in Part I of this dissertation. The classic work on music in Plato is Evanghélos Moutsopoulos, *la musique dans l'œuvre de Platon*; See also Edward Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). For a more recent account, see Francesco Pelosi, *Plato on Music, Soul and Body,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). The relation between mimesis and music has been recently addressed in Séline Gülgönen "La Mimesis Musicale Dans Les Dialogues Platoniciens." *Phoenix* 68.1/2 (2014): 97–111; for mimesis in Plato in general, see Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis*, 31-52 and Stephen

translation of Plato and the lack of technical texts on music misled sixteenth-century readers—from Zarlino to Caccini and Monteverdi—into assuming that *melos*, *harmonía* and *logos* stood simply for melody, harmony, and text in the modern sense, thus leading them to affirm the primacy of the word over music.[7]

This, however, is not the only problem with the reception of the Platonic account of the nature of music, specifically in the politico-philosophical context of the *Republic*. In my reading, the passage is determinately obscure, as it relies on a performance of Socratic ignorance that affirms the powerful capacities of music only to deny any further logical knowledge of them. In doing so, he establishes a specific relation between music and law, *mousikē* and *nomos*, which is precisely what is at stake in L'Ottuso's intervention. It bears clarifying that, although sixteenth-century readers did not read in the same way as we do today, a text like the *Republic* produces problems of interpretation that go beyond the issues of translation remarked by Palisca. Sure enough, they *are* problems of translation, in which the distance that separates readers gives the text a certain kind of agency that exceeds the intentions of authors involved in their translation and reading. Thus, as argued in Part 1 of this dissertation, it is only by attending to this history, to its historiography, explicit or under erasure, that we can know anything about mimesis. Lacking any self-identity and any originality, lacking any origin, any arche, and therefore any telos, mimesis is not outside the history that attempts to bind it and write it down. That is why we must engage mimesis as a historical matter, through its historicity. The strategy is not quite straightforward but it results from the "nature" of its object: mimesis is unoriginal, anarchic. It appears and disappears from our sources. It even sets the rules for its own disappearance.

As we saw in chapter 2 when examining the famous passage in book 3 of the *Republic*—which Monteverdi will later quote in his *Lettera*—music, for Plato, or more precisely *melos* "is composed of three things: speech [logos—translated as *oratione* by

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Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

[7] Palisca, *Music and Ideas*, 5; Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy", 154-155.

Ficino], harmonic mode [harmonía, *harmonia*], and rhythm [ruthmos, *rhythmo*]."[8] Yet, as I pointed out—and this is the crux of the matter—there seems to be an asymmetry between the regulation of logos and the regulations of harmonic mode and rhythm: if the myths are appropriate there would be no need for further regulation, but in continuing to discuss the "musical" modes independently, Socrates and his interlocutors point to a mimetic ambiguity in the musical elements: musical elements are supposed to imitate, correspond, or incite mimetic behavior in its listeners, but it is entirely unclear how this is so.

As we saw, at stake was the regulation of a multiplicity and multifariousness for which the *aulos* was the paradigm. The status of the *aulos* as irrational, opposed to all *logos*, "many-headed," and even barbarian, is summed up in Socrates's remark as they go about purging the city from everything excessive and immoderate: "We certainly aren't doing anything new in preferring Apollo and his instruments to Marsyas and his" (399c).

In its place, we found a codification of *ethos* that operated as an inscription upon the soul, the body and the community: all three had a similar structure that came to be regulated by a mathematical paradigm, the transcendent order of the *Timaeus*, which had to be preserved in the community. The guardians had the task of avoiding alterations—changes, tropes—in music since they would also transform the laws: "they must beware of change to a strange form of music, taking it to be a danger to the whole. For never are the ways of music (*mousikēs tropon*) moved (*kinountai*) without the greatest political laws (*politikon nomon*) being moved, as Damon says, and I am persuaded." (424c). In other words, it is by making musical songs as mimesis of *ethē*, thus as repetitions of them, that they become laws, preserving and inscribing the nature and social conditions of the community.

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[8] Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*. (New York: Basic Books, 1968). 398c. Henceforth I will cite this translation using inline Stephanus pagination. For the translation of these terms by Ficino and their consequences for sixteenth-century humanist music theory (with their "scant comprehension of Greek music") see Palisca, *Music and Ideas*, 3-4 and 154-155. I return to Monteverdi's interpretation of this passage below.

When these texts are taken up in the context of a mimetic humanism in the Renaissance, the multiple layers and complex modes of operation produce real problems of translation. Especially in the tradition that sought to revive neo-Platonicism as a form of natural science, as magic. Ficino's translation of Plato and his commentary on the *Timaeus* would have been cited by all the parties involved in the controversy, infusing the discussion with a cosmological metaphysics in which the powers of music were of central importance.[9] This tradition would produce a "philosophy" or even a "metaphysics" of music out of what in Plato was in fact the philosophical regulation of the place and functions of the members of the State and the articulation of the mechanisms for its production and preservation—either as an actual political project or as a dissertation on the nature of man and the role of philosophy.

Furthermore, mimesis—which in Plato is multifarious, all-pervasive, and ever in need of control—would disappear in the Renaissance under what has been called a continuous fulcrum of similarities.[10] In Foucault's well-known reading of the Renaissance, mimesis forms a homogeneous ground of similarities and correspondences that are discovered through hermeneutics and manipulated by magic. As Jairo Moreno has shown, the Foucauldian description of this episteme neatly accounts for Zarlino's system. The taxonomy of correspondences (*convenientia*, *aemulatio*, *analogia*, and *sympatia*) explains Zarlino's retelling of the doctrine of *musica mundana* and uniquely clarifies that which allows Zarlino to theorize and justify the expansion of the Pythagorean consonances to account for thirds and sixths in contemporary musical practice by advancing the notion of the *numero Senario*.[11]

The binding power of correspondences also accounts for Zarlino's elaboration of the affective power of music as presented in chapters 4-9 of the *Istitutioni*, one of the most important attempts to face the troubling absence of the miraculous effects of music

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[9] On Ficino's philosophy of music, see Jacomien Prins, *Echoes of an Invisible World: Marsilio Ficino and Francesco Patrizi on Cosmic Order and Music Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) and Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[10] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

[11] Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects,* 30-38.

during the Renaissance.[12] The rhetoric of this engagement is also paradigmatic: at stake is

the question of why modern music cannot reproduce the same effects as ancient music

did.[13] Zarlino's discussion of ancient Greek music is significant in many respects.

Emphasizing the point that ancient music differs in multiple ways from that of the

ancients, he gives a vivid account of the performative practice of ancient Greek music

that is not far from some of Eric Havelock's descriptions of *mousikē*.[14] It can also be

described, as is done in chapter 2 with respect to Havelock's account, as a general

acoustic assemblage of inscription.[15] In Zarlino's account, ancient Greek music, or

mousikē, is too a rhythmically-organized physiological, affective, linguistic, and sonorous

performance aiming to preserve and transmit, in short to compose, the customs, mores,

and laws of the community, its *ethos* and *nomoi.*[16]

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[12] In part II of the *Istitutioni,* Zarlino in fact paraphrases the pseudo-Aristotelean *Problema* XIX.28 quoted in chapter 2, (above) which explains that the musical form was called *nomos* because before people "learned writing they sang their laws" Andrew Barker, *Greek Musical Writings*, vol. 1. The Musician and his Art (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 198 (see note 52). Zarlino: "Et cosi con tai numeri, percussioni, modi, et concenti; et con la voce humana, esprimevano materie convenevoli et buoni costumi. Nominarono poi tali determinationi Leggi: imperoche altro non è Legge nella Musica, che un modo di cantare, il qual contiene in se un determinato concento et un determinato Rithmo, et metro. Et fuorono cosi chiamate: perchioche non era lecito ad alcuno di mutare, overo innovare in esse alcuna cosa, si nelle harmonie, come etiandio ne i Rithmi, et Metri; ancora che siano alcuni, che dicano, che si ciamavano Leggi: imperoche avanti che si scivessero le Leggi civili, si cantavano tal Leggi in versi al suono della Lira, o Cettera, accioche i popoli più facilmente ritenessero nella memoria quello, che dovessero osservare." Gioseffo Zarlino, *Istitutioni harmoniche*, (Venice: 1558; repr. New York, Broude, 1965), 66. Zarlino's reference for this passage is pseudo-Plutarch's *De Musica*, which he paraphrases at length. *De Musica* was translated by Carlo Valgulio in 1497, who believed it was by Plutarch. Palisca, *Music and Ideas*, 6. The actual author and date of *De Musica* are unknown, see Barker, *Greek Musical Writings,* 205.

[13] A question that would be repeated by Girolamo Mei, Vincenzo Galilei, Giulio Caccini, and even by Athanasius Kircher, whose account is closely modeled on Zarlino's. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

[14] Eric A. Havelock *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1963). See chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation.

[15] On the notion of "acoustic assemblages" see Gautier, *Aurality,* 22. For various approaches within classical studies to the notion of *mousikē,* see Murray and Wilson, eds.; *Mousikè et Aretè: La Musique et L'éthique, de L'antiquité à L'âge Moderne: Actes Du Colloque International Tenu En Sorbonne Les 15-17 Décembre 2003,* (Florence Malhomme and Anne Gabrièle Wersinger (eds.) Paris: J. Vrin, 2007).

[16] For an adaptation of the concept of "musicking" to a broader sense of practices that includes that of *mousikē,* Gary Tomlinson, *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity.* (New York: Zone Books, 2015). On the "ethos theory," see Warren Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music: the Evidence of Poetry and Philosophy,* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1966); Wallace, "Damon of Oa," and Peter Wilson, "Athenian Strings" in Murray and Wilson, eds., 259, 292.

Zarlino's physiological account of the dynamics of musical affection also relies on the Ficinian account and thus traces accurately the pleats within the Renaissance *episteme*. As Ossi explains, emotions depend on the variations on temperature (hot or cold) and humidity (wet or dry) in the corporeal and organic sensorial appetite. These elements may be changed through specific harmonies to which they correspond, "as a result of the similarity between these passions and certain Harmonies."[17] The Phrygian excites anger (characterized by heat and wetness), the Mixolydian produces sadness, while the Dorian mediates between the two.

When analyzing how, specifically, the miraculous effects of ancient music can be obtained, as Ossi shows, Zarlino sets up a fourfold set of requirements. These are the three elements that compose *melodia*, that is, harmony (of sounds or the voice), rhythm (*numero* or *metro*), and text ("*oratione, overo il parlare*"), plus a "*sogetto ben disposto*," a well-disposed subject capable of receiving the affections.[18] Zarlino presents them in additive form: no one will be moved by a simple harmony that does not express anything; the listener will find pleasure in the proportions, but he won't be moved unless he is pre-disposed to happiness or sadness. But if rhythm is added to harmony, it suddenly gains great strength and moves the soul ("*subito piglia gran forza, et muove l'animo*"), as it happens with dance.[19] Words come next:

> Adding then to these two things the text [*la Oratione, cioe il Parlare*], which expresses mores by means of narration of some story or fiction, it is impossible to express how great is the force of these three things combined.[20]

Words then add something entirely lacking in harmony and rhythm. The structure is the same as the passage in Plato's *Republic* quoted above where *harmonia* and *rhutmos* add nothing to logos that can be determined as content, but only a multifarious multiplicity

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[17] Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 70. Translation in Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 52.

[18] Artusi makes reference to this passage, especially to a "soggietto secondo ch'egli è disposto à ricevere cotali passione." *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 31. In the same passage, he argues that the similar has effects on the similar, the natural upon the natural, so that artificial harmonies cannot have natural effects.

[19] Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, on his part, quotes this passage in the *Dichiaratione*. Monteverdi, *Lettere, dediche e prefazioni*, 401.

[20] "Aggiungendo poi a queste due cose la Oratione, cioe il Parlare, il quale esprima costumi col mezo della narratione di alcuna historia o favola; è impossibile di poter dire quanta sia la forza di queste tre cose aggiunte insieme" Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 71.

and heterogeneity that must be regulated. They constitute a mimetic supplement that, while adding nothing, complicates everything. Zarlino's inversion ([harmony+rhythm] + text, instead of text + [harmony+rhythm]) changes nothing yet underscores the problematic supplementarity of the whole structure: wherever you begin there is an imbalance between what is added and what is essential, yet the addition of the inessential is always somehow necessary. The reference to "*costumi*," *ethos*, makes everything clearer: it conceives of the narrative ("*alcuna historia o favole*") as the medium ("*col mezzo*") for adding the supplement that is truly essential, the inscription of *ethos*. As Zarlino writes, in fact, it is impossible express how great is the force of these three things combined.

At this point, it is clear, we are not dealing with "affect" in any emotional sense. It is, rather, everywhere political—and Zarlino makes no attempt to hide this fact.[21] The example of Alexander the Great, moved to war through music by Timotheus (a classic example, also quoted by Galilei and Kircher, recounted in the Sudas), introduced to consider the necessity of the *sogetto ben disposto* (here—and only here—Zarlino calls him the listener, "*l'Uditore*") drives the point home: to be moved to laugher or weeping is never at stake. To be moved is to be moved to action, political action.

As Moreno writes, this is the only appearance of the listener in Zarlino. The *Institutioni* is otherwise lacking, insofar as "there is no conception of a 'listener' as a discrete cognitive locus separate from objects of perception."[22] Moreno locates in this fleeting listener the anchoring point of the ideological nature of Zarlino's *Institutioni*: under the criteria of objectivity and rationality it invests a particular musical practice with

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[21] Not, that is, as the biological or psychic states that are commonly understood as emotions. I elaborate on the difference between affect and emotion and its consequences for seventeenth-century musical thought in the following chapter. Ossi further refers to the *Sopplimenti musicali* (Venice, 1583; repr. Gregg Press, 1966) where Zarlino defines the ancient "Affettioni ò Costumi" as *ethos* and divides them, presumably following Aristides Quintilianus, into *sustalktikon, hesuchastikon,* and *hexukastikon.* These presumably correspond to Quintilianus's *systaltic*, *hesykastic*, and *diastaltic* but Zarlino corrupts the terms. See Barbara Russano Hanning, "Monteverdi's Three Genera" in Musical Humanism and its Legacy, Nancy Kovaleff Baker, and Barbara Russano Hanning, eds., 154ff. esp. 164 n. 41. Ossi rightly remarks that these *ēthē* correspond to Ciceronian rhetoric and further remarks that "they are not the passions themselves" but rather "the means by which human emotions may be 'directed and known.'" Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 53.

[22] Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects,* 45.

mythical values of immanence and universality aiming to sociopolitically legitimate Venetian musical practice, embodied in Willaert: at the same time Ciceronian model and redemptive figure.[23]

The theorist, moreover, occupies a complex subject position: he is not a purely rational subject nor a subject of affections, he is the "anchoring point" of a sociopolitical structure. This is the same position that Artusi's Luca occupies, and which motivates the phantasy of the musical *serata*: the theorist is under the political injunction to defend the musical institutions because these effectuate a suture between the mythical "ever" and the immediate "now," which seamlessly infuses the present with the past and projects its survival into the future as well.[24]

Well-established notions of *imitatio* and *aemulatio* are taken up with renewed strength at the historical juncture of the Italian Renaissance because they work towards accomplishing this goal. The injunction that the artist must imitate the ancient models is directed towards the production of the figure of the composer worthy of imitation—in line with the Ciceronian educational model remarked above—and this production has an entirely patriarchal structure.[25] By claiming to be imitating a certain author, artists inscribe themselves as this author's descendants (the beneficiaries, in Moreno's reading of Zarlino): they participate in a filiation that serves to preserve value and authority in an unmediated, pure transmission from male to male (or even to female, who nevertheless must claim a male model). Erasmus's image of *imitatio* as a birth from one's head, like

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[23] Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects,* 44. See also Martha Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). As the following chapter argues, this aspect of Zarlino's theory will be the locus of a significant reinterpretation by Kircher, which effectively marks the onset of a modern conception of the listener in a different but complementary way than the one produced by Descartes, as shown by Moreno.

[24] Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects,* 44.

[25] As Gebauer and Wulf remark following Luiz Costa Lima, however, is that *imitatio* is not to be taken simply as "a call for similarity to a model…[Rather] What is being required of those who exercise power over symbols is a *formal commitment.* The demand is made in the name of antiquity and truth, in the interest, not of the exercise of power to the advantage of individuals, but of supporting the social order and the universality of knowledge-bearing institutions." Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis,* 87.

Juno being born from Jupiter, is only one of the most well-known images of the patriarchal logic of Renaissance *imitatio*.[26]

This is the most widespread form of the mimetic production of originals during the Renaissance: not so much aimed at producing veridical copies, mimesis is concerned with determining who, and under what conditions, is a model of imitation—and what counts as a successful imitation, or alternatively, what are the consequences of a wrongful imitation. Such a model possesses an infinite reproducibility value, the guarantee that all the copies made thereof will be valuable of it as copies, whereas compositions that do not follow a model, or which seek to improve upon them in ways not considered viable—in short, "novelties"—appear as useless. This derivation ensures that they belong in the institutions, that they are rational. Furthermore, this value also takes a moral form expressed as the respect owed to the ancients, and so on. Thus, when L'Ottuso writes to Artusi that invention is better than imitation, Artusi replies that,

> As to the observation of the mores (i.e. the so-called 'rules' [or 'laws']), and those first principles that are taught in music as hypotheses [per suppositi], he himself [L'Ottuso] agrees when I say they were in good custody, when he demonstrates those mores that he adopted against nature. The judicious reader will draw the conclusions, being true that every artist strives to imitate nature, (although what is good about this I do not want to say for now). The despise for the things of the Ancients (as he calls them) about the imitation of things, demonstrates how confused is his judgement in believing to be more advanced. And he tells the truth without any contradiction left in his confusion, in the ugliness of the style, in the bad grace of the voice leading.[27]

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[26] Pigman, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," 9. The "origin" of this logic, as shown above, is precisely Plato, which thus authorizes—makes possible, and effective—above all the defense of the Monteverdi brothers.

[27] "Quanto alla osservatione delle tradittioni, che cosi si compiace di nominare le regole, e quei primi principii, che s'insegnano per suppositi nella Musica; quanto dico essi ne siano stati buoni custodi egli istesso lo confessa, quando dimostra quelle tradittioni da lui adoprate contra la natura; tiri adunque il giudicioso Lettore la consequenza, essendo vero che ogni Artifice si sforza d'imitare la natura; ma quello che ci sia di buono voglio tacerlo per hora. Il disprezzo poi che fa delle cose de gli Antichi cosi da lui detti

Crucial to the functioning of the Renaissance *episteme*—and preserved effectively in *imitatio* as the only form of mimesis clearly visible and audible in the musical surface—is that there is nothing "new," only things to be discovered as always already having been there (thus Zarlino's Willaert as the suture of past, present, and future). In Foucault's words, it is by means of the interplay of sympathy and antipathy—these fundamental yet restricted forms of mimesis—that "the world remains identical; resemblances continue to be what they are, and to resemble one another. The same remains the same, riveted onto itself."[28] A saying quoted at the beginning of the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi* captures this: "Chi lascia la via vecchia per la nova, spesso ingannato si ritrova."[29] More pointedly, however, Artusi lays out the role of *imitatio* in preserving the identity of the same when he writes that, even if L'Ottuso references Aristotle's "Ars imitatur naturam,"

> Because he says that in this way you do not have to conform to the imitation of the Ancients, as if they did not make artificial counterpoints, and to many who have given light to all the rest of us and who are worthy of being imitated. [Think of] Josquin, Iouan Motton, [Jacob] Clemens non Papa, Adriano [Willaert], and Cipriano [de Rore], who were the fathers of the modern way of composing. And what kind of artificial counterpoints made by the Moderns was not already found and invented by the aforementioned?[30]

The seamless thread produced by similarities, antipathies, and analogies hides the productive force mimesis. By assuming that the correspondences are everywhere present

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intorno alla imitatione delle cose loro, dimostra quanto il giudicio suo confuso sia, che si pensa d'avanzarli; et dice il vero, che senza alcuna contradittione, gli avanza nella confusione; nella brutezza dello stile; nella mala gratia delle modulationi delle parti." *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 41.

[28] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* 25.

[29] *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 4. This could be translated as: that who leaves the old way for the new, would find himself fooled all the same.

[30] "perche dice, che in questa facoltà non si ha da attendere alla imitatione de gl'Antichi, quasi che non habbino osservato di fare de Contraponti artificiosi, et tanti, che hanno dato lume à noi altri tutti, et sono degni d'essere imitati. Quel Iosquino, Giovanni Mautone, Clemens non Papa, Adriano, et Cipriano, che sono stati li padri del modo di componere moderno: et qual sorte de contraponti artificiosi si ritrovano da Moderni fatti, che dalli sodetti non si astato primari trovato, e inventato?" *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 42. It is true that this is not one of Artusi's strongest arguments: by saying that all "contraponti artificiosi" of the Moderns have been found and invented by his canon of composers, isn't he entirely contradicting himself? He goes on to say, moreover, that imitation is everywhere: or are not all of these composers constantly imitated? Does not one speak of a madrigal made "alla Ciprianesca," or "alla Palestrinesca"?

and only in need of interpretation, mimesis is rendered powerless–or better, inactive. A continuous structure, without time or history, is held together by macro and microcosmic correspondences and expressed again and again through musical compositions that pin down this order upon the figures, the models, of those composers sanctioned by tradition.

And yet, two non-coincidental absences mark—and threaten—the seamless thread of the Renaissance *episteme*: the subject and mimesis. Each of these points to each other's absence, each of them *de-sists* underneath it.[31] The affective (or rather, affected) listener, the subject of the new mimetic effects, appears as the crucial suture in the otherwise continuous "fulcrum of similarities"—the missing spot that joins knowledge and power—and her all-but fleeting absence in Zarlino shows its frail place, her absence masked by the prominence of the models. In fact, we could conceive of the entire structure as a means to hide its scandalous absence if this did not imply projecting a latter formation into an *episteme* defined precisely by this absence. But this is precisely why it is important to consider it as a lack—and to locate it through figures of absences like L'Ottuso, which begin to demarcate the fault-lines of these formations.[32]

When L'Ottuso writes to Artusi that the purpose of the new music is to find "new *concenti* and new *affetti*," he makes the whole Zarlinian structure collapse with a single blow. Artusi's responses to L'Ottuso everywhere evidence this epistemic dissonance. In his response to the first letter, for example, he concedes that the "*modulatione*" might be

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[31] By "desistance", Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Derrida aim to show the way in which the subject is "(de)constituted," that is, neither constituted for and by himself as an autonomous subject nor entirely the product of an an Other, the imaginary, or a social context. As Derrida writes, "Should one then say that subjectivity *consists* in such a desistance? No, that's just the point—what is involved here is the impossibility of *consisting*, a singular impossibility: something entirely different from a lack of consistency. Something more in the way of a "(de)constitution." Jacques Derrida, "Introduction: Desistance" in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5. A subject that de-sists is one that exists by being de-constituted, and mimesis, which is not one, which is not identical to itself nor to anything else, seems to be involved in this paradoxical operation, which Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe read as a "rhythmo-typy", a repercussion, resonance, echo, reverberation, by which the subject is "deconstituted…A rhythm collects us and divides us in the prescription of a character [*tupos*, but also *ethos*, DVV.]." I seek here to elaborate on the notion of desistance beyond this rigorously philosophical understanding of "rhythm." See Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 31 and *passim.*

[32] For the place of subjectivity in the context of *imitatio*, see Gebauer and Wulf, 85-88; Luis Costa Lima, "On Mimesis and the Control of the Imaginary," *Culture, Theory and Critique* (54:2, 2013) 145-165.

new since the compositions are new, which doesn't mean, however, that they make new "*concenti*," as *concenti* must always produce "an infinite sweetness in the ear," that is, they must be consonant—the difference between consonance and dissonance being "by nature."[33] In Palisca's paraphrase: "Indeed, no new *concenti* are possible, because the number of consonances is limited. So no new affections can be expressed by them."[34] The "hermeneutic" reason for this disagreement is that Artusi conceives of the musical science of Zarlino as an *ars perfecta*, having attained a state beyond improvement. L'Ottuso, however, writes that new *concenti* produce a new "*affetto*, that is to say a desire" for new *concenti*. In Ossi's reading, this constitutes an emancipation of desire as "an independent agent capable of operating in the pursuit of sensual pleasure, the very antithesis of reason."[35] The "archeological" reason, on the other hand, might be that the Renaissance *episteme* must necessarily disavow the possibility of anything new being introduced in the already seamless weave—the text—of similarities in which *concenti* and *affetti* are already intertwined through the correspondences that mark and locate them (anger as hot and wet and produced by the Phrygian mode, etc.). If this thread is broken by L'Ottuso it is not so much by the emancipation of "desire" but by the identification, through desire, of the subject that lacks, that de-sists, beneath the unbroken fulcrum. When Artusi realizes this absence he acts out, invoking the ghosts of Zarlino and Willaert—masks upon masks—which might still preserve the cosmos and save him from madness.

If L'Ottuso—keep in mind: an anonymous person, a faceless *persona*, another mask—points to the lack of true anchoring in the Zarlinian cosmos by invoking a desiring

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[33] Attacking the seventh at the opening of "Era L'Anima Mia," Artusi writes: "ma non fa già, che se gl'estremi suoni sono dissonanti, per questo habbino da consonare, et dilettare; perche quella cosa, che per natura sua è tale; sempre sarà tale; et se la consonanza sarà soave, sarà sempre per natura soave, ne in modo alcuno potrà V.S fare che non sia tale. Si come la dissonanza essendo dissonante, no potrà V.S. fare di modo, che sia consonante, essendo per natura sua dissonante." *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, 8. A further argument, which Artusi presents in a passage that simulates the month elapsed between his response to L'Ottuso and the latter's second letter, argues—using Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Physics*—that since not only consonances and dissonances are different but they are contrary, and that it is impossible for contraries to coexist, then it follows that they do not produce any new *concenti*, leaving the ear in utter confusion. *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 12.
[34] Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 140.
[35] Idem.

listener and a composer capable of creating novelty, he must also rebind the mimetic forces that the fulcrum of correspondences kept in place. It is Artusi, in his reply to the first letter, who challenges L'Ottuso to point out the new role imitation will have in a cosmos that knows no novelty. This brings to the fore the issue of mimesis in the controversy, which escalates quickly:

> That *Signor &c.* [Monteverdi] wants to distance himself somehow from the ancient traditions of some excellent musicians, I don't know who are these that you call the excellent Ancient masters; and which are those traditions, how and in which part he distances from those, and for what reason, he should say, so that we will see in detail how little esteem should be had for these novelties, that without any authority from the old masters, and without demonstration are introduced, damaging and ruining the good and beauty of the Music. *Which sculptor, which painter, which poet, orator is that who does not try to imitate as much as he can the Ancient masters, who are excellent? Except for* Signor &c.[36]

L'Ottuso replies with a pithy claim that is typical of the statements demarcating the Ancients from the Moderns in accounts of the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* in seventeenth-century France:[37]

> In these madrigals, *Signor &c.* has made a particular effort in this direction, since in Music novelty is more valued than the other, especially since in this field there is no need to follow the Ancients, there being ample opportunity for progress through invention and this new *modulation* [part-movement].[38]

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[36] "Che il Signor &c. [that is, Monteverdi] s'allontani in un certo modo da le antiche traditioni d'alcuni eccellenti Musici, non sò quali siano questi che lei chiama eccellenti Musici antichi; et quali siano queste tradittioni, come, et in quali cose egli s'allontani, et per qual ragione egli cosi s'allontani, dicalo V.S che à parte per parte vedremo in quanta poca stima si debba havere queste novità, che senza autorità de vecchi, e senza la demostratione sonno introdotte, guastando, e rovinando il buono, e'l bello della Musica. *Ma qual Scultore, qual Pittore, qual Poeta, Oratore è quello che non cerca di imitare più che puote gl'antichi, che sono stati eccellenti? eccetto il Signor &c.*" *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 11. Emphasis mine.

[37] Cf. Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), ch. 9.

[38] "In questi suoi Madrigali esso *Signor, &c.* si ha fatta particolare professione, come che nella Musica questa sii di gran lunga più lodata di quella, oltra che in questa facoltà non s'ha d'attendere alla imitatione

But earlier on, and only in passing, L'Ottuso makes the identification that will be crucial for the *seconda pratica*—which he thus baptizes: the new *modulatione* are full of new *affetto,*"to imitate with them the nature of the verse, and to justly represent the true intention of the poet" [*che sarà adunque questa se non nova modulatione piena di nuovo affetto, per imitare con essi la natura del verso, et giustamente rappresentare il senso vero del Poeta…*].[39] Music does not necessarily need to tend to imitation, but rather towards innovation, which is accomplished by the new "*modulatione*"—and thus the new "*concenti*" and "*affetti*" that Artusi everywhere denies, and which imitate the nature of the verse.

Here then is the crucial realignment of music, mimesis, and affect, formulated in a unique form by L'Ottuso: music will no more be limited to expressing the already existing similarities and antipathies that make up the ordered macro and microcosmic universe; it will no more be "magical" or "miraculous" in the way the Ficinian tradition—extending past L'Ottuso until Kircher—wanted it. The "ideological" nature of these formations is already in the surface of the deeper archaeological formations: Zarlino himself made them visible and audible. At the center of L'Ottuso's challenge is the relationship between art, truth, and nature—the truth of nature—that the harmonic institutions could not express anymore: in a world saturated by significance, music has the possibility of discovering what is true beneath the smooth surface of the (Foucauldian) same. The limits of the overlapping of hermeneutics and semiotics that guarantees knowledge in the Renaissance *episteme* are the limits of alterity. Still defending his claim that new modulations produce new *affetti*, L'Ottuso offers a diversity of definitions of "*affetto*" as passion, love, or desire.[40] However,

> it is not necessary that this music should perform the miracle of reviving the dead; it will well produce affect, that is, the desire with the novelty of its modulation to hear frequently such kinds of harmony, more apt to move our soul with its novelty

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de gl'Antichi, essendovi massime campo con la inventione, et con questa nuova modulatione d'avanzarli." *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 19. Translation modified after Ossi, *Divining the Oracle,* 40.

[39] *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 14.

[40] L'Ottuso defines the various senses of *affetto* as a passion of the soul (citing Guarini: "*affetti tuoi son fatti miei*"); desire (Petrarca: "*Hai spento ambidue gl'affetti miei*"); love (Dante: "*per abbracciarmi con si grand'affetto*"). *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, 17.

in this new practice than in the past one, as that which more effectively strikes the sense.[41]

What is important about all these diverse "*affetti*" as conceived by L'Ottuso and the crucial difference they have with respect to Artusi's and Zarlino's interpretation, is that these—the *affetti,* as well as the *modulatione* and *concenti* that produce them—are new or point towards the new. They do not belong in the cosmos of the same. What is denied is the association between the same and the true. From this perspective, in order for something to be true it must be different—it must be new.[42] For this, L'Ottuso brings the productivity of mimesis back from its deep slumber, by associating it with alterity, with the "new." The innovations of the new music have the only purpose of disclosing what is "true" in the poem, [il vero senso del poeta] by imitating the "nature of the verse" [la natura del verso].

Mimesis does not imitate what already exists. It uses innovation to expose nature by imitating something that was not there before. Where the Renaissance *magus* finds a similarity, where a madrigalism uses conventional associations of words and sounds, Monteverdi produces an as-yet unheard of combination of sounds that, being new, is more true to nature. Even if by using such innovations they seem to go against nature— that is, against the philosophical and theoretical definition of what nature—essence, more

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[41] "Non è però necessario, che questa Musica facci il miracolo di suscitar morti; cagionerà bene affetto, cioè desiderio con la novità della sua modulatione d'udir bene spesso simil sorte di concento, più atto à mover l'animo nostro con la novità sua in questa nova practica, che nella passata come quella che con più efficacia ferisce il senso." *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, 17; translation after Carter in Fabbri, *Monteverdi,* 45.

[42] José Antonio Maravall describes a series of changes from a moderate interest on the new in Renaissance Spain, followed by a phase of distrust motivated by monarchical absolutism's attempt to preserve its social order among broader transformations, towards its glorification during the seventeenth century, such that the baroque came to affirm a taste for the new as a "natural, innate inclination that pulls the human towards the new," yet he identifies this naturalization of taste precisely as an ideological strategy from the same monarchic absolutism to displace and stall attempts of sociopolitical transformation, as a strategy to capturing the will. "The appearance of a daring novelty that enveloped the creation on the outside concealed a doctrine —here the word ideology would not be out of hand —that was inflexibly anti-innovation, conservative. A force reconstitutive of traditional interests was smuggled in by means of the novelty that one was attracted to for enjoyment. Antonio José Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque Analysis of a Historical Structure* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 224ff. Maravall is right on the mark in identifying the political aesthetics of taste in the baroque, although his conception of power remains too centralized—as if power emanated top down and effectively pervaded the entirety of the social body. These problems are taken up in chapter 7.

precisely—might be. To challenge such notion of nature, in this context, is nothing less than a political intervention, in a strong sense: it expresses the possibility of a different order, a different nature, than the one sanctioned by the institutions.[43]

The stakes become clearer in the way L'Ottuso's reply exasperates the priest beyond proper measure, who deploys here one of the starkest gendered similes in the controversy (not noted in Cusick's groundbreaking paper—it occurs just after the description of "Cruda Amarilli" as a "monstrous birth," thus bringing home the homophobic bent of the metaphor).[44] Artusi twists L'Ottuso's words, who writes that the composers of the "*seconda pratica*" commonly follow a sharpened note by a descending interval and a flattened note by a rising one, even if this movement is "against their nature" [et così per moti contrarii alla natura sua].[45] Artusi retorts—reinscribing in that context the epithet for the new composers which L'Ottuso used in the passage:

> Do you think, Signor Ottuso, that this opinion (or rule) of yours can be compared to the many talented men, Greeks and Romans, who left so many other writings and rules? It is indeed true that in this new second practice of yours, those who (to use your own words) *act against nature* and confound the matters and the rules of our forebears, these reputed as the better and as more elevated talents, and in this way you believe that both you and they are to become immortal, and you are greatly deceived. All artists seek to imitate nature, and however many philosophers there are and have been, they neither think of nor philosophize about anything other than the operations done by her. And do you offer praise to and consider more fully those who *act against nature*?[46]

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[43] See note 22, above. I deal more closely with the politics of nature and the role of mimesis in its interpretation and production in chapter 8 of this dissertation.

[44] Suzanne G Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music: Thoughts on the Monteverdi-Artusi Controversy," *JAMS* 46, no. 1 (1993): 1–25.

[45] *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi,* 16. See Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 143.

[46] *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 22. Emphasis mine. Signor Ottuso, che questa vostra opinione, ò Regola si confronti con tanti e tanti valent`huomini, Greci, e Latini, che ce n'hanno lasciati tanti scriti, e Regole? E ben vero che in questa vostra seconda pratica nova, quelli che (per usare le vostre parole *fanno contra la natura*; et confondono le cose, e le Regole de nostri passati, questi reputate per i migliori, e per ingegni più elevati, et con questo mezzo vi credete che s'habbino, et voi, ed essi ad imortalare, et molto v'ingannate. Cercano tutti gl'Artefici di imitare la natura, et quanti Filosofi sono, et sono stati, in altro non pensano, ne filosofano se non intorno alle operationi da lei fate; et voi, quelli, *che contra la natura operano,*

"SECOND" WITH RESPECT TO ITS USE, "FIRST" WITH RESPECT TO ORIGIN

Being enlisted in this escalation of philosophical and political disagreements, Monteverdi could not avoid taking a position—which to an extent consisted in taking a distance from this specific conflict. The role of innovation in aesthetically calling into question the natural order is not the main point in the defense of the Monteverdi brothers. To examine their response at the level of the acoustemological challenges examined above, I will focus on the *Dichiarazione* as their main pronouncement by using a particular reading strategy, which takes advantage of a significant structural "motive" in the controversy, namely the way the pair Giulio Cesare–Claudio mirrors the previous dialogic duets of Luca–Vario and Artusi–L'Ottuso. Less for simplicity than for emphasis, then, I refer to them here collectively as *Signor &c.*, the name Artusi uses to refer to the composer in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*. This strategy, inspired by Derrida's response to John Searle in *Limited Inc.*, is further motivated by the appearance of the *Dichiarazione* on the printed page (in the *Scherzi* of 1608), where Claudio's letter is printed in large fonts with callings to footnotes in which Giulio Cesare glosses the "intention" of his brother.[47] This allows us, moreover, to distance the arguments—and my readings thereof—from problems of authorial intentionality. Not without playful irony, this strategy invites considering their texts at the same level as the others, that is, as *personae*, as masks. The *&c.* thus signals a collective, an authorial multiplicity, while the *Signor* locates the origin of this authoriality within a squarely patriarchal schema.

Instead of engaging with the technical aspects of Artusi's attacks or with the issue of mimesis as it emerged in the exchange with L'Ottuso, *Signor &c.* attack the very grounds of the argument—or rather, they make explicit that the controversy is about grounds, about origins and *archai*. They denounce instead the violence, the lack of

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maggiormente lodate, et osservate?"; translation after Carter in Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, 44. The brackets opened at "per usare" are nowhere closed in the printed text. Renaissance jurists like Paolo Zacchia (1584-1659) and Amato Lusitano (1511-68), the latter Chair of Medicine in Ferrara, wrote against anal intercourse and sodomy, calling it a sin "*contra natura,*" against nature. See George Rousseau, "Policing the Anus," in *The Sciences of Homosexuality in Early Modern Europe*, Kenneth Borris George Rousseau, eds. (London: Routledge, 2013), 86.

[47] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

civility and the lacerations effected by Artusi upon the composer's pieces. The paradigms, the exemplary examples presented by Artusi—fragmented as they are in the dialogue—are deprived of their harmony, their rhythm, but above all they are deprived of the words. Recall, as *Signor &c.* will do later, that pure harmony, without rhythm or words, is incapable of having any effect whatsoever. What Artusi exposes are not chimeras nor castles in the air but corpses, "bodies without soul," very minute details that amount to nothing musical if the words, the most important part of music, are left out.

> These details, called "passages" by Artusi, which are seen so lacerated [che si vegono così lacerati] by him in his Second Discourse, are part of my brother's madrigal "Cruda Amarilli," and their harmony is part of the melody of which this is composed; for this reason, he has called them details and not "passages." But in this case, Artusi takes certain details, or, as he calls them, "passages," from my brother's madrigal "Cruda Amarilli," *paying no attention to the words* [nulla curandose dell'oratione], but neglecting them *as though they had nothing to do with the music*, later showing the said "passages" deprived of their words [oratione], of all their harmony [armonia], and of their rhythm [Rithmo]. But if, in the "passages" noted as false, he had shown the words that went with them, then the world would have known without fail where his judgment had gone astray, and he would not have said that they were *chimeras and castles in the air* [chimere, e castelli in aria] from their entire disregard of the rules of the First Practice. But it would truly have been a beautiful demonstration if he had also done the same with Cipriano's madrigals … and, to conclude, with others *whose harmony obeys their words exactly* and which would indeed be left *bodies without soul* [corpi senz'anima] if they were left without this most important and principal part of music, his opponent implying, by passing judgment on these "passages" without the words, that all excellence and beauty consist in the exact observance of the aforesaid rules of the First Practice, which makes the harmony mistress of the words.[48]

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[48] Strunk, *Source Readings,* 406-407; Monteverdi, *Lettere, Dediche, e Prefazioni,* 395-396.

The defense of *Signor &c.* consists in resisting the metaphysics of Artusi's rational institutions, their grounding. It does not cease to be political nor metaphysical, however, still bearing upon the *logos* and *arche* of music. As shown above, in Artusi's paradigms the reason, the *logos*—or more specifically the "form"—is in the rational proportions (*logoi*) that regulate the entire composition and each individual interval. The intellect judges a composition according to one ground, one reason, one *arche*. If each sound fails to express its status and harmonic derivation from its origin—its relation as part to the whole—the edifice collapses, catastrophe ensues. For *Signor &c.*, *logos* is soul, the living speech of the music without which nothing is left, not even music itself. By being deprived of their words, the passages are also deprived of all their harmony, and of their rhythm: corpses standing in for the abstract and empty laws of the harmonic institutions.

Yet, even when avoiding the appeal to the "new," *Signor &c.* are explicit in their rejection of these institutions, of the authority and regulation that they presume to have, which only lack of civility and violence can make evident. For them, a theory is already this act of self-instituting violence: to their collapsing monuments they prefer the living practice of madrigalists like De Rore.

Make no mistake: a party whose official line in which the words should be the mistress (*padrona*) of the harmony and not the servant (*serva*) is by no means an anarchic one. As Cusick shows, the *padrona-serva* metaphor was motivated by Artusi himself, who writes that "Nascono dall'Harmonia, dal numero dal Rithmo che sono servi dell'Oratione."[49] The important consequence of these remarks is that, in responding to Artusi's gendered metaphor in the same terms, *Signor &c.* are accomplices—and not rivals—of Artusi in the preservation of a patriarchal institution, "Artusi's focus on the troubled masculinity of composers and listeners is reified in the brothers Monteverdi's responses: thus both modern music and its practitioners remain open to the association with effeminacy." This in turn suggests that we have to consider Artusi (with all his

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[49] Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music," 2; *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 31; Artusi refers to the *serva* before as well, in his gloss of the *Republic* through Zarlino, writing that "di modo che si vede, che non può la sua modulatione operare questi due effetti. Ella ben si può dire serva all'uno, et all'altro; all concento, et alla melodia; ma non per questo si può dire, che da lei nascano." *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*, 23.

pseudonyms and *personae*) as part of *Signor &c.*, so that their readings and misreadings become impersonal, textual—not particular "flaws of character" or something "of their time," but as forming a structural and effective part of a patriarchal order which regularly employs a diversity of mimetic strategies for its self-preservation and self-reproduction.

The dispute, as I have been showing, is about origins, but more precisely, as I now argue in greater detail, a matter of patriarchal filiation: one of the requirements of destroying the mechanism of *aemulatio* by which authority was preserved within the cosmos of the same is to make a claim on the new order, to secure their place as beneficiaries of *the new*. This is the effect of the signatures in Claudio's *Letter* and Giulio Cesare's *Declaration* they mark their authority over the "Second Practice." Giulio Cesare writes that

> My brother has made known to the world that this expression is assuredly his in order that it may be known and concluded that when his adversary said, in the second book of the Artusi: 'This Second Practice, which may in all truth be said to be the dregs of the First,' he spoke as he did to speak evil of my brother's works. This was in the year 1603, when my brother had first decided to begin writing his defense of himself against his opponent and when the expression 'Second Practice' had barely *passed his lips*, a sure indication that his adversary was desirous of defaming in the same vein my brother's words and his music as well, although they were still in manuscript. And for what reason? Let him say it who knows; let him see it who can find it on the map! But why does the adversary show so much astonishment in that discourse of his, saying further: 'You show yourself as jealous of that expression as though you feared that someone would rob you of it,' *as though he meant to say, in his language: 'You should not fear such a theft, for you are not worth imitating, let alone robbing'?*[50]

Signor &c., that is, identified at once the two modes under which Artusi deployed mimesis, "in his language," in this conflict upon origins: the repetition and inscription—the iteration—of the expression "seconda prattica," and the erection—or denial thereof—

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[50] Strunk, *Source Readings,* 406; Monteverdi, *Lettere, Dediche, et Prefazioni,* 401-2. See note 14, above.

of models "worthy of imitation." If L'Ottuso and Artusi first put the expression in print, these documents re-mark it as an illegitimate appropriation, for it is *Signor &c.*'s original expression, and "it may not be appropriated by anyone else" [questa voce seconda prattica tall'hora non fosse occupata da altri]. As for the statement, cited by *Signor &c.*, that the *Seconda prattica* is "the dregs of the first," it is not found in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, a text addressed to L'Ottuso and still aiming to conceal the identity of the composer. It appeared perhaps in the now lost *Discorso musicale* of Antonio Braccino Da Todi—which has "always been assumed to be Artusi."[51]

In the most important claim to origins of the entire dispute, they admit that it can be called a "Second Practice" with respect to its adoption, but that with respect to its *origin* it should be called first.[52] This declaration spells out the logic of modernity for centuries to come remarking and repeating the irruption of history in Zarlino. It is the logic of a rupture, of an event that splits history in two, that draws out a limit that validates the musical practice while, as Jacques Rancière would argue, absolutizing dissensus (pre-empting the disagreement voiced by L'Ottuso) by placing its terms outside of history.[53] The rupture, in this case, is retroactive: to wit, the second practice is first, and the event of rupture marks not the beginning of something new but the end of what took the place of the true origin. And what guarantees this primacy, this origin? The text of Plato, the *locus classicus* for the identity and authority, the patriarchy, of logos and *arche*, the founding moment and monument of the reasoned grounding of all institutions and filiations to come in the West.[54] Or rather, we might better say that the guarantee of primacy is given in the relation that this moment in history developed to Plato's text, a relation that I argue is fundamentally mimetic, in the sense of the term developed above.

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[51] Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 153; Carter "The Poetics of Modern Music," 175.

[52] "Chiamaralla seconda prattica in quanto al modo di adoperarla, che in rispetto al origine si potrebbe dir prima."

[53] Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 131. The question of the "modernity" of this position and its excessive mimetic structure is explored further in the following chapter.

[54] The consequences of this patriarchal heritage are exposed by Derrida in "Plato's Pharmacy," Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* and Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Echo of the Subject" in *Typography*.

Sure enough, the central passage from book 3 of the *Republic* quoted by *Signor &c.* in Ficino's translation—where melody is said to be composed of harmony, rhythm, and words—was standard fare in the humanistic discussions of the previous century and served to establish Plato's authority on the question of the effects of music—they contain, *in nuce*, almost the whole of Plato's "theory" of music. In fact, the same passage is quoted in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi* together with the passage in book 7 of Zarlino's *Institutioni* (examined above), with the crucial difference that when glossing the meaning of "Oratione," Artusi simply refers to "la lunghezza, e brevità della parola [che] s'appartiene al metro, overo alla Oratione." Gone is, then, any reference to ethos or *costumi*, as in Zarlino, or to "la natura del verso" or "il vero senso del poeta," as L'Ottuso claimed.[55] According to *Signor &c.*, Plato held instead that,

> "The song is composed of three things: the words, the harmony, and the rhythm"; and, a little further on: "And so of the apt and the unapt, if the rhythm and the harmony follow the words, and not the words these." Then, to give greater force to the words, he continues: "Do not the manner of the diction and the words follow and conform to the disposition of the soul?" and then: "Indeed, all the rest follows and conforms to the diction."[56]

Unsurprisingly for any reader familiar with the *Republic*, this is a simplification of Plato's text, to say the least. A convenient one, however, which was able to capitalize on the work of the humanists, indeed to turn Artusi's argument on its head, and mobilize Plato's authority for the defense of "new" music—the *Republic*, of all things, that paradigmatic text of aesthetic conservatism! This paradox, however, did not seem to trouble any of the parties involved in the dispute, nor has it caught the attention of music historians, captivated by the very expressive dissonances in the new madrigals of Claudio

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[55] Carter notes how much depends on how one defines "l'oratione," whether simply as "words," or as Palisca and Silke Leopold suggest, as "verbal delivery," the latter noting that 'oratio,' and 'logos,' can mean "on the one hand the words as such, and, on the other, the delivery of the words." The problem—the distance of Monteverdi's Latin from Plato's Greek and our attempts to understand them is more complex, yet it is still one of translation, which began with this Artusi. Carter, "Two Monteverdi Problems, and Why They Still Matter," 420 n. 5.

[56] Strunk, *Source Readings*, 407. These passages are taken from *Rep.* 3.398c-d and 400d. Monteverdi also quotes *Gorgias* 449d and Ficino's *Compendium in Timaeus*.

and by the rhetorical dexterity through which *Signor &c.*'s misreading of Plato's text effected a veritable musical revolution with consequences that are still audible today. More paradoxical still is that *Signor &c.* deployed everything crucial in Plato's discussion of music without mentioning mimesis or *imitatio*.

As argued above, mimesis permeates the entire argument of music in the *Republic*, both in Plato's text and its reception in the Renaissance. In fact, explicit mention of *imitatio* is everywhere in the passages that *Signor &c.* elide in the quotation yet is only alluded to in the specific passages they do cite. Mimesis is effectively avoided, textually repressed, in the *Dichiaratione*. Everything, however, rides on this absence. Its necessity was already evident for Ficino who, in the sentence just before the one quoted by *Signor &c.*, translates *homoioumenon*, "likening itself," with the same word he uses to translate mimesis, *imitatio*. Here is the full passage (400d) in Ficino's Latin and a modern translation:

> Atqui congruum quidem pulcram orationem sequitur, et tanquam simile imitatur incongruum verò contrariam. Quin etiam consonum ipsum, et dissonum eodem modo; quando quidem rhythmus et harmonia, ut paulò antè dictum fuit, orationem sequuntur, non ipsa oratio rhythmum et harmoniam sequitur.

> Further, rhythm and lack of it follow the style, the one likening itself [homoioumenon] to a fine style, the other to its opposite; and it's the same with harmony and lack of it, provided, that is, rhythm and harmonic mode follow speech, as we were just saying, and not speech them.

This passage, we might say, formulates an identification that belongs exclusively in the neoplatonic world of Ficino; as a translation, it is an interpretation, a form of closing off the play of the text (similar to the decision by which *pharmakon* is translated now as medicine, now as poison; see chapter 2). By translating *homoioumenon* into *imitatur*, by making *imitatio* also translate the process of "becoming similar to," instead of "making something in the image of something"—as the orthodox reading of the *Republic* would insist—Ficino makes mimesis liken itself (*homoioi*) to becoming similar (*homoioo*), that

is, becoming another (i.e. becoming similar to something else which implies that it is not itself): precisely the meaning Plato aimed to disrupt by coining the mimetology based on models and copies which reduce alterity to sameness. Ficino, we might say, uncovers the truth underneath the separation Plato aimed to preserve.[57]

This, in turn, prompts Antonio Braccino da Todi—Artusi's presumed pseudonym (masks upon masks)—to reject and ridicule *Signor &c.'s* metaphor of *oratione* as *padrona* and *harmonia* as *serva*.[58] This might appear as mere verbal nit-picking, but the consequences are formidable, for in this modern misreading of Plato—produced, as argued above, not by a single author but by the impersonal authorial function of *Signor &c.*—that we find the "origin" of the aesthetics of modern music.[59]

Mimesis, as we said, is everywhere in the Platonic text. Crucially, however, it is not where Ficino and *Signor &c.* put it: in Plato, words imitate the ethos—Zarlino's *costumi*—of others, that is, ideally courageous warriors and compassionate men (398d). By means of these imitations, the speaker comes to partake of the ethos that is being imitated by *becoming* that which is imitated—hence the educative function of music in the ideal State. This means that words act as a medium for such identification, a medium that assimilates the model to the copy: the ethos to the performer. Musical mimesis, in

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[57] The relation between *homoioo* and mimesis offered here is tentative, as it requires a more systematic examination of their relation in the *Republic* and the Platonic corpus, which moreover needs to be compared to the uses and functions of *methexis*, especially with the philosophical meaning this word attains in the *Sophist* and its elaborations in Hellenistic neoplatonism. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 155ff. who sees *homoiomata* (likeness) as interchangeable with *mimemata* in Aristotle, although he does not say the same (or the contrary) in the case of Plato; although the musical context for their identification, *Politics* 1340a12-39 makes it possible to assimilate them (at least for hellenic and neoplatonist writers).

[58] The metaphor first appeared in print in the *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi*. See note 102 above. On this passage, Palisca writes that "Artusi quite rightly, if unduly harshly, scolded Giulio Cesare for distorting Plato's meaning" "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 155.

[59] Monteverdi's writing strategies, despite their famous "laconism," exhibit an interesting productivity that depends on misreadings like this one. Another important example is the "slip of the pen" in the preface to the Madrigale Guerreri" analyzed by Massimo Ossi, where Monteverdi quotes from the *Republic* yet assigns it to a non-existing *Rhetorica*, which Ossi takes to be Aristotle's. This leads him to an interesting analysis of the preface according to the structure of its third book, providing an illuminating elaboration on the rather stark preface. The suggestion, however, that this is a "typical Freudian slip," seems to me less happy. It is with an aim to avoid this kind of psychologism that I deploy the reading strategy of authorial functions to understand the operations of the misreading of Plato in the *Dichiarazione*. Ossi, *Divining the Oracle,* 192ff.

Plato, is an imitation "of the same by the same."[60] The passage, it must be recalled, is
concerned with a regulation of what is possible through mimesis (even if this involves
assigning capacities to mimesis that will later be denied in the text). Thus, all the poetry
of Homer and Hesiod is examined to ensure the correct ethos is given as model. More
important than the regulation of models, however, is multiplicity in imitation. Plato
condemns those who can imitate everything as well as diversity and multiplicity of
rhythms and styles: a man who does many things "doesn't harmonize with our regime
because there is no double man among us, nor a manifold one, since each man does one
thing" (397e). This disharmony, moreover, is associated with madness, with a lack of
self-control. From this determination follows the reasoning that "the rhythm and the
harmony follow the words:" compositions must be made with unity of style, rhythm, and
harmonic mode, all three operating together (in "symphony" *sum-phonos*, 398c) towards
the enactment of a single, determined ethos. Since, recall, Socrates and Glaucon state
ironically that they "do not know" which modes and rhythms correspond to which ethos,
they assume that regulating words will be sufficient, "provided, that is, rhythm and
harmonic mode follow speech, as we were just saying, and not speech them." Words are
not the models (nor "mistresses"), they are just the component of melody that most
clearly exhibits the ethos that is to be performed. This is precisely what Braccino writes:
to follow is not to be a servant. In this text—the last "official" document of the
controversy—[61]we encounter the final substitution. Braccino identifies "to follow" with
"to imitate," an association *Signor &c.* never make explicit in the *Dichiarazione*.

> The declarer means for that *sequuntur* and *sequitur* that harmony and rhythm are
> both servants; and that the oration is the ruling master, and the former are the
> ruled ones. And yet when the talented Tiburtio Massaino imitated the works of the
> Excellent Cipriano [de Rore], can we say that he is servant of Cipriano? One

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[60] Gülgönen, "La mimesis musicale," 99, 101.
[61] Carter, "The Poetics of Modern Music," 175; Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 153.
Carter's most recent contributions to the scholarship on the controversy have focused on finding the
indirect ways by which Monteverdi responded to Artusi during the controversy and beyond, see Carter, "'E
in rileggendo poi le proprie note'" and "Cerberus Barks in Vain."

Melopeo follows the style of Adriano [Willaert], another Palestrina's, another Porta's, others Gabrielli's. What else can you say, except they are imitating the works of Gabrielli, Palestrina, Porta, Adriano?[62]

Further on, abandoning Plato, Braccino writes that it is necessary that the composer [*Melopeo*] "conosca la proprietà, la natura della consonanza, della dissonanza, et dell'armonia, acciò possi imitare più che puote la oratione conforme all'intento suo."[63] We have here a trace of the textual genealogy of the principle that music must imitate the words.[64] It happened more explicitly in the texts of Artusi than on the pronouncements of *Signor &c.*, and even then it obeyed to much larger transformations of mimesis at the end of the sixteenth century. Yet what remained the same underneath all of these transformations was the alignment of artistic practice with the preservation of an authorial power—a patriarchal filiation—grounded on the identification and appropriation of an origin. Thus, more important than locating this moment as the "origin" of the composer's aesthetic ideals after 1608 is to note what, in this misreading, is left out—or repressed.

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[62] "Intende il dichiaratore per quel *sequuntur*, et *sequitur*. chel' Armonia, e'l Rhithmo siano l'uno il servo, et l'altro la serva; et che la oratione sia la patrona Comandante, et esse le Comandate. Et però quando il valente Tiburtio Massaino sia imitato l'opere dell'Eccellente Cipriano si puo per questo dire che egli sia servo di Cipriano? Il tale Melopeo seguita lo stile di Adriano, quell'altro del Palestina [sic], un'altro del Porta, altri del Gabrielli; che altro vuol dire, se non che imitano le opere del Gabrielle, del Palestina [sic], del Porta, di Adriano?" *Discorso secondo musicale*, 8. This makes the *Discorso secondo* not only the culmination of the controversy but a definitive turning point in the history of mimesis; it cannot be thus dismissed as a "reiteration" of the previous arguments (cf. Fabbri, 51). One could consider it, in fact, the affirmation and further definition of the actual terms at stake in the controversy, if one is willing to consider reiteration in its constitutive sense, its role of constituting that which it re-iterated by signaling—by repeating it—what is iterable in any given utterance. In the context of Artusi's homophobia, it bears noting that Tiburtio Massaino served in Salzburg under Archbishop Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau until he was forced to leave in 1591 after a criminal conviction for homosexuality. David Bryant. "Massaino, Tiburzio." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed December 13, 2015.
[63] *Discorso secondo musicale*, 8. Branccino, overstating his point, here goes so far as contradicting Zarlino, writing that the harmony and rhythm possess "forza" and "vigore" by their own, not depending on the "oratione," "è ben vero che con questa accompagnate, la fortificano, le danno maggior forza di quello che per se stessa have."
[64] This account, of course, must be crossed with the genealogy that goes from Girolamo Mei, through Galilei, to Caccini. The influence of the Florentine Camerata upon Monteverdi's aesthetics is circumstantial. This separation allows us to trace it materially, instead of aiming for a presumed yet unaccountable continuity between them. As Carter calls them, they stand "in the wings of this shadow-play," Carter, "The Poetics of Modern Music," 177; See also Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," 153 and Palisca, "Vincenzo Galilei's Counterpoint Treatise: A Code for the 'Seconda Pratica'," *JAMS* (9:2, 1956).

As was clear to Zarlino, what the words bring to harmony and rhythm, the cause of as-yet unheard effects, is the *costumi*, the ethos. Also still clear, as we saw with Jenkins, was the political and moral meaning of these "effects"—especially in *L'Artusi*. The slow, almost unperceived transformation of musical mimesis we attend to here does not depend only in stating that "music must imitate the words" but rather that, in so doing, words become a kind of "model" they were not before. They attain a specific autonomy, they lose the capacity to confuse themselves with the ethos that they transmitted, becoming instead models of that ethos: they become "Platonic ideas" in the modern sense, not in the sense of Plato.

This has consequences for the music that aims to imitate such words: It becomes also autonomous, proffering only "a representation of speech."[65] We can describe this earlier sense as "a magical speech," where music and speech are almost "amalgamated," having a certain *consonantia* because of their participation in the harmonic order of things, minimally separated but unified by similitude, which reveal the hidden connections of things.[66] By doing so, the artificiality—that is, the arbitrary signification—of musical devices such as the ostinato in *The Lament of the Nymph* becomes clear, as do the reasons by which Monteverdi, in attempting to set poetry by a poet like Marino—who "embodied an epistemology of representation in which language was separated from the world"—constantly fell short of his genius as composer.

THREE TIMES MAD

We encounter, in this way, the picture of a melancholic Monteverdi, who never ceased to think about Plato and mimesis, hoping until his death to write his treatise on the Second Practice—another absent text. As he wrote to Giovani Battista Doni in 1633

> I keep telling myself that it will not be unacceptable to the world, for I found out
> in practice that when I was about to compose 'the Lament of Arianna'—finding

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[65] Tomlinson, *Music and Renaissance Magic*, 242.

[66] Idem., 241. This problem of a passage from a world of mimesis as participation to one of representation forms Tomlinson's interpretive schema, based on Osio's *L'armonia del nudo parlare,* for the passage from the late Renaissance into the Baroque discussed in the introduction to this Part; the problem will return below.

no book that could show me the natural way of imitation [la via naturale alla imitatione], not even one that would explain how I ought to have been an imitator [che dovessi essere imitatore], other than Plato, in one of his shafts of wisdom, but so hidden that I could hardly discern from afar with my feeble sight what little he showed me)—I found out (let me tell you) what hard work I had to do in order to achieve the little I did do in the way of imitation.[67]

Monteverdi, we are told, uniquely achieved "a realization of the rhetorical and assonant music inherent in the text, of the varied expressive devices through which Rinuccini projects Ariadne's changing passions…[O]nly in the lament of Ariadne is the passionate music of Rinuccini's verse ideally and unremittingly given real musical voice."[68] And, we are finally told—this, of course, before the archaeological mode of analysis was available but with roughly the same results—, "if Monteverdi never again achieved such a precise musical realization of the expressive means of his text, some of the blame may be placed on his poets."[69] Without taking into account the many metamorphoses of mimesis during this period when attempting to understand the difference between these whole incompatible epistemic worlds, we are still somehow limited to "the aesthetic" in the most traditional sense, of a concern to understand what archeology always tried to empty out, the idea of "genius" and "the interrogation of individual subjectivities."[70]

The reason for this might be, as Tomlinson writes, because "from all our efforts at hermeneutic and archeological interpretation there emerges, *as a function of our knowledge*, an irreducible difference—an unresolvable alienation separating us from, for example, Renaissance magic."[71] A further reason might be that, as Derrida remarks on Foucault's project to write a "history of madness" where madness speaks "in the first person," any attempt to write a "history" of madness will either be a reasoned history or be condemned to "follow the madman down the road of his exile."[72] Thus,

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[67] *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, 421;

[68] Tomlinson, "Monteverdi's 'Via Naturale Alla Immitatione,'" *JAMS* (34: 1, 1981), 96.

[69] Idem., 97.

[70] Tomlinson, *Music and Renaissance Magic*, 241.

[71] Idem., 247.

[72] Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness" in *Margins of Philosophy,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 36.

a history, that is, an archaeology against reason doubtless cannot be written, for, despite all appearances to the contrary, the concept of history has always been a rational one. It is the meaning of 'history' or *archia* that should have been questioned first, perhaps. A writing that exceeds, by questioning them, the values of "origin," "reason," and "history" could not be contained within the metaphysical closure of an archaeology.[73]

Monteverdi the composer knew this first hand, as shown by his abandoned project for writing music—another rational enterprise with high stakes on *archai*—that imitated madness. Struggling with mimesis, Monteverdi aimed, and failed, at writing music that brings mimesis to the extreme of its own formulation. As he wrote to Striggio in 1627, he aimed in his portrayal of madness in *La Finta Pazza* to imitate "the single word rather than the sense of the phrase."[74] Monteverdi's formulation in that letter, that "the person who takes the principal part, which should arouse both humor and compassion, must be a woman who can lay aside every sort of imitation except that which is dictated by the word that she is saying" is a formulation *avant la lettre* of Diderot's *Paradox of the Actor*.

It demonstrates, as the latter does, that madness, mimesis, and self-representation are bound in an inescapable tension: musical expression, the investment in mimesis that from this moment on defines the most important understanding of mimesis in musical thought, is threatened from within by madness. This connection had been noted expressly by Plato, whose distrust of the manifold, as we saw, was linked with madness. Not until Diderot will this issue reappear. In Diderot we will find again how "doctrines of mimesis are unworked, exposed to the difficult tensions between semblance and deviation, difference and repetition, propriety and impropriety."[75] In this moment, the mimetic

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[73] Idem.

[74] Monteverdi, *Lettere*, ed. de' Paoli, p. 244; translation in Tomlinson, "Monteverdi's 'Via Naturale Alla Immitatione,'" 102. See also Tomlinson, "Twice Bitten, Thrice Shy: Monteverdi's 'finta' 'Finta pazza'" *JAMS* (36:2, 1982) 303-311.

[75] John Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 55.

regime that begins with Monteverdi, where "sound absorbed into discourse, ready and able to represent or express," will be destroyed by Rameau's Nephew by exceeding its own capacities.

Another way of understanding the meaning of the transformation in the history of mimesis gathered in the injunction to "imitare la oratione" is by focusing on the political sense of ethos that is effectively severed off in the exchanges examined above. If this disappearance might not be appreciated in the specifically "aesthetic" level, this may be because the "aesthetic," as it arises here, is concerned essentially with covering the means by which the disappearance was effected.[76] Which does not mean that the power by which music inscribes ethos ceases to exist. It happens, we might say, as it does in Plato: the laws, *nomoi*, are preserved, inscribed, by repetition. The moderns, however, displace the place of inscription of this bionomics: no more upon bodies but upon the aesthetic itself. Art becomes that which *makes* the law.

By elevating *L'Arianna* to the level of model, of paradigm of musical mimesis, Monteverdi instituted one such law. *L'Orfeo* and the *Combattimento*, moreover, can be seen as the places by which this institution of *nomoi* is inscribed within a more restricted mimesis, again as a bionomic—of the latter composition, Suzanne Cusick writes that it might be the most important site to address the problematic politics of ethnicity and gender representation with which we engage today, suggesting that to address it is

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[76] A similar argument is advanced by Tom Huhn, who locates this transformation in eighteenth-century philosophy, which created an aesthetics "in imitation" of mimesis, that is, that the aesthetic production of the eighteenth century, in its ever more divergent ways, continued to be underpinned by a notion of mimesis. Rather than a replacement, an emancipation or a decline, one can argue that the eighteenth century accomplished a crucial transformation in relation to the metaphysical determination of being as representedness, namely that of naturalizing representation by erasing mimesis as a regulated device for the making and judging of artistic objects, only to incorporate it into a production of sensory experience, of *aisthesis* itself. As Heidegger writes, "the artwork becomes an object of experience and consequently is considered to be an expression of human life." Heidegger, Martin, *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002. 57. Important works which readdress the place of mimesis in the eighteenth century in aesthetics in general are Huhn, Tom. *Imitation and Society: the Persistence of Mimesis in the Aesthetics of Burke, Hogarth, and Kant*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004 and Derrida, Jacques. "Economimesis." *Diacritics* (11.2, 1981), 3-25.

necessary to consider music not as a signifying medium in an "*episteme* of representation" but rather a force[77].

I offer the ideas in this chapter as a supplement: Mimesis may be such a force, in this case, constantly producing alterity as both representation and inscription. The *Combattimmento*, in Cusick's reading, and *L'Orfeo*—by which the Gonzaga dynasty inscribes its divine filiation, as suggested by Jean Pierre Ponnelle's groundbreaking 1975 production for the Zurich Opera—to which we now turn, are exemplars of this force. Monteverdi's silence upon their political effects while simultaneously making "purely" aesthetic statements, is symptomatic of their importance.[78]

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[77] Suzanne Cusick, "Monteverdi studies and 'new' musicologies" in *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi* John Whenham, Richard Wistreich eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007), 259.
[78] On the *Combattimento*, see Ossi, *Divining the Oracle*, 211ff, and Cusick, "Indarno Chiedo," in *Word, Image, and Song. Vol. 2*, Rebecca Cypess, Nathan Link, and Beth Lise Glixon (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013).

Part III

Orpheus' Modern Turn: Sovereignty, Allegory, Performance

ὀνομακλυτὸν Ὀρφην
"Orpheus, of famous name;"
first extant mention of Orpheus (6th C. BCE)
Ibycus, fr. 10 (Diels)

SERENISSIMO SIGNORE MIO SIGNORE [FRANCESCO GONZAGA]

ET PATRONE COLENDISSIMO

La favola d'Orfeo che già nell'Academia de gl'Invaghiti sotto gl'auspitii di V.A. fù *sopra angusta scena musicalmente rappresentata*, dovendo ora comparire nel *gran Teatro dell'universo* a à far mostra di sè a tutti gl'huomini, non è ragione che *si lasci vedere* con *altro nome signata*, che con quello dell'Altezza V. glorioso, e felice. A lei dunque humilmente la consacro, affinch'ella che *à guisa di benigna stella le fu propitia nel suo nascimento*, con I Serenissimi *raggi* della gratia sua, si degni di favorir il progresso della sua vita, la quale posso sperare, mercè dell'Altezza Vostra chè sia per esser durabile al pari dell'humana generatione. Supplico V. Altezza à gradir questo segno della divotione mia, con quell'animo grande che, è proprio di lei, e che lega gl'animi di chiunque hà ventura di trattar seco, E qui inchinandomi con sommessa riverenza all'Altezza V. prego il Signore che d'ogni suo desiderio la faccia contenta. In Mantova li 22, d'Agosto. 1609.

Di V. Altezza Serenissima,

Humilissimo, et obligatissimo servitore,

Claudio Monteverdi[1]

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[1] Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo Favola in Musica Da Claudio Monteverdi Rappresentata in Mantova l'Anno 1607. & Novamente Data in Luce* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1609), f. 1.; Preface transcribed in Claudio Monteverdi, *Lettere, Dediche, E Prefazioni, ed. Domenico De' Paoli* (Roma: De Santis, 1973), 408–9. Emphasis mine. "The fable of Orpheus, which has already been represented in music under the auspices of Your Highness on a small stage at the Accademia degli Invaghiti, now having to appear in the great theater of the universe to wshow itself to all men, there is no reason that it should allow itself to be ssociated with any other name than that of Your Glorious and Fortunate Highness. To you therefore I humbly consecrate it, so that you, who as a benign star were propitious at its birth, with the most serene

Speaking of origins, what about that paradigmatic phrase—*Theatrum mundi,* the theater or the spectacle of the universe—that Monteverdi employed in the preface to the 1609 score of *Orfeo*?[2]

What can we make of this gesture, this second birth—staged under the "rays" (*raggi*) of the "benign star" (*benigna stella*) of Francesco Gonzaga—that made *Orfeo* pass from a famously narrow stage, the *sopra angusta Scena* in the Mantuan Ducal Palace, to the "great Theater of the Universe" (*gran Teatro dell'universo*)[3] from which, however, it would just as soon disappear until 1904?[4]

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rays of your grace, will deign to favor the progress of its life. I beg your Highness finds this sign of my devotion agreeable, with the great spirit that is proper of his, and and which he transmits to all who have the fortune to treat with him. And bowing in submissive reverence to Your Highness I beg the Lord that he finds worthy of all your desires." translation modified after Mauro Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera: Monteverdi's Staging of the Self* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 282 n. 28.

[2] In Part II I introduced the figure of *Signor &c.* to refer to Claudio and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi as a collective authorial function facing the various authors, pseudonyms, and anonymous figures of the texts involved in the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy. With this strategy, I sought to distance my arguments from claims pertaining to intentionality and authorship for texts that are already densely interwoven. In this section, I will refer only to "*L'Orfeo,*" without aiming to identify or distinguish between Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Striggio as authors, thus bypassing fraught arguments about the literary merit of the libretto or the possibility, recently advanced by Barbara Russano Hanning, that the author of the Apollonian ending might be Ottavio Rinuccini; see Barbara Russano Hanning, "The Ending of L'Orfeo: Father, Son, and Rinuccini," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 9, no. 1 (2003). When referring to the characters from the operas, I refer to their Italian names (thus Orfeo, Euridice, Plutone), and use English names when referring to the mythical figures (Orpheus, Pluto).

[3] The history of the *Theatrum mundi* metaphor has been explored at length, famously by Ernst Curtius in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages;* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1953). and more recently in the context of baroque literature in Frank J. Warnke, *Versions of Baroque: European Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972). Warnke argues after Curtius that there was a surge in "world as theatre metaphors" after 1595, with the reprints of John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus* which contains the famous motto of the Globe Theater, "*totus mundus agit histrionem,*" but especially "because the metaphor expresses with great cogency the concern with the illusory quality of experience which runs obsessively through the literature of the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century" Ibid. According to Warnke, it acquires its most refined poetic elaborations in the works of Shakespeare and Calderón (especially *Hamlet* and *La Vida es Sueño*). See Lynda G Christian, "Theatrum Mundi: The History of an Idea" (Garland, 1987) and; Matthew Potolsky, *Mimesis* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006). In the Italian context, the metaphor is familiar from Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), which contain the keystones for what Stephen Greenblatt calls the Renaissance self-fashioning. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Of particular interest for this dissertation is James M Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven, CT: Yale University press, 1996), which employs the

The four chapters that follow are an extended exercise in examining the creation of paradigms in early modern Italy and in the multiple ways in which mimesis is effective in early opera as what I described as a performative assemblage of inscription (see chapters 3 and 4). This is an essay—*un ensayo*, an attempt—to look and listen to *Orfeo* from the perspective offered by Monteverdi in the dedication preface, through a trope— the *Theatrum mundi*—that almost stands in for the whole aesthetics of the baroque: not only as the politico-theological framework in which men's fate is scripted by God (or Fortune) and its sensorial overhauling in Counter-Reformation sensualist catechism,[5] nor as the "performance of nobility" by which courtly spectacle became an effective means of political control,[6] but also as that change of perspective, or turn to perspective—the introduction of mathematized perspective (in geometry and painting)[7] and the turn it

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metaphor as key to offer a general interpretation of the 1589 *intermedi*. Based on Saslow's work, one could suggest that, for early seventeenth-century readers, the expression could specifically suggest Florence— Jacopo Soldani would refer to the city as a "theater of the world" as late as 1716.S Berner, "Florentine Political Thought in the Late Cinquecento," *Il Pensiero Politico* 3, no. 2 (January 1, 1970): 186.

[4] On the status of the 1609 score and the interpretation of prologues as paratexts—as "liminal thresholds working as crucial sites of intersubjective exchange between subject and reader"—which authorize the work and its subsequent performances, see Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 21ff and further; Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and; Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). On the various extant editions and copies of the score of *L'Orfeo* and its editorial problems, see Tim Carter, "Some Notes on the First Edition of Monteverdi's 'Orfeo' (1609)," *Music & Letters* 91, no. 4 (2010): 498– 512. Carter notes that the metaphor is a clumsy rhetorical flourish with a potentially negative effect, as Monteverdi does not realize that "drawing attention to the limitations of the first performance scarcely paints his patron in a flattering light" p. 509; Carter also suggests an interesting possibility, from the perspective of material book studies, that "angusta" may be a typographical error for "augusta," a hypothesis that the famous 1607 letter by Carlo Magni (which dates the first performance of *L'Orfeo* and says all the performers will "speak musically" [*parleranno musicalmente*]) falsifies, as it utilized the same adjective to describe the size of the room, "…caso che l'angustia del luogo non mi escluda."Angelo Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969), 69; see also Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 20; Susan Helen Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627: An Archival Study" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1989), 189 n.81. In lieu of adducing simple causal reasons like this one, we can suggest that the rhetorical flourish is overdetermined, and in this lies its analytical interest. It may be clumsy, or a typo, and also motivated by opposition of the pervasive trope it aims to mobilize—the *Theatrum mundi*—as well as by the other trope that accompanies—the birth (and this sense should not be underestimated). In all cases, it mobilizes diverse, incompatible, and simultaneous causes none of which entirely accounts for it, yet it uniquely programs the conditions under it was produced, as well as illuminating how we approach it now, as this section elaborates.

[5] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 45ff; Antonio José Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque Analysis of a Historical Structure* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[6] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*; Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 17–20.

[7] Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 1991).

entailed towards representation, towards an image of the world which saw the world as an image[8]—that served to expand and implement the mechanical and sensorial dimension of the new place of man elaborated in what we know today as "Renaissance humanism," programming modernity as a turn away from the obscurity of myth towards the light of reason, towards En*light*enment.[9]

The chapters that comprise this section focus on elaborating the figure of the paradigmatic turn in the Orpheus myth—a longtime figure of poetic *imitatio*—specifically as developed in *L'Orfeo*, from historical, political, and aesthetic perspectives. In chapter 5, I locate *L'Orfeo* within the agonistic relation between Florence and Mantua, where the two dynasties aimed to appropriate the Orpheus myth as a means to self-display. The reading of *L'Orfeo* as an allegorical representation of the Gonzaga patriarchal lineage is suggested in Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's 1976 production of *L'Orfeo*, and further analyzed by Mauro Calcagno.[10] Elaborating on Calcagno's reading of *L'Orfeo* as a performance of nobility which includes not only the musical performance of 1607 but also the printed scores and other materials produced after the production, I introduce the idea of performance as actualization and operativity, but especially as *in-completion*: namely that the same conditions that allow for allegorical identifications to be suggested through performance are at the same time the conditions for the impossibility of such identifications to remain fixed but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, in constant need to be reenacted in order to, precisely, affirm noble power and legitimize its sovereignty. This point is elaborated through a close-reading of the opening of Ponnelle's production, and further in an excursus focused on the role of allegory and opera in Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.

L'Orfeo is recurrently presented as the paradigmatic opera, both due to its theme of musical effectivity and its historical position, yet it cannot nevertheless be taken as a

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[8] Martin Heidegger, "'The Age of the World Picture (1938),' in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[9] Adorno, Theodor W, and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

[10] Jean-Pierre Ponnelle and Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Monteverdi: Orfeo* (Munich: Unitel Films, 1978); Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*.

pure origin. As we know, it draws most immediately from Rinuccini and Peri's *L'Euridice* (1600), from the madrigal tradition (as Calcagno and others demonstrate), and further from the allegorical *intermedi* developed by the Medici in Florence during the sixteenth century and adopted by Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga at the end of the century. Chapter 6 thus looks back at *L'Euridice*, aiming to situate what I argue are the most important elements that make both *L'Orfeo* and *L'Euridice* modern versions of the Orpheus myth, namely the absence of musical power as magical effectivity, and its displacement onto questions of sovereignty and law. I situate this displacement through a close reading of the underworld scene in *L'Euridice*, which introduces two significant departures from ancient and modern versions of the myth: first, in Peri's *stile rappresentativo* magical song is not only unrepresentable but also ineffective. Second, Orfeo's paradigmatic lament/plea to Plutone is doubled by Caronte and Proserpina, who adapt and transform elements from Ovid's telling creating a choral appeal that centers on the sovereign. This figure of the sovereign corresponds to Benjamin's analysis of the politic-theological figure of the sovereign in the German *Trauerspiel*, based on Carl Schmitt, but it is not exhausted by it. I elaborate on this choral dimension by turning to Machiavelli's political and theatrical writings (*The Prince* and *La Clizia*), suggesting not only that the entire scene in *L'Euridice* recalls some of Machiavelli's writings on sovereignty, but that seeing it from that perspective opens it to suggestive interpretations of its political function, namely that the collective address to the sovereign from the position of the subordinates can be understood as mode of opening a space for the people. If chapter 5 argues that every performance is an in-completion of the work, chapter 6 argues that such an in-completion can be understood in a political sense as an opening towards the future, as opening such a political space, a space for a people that is unrepresentable.

In chapter 7 I focus on a structural condition by which a turn produces a dorsal invisibility, as remarked by David Wills in *Dorsality: Thinking Back Through Technology and Politics*, which defines the place of music as dorsal, unseen and even as transcendent. The spectacularization of the world, I argue, is also a spectralization, the production of a haunting remainder that makes every new turn into a crisis. Thus, the

performative and material turns in contemporary musicology necessarily produce the idea of music as transcendent, as I show through a reading of Carolyn Abbate's 2004 essay, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" This structure, I argue further, is constitutive also the modern turn towards vision described by Martin Jay in *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* and especially by Christine Buci-Glucksmann in *The Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics*. The baroque, moreover, intensifies the simultaneous spectralization and spectacularization of the world by posing multiple perspectives, which music traverses through what baroque theorists called *the affections*, a collective, impersonal disposition which music regulates. I focus on a particular type of affect, *allegrezza* or *gioia*, which characterizes early modern *festa*, as the mimetic means by which early modern spectacle, from *intermedi* to opera, uses spectacle, music and allegory to inscribe the *ethos* of the community.

The two preceding chapters can be seen as a preparation for my reading of Act 4 of *L'Orfeo*, specifically the moment of Orfeo's backward turn and subsequent loss of Euridice, which serves as the unifying trope of Part III. I focus on the seldom noted noise (*strepito*) that makes Orfeo turn towards Euridice. Absent from other tellings of the myth except for Virgil's—where three thunders are heard *after* Orfeo turns—this noise complicates traditional readings about Orfeo's motive for turning. Added to the absence of magical song—as argued in chapter 6—this noise makes *L'Orfeo* a paradigmatic baroque moment, a turning point or a crisis, at the origin of modernity. I first elaborate on this sense of crisis and modernity and music's role in it through Theodor Adorno's and Mladen Dolar's comments on *L'Orfeo* (in *Sound Figures* and *Opera's Second Death*, respectively). The ineluctable eventality and opaque materiality of the noise constitutes an interpretive impasse that declares the turn to be without meaning, and thus invites us to consider the turn in all its material and performative dimensions.

I ask several questions which I consider to be at the center of critical approaches to *L'Orfeo*, given its paradigmatic place in the history of opera. These are questions that will help understand how *L'Orfeo* becomes such a paradigm, how it is produced, and how

paradigms in general are produced. Central to my method is avoiding to place Monteverdi or any other as an author, and instead examining the figures—authorial, rhetorical, historical, that frame questions like these: how can we reconcile the mythical aspects of Orpheus with the literary tropes that actualize it in early seventeenth-century opera, while preserving the specificity of opera's modes of figuration and the technologies that mediate it? In other words, how is it that the birth of opera, and modern music, are presented—re-presented (*musicalmente rappresentata*)—on the stage of a trope that is as old as the world, the *Theatrum Mundi*, while also being articulated as a turn (a re-turn) towards ancient music and myth (or the return of ancient drama to the modern stage)? What is the structure and the significance of this turning point (a birth which is also a passage into the underworld—a *katabasis*—into the past as the realm of the dead, a shamanic initiation for Orpheus) for modern music?[11]

For *L'Orfeo* is such a turning point, staged precisely as a turn in Orpheus's unavoidable and irresistible movement, a *tropos* which becomes a trope.[12] The early status of *Orfeo* in the history of opera makes it also irresistible to locate and to interpret—

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[11] Not to speak of its medieval interpretations as a precursor of Christ, as educator, civilizing agent, and so on. For a survey of the various figures of Orpheus in history, from antiquity to late modernity, Walter A Strauss, *Descent and Return; the Orphic Theme in Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); John Warden, *Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); A. M Babbi, ed., *Le metamorfosi di Orfeo: convegno internazionale, Verona, 28-30 maggio 1998 : atti* (Verona: Fiorini, 1999). As the titles of these works attest, and as Strauss elaborates, metamorphosis is the uniting trait in the Orpheus myth—in fact, of any myth, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro emphasizes (after Levi-Strauss): "Mythic discourse registers the movement by which the present state of things is actualized from a virtual, precosmological condition that is perfectly transparent—a chaosmos where the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of beings do not yet conceal each other… mythic metamorphosis is an event, a change on the spot… Myth is not history because metamorphosis is not a process, was not yet a process and will never be a process. Metamorphosis is both anterior and external to the process of process—it is a figure (figuration) of becoming." Eduardo Batalha Viveiros de Castro and Peter Skafish, *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology*, 2014. In other words, Orpheus can be taken as an exemplary myth, as "myth thinking about myth," in the words of Elizabeth Sewell Strauss, *Descent and Return; the Orphic Theme in Modern Literature*, 2; On katabasis and Orpheus as shaman, see Robert MacGahey, *The Orphic Moment: Shaman to Poet-Thinker in Plato, Nietzsche and Mallarmé* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994).

[12] As Heather Love notes, the word *trope* indicates a "a word turning away from its literal meaning." She thus takes the turn as a figure for figuration, and specifically for a modernist melancholia which seeks to move forward by producing a series of nonmoden others that are left behind, to which it is nevertheless tragically bound. Her book is "an image repertory of modernist melancholia" figured as a backwards turn, to which the readings in this chapter can contribute. Through this repertory, we could also then speak of the trope of treating the turn as the trope of modernity. Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5.

to allegorize a myth that historically has invited allegorical interpretations in the West for more than two millennia, perhaps more than any other myth in its repository[13]—as a point of origin, as a paradigm of opera *in toto*. The myth gives itself easily to interpretation, to the selection of particular elements within the narrative that are then presented as exemplary of opera as a whole. It seems obvious why Orpheus is given this prominent role, in mostly every author who signals the recurrence of early baroque operas based on that particular myth, so obvious that the explanation most often misses or overstates the crucial point. Orpheus is taken to represent the magical and incantatory power of music over its listeners that Italia humanists sought to restore in their attempt to fashion themselves after the ancient Greeks.[14] What would then be more suitable to create and reproduce the fabled effects of their than by choosing Orpheus as their model?[15]

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[13] I have referred, among others, to the rich essays collected in Warden, *Orpheus*.

[14] And it is large question, indeed, why it is a pastoral myth in its Ovidian form and not the "true" heroic tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, or Seneca. As Lorenzo Bianconi remarks, "it is as though the foundation of the new musical and theatrical genre—based on a musical language that was capable of representing and moving the affections (a regeneration, so to speak, of the 'pathopoietic' properties of music) *was destined* (my emphasis) to take place less under the banner of the tragic catharsis of heroic and sacrificial mythology (the horror of which is sufficient to silence both music and text) than on the fertile— indeed, enchanted—terrain of a mythology of metamorphoses and origins." Lorenzo Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987). This contradiction seems to have struck the young Nietzsche as well, who dismisses the *stile rappresentativo* in section 19 of *The Birth of Tragedy* as the product of "unmusical" and "theoretical man," who "Because he does not sense the Dionysian depth of music, he changes his musical taste into an appreciation of the understandable word-and-rhetoric of the passions in the *stile rappresentativo*, and into the voluptuousness of the arts of song. Because he is unable to behold a vision, he forces the machinist and the decorative artist into his service. Because he cannot comprehend the true nature of the artist, he conjures up the "artistic primitive man" to suit his taste, that is, the man who sings and recites verses under the influence of passion. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House, 2000), 116.

[15] The phrase that "all opera is Orpheus" has become a commonplace in critical assessments of the philosophical aspect of opera and its origins in a (often Romantic or romanticized) teleological narrative that tends to overemphasize certain aspects of opera as determining of the whole genre: vocal virtuosity, the expressive power of monody and the *stile rappresentativo*, etc. But several other questions can be asked by taking its centrality as a starting point. This paradigm is, of course, being challenged from several positions, for example by recovering and re-staging works from the so-called "dark ages" of opera, i.e. the period between Monteverdi's death and Gluckian reform, and especially by producing new historicist close readings of primary sources, documents, and performances to expose the variety, complexity, and irreducibility of musical practices to a single paradigm, especially by highlighting issues of gender, identity and difference. See, for example, Bruno Forment, *(Dis)embodying Myths in Ancien Régime Opera: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012); Rebecca Cypess, Beth Lise Glixon, and Nathan Link, *Word, Image, and Song*, vol. 1, 2013. One may argue, however, that with such a reexamination its status as paradigmatic opera is not threatened or relativized but only reinforced by

This interpretation is not without its mimetic complications: to recall the theory of mimetic paradigmaticity presented in Part I, there is a certain contagion in this process of paradigmatic determination: the singular stands in for the totality, it is both a part of the whole and outside of the whole, without any mediation other than the work of mimesis by which both become identified. The particular mirrors the totality, which it anticipates in congealed form—a "proleptic vision."[16] *L'Orfeo* certainly has this quality. It is commonly presented as a rare case, a truly mythical being: born—like Athena—fully grown from the genius of the composer[17] (or so it seems, since we lack any sketches or correspondence that gives light on the composer's labor); a hybrid with no offspring (for the difference with the works of its contemporaries and the composer's own later works is radical); and yet majestically appropriate to stand in for the birth of opera as a whole.[18] Or so it appears in Joseph Kerman's *Opera as Drama*:

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examining the context of which it is taken to be paradigmatic. This chapter complements these approaches with a critical assessment of the notion of paradigmaticity at stake in the "paradigmatic opera" for the period these works aim to complicate.

A slightly different argument for the use of Apollo and Orpheus is suggested by Pirrota and emphasized by Calcagno, namely that "the choice of mythological characters known for their musical prowess—Apollo and Orpheus—undoubtedly served a legitimizing purpose, justifying music as an art that could fully hold the stage for an entire performance, fulfilling Aristotelean requirements of verisimilitude." Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 15.

One could also question the centrality of Orpheus by noting the also prominent place of Apollo in the symbolic universe of the Medici, which precedes, and engenders, the role of Orpheus, as Barbara Russano Hanning does in her reading of the *first* first opera, Dafne, by Rinuccini, Corsi, and Peri. Barbara Russano Hanning, "Glorious Apollo: Poetic and Political Themes in the First Opera," *Renaissance Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 485–513. In this line, or lineage, one may also question the place—or absence—of Eurydice as paradigm and symbol. Kelley Harness, "Le Tre Euridici: Characterization and Allegory in the Euridici of Peri and Caccini," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 9, no. 1 (2003), http://sscm-jscm.org/jscm/v9/no1/harness.html.

[16] Echoes here of Attali's "prophetic music" are not mere coincidence. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

[17] Thus Leo Schrade: "But the *Orfeo* was in every respect *a unique work*, so far above anything that had been produced in the early days of opera that the genius of Monteverdi, "Musico ver del Paradiso," must have been apparent even to those who had previously shown reluctance to honor him. The Mantuans welcomed the *Orfeo* with great excitement, since they knew, as Carlo Magni recorded, that they were privileged to witness *a unique event*…The unity between drama and music, which Ferrari observed is, indeed, the great historic distinction of the *Orfeo*. At the dawn of operatic history, *the music drama was created by Monteverdi alone, without any real precursor.*" Leo Schrade, *Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music* (New York: Norton, 1950), 226.

[18] Elements for this fable of pure origin are also to be found in the mythical figure of Orpheus, every since Ibycus named him "Famous Orpheus" (fr. 10, Diels; David A Campbell, *Greek Lyric: In Four Volumes.*, vol. 3, Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides, and others (Cambridge, Masachusetts: Harvard UP, 2001), 269.) as well as Pseudo-Plutarch, for whom Orpheus "appears not to have copied anybody, [Ὀρφεὺς οὐδένα φαίνεται μεμιμημένος] since he had no predecessors except the poets who composed songs sung to the

The lasting myths contain in them the lasting problems of man. The myth of Orpheus, furthermore, deals with *man specifically as artist*, and one is drawn inevitably to see in it, *mirrored with a kind of proleptic vision*, the peculiar problems of the opera composer…[For] Orpheus, the lyric singer, the crisis of life becomes the crisis of his lyric art: art must now move into action, on to the tragic stage of life. It is a sublime attempt. Can its *symbolic* boldness have escaped the musicians of 1600, seeking new power in the stronger forms of drama? Orpheus' new triumph is *to fashion the lament that harrows hell out of his own great, sorrowing emotion*…It is *the problem of emotion and its control*, the summoning of feeling to an intensity and communicability and form which the action of life heeds and death provisionally respects. But as man he cannot shape his emotions to Pluto's shrewd decree; face to face with the situation, *he looks back, and fails*. Life and art are not necessarily one.[19]

For Kerman, then, Orpheus stands in for his (and T. S. Eliot's) theory of drama, the rigorously mimetologic definition of artistic creation as the organic shaping of materials and feelings towards a unified aim which seeks to give "some perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it."[20] Orpheus is presented as (modernist) artist, and a failed one, incapable of controlling himself—for this is the moral of the story as given by Apollo, the neoplatonic interpretation according to which Eurydice's beauty is but a means to kindle the "blind amor" of true philosophical eros, one directed towards eternal things and not tied to earthly appearances.[21] This scheme—already an interpretation of an interpretation—gives Kerman the key to approach the score as bearing the traces of the

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aulos, and Orpheus' work is not like theirs in any respect" Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica*, sect. 5. Andrew Barker, *Greek Musical Writings*, vol. Vol. 1 The Musician and his Art (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), [p. 210.

[19]Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 27–28 emphasis mine.

[20] Eliot, quoted by Kerman in ibid., 8.

[21] The gendered dimensions of this interpretive schema—the (male) composer working upon a passive/unruly (hence feminine) material—should be kept in mind, especially in the context of the previous chapter. For a different reading of this neoplatonic motive in the opera, with a criticism of this logic, see Klaus Theweleit, "Monteverdi's L'Orfeo: The Technology of Reconstruction," in *Opera Through Other Eyes*, ed. David J Levin (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 164.

compositional process (in the absence of sketches) in which the (Prometheic and not simply inspired) genius meets the raw libretto (of a poet whom all critics are happy to dismiss as mediocre), struggling to accomplish an organic, ideal unity, with fallible humanity accounting for the score's flaws.

And yet, we may ask, what is the necessity of this turn, what makes it fateful or tragic, and to whom does it belong? Even if we remain within the interpretation of Orpheus as lyric poet, the turn is not univocal. By turning, by losing Eurydice—it is also suggested (after Rilke)—Orpheus becomes who he is: Orpheus's disobedience transforms fate into vocation.[22] Also since the place and the moment of the transgression are not clear: there is a certain inevitability for transgressing the law that forbids him to turn. It is necessary to repeat the transgression of the law, "for he already violated it with his first steps toward the shades."[23] For, as Guthrie established, Eurydice is a late addition to the Orpheus myth: in the most ancient sources, Orpheus is at home in the underworld; later on, Eurydice enters the story and, significantly, Orpheus succeeds in rescuing her (as in Peri and Rinuccini's *Euridice*). The injunction not to look back, Guthrie suggests, signals "an element of tabu" which nevertheless only becomes prominent in Alexandrian versions, and more famously in Virgil's and Ovid's tellings—the earliest sources for Striggio's libretto.[24]

Further, if for Kerman *L'Orfeo* is an allegory of the work of the (male) composer struggling to control himself and his (passive/resistant/feminine) material, we can imagine another interpretive turn and see this struggle in its historicity, in fact as an allegory of historical work as such. Beyond the autonomous realm of the aesthetic, *L'Orfeo* takes place on a world stage, or a stage between worlds, in a liminal space

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[22] Robert Romanyshyn, "'Anyway, Why Did It Have to Be the Death of the Poet?': The Orphic Roots of Jung's Psychology." *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture*, no. 71: Orpheus (2004): 67ff. This interpretation is echoed by Klaus Theweleit and further by Slavoj Žižek, "The Ridiculous Excess of Mercy," *Lacanian Ink*, no. 41/42 (Spring 2013), www.lacan.com.

[23] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 1982 References to modern readings of the myth can be endlessly multiplied; they will appear below as needed.

[24] William K. C Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orph. Movement.* (London: Methuen, 1952), 31; On Striggio's sources, see F. W. Sternfeld, "The Orpheus Myth and the Libretto of Orfeo," in *Claudio Monteverdi, Orfeo*, ed. John Whenham (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

between the underworld and the mortal world, or similarliy in the private, narrow scene of the Gonzaga palace and the public stage which it never reached.[25] Thus, *L'Orfeo* stages the demand that humanism placed in opera, that of fulfilling a historical, political, and artistic task by looking back, by seeking to save the ancient past from forgetfulness and setting it to work in the present—an ancient past which stands in for modernity's fantasy of a lost origin.[26] Seeking to revive in opera the fabled effects of a now silent ancient music (but for what ends?), the humanists wished to have been born under the sign of Janus—capable of seeing equally towards the past and the future—yet their fate was to repeat Orpheus' destiny, to keep turning back, to keep losing what they sought to retrieve, to reinscribe it as trope in its iteration.

In so doing, the humanists programed opera with a certain historicity characterized by a mimetic structure which is embodied by Orpheus' turn: opera has no origin, it was not born—in Florence or Mantua or Venice—but it was always a return, a turning gaze seeking a model, the paradoxical creation of the new through a turn towards the already lost past.[27] A turn that was supposed to authorize it, to endow it with a lineage that would support and guarantee its value—by providing an interpretive scheme, a methodology, a repository of meaning, and authority: an "origin" for what was otherwise

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[25] On the private/public aspect of the Theatrum mundi metaphor in L'Orfeo, see Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 21. The difference between the private and the public, Calcagno argues, is more of degree than in kind, and also determines various aspects of the opera, most significantly the need for two different endings. p. 22; I return to this interpretation below.)

[26] Among the well-known figures involved in this enterprise, Jacopo Peri seems to have had an awareness of the problematic task they faced, as he noted, in his foreword to the 1601 edition of *Euridice*, that even if he was inspired by the theories of the *Camerata*, his attempt at reviving the power of ancient music was not an attempt to recreate "the manner of singing used in the fables of the Greeks and the Romans," but rather a kind of singing that could be adapted to modern Italian.Translation in Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 375.

[27] The question of "when" and "where" is of crucial importance, as Lorenzo Bianconi shows, for the historiography of opera. There are only two alternatives, Bianconi writes suggests that either opera began in Florence in 1600, or in Venice in 1637; either opera is a courtly event, produced by humanist intellectuals, aimed at demonstrating the magnificence of the sovereign for a private audience that embellish a particular festive event, or it is a massive spectacular public performance, repeatable and ephemeral, and aimed at producing amazement in the bourgeoisie by through distraction and exaltation of civil life. In Florence, opera turned to the Greeks, in Venice it turned away from them and towards the public; the Metastasian reform would be yet another attempt at turning back, and so on. Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*.

an "original," unprecedented creation—a similar economic strategy as the one that organized the dispute between Artusi and *Signor &c*. This, to recall the terms of the previous chapter and to situate it in its Renaissance terms, is the function and mechanism of *imitatio*. Within a patriarchal structure, it allows for artists to inscribe themselves as descendants and beneficiaries of a composer-model, or in this case, of a myth that acts as a repository of meaning and authority.[28] To make a copy, in the context of Renaissance *imitatio*, is to accrue from the value of the original that is thus produced. Thus, we can still ask, who or what turns or responds in this turn and its repetitions? What are the consequences of this originary event of modern aesthetics, especially when staged as a turn, or a re-turn?

For this return undoes opera's originality, it reinscribes as permanent what it sought as novelty, and at the same time defines the "new" of modernity as a turn that necessarily loses its object. Similarly, the trope of Orpheus's turn stages this logic: the turn is at once *origin* and *repetition*, the origin of a repetition of the past, a turn towards the past and a return of the past. The movement we examine here is a turn towards the past that simultaneously creates and loses the ghost it seeks—either by recognizing it as a ghost and fleeing from it, or by failing to see it as a ghost and grasping an empty void. In a psychoanalytical language, both seem to be fatal misrecognitions and the unconscious acting out of a drive to autonomy that defines the modern; Orpheus, we'd have to say, "intentionally" loses Eurydice in an attempt to be thoroughly autonomous—him and his lyre. This spectral structure is suggested by Klaus Theweleit's reading of Act 5 of *L'Orfeo* as an anticipation of recording technology, whereby Orpheus himself "creates this recording medium [in his "conversation" with Echo] and he creates it out of his dead lover, Eurydice," which Žižek further reads as a Orpheus's perverse act, willingly turning towards her in order to lose her and reach sublimation as an artist.[29]

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[28] Recall also Erasmus' allegory of Juno's birth, born fully grown out of the head of Jupiter, which we likened above to the seemingly sudden appearance of *L'Orfeo*.

[29] Theweleit, "Monteverdi's L'Orfeo," 169; Žižek, "The Ridiculous Excess of Mercy." I return to Žižek's reading at the end of chapter 8.

CHAPTER 5

PERFORMANCE AND ALLEGORY AT THE TURN OF MODERNITY

If *L'Orfeo* could be said to stand in for the birth of opera and modern music, this does not mean it appeared out of nowhere. The musical experimentations of Peri, Caccini, and Monteverdi are not unprecedented or inaugural events but rather, as we know through the work of Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, the result of adaptations and modifications of earlier poetic, musical, and theatrical court practices and rituals.[1] They constitute a reorientation, an inflection that could be located as an attempt to stop the blind, disorderly drift of courtly spectacle, to turn it towards the past so that it could advance towards the future.

The dimensions of the Orpheus myth as original, as repository of particular meaning and value, can be measured by the centuries-long quarrel between courts to secure the "rights" over the actualization of the myth, a dispute that was part of a political strategy of alliances based on festivals and dynastic weddings in a complex economy of exchange and expenditure.[2] The turn occurs in the midst of an already densely structured field where, as Mauro Calcagno and James Saslow argue, the nobility patronized artists and organized spectacles—including operas—in which mythology was used to relate the "stage of the world" to "the world on stage."[3] That myth and spectacle operated together in articulating these two stages is evidence enough to hold that the distinctions between the aesthetic, the political, and the mythological were not given. Rather, their

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[1] *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982)*. The point is remarked by Bianconi, who speaks of the "sheer enormity" of the operatic "invention" while emphasizing that its emergence is "deeply rooted in historical and social events: conditioned as it is by the various prevailing economic and political situations, opera has been and continues to be exploited as not an insignificant tool of ideological persuasion and mobilization, a public demonstration of sovereign power, a means of collective entertainment, a vehicle for the community celebration of civic events." Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, 161.

[2] Mauro Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*; Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*; Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Sara Mamone and Francesco Venturi, *Firenze e Parigi: due capitali dello spettacolo per una regina, Maria de' Medici* (Cinisello Balsamo (Milano): Silvana, 1988); Sara Mamone, *Dèi, semidei, uomini: lo spettacolo a Firenze tra neoplatonismo e realtà borghese (XV-XVII secolo)* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2003).

[3] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 17.

coarticulation suggests that such distinctions are produced through a widely distributed network of mimetic practices. Thus, as Calcagno argues "the Mantuan artworks based on the story of Orpheus were a public act blending mythology and art in order to symbolize the rank of the sponsoring dynasty through self-representation."[4]

And we should not, within this struggle for symbolic authority, lose sight of the agonistic relation between Florence and Mantua (as well as the Este in Ferrara): it is no mere coincidence the Gonzaga chose the same myth as the Medici for their courtly celebrations.[5] From Ficino's self-identification with Orpheus, through Poliziano's presence at Lorenzo de' Medici's court and further Agnolo Bronzino's portrait of Cosimo de Medici as Orpheus (c. 1537-1539; Philadelphia Museum of Art), ending with the Rinuccini-Caccini-Peri collaboration in *Euridice* for the 1600 Florentine *intermezzi*, the Medici could have been taken as the rightful inheritors of Orpheus's powers and divine lineage. The Gonzaga, for their part, boasted Mantegna's 1474 frescoes in the *Camera degli Sposi* which features four different depictions of *Orfeo*, as well as the portrait of Poliziano, which "may have reminded the Mantuans that his *Orfeo* was produced in Mantua in for the first time upon the return of Cardinal Francesco in 1472."[6] In addition, various references are made to the myth in the Loggia of the Muses at the Gonzaga Palazzo del Tè located at the entrance of Mantua. Built in the 1520s, the Loggia was decorated by Giulio Romano with two episodes from Virgil's telling of the Orpheus myth; the motive returns elsewhere in the Loggia in an iconographic ensemble of an *Allegory of the Mantuan Arts*, and again in a smaller chamber dedicated to Ovid, which displays Orpheus and Eurydice before Pluto and Proserpina.[7]

In the case of *Orfeo*, Calcagno notes, the competition determines all the aspects of the work, making the score less a prescriptive text than a performative function, aimed

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[4] Ibid., 23.

[5] On the practices of sovereign representation in Florence during this period, see Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for La Pellegrina* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).; Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*; and Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*. On Mantua, see Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627"; and Iain Fenlon, *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[6] Schrade, *Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music*, 225.

[7] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 23.

to symbolize the rank and function of the patrons.[8] In fact, it is precisely the agonistic

mix between competition and collaboration that defines *aemulatio*, where *imitatio* is not

only aimed at accruing value but at outdoing the adversary's—or the model's—earlier

accomplishments. *Aemulatio* transforms the economimetic structure of *imitatio* into a

zero-sum game, where the inexhaustible value of the original is transferred over to the

copy, which then becomes a new original under the monopoly of the *aemulans*.

The first part of this chapter examines the strategies involved in this agonistic stage and

elaborates on the important suggestion by Calcagno and Saslow, that there is a relation

between performance, myth, and sovereignty. In order to elucidate this relation, I bring

Calcagno's discussion of performance closer to the theoretical framework of this

dissertation through an examination of Judith Butler's theory of performativity. If

Calcagno's suggestion is to question the difference between text and performance such

that performances can be incorporated into the musicological archive, I show how

treating a performance as text also implies that performance is open to the type of play

and undecidability that characterizes all texts, and which I call the *in-completion of*

performance. The result of this will be a notion of performance that can productively

expand Calcagno's analysis in order to relocate or reinscribe performance less as a locus

of historicist hermeneutical meaning, and more as an always already open site of

contestation whereby history becomes interpretation.

      Here, I return to a claim advanced in chapter 4, that Monteverdi's "second

practice" is a question of patriarchal filiation, which employs and transforms available

notions of mimesis—of a particular Platonic heritage—to redistribute the relation

between music and the social world. The dispute transformed the humanist understanding

of the relation between music and *ethos*, producing an "aesthetic" sphere in which words

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[8] Ibid., 26 Calcagno borrows the expression "conspicuous consumption" from Peter Burke's influential essay. I return to Burke's essay in chapter 6, but here it may be noted that "consumption" still implies something closer to capitalist accumulation. "Expenditure," in Bataille's sense (to whom Burke refers in passing), could also be useful. In this dissertation it can be more easily understood as an economimetic production of paradigms. Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

and music are linked by separating them as models and copies, whose relation is verified by their effects upon an affective (and affected) listener.[9] This sphere has a certain autonomy, in that words understood as models are severed from their semantic functions outside of the affective closed loop joining words to music and listener. Yet, as we saw, this autonomy masks the political function of inscribing the laws of the community upon the social body by means of (i) a performative assemblage of music, words, stage machinery and props, dances, buildings—which incorporates the gods into courtly life through *intermezzi*, banquets, poems, and so on—and (ii) an economic reorganization and reappropriation of mythical repositories of symbolic value (the passage from *imitatio* to *aemulatio*). This makes Renaissance self-fashioning (*sensu* Greenblatt) into a spectacular Baroque self-performance of sovereignty on stage, which will remain dominant until the French Revolution.[10]

The second part consists of a reading of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's opera-film *Monteverdi: Orfeo*, with the Monteverdi-Ensemble des Opernhauses Zürich, conducted by Nicolaus Harnoncourt and released in 1978 by Unitel Films, Munich.[11] In this "epoch-making production," the singers playing Apollo and Orfeo double as Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga and Prince Francesco. The production stages the mediation between the world and the myth through an analogy that relates Apollo and Vincenzo as the father, and Orfeo and Francesco as the son, thus establishing a divine lineage for the Gonzaga dynasty that can be taken to legitimize the sovereignty of the Mantuan rulers in a time of social, economical, and political upheaval.[12] The identification is suggested not only by the doubled role of Duke Vincenzo/Apollo, but effected through a series of allegorical

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[9] The scare quotes around "aesthetic" should warn the reader against understanding such a sphere simply in the modern sense of artistic autonomy.

[10] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); see also *Maravall, Culture of the Baroque.*

[11] See Nigel Fortune, "The Rediscovery of Orfeo," in *Claudio Monteverdi, Orfeo*, ed. John Wenham (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); On the opera-films of Ponelle, see Marcia J. Citron, "Subjectivity in the Opera-Films of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle," in *When Opera Meets Film*, Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 97–135.

[12] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 24. Here, I write "Orpheus" and "Eurydice" (and so on) when discussing the mythical characters, and "Orfeo" and "Euridice" when referring to Monteverdi and Striggio's characters. On the end of the Renaissance as a period of change, see Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*; and Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

devices, which I analyze through a reading of Walter Benjamin's notion of allegory in his 1923 *Origin of German Tragic Drama*. From this reading I advance a way to relate performance and allegory through the notions of spectacle and affect, which illuminate the specifically modern form of performance that appears with early opera.

PERFORMANCE AND THE IN-COMPLETION OF OPERA

The Ponnelle production of *L'Orfeo* is an early example of an approach to Early Modern courtly productions which considers them less as artistic works having purely aesthetic or dramatic motivations, and more as means for social groups to represent and affirm themselves as within symbolic networks.[13] According to this approach, early operas, in the patronage system of Early Modern Italy, symbolized nobility's social rank by means of events that can be critically understood as performances (both the musical performances and their printed paratexts), as Calcagno argues after Claudio Annibaldi and Richard Schechner. Such performances, Calcagno states, "were aimed at displaying the innate moral superiority of nobility, a superiority signified by elevated musical style and sheer magnificence in the productions, and that justified nobility's social and political power."[14] This moral superiority is linked to the values of the north Italian nobility that were conveyed through operatic plots, especially those that focused on the patriarchal lineage of Apollo and Orpheus, making opera "a true princely spectacle." *L'Orfeo* is not only, or not so much, an example of courtly entertainment but rather, as Calcagno argues, a type of ritual (performed during Carnival, in a specific place, and for a specific audience, with a specific function). Considered within a neoplatonic interpretation of the myth, where Orpheus attains wisdom by losing Euridice, the performance of the opera within the agonistic courtly context of Florence and Mantua can be seen as "a rite of passage," where allegorical interpretation would have suggested the identification between the Prince and Orfeo, and thus symbolizing a transformation in the Prince himself,

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[13] Another productive approach to opera as social performance is offered in Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); I consider Feldman's work in chapter 6.
[14] Ibid., 16.

> In the case of Orfeo, symbolic value was conveyed through the enactment of the "rite of passage" undergone by the protagonist of the opera, in a mise-en-scène of Prince Francesco's process of increased self-knowledge, showing the acquisition of virtues considered natural to nobility. The elite academic members present at the premiere mirrored themselves in this process. The score, as the material reiteration of the values embodied in performance, transferred this process into the public domain.[15]

This approach to *L'Orfeo* casts the work in an entirely new light, and allows us to ask crucial questions about the way music, as a performative assemblage, is involved in the production of paradigms, or in this case, a certain type of value. Calcagno suggests that the inherent value of the nobility is first displayed in the performances, and then conveyed as symbolic value through the scores and other paratexts. One could ask, however, whether displaying and symbolizing nobility are political acts with real effectivity—especially in the turbulent political world of the late sixteenth century—or, in other words, whether symbolic value exists and is effective in a political, and not aesthetic, sphere. One way to understand their effectivity is to question their status as symbols, limited to communicating and transmitting (without altering) the values of the nobility. However, as we have seen, there is no such transparent transmission: a repetition is always an alteration. Thus, if it has been established that the performances are not simply an entertainment but are entwined with issues of political representation and sovereignty, questioning the mimetic structure of these productions, emphasizing their productive aspect as performative assemblages, might put them in a new perspective. As in other forms of mimetic production examined here, we can suggest that what appears as a symbol for the value of the nobility is already the production of such value

We can already see how this happens in Calcagno's analysis. 'Value,' in these two passages, is first synonymous with 'virtue,' namely the "innate moral superiority" of the nobility that needs to be displayed and signified. And yet, these ethical valences are also conveyed, embodied, and transferred through these significations. That is, 'value'

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[15] Ibid., 19.

here also has an economic mode of circulation, one that includes the mirroring of the elite academic members in the performance. Thus the innate, we might say original, moral value—the inherent goodness—of the nobility passes into its cultural products by being signified through the production's elevation and magnificence, through conspicuous consumption. It is as if the passage of virtue into an economic mode of existence had itself been motivated by the historical circumstances of northern Italy, specifically the way the Medici used their power and influence as bankers to gain political control of territories and to rise above other aristocratic families, such as the Gonzaga.

In fact, the Medici first developed the strategy of "performing nobility" during Cosimo I's rule, but especially during Ferdinando's time, that is, after 1588. Ferdinando, known for his frugality and financial efficiency, largely expanded on the resources, technologies, and creative forces within the principate, and made it his central purpose to present the Medici to the world "as commanding actors on the international stage."[16] This was especially necessary given the difficulty of legitimizing Medici rule according to political theories of sovereignty. In late cinquecento Florence, sovereignty was defended more on terms of ancient lineage than on monarchical titles of honor.[17] Giovanni Battista Strozzi, commissioned in 1603 to write an encomium of the Medici family to be distributed around Europe, faced the problem of accounting for the family's origins in "strictly" historical terms. As Samuel Berner shows, his solution was to insist on Florence as the greatest imitation of Rome, and the role of the Medici family in maintaining its magnificence—a device which allowed him to gloss over the uncertainty of the family's origins as well as their exile during the Republican period.[18] The official descriptions of the 1589 *intermedi*, written by Bastiano de' Rossi, relied on the same device:

> Leaving aside the machines and the other Roman splendors, and the spectacle
> which—with many animals from all over the world—Pompeo launched in Rome

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[16] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 10; Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 14.
[17] Berner, "Florentine Political Thought in the Late Cinquecento," 170.
[18] Idem., 171.

(by the way, they say that more than five hunderd lions were killed); and from these distinguishing what was public, since the private were other things, and getting to our argument, we can say that: among the European provinces, that of Tuscany (and particularly the city of Florence) has always forcefully and publicly tried to imitate the aforementioned venerable antiquities, in terms of theatre buildings and amphitheaters that were built there.[19]

Rossi goes on to describe the buildings and spectacles created by Cosimo il vecchio (1389-1464), supreme model of *magnificenza* and *virtù* and moves through all generations, in which each patriarch imitated and surpassed their accomplishments, up to Cosimo I de' Medici, "il primo Granduca di Toscana, notabile esemplo, nell'età nostra, di tal virtù," and his sons Francesco and Ferdinando, each more "enamoured" (*innamorato*) and "infatuated" (*invaghito*) with the patriarch's *virtù*. Ferdinando's wedding *feste*, then, was his attempt to show, with his works, how much he loved such *virtù* ("E volendo pur tuttavia con l'opere mostrare, quanto e' sia amator di questa virtù…").[20]

By 1600, Duke Vincenzo had entered the competition and could only do so in their terms, replacing his costly military endeavors with—even more costly—displays of *magnificenza*.[21] By engaging in the practices of *aemulatio* with the new kind of ruling class of Florentine bankers, the values of the Gonzagas became similar to those of the Medici. We would have to say, then, that in the context of northern Italy's Early Modern opera, symbolic value depends on display and circulation and not accumulation. This explains why the innate moral superiority of the nobility needs to pass into its cultural

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[19] "Ma lasciando da parte le macchine, e l'altre romane magnificenze, e lo spettacolo, che con tanto numero di fere, condotte da diverse parti del mondo, fecce rappresentare in Roma Pompeo, che fra l'altre dicono, che vi furono uccisi più di cinquecento Lioni; e da queste faccendo ragione, quali fossero le pubbliche, poichè le privati erna tali, e venendo al nostro proponimento; diremo che, tra l'altre provincie dell'Europa, quella della Toscana, e in quella particolarmente la città di Firenze, come per le reliquie de' teatri, e anfiteatri, che fabbricati furono in essa, tuttavia possiamo vedere, ha sempre cosi in pubblico, come in privato, con tute le forze sue, cercato d'imitare le dette venerabili antichità." Bastiano de'Rossi, *Descrizione dellapparato e degl' intermedi. Fatti per la commedia rappresentata in Firenze. Nelle nozze de' serenissimi Don Ferdinando Medici, e Madama Cristina de Loreno, gran duchi di Toscana.* (Firenze: A. Padouani, 1589); transcribed in Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 178.

[20] Coining the title of Great Duke for Cosimo I, in 1569, was itself a transformation of sovereignty towards a more monarchical theory of sovereignty, closer to that of divine right. Berner, "Florentine Political Thought in the Late Cinquecento," 186.

[21] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627."

productions, why it needs to be performed. By the end of the Renaissance, moral value has no value if it does not circulate, if it does not behave like economical value. The nobility discovers that its decreasing value cannot be accumulated like capital: it needs to put its value in circulation through the cultural products from which the members of the Academies that produced them can benefit by mirroring themselves in them.[22]

Readings of these early modern performances as offered by Calcagno and Saslow force us to question the modes of circulation and representation of this double value (moral and economical). They suggest also, if we push the logic further, that performances *produce* the values that they put in circulation. It is not so much that the inherent moral value of the nobility is signified by the performances, as if they were signifiers of an essential core. Rather, as mimetic performances, they partake of the production of values that characterize the nobility, especially as the moral values of the nobility turn into the economical values of the rising bourgeoisie.

The economimetic structure of the production of values through performance can be seen more clearly by turning to Judith Butler's theory of performativity as presented in her influential "Imitation and Gender Insubordination."[23] For Butler, there is no essential, interior identity to be put on display, for example by calling oneself "gay" or "lesbian," (or, as in this case, "noble") that is externalized by "coming out of the closet" or by producing cultural products to signify such an identity. Rather, being "out" is only a deferral that depends on being "in," that produces the closet as a promise of disclosure that, says Butler, by definition can never come. This deferral, the non-presence of identity as essence, is "a site for the production of values."[24]

The values that are produced from this deferral include "male," "female," "gay" and so on, which are the result of play and repetition: Not the repetition of the "being" of

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[22] As David Graeber shows, there is still much do do in anthropological theory to show how is it that economy and morals share the term "value," and how to understand the difference, or rather the identity, between the two. My modest claim is that mimesis, which strictly belongs to none of this spheres, is in charge of relating them one another. David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[23] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 13–32.

[24] Ibid., 16.

these values (i.e. not the symbolic presentation of the noble in its productions) but rather the repetition in which a subject plays a being lesbian or noble. Repetition without a model, which constitutes "the way in which that 'being' gets established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed."[25]

More precisely, and to turn to Butler's inversion of the notions of gender and performance, which employs just the Derridean logic this dissertation elaborates upon, gender is paradigmatically mimetic, it is a kind of imitation that has no original but that, in fact "produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself."[26] The imitation, Butler argues, is a performance—a kind of drag—that produces the "reality" of heterosexual identity by setting itself up "as the origin and the ground of all imitations."[27] Thus, what is politically subversive in the Derridean inversion of mimesis is that is shows how, whereas heterosexuality aims to performatively constitute itself as an original, as a normative and natural mode of being, "the parodic or imitative effect of gay identities works neither to copy nor to emulate heterosexuality, but rather, to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized idealization."[28]

In our context this inversion illuminates the strange identification of economical and moral value that circulates as Early Modern nobility. With the rise the bourgeoisie, it is not enough be a noble to maintain one's place and political control. As Machiavelli had made explicit, even in times of peace the main concern of the ruler should be maintaining his power, as much through force as through cunning, specifically by carefully controlling the way the Prince appears to others, his *virtù*: "[f]or everyone is capable of seeing you, but few can touch you. Everyone can see what you appear to be, whereas few have direct experience of what you really are; and those few will not dare to challenge the popular view, sustained as it is by the majesty of the ruler's position."[29] Under this

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[25] Ibid., 17.
[26] Ibid., 19, emphasis in the original.
[27] Ibid. emphasis in the original.
[28] Ibid., 18.
[29] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: The Prince*. Edited by Quentin Skinner. Translated by Russell Price. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63. My reading of Machiavelli, developed further in chapter 6 is influenced by Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us* (London; New York: Verso,

mimetic regime of political spectacularity, where the centaur-like Prince is made by imitating previous rulers, mythical heroes, and even beasts, the act of ruling is a warlike performance.[30] Every affect and affection has to be measured and balanced towards creating the prince as an image of power to which others will submit. And although Machiavelli only mentions feasts and spectacles in passing as a means to gain reputation, and whereas the Medici did not quite receive his advice—quite the opposite, during his lifetime—we cannot doubt that he was a sharp analyst of his own culture—what Burke would call an "insider." The *virtù* of the Prince that constitutes his power as Prince depends on the same value that makes him part of the nobility, and follows its logic. This value needs to be put in display and circulation, through extensive and lavish performances, since, strictly speaking, such values do not exist until they are constituted through the performances that presume to represent them. The performance and the self-representation of nobility is precisely the production of nobility as value. And this value, as in Butler's account, is first of all a heterosexual, patriarchal value, more precisely, of the ideal of innate value as the result of inherited transmission, and of the sovereign as divine descendant: hence the importance of employing the myths of Apollo and Orpheus as the models for their performances. In other words, Early Modern performance

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1999). For a reading of Machiavelli in relation to Monteverdi's operas, see John Bokina. "Deity, Beast, and Tyrant: Images of the Prince in the Operas of Monteverdi." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 12, no. 1 (1991): 48–66 and Wendy Heller, "Tacitus Incognito: Opera as History in 'L'incoronazione Di Poppea.'" *JAMS* 52, no. 1 (1999): 39–96.

[30] "Since a ruler, then, must know how to act like a beast, he should imitate both the fox and the lion, for the lion is liable to be trapped, whereas the fox cannot ward off wolves. One needs, then, to be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten away wolves. Those who rely merely upon a lion's strength do not understand matters...and those best able to imitate the fox have succeeded best. But foxiness should be well concealed: one must be a great feigner and dissembler" *Idem.,* 61. This is a political mimetology—a zooanthropomimetopolitics: the sovereign must imitate (and hence is, or becomes) the beast. What he imitates in the fox, moreover is cunning: the ability to pretend, the power of simulacrum, is taken from his imitation of the fox: "[t]he prince must be a fox not only in order to be cunning like the fox, but in order to pretend to be what he is not and not be what he is." Derrida, Jacques. *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Vol. 1. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 91. This zooanthropomimetopolitcs would have a long, if surprising life. Berner describes a funerary oration for Cosimo I (d. 1574) written by Bernardo Davanzati, where a central conceit is that, since "one must try to imitate nature as much as possible, [then] the acquisition of the Principato is more perfect when it comes about most naturally," namely, as it happens in the animal kingdom, where the strongest becomes the ruler. Berner, "Florentine Political Thought in the Late Cinquecento," 185.

inscribes a certain *ethos*, a type of nobility that, as we have already seen in Part II and as I shal show below, is organized around the heterosexual and patriarchal accumulation of power.

In a period of economic, social, and religious upheaval, the panicked Italian nobility could not but incessantly repeat the naturalized idealization of patriarchal heterosexuality in and through spectacular performances, through all the events that made up celebrations such as weddings and coronations and which formed the stage for the transition from *intermedi* to opera. In the Medici celebrations of 1589, the allegorical *intermedi*, where the symbolic elements where presented, were repeated five times throughout the month. All other events occurred just once, including the plays for which the *intermedi* were intermissions. It is as if the allegories needed repetition to be effective, as if they were constituted through repetition.[31] As we know from a letter by Prince Francesco to his brother Ferdinando on March 1, 1607, Duke Vincenzo, "not content to have been present at [the February 24 *L'Orfeo*] performance, or to have heard it many times in rehearsal, has ordered it to be given again."[32] This means that the production of values through performance is not accomplished by a single event, but depends on repetition. This brings us to the question of the relation between the performance and the text since, if the value of the nobility does not exist before its performances, if the performance is not just a symbol of the nobility but constitutes it as such, and if performance depends on circulation, then we need to analyze how they

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[31] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*; Gino Stefani, *Musica barocca* (Milano: Bompiani, 1974). Treadwell, however, writes that, since the Medici were concerned mostly with impressing non-Florentine powers, the *intermedi* should be conceived not as "ritualized behaviors of court culture whereby subjects were inculcated through patterns of iteration. On the contrary, spectacles of this magnitude were only mounted on an ocasional basis, and attempted to be 'one of a kind.'…[thus] for most spectators-auditors, witnessing the *Pellegrina intermedi* would have constituted a rare, possibly 'once in a lifetime' experience. Like travel narratives that recounted experiences in distant or 'exotic' lands, unofficial accounts of the *Pellegrina intermedi* emphasize the 'truth value' of direct experience."Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 25. As I noted, this seems to be contradicted by the fact that the same *intermedi* were used for different comedies. In fact, as many commentators—then and now—have noted, it is as if the comedies served as an excuse for the *intermedi*. Everything rides on the opposition between ritual as iteration and performance as event, which Treadwell exploits to emphasize *meraviglia* and *magnificenza* as the primary persuasive means in the *intermedi* while undermining the intended meaning of the allegories.
[32] Translation in Fenlon, Iain. "Monteverdi's Mantuan 'Orfeo': Some New Documentation." *Early Music* 12, no. 2 (1984): 163–72. Fenlon also speculates a third performance was scheduled. See also Fabbri, Paolo. *Monteverdi*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 286 n. 98 for possible records of other performances in the seventeenth century

circulate beyond the repetitions of the performances—in other words, performance and circulation are modes of repetition.

A central concern for Calcagno is understanding why, and by what means, "the compound of words, music, and gesture characterizing Monteverdi's madrigals and operas" is effective, both in their historical context, and for audiences today.[33] Posed in the terms of this dissertation, the problem is to understand performative assemblages as having effectivity—and not merely symbolic or representative meaning—by emphasizing mimesis as a production of values, in this case the value of the nobility. In the case of *L'Orfeo*, Calcagno makes the important point that it was not only the 1607 event of the performance in the Mantuan Ducal Palace which had such a performative function, but that the two versions of the score need to be analyzed as also partaking of this effectivity. These scores—as most early modern documents of the sort—invert what is now the normal relation between a text and a performance, where the score contains the instructions for the performance and thus holds a status of original, an original which would sometimes be equated with the work as such, as we know from the critique of the "work concept." The scores of *L'Orfeo* we possess today were produced after the performance and not before, and thus they invite for different modes of analysis. Yet, as is always the case with mimetological relations, it is not enough to simply invert these relations. In a suggestive move, Calcagno insists taking the scores not so much as records of the performance—that is, as secondary copies of a unique original—but as objects which are themselves involved in performance and possess a different function and meaning (making *Orfeo* go from the private, "angusta scena" to the public, "theatre of the universe"), such that it is unproductive to examine them in search of traces of previous performances.[34] Thus, Calcagno argues for reconsidering the difference between text and performance, insisting that these scores, too, need to be considered as performances, in the sense that Barthes considers texts to be a dynamic site where the play of signifiers

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[33] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 1.
[34] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 19.

consists of play, production, and practice.[35] "Libretto and score are devised in fact not only to be completed, in the traditional sense, by reading, staging, and musical performance, but also are meant to prolong and enact the effectiveness of the symbolic values conveyed through the premiere."[36]

Seeking to blur the difference between text and performance brings up a traditional mimetological problem of distinguishing between the performance as an event and its material inscriptions (i.e., scores, sketches) as permanent objects. Opera, Calcagno holds, is a two-stage art where "converging symbolic actions originating from both artists and patrons conveyed meanings residing at the intersection of text and performance,"

> [B]oth a drive to compete and a need to symbolize rank and power led to permanent products such as commemorative descriptions, printed libretti, and scores—all products that in turn facilitated the elevation of these works to the status of *exempla*. In being both permanent and ephemeral, both texts and performances, early operas such as *Orfeo* displayed a double mode of existence— a feature that, since then, has marked, at various times and in different degrees, the history of the genre.[37]

Thus, descriptions of the performances, libretti, and scores make the works into *exempla* or paradigms. For Calcagno, these are both permanent and ephemeral. Thus, the materializations are also performances: the permanent product is also an event. The importance of this identification is crucial for understanding the case of *Orfeo*, whose original performance and score are not contemporaneous—and where, unlike most of the cases, the operatic event precedes its inscriptions. We must then affirm the claim that the text is a performance, i.e. a repetition with no precedent, a copy whose model is produced through its iterations. Simultaneously, the performance is a text: it is no less ephemeral than the paper in which the score is supposed to be preserved. In this sense, what ensures the permanence of the values that the performance conveys is not so much the medium that preserves it but, again—and true to the economimetic mode of being of value—

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[35] Ibid., 27.
[36] Ibid. 19.
[37] Ibid., 20.

through repetition. That is, we cannot assume that the difference between ephemerality and permanence depends simply on its preservation in paper. As argued in chapter 2—after Derrida—inscription should not be understood in the restricted sense of alphabetic (or musical) writing, especially in the case of the widely distributed performative assemblages under discussion here, where all the elements, from backdrops to bodies, even the "reputation" of the Prince, constitute inscriptions. The type of value that is produced and circulated through them is never wholly present in nor exhausted by individual scores. This point is crucial for the model presented by Calcagno, where libretto, score, and performances are involved in a dynamic relation where all "emerge as *producing,* and not simply embodying, the work, which consists more than the sum of its textual parts."[38] Calcagno conceives of the relation between scores and performances, after Joseph Grigely, in a schematization in which all versions of the libretto, the score, and the performance are displayed in a linear sequence which adds them chronologically, and whose total summation produces the work as "an abstract, ideal, ever-absent entity, what is verbally referred to, in the case at hand, as "Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, encompassing, but also exceeding, both *Orfeo del monteverde* and MONTEVERDI: ORFEO [Ponelle's film-opera]."[39]

The model operates through a linear accumulation of events/texts, which add up to an ideal construction, an ever-absent work. In this sense, all of the elements are of equal "epistemological relevance regardless of their chronological position," so that the first performance, or the first printing of the score, does not have any preeminence over other manifestations. In other words, there is no original event to speak of and, more importantly, since text is considered in the Barthesian sense of a site of play and openness, "the work that is opera is never fully realized, since its textual versions indefinitely defer completion."[40]

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[38] Ibid, 28.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

The openness of texts, however, is as much a productive field as it is a site of obscurity, (as critics of "poststructuralism" have been always been to point out), but especially a threat to the stability of any intended meaning. In the case of *L'Orfeo*, for example, the 1609 score constitutes a "public" supplement to the "private" event, which in its supplementarity exposes the incompleteness of the event as a performance capable of fulfilling the task of symbolizing values that it is required to. With Butler, we would say that by "coming out" in public, *Orfeo* can only produce a new opacity; and the private closet produces the promise of a disclosure that can, by definition, never arrive. If this is so, then the score in fact annuls the symbolizing work of the event that motivated it—it betrays it as it aims to magnify it. In the case of poststructuralist philosophy, this openness has always been understood as a site of praxis, as a way of conceiving reading and writing as a form of political resistance against totalitarian cooptation or, in the case of Butler, as a site of denunciation of oppressive models and of playful appropriation of these same strategies for the possibility of appropriating different constructions of the self. When incorporated into historiographical work—as Hayden White shows—it works towards showing that narrativity and figurality are not simply accessory for historiography but in fact determine what appears as historical, and how it appears. In this sense, however, is at odds with positivist historicism's attempt to determine, as thoroughly as possible, the conditions, practices, and meanings of works for each specific period. The question, then, is how to conceive of history and historiography in a way that textuality and play continue to be politically effective, without foreclosing the means to understand what values and by which means the performance was supposed to achieve its symbolic work. In other words, the question is how the symbolic effectivity we see in these performances today can be established, and how we can understand the relation between texts and performances while questioning these distinctions.

Calcagno's solution is to treat both texts and performances as having equal value among them, by positing the ideal work as the product of all their different manifestations. There is, however, a problematic tension between this affirmation of openness and deferral—which is deconstructive at heart—and the ever-absent ideal entity that the various manifestations add up to. Not only does the ideal work—however

absent—seem to return to notions of the "work concept" whose critique was crucial for opening the way for analysis of performance in the first place, but it also seems to gain a preeminence over the particular events, as if they had to be added up in order to arrive to the whole.[41]

In order to preserve their particularity, one would have to recur to historical circumstances, which for Calcagno means that relationship between the work and the performance is mediated by context. This introduces the problem of having to specify what is particular in each element, which presupposes that one can distinguish between the musical content and the extramusical context on the one hand, and that the context for each of the elements can fully be determined, on the other.[42] Yet ignoring such mediation, on the other hand leads either to reaffirming the "work concept" position, or else produces what Amy Cimini and Jairo Moreno call "dematerialization" of the modes of production of musical value when performance is taken as a pure event, separate from other forms of inscription.[43] By positing the ideal work as the sum of all the performances, then, we seem to be stuck between the Scylla of a total work with a purely ideal existence, and the Charybdis of multiple events that are disconnected from each other. Finally, it must be remembered that what is at stake is establishing if and how performances and texts participate in the construction of nobility through the mimetic production of values. In other words, what circulates among the various texts is not

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[41] Unless, that is, we consider the Work from a nominalist perspective as simply the name that is used to refer to elements that otherwise have nothing essential in common, as Calcagno could also be seen as suggesting, in relation to the distinction between autographic and allographic, as developed by Nelson Goodman and adopted into narratology by Gérard Genette, which Calcagno refers to, which could be criticized from the perspective of this dissertation, especially through the notion of iteration as elaborated below, since, in the allographic regime, the same "permanence" that allows us to speak of the "same" work is what would allow us to relate different autographic events. Goodman's analyses, on the other hand, are fruitful in showing the impossibility of developing rigorous analytical criteria to ascertain that something is a copy of something else. See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968).

[42] On the impossibility of distinguishing between the "musical" and the "extramusical," see Lydia Goehr, "Writing Music History," *History and Theory* 31, no. 2 (1992): 182–99; On the impossibility of entirely establishing context as determining of a text, see "Signature Event Context" in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); I return to the latter text below.

[43] Amy Cimini and Jairo Moreno, "Inexhaustible Sound and Fiduciary Aurality," *Boundary 2* 43, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 16.

meaning but value, not the identity of *L'Orfeo* as work but the type of value (symbolic or otherwise) which we seek to determine.

The tension, as I see it, emerges from the assumption that questioning the opposition between the text and the performance is the same as questioning, or abolishing, the opposition between the ephemeral and the permanent: on the one hand, we have texts and performances which are both ephemeral and permanent, but somehow material, and on the other we have the ideal work which emerges from the various manifestations yet has a certain permanence in the minds of the listeners or the historian. As Calcagno writes, through the publication of the libretto and score "the work attained the status of an ideal object, each time materializing and reiterating itself in the minds and ears of the libretto readers as well as in those of the performers of and listeners of the score."[44]

Calcagno's crucial move is introducing a distinction between performance as text, i.e. the possibility of interpreting a performance like a text (signified in the diagram reproduced below as P), and performance understood as "that which awaits completion" (signified as an arrow that connects the other elements L for libretto and S for score).[45]

$$W = \text{Work} \quad L = \text{Libretto} \quad S = \text{Score} \quad P = \text{Performance}$$

$$\text{Text} \left[\begin{array}{c} \end{array} \right.$$

$$W \rightarrow (L_I)\, P_I \rightarrow S_I,\, (L_2)S_2,\, (L_3)S_3 \,\ldots\, (L_N)S_N \,/\!/\, (L_X)S_X \rightarrow P_2,\, P_3,\, P_4 \,\ldots\, P_N \,/\!/\, P_X \rightarrow W$$
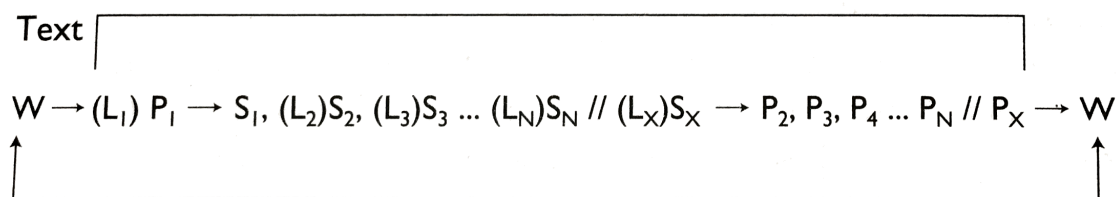
It is this formulation that has mostly attracted my attention, since it seems to me it can be interpreted in ways that can be productive by applying some pressure on it. Calcagno offers this interpretation just after the passage quoted above, in the course of showing that the libretto and score of *Orfeo* also partake of the work of performing nobility. Thus, he writes, "[i]f the term 'performance' is intended in one of its etymological meanings—as something that 'awaits completion' (from the French word *parfournir*) and as therefore

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[44] Ibid., 19.
[45] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 29. Diagram reproduced from Ibid.

ab origine incomplete and unexecuted—these materializations can also be termed 'performances.'"[46] Interestingly, the Middle French word *parfournir* was replaced in modern French by the Anglicism 'performance,' which means 'to carry out,' or 'to execute.'[47] More than to await completion, to perform is to accomplish something entirely and thoroughly. If we want to find an openness in performance, its etymology suggests rather the opposite. Etymologies, however, are interesting as heuristic resources and not as positive proof of the meaning of a word. But if what is crucial about performance is such an openness or, more precisely, an incompleteness, the sense of "to carry out completely" that emerges here points to an important distinction, one that illuminates the complications in understanding the type of work involved in considering performances as texts and texts as performances.

In the scheme offered by Calcagno, performance in the sense of "to await completion" is signified by arrows that connect individual elements and add up to the ideal work, W. The ideal work is the sum total of all the performances: a teleological work. This means that the performance that relates them is somehow incorporated and taken over into the total work. Reading the two etymological variants of performance against each other, we could say that P, in the end, does amount to an accomplished product—the ideal work—with no remainder, with nothing left behind. If it introduces a deferral among the elements, this deferral is nevertheless finite and exhausted in the end. According to the model, if the text is a performance, it is so because everything that was there as a possibility was taken up and realized as a whole, transformed into the ideal work.

Another way to understand this logic—and to bring back the issue of value—would be to make a distinction between such a realization as *Verwertung*, the

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[46] Ibid.

[47] "Performance: (anglais *performance*, de l'ancien français *parformance*, achèvement)." http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/performance/59512. In both cases, however, we can hear the etymology: 'par' + 'fournir.' The Latin prefix *per*- means through, 'throughout' or 'thoroughly' (as in *per*-forate) or 'completely' (as in *per*-fect). The Old French *Fournir*, 'to complete,' 'to accomplish,' 'to fulfill,' is not related to the Latin 'forma' but to the West Germanic **frummjan*, to further, promote, accomplish, supply; as in 'to furnish'. 'Perform, v.'; 'furnish, v.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web. 18 May 2016.

transformation of something into value (*wert*), an exploitation that liquidates the resources without remainder, and realization as *Wirkung*, as making actual and effective.[48] *Wirkung* translates the Greek *ergon*, function or work, which, as *energeia*, as actuality, is opposed to *dynamis*, to potentiality. Now, as Giorgio Agamben explains, what defines potentiality as opposed to a mere possibility for anything "is not simply the potential to do this or do that thing but potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality."[49] More radically still, this potential not-to, this impotentiality, needs to be preserved even in actuality:

> What Aristotle then says is: *if a potentiality to not-be originally belongs to all potentiality, then there is true potentiality only where the potentiality to not-be does not lag behind actuality but passes into it as such*. This does not mean that it disappears in actuality; on the contrary, *it preserves itself as such* in actuality. What is truly potential is thus what has exhausted all its impotentiality in bringing it wholly into the act as such.[50]

What allows for the performance to produce value and to be repeated, to keep producing value throughout its repetitions and not being exhausted, is because actualization,

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[48] A historical approach is not only concerned with identifying why some events are "historical" and others are not, but rather what makes something an event as such. And this decision, which is the historian's, is entirely determined by her own historical situation: the past is a concern of the present and for the present, and the event is precisely the moment in which this relation becomes apparent to the historian, as Benjamin writes, not as illuminating the past through the present or the present through the past, but rather as the image "wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill." N3,1 Walter Benjamin and Rolf Tiedemann, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 463. This image, as Benjamin goes on to write, is better read through the technique of dream interpretation in awakening, which constitutes for him the paradigm for historiography: "The realization [*Verwertung*, the economic exploitation or utilization, the liquidation] of dream elements in the course of waking up is the canon of dialectics. It is paradigmatic [*vorbildlich*] for the thinker and binding [*verbindlich*] for the historian." N4,4 ibid., 464. Hence, the importance of treating the metaphor of the *Theatrum mundi* and the *lapsus* of the "angusta scena" as overdetermined images and not as clumsy gestures or accidental events.
What is crucial, then, is that there is always the possibility, another possibility, another reading; and the role of the historian, in awakening, consists in seizing that moment, on accounting for how the overdetermined dream elements are recognized "as just this particular dream image as such": the point being, of course, that it could always have been otherwise. N4,1 ibid. Compare this notion of a dialectical image with the one attacked by Abbate of the traces or cyphers of history to which she reduces the work of Adornian critical musicology. Carolyn Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004).
[49] Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 180.
[50] Ibid., 183, emphasis in the original.

wirkung is not exhuastion, *Verwertung*; the performance produces value that gets used up, but in doing so the impotentiality, the possibility to be otherwise, of the performance does not disappear.

Would it be possible, for the critic, to preserve impotentiality in performance, not to use up and exhaust all the possibilities in a total interpretation to produce an ideal work? Would it be possible, then, to speak not of performance as total accomplishment but rather as the actualization of potentiality? Under this form, actualization carries the power, the *dynamis*, of potentiality; it carries the power not-to be which is also the power to be otherwise. *Wirklichkeit*, as a translation of *energeia*, captures all these meanings: reality, as what has been realized, made actual, as what has passed into actuality. It is also effectivity, since it carries power. This effectivity is affective, transformative, and operative. We reencounter here, then, the power, the work of opera (as in Calcagno's subtitle)—not opera as *opus*, as accomplished work, but as working effectivity or as efficacy; as an effectivity that is neither identical nor exhausted in its performance, but which is carried over as potentiality not-to be. Operativity is not performance—completion—but incompletion: not which awaits completion but what, in being actualized and effective, does not actualize itself without also actualizing the possibility not-to be, to be otherwise. Should we speak, then, not of the performance of opera but of an effective actualization (of a score, of a story, of a myth)? But this is what opera already says and does.[51]

With this we are in the position to elaborate on the analysis of the acoustic assemblage of inscription introduced in chapter 2, where *mousikē* was described as a type of writing *avant-la-lettre*. It was presented there as the means for the community to inscribe and transmit its *ethos* and *nomoi*, owing to a certain structural identity which remains even in the absence of those involved in its performance. What guarantees this

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[51] In a related point, Treadwell argues that, "performance of courtly *intermedi* during the principate attempted to *actualize* the Duke's power, most especially during the 1580s, when advances in technology pressed each element of the multi-media genre to its most extreme manifestation. This actualization, as I will describe it—in which the Duke's (seemingly) divine power was not merely symbolized but enacted through performance—resonated with the conceptual premise of Ficinian Neoplatonism," that is, the mimetology of similarities. Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 24.

effectivity is what Derrida describes as *iterability*: the possibility of a mark to be extracted from its context, repeated, and cited, and to be legible—effective—in the absence of its addressee.[52] What is iterable in a mark, Derrida holds, is not exhausted in the presence of its inscription, yet this does not make it ideal either: it is a remainder.[53] This notion of a remainder is crucial for overcoming the ontological ambiguity of texts, performances, and ideal work. It suggests that permanence is already alteration, but also that ephemerality (if by this one means the possibility of disappearance) is not the opposite of permanence: ephemerality is nothing other than alteration. Nothing keeps us from describing *mousikē* and Early Modern opera along the same terms, since for Derrida iterability is a condition of possibility of experience in general:

> This structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified (and therefore from communication and its context) seems to me to make of *every mark*, even if oral, a grapheme in general, that is, as we have seen, *the nonpresent remaining* of a differential mark cut off from its alleged "production" or origin. And I will extend this law even to *all "experience" in general*, if it is granted that there is no experience of pure presence, but only chains of differential marks.[54]

The courtly performances of the Italian nobility thus have the same mode of operation as ancient Greek *mousikē*, as they employ a broadly distributed assemblage to inscribe their *ethos* and *nomoi*, to exteriorize the memory of the community (to make the community a site for memory, a repository), an inscription that depends on iterability for producing and preserving a certain ideal of nobility. This structural repeatability—being structured through repetition and having the possibility (and hence the necessity) of being repeated—is what determines *mousikē* and opera as ritual, and not so much the context,

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[52] In what follows I return to "Signature Event Context" in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*.

[53] 'Remainder' is the English translation for a French neologism, '*restance,*' coined by Derrida in this text. In his reply to John Searle, published as "Limited Inc," Derrida explains that this "quasi-concept" replaces the notions of "permanence" or "substance," and any other that presupposes presence. "The remainder is not that of the signifier any more than it is that of the signified, of the "token" or of the "type," or of a form or of a content…There is no doubt that the "permanence" or the "survival" of the document…imply iterability or remaining in general. But the inverse is not true. Permanence is not a necessary effect of remaining. I will go even further: the structure of the remainder, implying alteration, renders all absolute permanence impossible. Ultimately, remaining and permanence are incompatible." Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 53–54.

[54] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 317.

the function, or the participants. The context—the origin—of the performance is never the same, it is never identical, and yet the performance is repeated: if it is the same performance under different conditions, in a different context, it is because there is a such a differential mark by which it is the same even when, or as, it differs. And for this reason iterability is not affected by context, but rather exceeds it. If the performance is an event, what is nevertheless operative in it is its originary repeatability. Its effects carry over and are in excess of its immediate eventality—they carry over even for us to be able to receive these effects, but also if no one ever came to receive them (potentiality not-to be). What makes a something a performance, or rather an opera, is this effectivity, this mode of being in excess of itself, which carries over in all their iterations.

In terms of analysis—i.e., of comparing texts and performances—what relates the 1607 performance to the 1609 score is just such a nonpresent remaining (neither a material inscription nor an ideal entity, and much less a signified meaning or value) but the severed and repeated iteration, the mark that marks them as iterations of each other. They are not any more in the scores or the performances than they are in the affective transformations they produce in listeners, in their bodies as much as in their minds, and also in the instruments as much as in the painted backdrops and stage props; the "work" is not wholly in any of these elements, nor in the total sum of them, but is effective in and through all, each of one in-completing (completing by exposing the necessity for something extra to complete them) the others. All the iterations of the work—texts, libretti, performances, descriptions, machinery, and so on—continue to sever this remainder from its alleged "production" or origin and to cite and repeat—to iterate— what is repeatable in the opera, what makes the opera *be* insofar as it is repeatable. What is repeated never remains the same, it is altered in its displacement and its repetition: with each iteration, the opera it is at the same time an original (for it is different) and a copy (for it points towards another original).

Here, then, is the notion that is missing from the schematization of performance and text in Calcagno's account. What is crucial in the relation between the operatic event and the score is not that one records the other or that it makes it pass from the private to

the public, for thus conceived, it rather shows that the original event lacks the performative force through which value is supposed to be produced and transmitted. Rather, and as Butler stated, value is produced by performance as repetition—a value that may be used up but which does not exhaust the effectivity of what is repeated. Mimetically, what establishes the relation between the event and the score is not inscription but the iteration by which the copy constitutes its origin—or de-constitutes it, by being removed from it—as source of value. It is not "symbolic value" that gets repeated here, and we cannot say that is preserved or signified in any of these iterations. Rather, value emerges in the insistent, panicked imitation or iteration of its presumed naturalized ideality. Finally, as Derrida notes, iteration is simultaneously a repetition (*iter*) and an alteration (*itara, alter*), a repetition that alters. An alteration, namely, of the value of what is repeated: it is made into an original.

One final aspect in this economy needs to be noted. As Calcagno shows, there is a motive that runs through the text and paratexts of the opera, that of the sun's rays (the description of Francesco as a bright star in the prologue and further in *Rosa del Ciel* and the final chorus), that implicitly evokes the myth of Memnon's statue, given voice by the rays of dawn.

This serves the purpose of highlighting the role of the patron, vital to the writer in giving birth to his work. In the case of Orfeo, however, the metaphor tells readers and performers that Prince Francesco authorizes not only the score, intended as a material inscription, but also the voice originating from it; not only the voice of the author, intended in a figurative, narratological meaning, but the actual one(s) heard in performance, springing from the singer's lips. The composer, that is, receives from the patron authorization to "speak." But, in a further transfer of authority, it is he, the composer, who in turn authorizes the singers to perform, as his proxies."[55] Thus Calcagno shows a linear chain of authority that travels through the score of *L'Orfeo*, from the "benigna stella" of Prince Francesco, becoming a figurative voice through a myth that is only implicitly alluded to, and ending in the real voices of singers in performance. Every

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[55] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 25.

subsequent performance using the 1609 score, Calcagno writes, has been authorized by Prince Francesco. One could here object to the emphasis on the voice, which aside from the implicit reference to Memnon's statue, is hard to locate in the preface. Clearer for the problem of authorial intention and inscription seems to be the patriarchal mimetological fantasy of asexual procreation (which guarantees divine ascendancy) sublimated in artistic production (Erasmus's Venus). In this case, to recall Carter's suggestion (that the *Theatrum mundi* metaphor in the preface is clumsy, for referring to the stage in the Ducal Palace as "narrow" scarcely paints the patron in a flattering light; see note 2. above), an "augusta scena" may be as appropriate as "angusta"—the latter somewhat more telling: in both cases, the patron (*patronus, pater*) illuminates the work/product that the composer's labor (work/childbirth) brings to the world through a narrow/eminent passage like a bright star (like the sun, the father). Similarly, Monteverdi reaffirms the patriarchal analogy/lineage (Apollo : Orfeo :: Vincenzo : Francesco) that connects the 1607 performance—where the printed libretto was dedicated to Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga—to its second birth, its dissemination in score form, by making sure that the latter is "not *signed* with a name other" than Prince Francesco's ("con altro nome signata") (Figure 2).

SERENISSIMO SIGNORE MIO SIGNORE
ET PATRONE COLENDISSIMO.

A fauola d'Orfeo che già nell'Academia de gl'Inuaghiti sotto gl'auspitij di V. A. fù sopra angusta Scena musicalmente rappresentata, douendo hora comparire nel gran Teatro dell'vniuerso à far mostra di se à tutti gl'huomini, non è, ragione che si lasci vedere con altro nome segnata, che con quello dell'Altezza V. glorioso, & felice, A lei dunque humilmente la consacro, affinch'ella che à guisa di benigna stella le fù propitia nel suo nascimento, con i Serenissimi raggi della gratia sua, si degni di fauorir il progresso della sua vita, la quale posso sperare, mercè dell'Altezza Vostra che fia per esser durabile al pari dell'humana generatione. Supplico V. Altezza à gradir questo segno della diuotione mia, con quell'animo grande che, è, proprio di lei, & che lega gl'animi di chiunque hà ventura di trattar seco, E qui inchinandomi con sommissa riuerenza all'Altezza V. prego il Signore che d'ogni suo desiderio la faccia contenta. In Mantoua li 22. d'Agosto. 1609.

Di V. Altezza Serenissima,

Humilissimo, & obligatissimo seruitore,

Claudio Monteuerdi.

Figure 2: Dedication Page of the 1609 edition of L'Orfeo

And yet, with this same gesture, Monteverdi appropriates the Prince's signature, for what is a dedication but an appropriation of the patron's name and renown through the iterability of the signature? The signature is a performative; it affirms that the signer agrees with what he is signing. Its function is to restore the nonpresence of the signer, to act in the absence of the signer, or to signify that the signer's authorization can be repeated again. The signature, the reproducibility of the mark that presumes to ensure the presence of the signer and which preserves its effectivity in her absence, in the analysis of iteration, demonstrates that it there is a kind of sameness which carries over as it is removed from its source, cited, and altered.

Yet the signature does not simply make the signer present: the signature marks the signer's having-been present, the event of leaving his signature as a trace. That the signature continues to be effective as it is reproduced means that the event of the signature is repeatable through the trace that marks the signer's presence, that the "now"

in which the signer left his trace is also somehow inscribed in the signature as it is repeated, and it is present "now" in what was a future then, so that it is impossible to distinguish between before and after: "the pure reproducibility of a pure event."[56]

What applies to the signature applies to every mark: the signature is but an exemplary case. In this case, furthermore it is exemplary of how value is produced and transmitted through iteration. By dedicating the work to Prince Francesco, Monteverdi uses Francesco's signature as an origin(al) locus of authority and value. Thus, it is not that the Prince authorizes the performance, in the sense of transferring an authority he possesses into the work: the Prince is not the origin of his value as noble because, as we saw, this value is nothing without the performance by which it is produced. Rather, the name of Francesco is cited, through his signature, as someone who would be capable of authorizing a work, someone with the power and status of a Prince. His value, as nobleman and Prince, is created through the performance and ratified by appending his signature to the work.

Or, more specifically, by a countersignature, a signature that ratifies or subscribes the prior signature: thus the dedication has the signature of the Prince only by having the countersignature of Monteverdi, which inscribes itself in the signature that it reaffirms, that it repeats. The Prince's signature can accomplish much (the Duke's signature too: he almost brought the Court to bankruptcy through gambling before turning to spectacles, as Susan Parisi shows).[57] But in order to make the Prince's signature work, to make it effective and so produce his value as nobleman, the signature needs a countersignature that ratifies it and authorizes it as doing a specific type of work, such as Monteverdi's at the bottom of the dedication. By signing the dedication, Monteverdi countersigns the Prince's signature as patron of the opera, as its owner.

Yet by doing so, by countersigning the Prince's appropriation of the opera, Monteverdi also reveals/betrays the truth of this appropriation as a parricide: a betrayal by the son, and a betrayal by Monteverdi (the father of the opera and the son of the

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[56] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 328.
[57] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627."

patron). Every mark, as Derrida writes, necessarily implies the absence of its addressee to be constituted as such. By inscribing Prince Francesco into the paratext—and hence the text—of *Orfeo*, by making the addressee into part of the message, Monteverdi inscribes the patron's death in the work itself, which is repeated with each iteration. Without going too far, it is a sacrifice—but we know that the relation between sacrifice, mimesis and art is not easy to pin down.[58] But paradoxically, with this betrayal Monteverdi also inscribes *himself* in the divine lineage the opera aims to establish.[59] At the same time as the patrons are inscribed within the lineage, the play of the text—the signature and the countersignature—reinscribes one name over the other.

The signature and the countersignature also have the function, or the effect, of fixing and stabilizing the play of the text, the very play that makes performance incomplete. Every actualization of the work, every reading—and every listening, as Peter Szendy shows—has to deal with two contradictory requirements: that the play of the text be somehow fixed and located in order for it to have a meaning, however local, for the reader or spectator, who decides on opposed meanings that are, by definition, undecidable. Reading and listening in fact, consist on fixing such play, or having the temporary illusion of doing it.

This opens a question that will be addressed in the remainder of this chapter: by insisting on the essential iterability of the operatic performance, of the necessary possibility for the opera to be repeated outside of its "original" context, remaining identical and different at the same time throughout its iterations, we risk losing what is specific about a certain iteration or another. As in Calcagno's schema, they still threaten to become indistinguishable as pure events occurring outside history; but on the other hand, if we could locate them, specify what they were, in their context and with all their materiality, we would go back to the ambiguity between a performance that awaits completion and the one that to carries out completely. We would have to reword such

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[58] As Lacoue-Labarthe elaborates on "Typography."

[59] On the countersignature as betrayal of truth, see Jacques Derrida, "Countersignature," trans. Mairéad Hanrahan, *Paragraph* 27, no. 2 (2004): 7–42. Derrida's work on the signature is also elaborated in Jacques Derrida, *Signéponge = Signsponge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); and Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

definition (and preserve performance as a *paleonomy*, just as we still speak of writing, or "I") as "that which *defers* completion," for the logic of iteration, of repetition and alteration, is nothing other than *différance*: the spatial differing and temporal deferring on account of which each iteration is constituted as repetition, which differs and defers from itself in its iteration.

This is why actualization and operability, the effectivity of the opera as work, the excess or remainder which constitutes the iteration, is a crucial question for historiography: how can we say that something happened without ignoring that each time we do it we risk closing off this very operability, this possibility to be otherwise. The question, then, to go back to Benjamin, is how to write a history that we can read like "the book of nature," which indicates that one can read the real (*Wirklichke*) like a text (N4,2): a text, whose condition of undecidability is inscribed with the potentiality not-to be, or to be otherwise. The task of the historian, in reading the book of what happened (*Wirklichkeit*) is to show those moments where a certain reading was done, a certain interpretation was made, a decision enforced. We are all readers of the book of nature— but only some have the power to call or countersign that reading as "history."[60]

ALLEGORIES OF/ON THE SCREEN

What is repeated from the 1607 performance on to the 1609 score, its 1615 reprint, and their further iterations is not Francesco's authorization, but rather his sacrificial inscription as the constitutive absence of the text: not a "real" sacrifice, of course, but not a "symbolic" one either. It is rather one that charges Francesco with a task that cannot be accomplished. The same conventional apparatus of paratexts, dedicatory paragraphs, and learned rhetoric that Monteverdi mobilizes to guarantee the permanence of his work, paradoxically opens both the work and the patron's name to their own constitutive in-completeness. Prince Francesco's borrowed signature guarantees the permanence of *L'Orfeo*'s performative work. But, at the same time, it tears it open and submits it to

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[60] I thank Ann Pellegrini who took my question about historiography seriously and generously offered 'power' as the key to the enigma. University of Pennsylvania, Departmental Colloquium, April 19, 2016.

unending iterations—repetitions and alterations—each of which will be inscribed with the mark of deferral: the work will never be completed. We thus have to agree with Carter: this scarcely paints the patron in a flattering light…[61] But how do we know that his intention was flattering and not betrayal? What is it that makes one turn towards the other? And how do we know that the turn to performance and materiality is also an act of love and gratitude towards music and not a betrayal?

One of Calcagno's motivations—and my own—for discussing the relation between text and performance is, as mentioned, Jean Pierre Ponnelle's 1976 opera-film *Monteverdi: Orfeo*. For Calcagno, the production demonstrates an anxiety over authorization, a concern with locating the production in its historical context as a means of securing the authenticity of the production. Taking into consideration the above reflections on the in-completion of performance, however, I cannot approach Ponnelle's production without asking what is done and undone through the allegorical identification of Prince Francesco and Orfeo. Specifically, I am concerned with the question of establishing the type of historical work that the production accomplishes by suggesting such an identification: at what level can we affirm that the production is authentic of accurate, that it truthfully reproduces or repeats the 1607 event, so that we can claim—or deny—that in fact the purpose of *L'Orfeo* was to affirm the Gonzaga dynasty as divine? Can we still suggest in this case that the second performance, the repetition, produces the original? Is this not a preposterous exaggeration of my thesis?

Preposterous (*pre-post*) might be the right word: it turns around the natural order; it places last what should be first. This form of musicological reflection, which can be termed *preposterous analysis*, after Mieke Bal's formulation of a *preposterous history* (itself taken form Patricia Parker's *preposterous events*), does not, as historicist analysis would, seek to reconstruct the past and the experience of the works by limiting analysis to its actors and objects (as Taruskin defines the historian's work in the introduction to the *OHWM*), nor analyze according to present human experience disregarding or marking the

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[61] Carter, "Some Notes on the First Edition of Monteverdi's 'Orfeo' (1609)," 509. See footnote 4, above.

past as unreachable, but rather attempts to establish a new, experimental relation with music of the past, a relation that necessarily reinscribes it—or that recognizes this process as unavoidable.[62] This operation, as Bal deploys it, is a turn that seems particularly appropriate to the baroque, since it "acts out what is itself a baroque vision, a vision that can be characterized as a vacillation between the subject and object of that vision and which changes the status of both."[63] Ponnelle's production is preposterous in this way: once the allegorical identification is made, it seems impossible to turn back and consider *L'Orfeo* as a purely aesthetic drama about man as artist (as in Kerman's account). Besides the possibility of demonstrating through documents that the performance was *thus* (and besides the real success of the performance as historical or artistic work), the production hints, in a flash, at a historical situation that may have been only too real to be preserved in documents, a truth that history has forgotten (read *repressed*). In this case, *Monteverdi: Orfeo* is not a repetition of a historical event because we do not possess any documentation that authorizes it as such, and yet its performance does make us turn back to ask questions about the relation between sovereignty, spectacle, and myth that locate *L'Orfeo* in a historical moment that was not articulated before as such.

Preposterous or not, the production poses historiographical questions that we cannot ignore and which locate us as viewers, listeners, and historians in a particular position, looking at the past from a particular perspective. The film's opening shot is

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[62] Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Events," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1992): 186–213.

[63] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 7. Bal's conception of history is of course only a recent form of what Benjamin had elaborated long before, a conception of history as the attempt "to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger," Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol. 4, 1938-1940* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 391. This is a moment that is revealed as now-time, *Jetztzeit*, in which the historian "grasps the constellation into which his own era has entered, along with a very specific earlier one. Thus, he establishes a conception of the present as now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time." Ibid., 397. It is not by coincidence that the first extended form of Benjamin's "Theses on History" occurred in, or through, his book on baroque mourning drama. Benjamin's writings on history and the baroque have called attention to the urgency of understanding the period as inevitably bounded with our own time, to the extent that the very notion of baroque is now almost inseparable from his materialist historiography—where "the materialist presentation of history leads the past to bring the present into a critical state." Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol. 4, 1938-1940*.

divided horizontally in three stages: the front row of a twentieth-century theater (the Zurich Opera House) in the forefront; Nicolaus Harnoncourt's period-instrument ensemble in the pit; and a two-level stage depicting the outside of a castle covered with moss in the background (Figure 3).

The second level of the stage has long balconies in either side the members of the chorus occupy, doubling also as a seventeenth-century audience, while their twentieth-century counterparts find their seats; the musicians on stage lounge around and talk among themselves. The proscenium arch bears the inscription "FRANCESCO GONZAGA DUCA DI MANTOVA ET MONFERATO," a clear hint that in this production the place and function of the "fourth wall" is blurred, at best.

Figure 3:"Film-prologue" in Ponnelle, Monteverdi: Orfeo.

Here, time becomes space: the present as forefront and the past as background are mediated by the orchestra in the pit; the vanishing point is located in the entrance to the castle which will be occupied by the actors playing Vincenzo Gonzaga and Eleonora de' Medici—but also Apollo (Roland Hermann), La Musica and Speranza (Trudeliese Schmidt), in the doubling that structures the main conceit of the production: the patriarchal analogy that makes Prince Francesco a direct descendant of Apollo.

The sovereigns stand at the center, in the vanishing point of the perspectival construction. Their spatial and temporal coincidence at the center of the tripartite division accomplishes a flattening of historical distance and difference upon the flat screen employing the logic of mathematized perspective—itself a discovery contemporaneous with Monteverdi's *Orfeo*—to negate the differences between front and back, up and down, bodies and intervening space, "so that the sum of all the parts of space and all its contents are absorbed into a single 'quantum continuum.'"[64] Collapsed time and mathematized space, everything is synthesized in a single shot; the opening of Ponnelle's opera-film seems to accomplish, at the height of postmodernity, what the humanists sought for in early operatic and scientific experimentations: a unified glance upon the world, past and present; everything is articulated, held together by the ritornello of the Gonzaga *toccata* fanfare.

Such a synthesis, of course, is not without its tensions—beginning with the contradictions faced by "historically informed performances" with regard to understanding composerly intentions, instrumental practices, and the "authenticity" of their performances.[65] If Harnoncourt's sound is the truly "modern sound," insofar as only today do conductors attempt to restore the "authentic" sound of historical works, thus "reinventing music in the image of the twentieth century" *malgré lui*, Ponnelle's *mise-en-scène* shows that "modern" begins with the seventeenth century.[66] In the three-stage division of the opening shot, the distance that separates us from the nineteenth century is the same that brings the seventeenth century to the present.[67]

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[64] Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 67. In chapter 7 I expand on the role of perspective as analyzed by Panofsky for the baroque spectacularization of the world.

[65] Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[66] Ibid., 231.

[67] This inscribes the production in a long critical tradition, extending back to Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama,* and the formalist models of Wölfflin and Eugenio D'Ors, up to Deleuze, Lacan, Buci-Glucksmann, and Bal which sees the seventeenth century as a crucial site for a critical understanding of modernity. For a lucid summary of this argument, see the introduction by Bryan Turner to Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Sage, 1994). Omar Calabrese approaches postmodern aesthetics as a repetition of baroque aesthetics, as a neobaroque. Taken beyond an aesthetic category, the relation between the baroque and the present has been most

We can read this attempt to erase temporality as the key of the production (whether critical or ideological remains to be established), effected through a vertiginous *mise-en-scène*, where the opening shot makes a paradigmatic *mise-en-abyme* of the *Theatrum mundi* trope. Not only is the world put on stage and the stage on a screen. The stage-within-a-stage also contains the past, the present, and the future, mapped onto the visual spaces of the opera house (with its divisions between the stage, the pit, and the audience). The construction is further displaced onto the tv-screen, where the *Theatrum mundi* passes from being a geocentric universe located in the opera-house to a constellation without center, disseminated across the heterogenous and anonymous viewers at home—a perspectival universe in which the entire world is contained within each monadic tv-screen.

This liminal shot, indeed, acts as a prologue and paratext to the film, fulfilling the role of addressing the spectator, situating the performance, and determining its further meaning.[68] We will call it the *film-prologue*, a chronotope (sensu *Bakhtin*) with the capacity for locating and specifying the spatio-temporal relations between the monadic tv-viewers and the unified universe presented by the performance.[69] It addresses the spectators in their present and binds the historical gap by taking them in, by offering a common perspective in the opera house. From the beginning, the viewer is meant to understand that this is not a mere performance of a "historical work" which seeks authenticity through period costume. Rather, the very act of actualizing a historical work—performance—is the subject of the performance itself. It is an exploration of the means by which works can be interpreted as "historical" in a strong sense, as having the

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rigorously explored in Latin America. As Irlemar Champi argues, neobarroco is a reappropriation, or a recycling of the past, by which a poetic experience inscribes the past in the dynamics of the present so a culture can face the enigma of its future. Characterized as historically, geographically and aesthetically eccentric with respect to historicist canon and classicism, the baroque is revalued by writers like Severo Sarduy or Octavio Paz—following José Lezama Lima and Alejo Carpentier—to reinscribe the way Latin America enters Euro- and North American modernity. Irlemar Chiampi, *Barroco y modernidad* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000). See also William Egginton, *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (neo)baroque Aesthetics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford university press, 2010). Calcagno, too, suggests that the baroque is a site for understanding the modern "dialogic subjectivity" from its origin and development through Petrarch and Monteverdi. Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 7.

[68] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 34ff.

[69] M. M Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

capacity of affecting the present due to their nature as historical objects, of making historical content into truth content.[70]

Signaling its self-awareness as an absolutely contemporary (and postmodern) hybrid multimedia object—an opera-film, each of its components themselves a multitude, each an attempt at a *Gesamtkunstwerk*—, the first shot aims to emphasize its character of a live event by presenting the familiar temporality of the pre-event: as the credits flash on the screen, the tv-spectator is compelled to take her seat next to members of the twentieth-century theater audience, seeking to erase the forty years that separate her from the event. "This is not a film—it means to say—but a performance whose audience would have been 'you,'" the deictic being given by the the empty seats which the spectator seems to be invited to take along with the audience on screen. The open seats are, quite literally, awaiting the for viewer to inscribe herself on the work. Yet after the liminal moment of the film-prologue, after the work properly begins, the tv-spectator, at first invited to join and lose herself in the performance, is sent back to her place in front of the screen—and outside of the theatre hall—as the traditional montage techniques that Ponnelle introduces for the new medium of "opera-film" begin interpellating her as tv-spectator (and I use the term interpellation in the Althusserian sense).

There is a contradiction between the "realistic" opening which marks the performance as a traditional operatic event in which the spectator is present, and the montage techniques that displace her. Thus, after offering a long shot of the pit from the stage (audience visible) as Harnoncourt reaches the podium and marks the downbeat of the Gonzaga *toccata* (although we first heard it non-diegetically), a jump cut reverses the perspective towards the stage and focuses on two trumpeters in seventeenth-century garb. The camera pans up from the trumpeters to offer a low-angle, close-up shot of the Mantuan coat of arms in the proscenium of the stage-within-a-stage, cuts back to Harnoncourt, and back again to the stage, where the curtains open revealing Duke Vincenzo and Eleonora De' Medici (Figure 4).

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[70] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), 182; Theodor W Adorno, *Sound Figures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 22.

Figure 4: "Opera-prologue" in Ponnelle, Monteverdi: Orfeo, (opening sequence montage).

Here we see realized temporally what the opening shot (discussed above) realizes in its tripartite division: a seamless connection between the past (Duke Vincenzo and Eleonora, who also stand in for the mythical "past" through their doublings) and the present (Harnoncourt and the audience), whose readability as continuum is only possible for a future tv-viewer, who is thereby included yet excluded from the event. This sequence follows immediately from the iconic "fake" score which is superimposed on the screen between the film–prologue and the opera-prologue. As Calcagno notes—no doubt reacting to the same contradiction we are analyzing here—the score, which does not correspond to the 1609 nor to the 1615 edition, is "an authentic fake" that unintentionally validates the distinction between allographic and autographic arts.[71] For Calcagno, with this authentic fake, "an anxiety to authorize performance as being historically informed reaches an almost absurd degree."[72]

According to the reading offered here, however, the authentic fake score rather hints at a no less anxious (postmodern) historical awareness: the awareness, that is, that the mimetologies that until now have authorized critics and interpreters to distinguish between originals, copies, and fakes in order to construe a univocal version of history is being exposed with each attempt to affirm it. The score, we would argue, serves not so much to authorize the performance but to perform the same economimetic ritual of authorization that the opera aimed to do in 1607: as Monteverdi appropriated Prince Francesco's signature, so does Ponnelle countersign the work, reaffirming and undoing the self-representation of nobility that motivated the work in the first place. In repeating the ritual, in performing it, the authentic fake score—invoking Butler once again—serves

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[71] See note 25 above.
[72] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 28.

to expose the normative (and the normative here applies to both the Italian nobility and contemporary HIP musicians) as a *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized imitation.[73]

The contradiction, then, is that while we continue to analyze works and situate them with respect to their sociopolitical context, to understand them as they affect and are affected by the societies that produced them, we also find performances to be always incomplete, always exceeding their context and undoing the work for which they seek to be mobilized. The situation reaches an "absurd degree": a hyperbolic logic in which the difference between a particular mimetology—using the spectacle as a means of self-representation of the nobility—and the general mimesis that makes it possible (the circulation of value and affect between the political, the aesthetic, and the economical) is made evident as the one is exceeded by the other, as the performance parodies itself—as performance, as drag—or as the historian seeks to pin down values and reality in terms of symbols, originals, copies, and fakes.

Even before cinematographic technique enters the operatic stage, that is, still in the film-prologue, it is time which pictorially and sartorially marks the spectator as outsider. Onstage, the past is displayed *as* past: painted backdrops and period costumes. (The musicians in the orchestra are divided between those who will perform onstage, in full seventeenth-century garb, and those clad in modern performance clothes, including Harnoncourt himself). But the present—its 1975 present—is tinged with that familiar Benjaminian fate: the high fashion of the opera audience pins it down in a present for which our own time is future. If the signature has the capacity of producing an ever present now, *maintenance*, through which the absence of the signer is preserved through its iterations, the sartorial signature of the audience has the opposite effect: the minimalist, bourgeois high fashion of the 1970s which pretends to be timeless and post-

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[73] One of the reasons of Calcagno's rather hasty dismissal of the production may be that he considers the opera-film as a "videorecording," that is, as a transparent mediation of the performance—neither original event nor copy, under that logic—which does not seem to have a place within the ontology analyzed above. Since we agree with Calcagno in assuming "the dynamic view of the relationships between text and work outlined above [in which] librettos and scores, but also performances [and, we would add, opera-films and other iterations that contribute to its infinite dissemination], all emerge as *producing*, and not simply embodying, the work which thus consists of more than the sum of its textual parts." Ibid.

historical, marks the present as a future that is not theirs except as death, even as they seek to evade it by losing themselves in the spectacle of mediatized history.[74] If the flattening device of the opening shot brought us any closer to Monteverdi's time, the sudden realization of the distance separating us from the experiments of historically informed practice and postmodern *Regieoper* shatter the work's opening gambit.

If Ponnelle's production stages the theory that the historical role of *L'Orfeo* was to produce an allegorical identification between Prince Francesco and Orfeo, such that the Gonzaga dynasty was effectively put in continuity with the mythical gods, thus performatively deriving from them their authority as sovereigns—as the King and the Pope in monarchic absolutism are the representatives of God on earth—then the performance of the performance may still give us an insight into the mimetologies involved in producing and maintaining the relation between sovereignty, myth, and performance that motivate this chapter. And, if the identification is accomplished by means of allegory—that paradigmatically baroque mimetology—then it is to its mode of operation in this performance that we must now turn.

After the "authentic fake" score fades out, the curtains of the stage-within-a-stage reveal Duke Vincenzo (Roland Hermann) and Eleonora de Medici (Trudeliese Schmidt) at the focus point of the historico-perspectival chronotope of the film-prologue. Vincenzo then descends two steps and faces Eleonora as the camera pans out, until the entire stage, the pit, and the conductor are visible—but not the bottom level which in the film-prologue placed the viewer in 1976 (in fact, it will not return again throughout the performance). Eleonora starts singing the first verse of the prologue, "Dal mio Permesso amato a voi ne vegno," as Vincenzo watches enthralled. Vincenzo gives Eleonora an allegorical tiara inscribed with the word MUSICA during the ritornello before the second strophe of the prologue, ("Io la musica son, ch'ai dolci accenti") and a lyre before the

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[74] See the famous "Convolute B" in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* Edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999) and; Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity & Deathliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). These pages, incidentally, have been written within a week after Harnoncourt's passing.

third ("Io, su cetera d'or, cantando soglio") (Figure 5).

Figure 5: La Musica on stage in Ponnelle, Monteverdi: Orfeo.

The tiara and the lyre turn Eleonora into La Musica. A close up permits the tv-spectator see the tiara, but Vincenzo's ruff hides the instantaneous metamorphosis. The transfiguration operates by means of allegorical mechanisms (a series of them: the allegorical tiara and the eponymous lyre turn the real character, Eleonora, into an allegorical character; it is hard to keep track of their dissemination) to accomplish the effects produced by deictics in performance as analyzed by Calcagno (in Luca Ronconi's

1998 production), and then some (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Allegorical Tiara and concealed metamorphosis in Ponnelle, Monteverdi: Orfeo.

For Calcagno, La Musica's gestures "[enable] the gradual transition from singer's *persona* ("Cecilia Gasdia") to character ("La Musica") and, for the audience, the parallel transformation in perception from real to fictional times and places"[75] Calcagno, after Gumbrecht, analyzes the prologue of the opera into three different "subject-effects," by which performance actualizes an operatic text. The "self-reflexive effect" occurs when La Musica sings "I am music," so that the referent of the semantically empty "I" locates the subject of the verse at a discursive level.[76] This is complemented in performance by the presence-effect, by which the semantic emptiness of "I," "an absence deferring to a presence" is actualized by an embodied subject which is thus positioned at the center and origin of deictic space—paradigmatically by pointing to herself at the same time as she sings "I," and pointing to the audience as she sings "you." These, in turn, are located by the use of temporal deictics, referring to "now," and here; this, the "narrative effect"

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[75] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera,* 62.
[76] Ibid., 41ff.

introduces temporality and narrativity—some narratologists say history—into the utterance.

Just like Ronconi's production, Ponnelle's emphasizes the sequence of deictics in the prologue by means of carefully coordinated body movements. She avoids the obvious gestural madrigalisms—pointing to herself for "I," to the audience for "you"—and instead accomplishes the presence effects, the passage from "my" to "you," through her gaze, looking beyond the stage and the audience—the beloved Permessus, visible only for her—and then to an indeterminate place in the center of the shot, just off from looking at the camera—that is, the tv-spectator. In the following verses, La Musica—or shall we say Eleonora, since she only gives herself that name in the second strophe—situates the "you" of her address not as the audience (as is often the case, including in Ronconi), but as,

> Incliti eroi, sangue gentil de' regi,
> Di cui narra la Fama eccelsi pregi,
> Nè giunge al ver, perch'è tropp' alto il segno.
>
> famous heroes, gentle issue of kings,
> whose excellent merits fame reports,
> without nearing the truth since the aim is too high.

The entire verse is addressed to Duke Vincenzo, whose bowing identifies him as the "illustrious hero," as the only claimant to the "*sangue gentil de' regi*." Thus, the crucial function of identifying La Musica as the center, the source of the narrative to follow, is offset and displaced by the silent play of Eleonora's gaze, which passes from an unseen Permessus to the silent Duke in front of her; at no point does she refer to herself or the audience in the theater or in front of the screen. Before we even get enthralled by La Musica's "*dolci accenti,*" in the first strophe of the prologue we do not see La Musica singing; We see Eleonora seeing; we see her gaze: we see the instant by which her gaze

crowns Vincenzo as hero, king, and audience (Figure 7).

This visual relay not so much fixes the deictics of "my" and "you" with La Musica at the center of the deictic field but instead unleashes a play of referentiality by which the allegorical conceit of the production is exposed. What the prologue accomplishes is situating the sovereigns as the spectacular center of the production, in a play of referentiality that recalls Foucault's reading of *Las Meninas* as "a representation of representation."

The centrality of the sovereign couple thus depends on a tension between the empty deictics as delivered by song and how it is actualized on stage and on screen. There is a similar tension between sound and sight in Ronconi's production. There, as Calcagno argues, the distinction between the self-reflexive effect and the presence effect disappears when La Musica establishes a series of visual identifications with a silent and blindfolded Orpheus onstage (blinfolded since, Calcagno explains, music cannot be seen).[77] She stands behind him as she sings "I am music," so that the two characters are united in a symbolic "split self" mediated by the lyre, while the perspective also makes

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[77] Ibid., 63.

her/them "the visual double of the conductor in the pit."[78] She then touches Orpheus's hand as she sings the first verse of the second strophe "I, singing to the golden lyre." This touch ultimately collapses the distinctions between self-reflexive and presence effects, as well as "the distinction between the subject touched and the one touching, and, more importantly, the distinction between self and other."[79]

If this is so, if touch abolishes the distinction between self and other, what happens when Duke Vincenzo—who was crowned king by Eleonora's gaze—in turn crowns Eleonora with the allegorical tiara of Music? The identification between Orpheus and La Musica as a *symbol* of the "split subject" in Ronconi's production is true to the letter: it seeks the organic unity of the particular and the general, Orpheus and Music through the mediation of the lyre. The means employed to signify this unity—the opposition between black (Orpheus) and white (La Musica), visibility and invisibility (La Musica's position behind blindfolded Orpheus), subjects and object (the lyre), and so on—are binary abstractions that are united in what we could call, with Walter Benjamin, the "mystical instant" (the *mystiche Nu*, as opposed to the *Jetz,* "now") of La Musica's touch.[80] If there is any embodiment taking place in this operation, it occurs as a representation, where the empty universals of "voice" and "self" attempt to fill in the empty deictics (hence its extremely calculated choreography, which aims to account with "meaning" for what it lacks in content).

More crucially, what is entirely lacking, and which is introduced in the most baroque way in Ponnelle's production, is history as allegory exposes it, as its *facies hippocratica*, a ruin that attests to the dialectics of natural history and human finitude.[81] Compare the notion of a "split subject" symbolized by two actors in opposite colors with

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[78] Ibid., 62.

[79] Ibid., 64.

[80] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 183. As Buci-Glucksmann explains, *Jetzzeit*, now-time is opposed to the simple present of presence that can be added sequentially. *Jetzzeit* is "an active forgetting, peculiar to memory and the infinite capacity of reopening a past that the science of history claimed to be over and done with…the approach which awakens the forgotten is therefore archaeological and interpretative: its scanning of historical time bases itself upon an acute consciousness of crisis and catastrophe, making time capable of being seen and thought. Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason*, 67.

[81] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 166.

the dismemberment, the *sparagmos*, that the subject undergoes through the Orphic moment of psychoanalytic remembrance (with complicates the work of history as Benjaminian awakening suggested above), where,

> [I]n the moment of un-forgetting something happens to the person who is being re-membered. Anamnesis is a sundering of the person, a *sparagmos* or tearing apart, a dis-membering like Dionysius and Orpheus himself undergo. Anamnesis is a painful awakening, a re-membering of the flesh. It is not recollection contemplated in the comfort and safety of the critical, reflective mind.[82]

If, to recall, the Benjaminian paradigm of historical work is to seize the dream elements in the moment of their liquidation (*Verwertung*) to retain the possibility that the over-determined images can be actualized (*Gewirkt*), this process of actualization operates by dismembering and disseminating rather than uniting in symbols. Now, whereas the symbol aims to present the dynamic of the universal and the particular in an organic, univocal instant, allegory rather works by producing sequential and static relations between objects for a concept which is not entirely signified at any moment. Speaking of Harsdöffer, "the most consistent allegorist," Benjamin writes: "With every idea the moment of expression coincides with a veritable eruption of images, which gives rise to a chaotic mass of metaphors." This proliferation of metaphors makes up for the fact that the natural relation between words and things is radically put in question. Thus, "[a]ny person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else." Yet, for this same reason, in the baroque even the most profane things appear to derive a power "which raises them onto a higher plane, and which can, indeed, sanctify them. Considered in allegorical terms, then, the profane world is both elevated [*erhoben*] and devalued [*entwertet*]."[83] Benjamin notes how the dialectics between natural expression and arbitrary convention is repeated in that between sacred script, which would be univocal, and arbitrary, alphabetical script. Allegory is both convention and expression, a tension which the baroque exaggerates: baroque allegory is not "convention of

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[82] Romanyshyn, "'Anyway, Why Did It Have to Be the Death of the Poet?': The Orphic Roots of Jung's Psychology.," 68.
[83] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 175.

expression, but expression of convention," and its dialectics attains its more precise formulation in the idea of natural history.[84] For Benjamin, the essence of allegory is the movement from history to nature, a movement that is characterized by decay and ruination: "not so much the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay."[85] As an object of imitation, nature is not nature as shaped by God [hence perfect and timeless] but fallen nature, "which bears the imprint of the progression of history."[86]

RUINS AND REMAINDERS OR, THE MIMETIC ENDS OF BENJAMINIAN ALLEGORY

Allegory thus gives us a particular form of mimesis which is not exhausted in the opposition between the natural and the conventional which underpins the passage between the magical imitation to representation in the Foucaluldian model elaborated by Tomlinson in *Music in Renaissance Magic* (see chapter 3, above). Allegory exposes the limitations in this opposition, it is not so much a synthesis of the two, but rather appears to complicate the schematization that aims to distinguish it, revealing both the idea of the natural and the conventional, of "imitation" and "representation," as ideologically suspect. Allegory is a form of writing in which the materiality of the signifier overpowers the signified as meaning. The images that make up baroque allegories are arbitrary, transitory, and decaying, for they are not understood in as uncritical representations of their signifieds. Rather, the meaning of baroque allegory appears in this dissemination, in the unremitting proliferation of differences that defers signification. The similarity between Benjamin's notion of allegory and *differance* have been noted before, for example in Craig Owen's "the Allegorical Impulse."[87] For Owen, allegory consists on producing a double reading, of reading a text as or through another, it is *allos + agoreuei*, speaking in another voice. "Allegory is extravagant, an expenditure of surplus value; it is

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 178.
[86] Ibid., 180.
[87] "The Allegorical Impulse," *October* 12 (Spring 1980): 67–86. See also Paul De Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

always in excess," he writes.[88] This gives allegory a supplementary structure as it operates by giving another meaning to the text, an addition that alters and defers meaning, that in-completes the text. We could also suggest that Benjamin's notion of natural history is closer to *differànce* than it is to Adornian dialectics. But it is Benjamin who poses the question of the relation between writing and sound as crucial for understanding baroque allegory, since the writing of the baroque *Trauerspiel*,

> does not achieve transcendence by being voiced; rather does the world of written language remain self-sufficient and intent on the display of its own substance. Written language and sound confront each other in tense polarity…The division between signifying written language and intoxicating spoken language opens up a gulf in the solid massif verbal meaning and forces the gaze into the depths of language…In the baroque the tension between the spoken and the written word is immeasurable.[89]

With the formulation of this antithesis, not only does Benjamin break with the Platonic mimetology of debased writing denounced by Derrida, but also points to the baroque as the crucial site to develop the critical intuition behind it. Even more significantly, this tension, which passes through echo and onomatopoeia, is what propels the *Trauerspiel* into opera.

Benjamin examines the treatment that baroque authors had of the plasticity of language and how "in their techniques, in the anagrams, the onomatopoeic phrases, and many other examples of linguistic virtuosity, word, syllable, and sound are emancipated from any context of traditional meaning and are flaunted as objects which can be exploited for allegorical purposes."[90] In fact, the antithesis of sound and meaning is most evident, he argues, when it could actually come in a synthesis, such as in the popular "echo" scenes. After dealing with onomatopoeia and echo, Benjamin introduces music as the result of the antithesis between written and sonorous language, focusing on the role of ambiguous role of the chorus and the apparition of the musical overture. These elements,

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[88] Idem., 84.
[89] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 201.
[90] Ibid. translation modified.

he argues, bring about the dissolution of the *Trauerspiel* into opera. Against Nietzsche, Benjamin argues, that if opera chooses meaning over sound, this is already a debased meaning: the productive tension between sound and meaning ceases or disappears; devoid of this tension, what initially evidenced the plasticity of language now becomes mere empty façade.

Only Ritter among the Romantics, Benjamin argues, seized on the essence of baroque allegory when arguing that every image and every sound—as demonstrated by his experiments with the plates that today bear his name—is only a form of writing (*alles Bild sei nur Schriftbild*): "In the context of allegory the image is only a *signature* [*Signatur*], only the monogram of essence [*Monogramm des Wesens*], *not* the essence itself *in an envelope* [*Hüllen*]. But there is nothing *subordinate* [*Dienendes*] about written script; it does not fall behind in reading, like *cinders* [*Schlacke*]. It is absorbed [*geht*] along what is read, as its '*pattern*' [*Figur*]"[91] The solution to the antithesis, then, is,

> to bring oral and written language close to each other, identifying them—but only dialectically—as thesis and antithesis [*auch immer einander zu nähern, so doch nicht anders als dialektisch, als Thesis und Synthesis, zu identifizieren*]; to secure for music, the antithetical middle term [*antithetischen mittelglied*], and the last remaining universal language [*der letzten Sprache aller Menschen*] since the tower of Babel, its rightful central position as antithesis; and it would have to investigate how writing arises from music and not immediately from the sounds of the spoken word (*wie aus ihr* [*Musik*]*, nicht aber aus dem Sprachlaut unmittelbar, die Schrift erwächst*.)[92]

If these lines do not sufficiently anticipate Derrida's formulations, if the "dialectical" cast threatens to throw us out of track, and if "erwächst" might seem to suggest an origin or a source (even more when translated as "grows out of"), then we might see the "middle

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[91] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1998, 183 translation modified; emphasis mine; thus, not only Benjamin but also Ritter would have escaped Platonic mimetology. For a different reading of Ritter, see Veit Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2010), 197ff.

[92] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 183; translation modified.

term" as just another *iteration* (since the middle term is here no *arche* or *telos* nor synthesis, it is a remainder, *der letzten*); we might retranslate music as *mousikē* and recall how, in its ancient Greek context and in its early modern return, it functioned not as the origin nor the telos of civilizing or alienating processes but as a medium—a widely distributed and fragmented performative assemblage of media—that served effectively to inscribe the *ethos* and *nomoi* of a community; then, perhaps, we might see that the identification of oral and written language—if this identification consists in preserving their difference without submitting one to the other, or rather in accounting for their difference without posing a single origin as *arche* or *telos*—may be precisely the difference that arises from iteration, from the repetition in performance of the signature, by which the envelope, the exterior, is incorporated; by which the remains, the cinders, do not fall behind but become figure.[93]

Baroque mimesis consists in putting history on stage, on presenting history as a natural process, where nature is understood as fallen, as decaying; natural history appears the *disjecta membra* of its fragments and ruins. These fragments do not refer to an absent totality but to the absence of totality, to the discontinuous and incomplete: they reveal death as inscribed upon the face of history. This expression is attained by means of shock, of a face or "a death's head," or again in the "awkward heavy handedness" of the way allegory personifies nature and in the way stage props and emblems become overtly material. "There is not the faintest glimmer of any spiritualization of the physical. The

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[93] I thank Jean-Michel Rabaté for first calling my attention to these pages and suggesting that the *Feuerschrift* was archi-writing. This interpretation is placed, nevertheless, under Benjamin's acknowledgment of the tentative tone of these suggestions. Adorno, too, had a crack at the enigma in his 1934 essay "The Form of the Phonograph Record," in whose grooves he sees "the phonograph record's most profound justification, which cannot be impugned by an aesthetic objection to its reification. For this justification reestablishes by the very means of reification an age-old, submerged and yet warranted relationship: that between music and *writing*…It would be then that, in a seriousness hard to measure, the form of the phonograph record could find its true meaning: the scriptal spiral that disappears in the center, in the opening of the middle, but in return survives in time." Adorno, Theodor W. *Essays on Music*. Edited by Richard D Leppert. Translated by Susan H Gillespie. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 279-80. See also Chafe, Eric. *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991, 21.

whole of nature is personalized, not so as to be made more inward, but, on the contrary—
so as to be deprived of soul."[94] There is nothing inconspicuous in baroque allegory.

So it happens with the allegorical tiara in Ponelle's production. The tiara cannot
be described otherwise than as excessive. It is literally inscribed with its meaning,
overlaying the emblem's *inscriptio* upon itself, revealing in advance or interrupting the
work of interpretation that the viewer would have to perform. It breaks down the role of
signification by attempting to unite signifier and signified. Moreover, given that La
Musica introduces herself through the paradigmatic presence-effect of pointing to herself
as she sings "I am Music," the tiara appears as entirely unnecessary, supplementary: and
yet it is there, repeating—and thus altering—the personification of music through a prop.

What's more: the instant of the transformation is hidden on-screen by Vincenzo's
ruff, yet another prop—part of the period costume that seeks to enhance the
"authenticity" of the performance—, whose effect in the performance is that of an
obstruction. The performance interrupts the aural dimension of the transformation by
calling attention to material surface, to the material inscription in the tiara and the stiff,
elaborate, yet out-of-focus ruff. These appear now to be clearly arbitrary props, whose
lack as symbols is remarked by the introduction of yet a third prop, the lyre, in the second
verse, to repeat the metamorphosis. In this case, again, the instant of the transformation is
elided through montage, as the camera cuts to a medium close-up of three musicians as
they play the ritornello. The effect, once again, is obstruction: the moment when
Vincenzo hands the lyre to Eleonora is not only in the background and out of focus, but
also blocked from view by a bow that swings in front of the camera (Figure 8). The
perspective is entirely artificial, structured through a horizontal plane and an
accumulation of figures, movement, and dark colors in the front and middle-ground,
while the important event, the transformation, almost goes unnoticed.

The return of the prop, the repetition of the allegorical effect that turns Eleonora
into La Musica—the turn and return of the allegorical identification of historical and

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[94] Herbert Cysarz, quoted in Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 187.

Figure 8: Second obstruction Ponnelle: Monteverdi: Orfeo

allegorical characters which forms the conceit of the entire production—contaminates the first turn, it marks it as needing yet another turn to be completed, thus in-completing it. The performance simultaneously establishes the rules of its mode of signification and undermines them by remarking their artificiality, the materiality of its spectacular effects. With this repetition, which marks and remarks the mimetic ground of its ideological intention, the performance disrupts the effect, offering itself both as (plain) performance and interpretation.[95]

If in Ronconi's production Orfeo and La Musica are united in a mystical instant through the Merleau-Pontian touch, the transformations by which Schmidt turns into Eleonora and then La Musica (to then return to her role as Eleonora), produced by a stage-prop that remarks itself as allegorical, produces the exaggerated, indeed baroque, effect by which "allegory emerges from the depths of being to intercept the intention, and

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[95] The similarity, indeed the anticipation of Brecht's theater in Benjamin's analysis of allegory has been noted. Buci-Glucksmann signals the *Theatrum mundi* metaphor, adapted by Benjamin from Cysarz as a "panoramatic" temporality, joins medieval and baroque drama to Brecht. Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason*, 71.

to triumph over it."[96] This moment, a *Now* that is permeated by history, necessarily exposes the bodies involved in their materiality as finitude. And if this transformation is exposed as an artifice, why would we believe the one that aims to identify Vincenzo and Francesco with Apollo and Orfeo?

For Calcagno, Ponnelle's production attempts "almost desperately, to recreate the premiere."[97] While this may be true, one also could say that Ponnelle's staging recreates the desperation of any attempt to perform a work with any kind of "historical awareness," especially with the awareness that history signifies decay, rupture, and death. The "authenticity" of Ponnelle's production (the allegorical identification of Apollo, La Musica, and Orpheus with the members of the Gonzaga family) does not only derive from the early modern habit of depicting noble rulers as mythological figures, but rather from an awareness of what the mechanisms of this "habit" are, in how they operate in the politico-theological framework to which these works owe their existence and to which they contributed in actual, productive ways. This political context is entirely erased if one understands these allegorical practices as aiming to blur myth and reality. As argued above, the production is only minimally concerned with recreating the premiere as an original event, as an event of origins in which its full meaning could be found: if anything, it only contributes to its in-completion. Nor is it interested in further blurring the difference between myth and reality, for how can one account for that difference in the first place?

By examining performance as in-completion in Ponnelle's production, we find allegory as the key to understand the articulation between performance, myth, and sovereignty. Yet, besides an emphasis on the materiality of the signifier, we have not reached what is properly historical in allegory—in Benjamin's sense—and which distinguishes it *as* allegory, and not merely as a sign or a representation. So far, allegory does not more perform the identification between the historical and the mythical characters as it reveals this identification to be ideological. Either we deny any success to

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[96] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 183.
[97] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 30.

the presumed identification, or we accept the identification and its repetition, which undoes it. In both cases, we return to seeing the performance as a pure event with no consequences beyond itself. In other words, it is impossible to affirm, simply, that the identification is successful and that the historical and mythical characters are present in front of us in any sense that goes beyond a restricted aesthetic sphere—that is, without the political effects that we attribute to the operation. We fall back into the affirmation that music mirrors the social order, whose effectivity, if any, is that of solving the contradictions of this social order at a purely formal and symbolic level.[98] This is, additionally, the mimetological limit of any analysis that seeks to argue for baroque opera as ideology *tout court*, one that relies on such types of identification to produce a representation of the sovereign that has real effects, as tends to happen in Calcagno, Feldman, or Stein.

Under the critical notion of mimesis advanced here, we can argue further that, if is accepted that under general mimesis the distinction between copies and originals is a product and not an empirical given, and that such a distinction needs to be questioned from the perspective of an economy of distribution of value (i.e., economimesis), then the claim that music mirrors the social order would mean that its effects are not limited to the symbolic level. Music—and any representation of the social order—is effective and indeed productive of said order, yet it seems simply wrong to suggest that, because Apollo and Duke Vincenzo were identified in performance, the spectators—in 1607 or today—would take this identification to be politically effective in any strong way. While we agree with the claim that modernity is characterized by a turn towards a form of representation that has the capacity to shape the world, and that power may harness this capacity to affirm itself, how this capacity is enacted needs to be articulated through a critique of ideology and mimetology.[99]

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[98] As post-Marxist thinkers from Jacques Attali to Frederic Jameson and Terry Eagleton would argue. Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*; Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[99] This question depends on ascertaining the historicity of the "aesthetic." Jacques Rancière's analysis of different regimes of artistic identification aims to show that art as such does not exist before 1800, and that under the representative regime mimesis had a regulative function that limited it to preserving the broader

The question is all the more important at the time of absolutist power of which *L'Orfeo* is the precursor where, as Martha Feldman writes, "opera seria inevitably reproduced, as narrative and social/symbolic practice, the prevailing social structure, broadly supporting the absolutist trope of sovereignty despite inflections indigenous to different forms of political organization across Italy."[100] Feldman's further claim, that "no one person or group could claim [opera's] symbolic capital in toto, and the mechanisms of identification were many, varied, and complexely mediated" is key.[101] Feldman locates spaces of resistance in attitudes like distracted, anarchic, and erratic listening in the face of operas with librettos in which "endless, insuperable patriarchy was a foregone conclusion."[102] These techniques of distracted listening work towards the decentralization of opera's sovereignty, securing the place for autonomous individuals outside of a simplistic ideological model, yet they do not seem to go far enough in the direction of ideological and mimetological critique, working instead towards affirming more traditional musicological objects such as the "ineffable power of the human voice."[103]

An important problem emerges from the reading of Ponnelle and Benjamin that will set the direction in the following chapter. We have been operating under the hypothesis that *L'Orfeo* is an allegory, that its meaning and function as ritual in the court do not have a purely aesthetic function but especially a political one, that of displaying the rank of the sponsoring dynasty through self-representation. However, in examining what is at stake in this self-representation, and especially when a production such as Ponnelle's stages it, this explanation seems to crack. It is not that the hypothesis might be

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political distinctions. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 24. As argued in the introduction, however, Rancière's writings on art seem to privilege the aesthetic regime over the representative regime, which appears only as preparatory of the categories that the aesthetic one would disrupt, thus conforming to the teleological narrative that this dissertation aims to resist.

[100] Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6.

[101] Ibid., 8. See also Feldman, Martha, "The Absent Mother in Opera Seria," in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[102] Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 25.

[103] Ibid., 26.

wrong or that we need more historical information to prove it. No amount of information would be enough to fill in all the gaps. What happens, rather, is that the performance in-completes itself. As soon as it sets weight on one specific referent in order to ground itself historically (such as the filial analogy between the Gonzagas and the gods) another referent (La Musica as an allegory) remarks the first allegorical device as being itself an allegory (and not a purely historical referent). Although this is the case with any text, the fact that it is precisely allegory that is employed here, makes things more critical. This crack or breakdown complicates the simple reference between a work performed in the present and the historical past where we assume it is located.

In Benjamin's terms, we would say that there is a flash of now-time that exposes our relation to the past. If the performance today sought to be a purely aesthetic event, it now becomes political. It reveals that, in order to perform these works, we must grapple with the ideological and theological elements of the work. Not simply as a matter of context but also of content—but we already lose the ground to distinguish between the two. A further examination of allegory as Benjamin conceives it, elaborated in the excursus that follows, will show that baroque allegory and the political theology of sovereignty are fundamental to solving this question, as well as the specific affect that these performances seek to mobilize, which we will explore in the chapters that follow.

WALTER BENJAMIN: MUSICOLOGIST

(FIRST DISCIPLINARY EXCURSUS)

In the following chapter I will undertake a closer examination of the mimetological and ideological structures of baroque performance. In this excursus, I will remain with Benjamin's theory of allegory in order to situate it with respect to *L'Orfeo* more accurately since, as readers familiar with *The Origin of Baroque Tragic Drama* might already have noted, there seems to be little relation between the *Trauerspiele* analyzed by Benjamin and early modern opera. The works analyzed by Benjamin—and this is the starting point of his investigation—are not inspired either by Greek tragedy nor by pastoral drama; they do not depend on myth but history, through a mediaeval tradition of mystery cycles and Jesuit theater; they do not present heroes in action and moral conflict but tyrants, intriguers, and martyrs who die on stage. In other words, just as *L'Orfeo* is far from Greek tragedy are the *Trauerspiele* distanced from *L'Orfeo*. Thus, in order to employ Benjamin's notion of allegory, developed as it is through careful examination of a particular repertory, we will need to establish some common concepts and interpretive keys to put them in relation to each other. Finally, this excursus aims to provide the ground for reintegrating Benjamin's early work into traditional questions of musicology, namely affect, historicity, and meaning. In contrast to Adorno, Benjamin's work has received little attention from scholars in the field, if only because he seldom writes about music. Whereas scholars such as Eric Chafe and Daniel Chua do cite him as an influence on their work on allegory and history, they remain at a considerable distance from the text. My reading here aims to make up for these gaps, so the following pages will remain rather close to Benjamin's text yet providing sufficient points of articulation for this dissertation and his work.

Some common concepts have been announced in the preceding chapter, most centrally the disrupting role of the allegorical props in Ponnelle's production that recall Benjamin's insistence on the transient nature of the allegorical ruin. More generally, these props evidence a tension between the sonorous and the visual that runs through the

performance, to the point that we assist to a performance of representation. The allegorical means that characterize the *Trauerspiele*, for Benjamin, also depend on remarking the tension between the audible and the visual, experimenting with echo, onomatopoeia, and pure sound on the one hand, and developing the trope of the *theatrum mundi* to its spectacular extreme, with the sovereign at the center, on the other.

Materiality, transience, and spectacularization—in short, natural history—are articulated in the body of the dead sovereign of the *Trauerspiel*; but is it the same for early modern opera? To be sure, the relation between death and sovereignty in this performance, especially in the prologue, appears weakly at best, unlike the *Trauerspiele*. Moreover, neither catharsis nor mourning—the two central affects of tragedy and *Trauerspiel*—are present in *L'Orfeo*, a *favola* which, in a "flagrant contradiction" remarked by Lorenzo Bianconi, is taken from Ovidian mythology and not the "true" Greek tragedy whose effects the humanists aimed to revive.[1] For Bianconi, "the adoption of Ovidian transformation myths and their pastoral setting complies with certain aesthetic requirements which, to the perpetrators of the earliest attempts to sustain an entire dramatic action through music, seemed inescapable."[2] In addition to the requirement of the *lieto fine* initiated by Rinuccini's *Euridice*, the privilege of the pastoral in general results from a certain interpretation of Aristotelian verisimilitude presented in the anonymous treatise *Il Corago* (c. 1630)[3] and by G. B. Doni, for whom the pastoral deities, nymphs, and shepherds conform to the requirement of verisimilitude because they belong to a time in which "music was natural and speech almost poetic."[4] For Benjamin on the other hand, the integration of the pastoral in the baroque does not depend on such aesthetic reasons or in the emergence of the anti-artistic, theoretical man of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. Rather, the function of this integration is to undo, or rather overcome the opposition between nature and history by secularizing the historical in the state of

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[1] Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, 174.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, *Il corago.* (Firenze: Olschki, 1983); Roger Savage and Matteo Sansone, "'Il Corago' and the Staging of Early Opera: Four Chapters from an Anonymous Treatise circa 1630," *Early Music* 17, no. 4 (1989): 495–511.

[4] Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, 175; see also Roger Savage, "Precursors, Precedents, Pretexts in Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjenšek, *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–30.

creation. Thus, as a response to the "disconsolate chronicle of world-history" the baroque opposes not eternity but "the restoration of the timelessness of paradise" through the idyllic nature that appears in the pastoral.[5] For Benjamin, that is, verisimilitude is not a reason or a motivation but an effect of a deeper historical and theological concern that defines the character of the baroque.

This eschatological opposition of nature and history is, for Benjamin, the key to understand the baroque, which he places it within a historical framework of catastrophe and crisis.[6] Not just an economic one—which it was—but a crisis of the very concept of sovereignty in the Counter-Reformation as analyzed by Carl Schmitt. In Benjamin's gloss,

> A new concept of sovereignty emerged in the seventeenth century from a final discussion of the juridical doctrines of the middle ages. …Whereas the modern concept of sovereignty amounts to supreme executive power on the part of the prince, the baroque concept emerges from a discussion of the state of emergency, and makes it the most important function to avert this. The ruler is designated from the outset as the holder of dictatorial power if war, revolt, or other catastrophes should lead to a state of emergency.[7]

 The antinomy in sovereign power consists in defining the figure of the prince in terms of crisis and catastrophe. The emergency, Schmitt writes, is unpredictable: one cannot anticipate its characteristics nor specify in advance how it is to be dealt with; it exists outside of the law. The most the constitution can do is to specify who acts in such a case, yet since the emergency is unpredictable, it falls to the sovereign to decide whether there is an emergency at all. The sovereign depends on the emergency to be defined as sovereign, and thus his authority is also outside the law. Yet he is also included since

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[5] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (New York, NY: Verso, 2009), 92.
[6] "For a critical understanding of the *Trauerspiel*, in its extreme, allegorical form, is possible only from the higher domain of theology; so long as the approach is an aesthetic one, paradox must have the last word. Such a resolution, like the resolution of anything profane into the sacred, can only be accomplished historically, in terms of a theology of history, and only dynamically, not statically in the sense of a guaranteed economics of salvation." Ibid., 216.
[7] Ibid., 65.

only he can decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended.[8] In other words, it is "a vicious circle of the political, where absolute power rises up on the basis of catastrophes, in order to avert a catastrophe."[9] As Christine Buci-Glucksmann comments, Benjamin uses Schmitt's analysis to uncover the foundational violence of seventeenth century political theology, which liberal political philosophy would quickly seek to conceal as a move from "savagery" to "civil" nature, "contract" or reason.[10] And in this lies one of Benjamin's motives for approaching the baroque: it is not an aestheticist or historicist approach but rather one which locates the period as key to understanding the logic of modernity, of uncovering the hidden violence that philosophy sought to conceal and which allegory reveals in an indirect way.

If the essence of sovereignty consists in facing crisis with decision, then "the sovereign is the representative of history; he holds the course of history in his hands like a scepter."[11] History, power, and spectacle are embodied in his figure. Thus, the German *Trauerspiel* and the theatre of Calderón appear as the two extremes by which the sovereign appears on stage. In protestant Germany, and as Weber shows, the affirmation of grace as the only form of redemption, which places salvation only in the afterlife, providing no transcendent reassurance for earthly life, means that "whereas the middle ages present the futility of world events and the transience of the creature as stations on the road to salvation, the German *Trauerspiel* is taken up entirely with the hopelessness of the earthly condition."[12] In contrast, the Counter-Reformation did not present history as catastrophe and apocalypse but as a golden age of peace and culture, where "the conflicts of a state of creation without grace are resolved, by a kind of playful reduction, within the sphere of the court, whose king proves to be a secularized redemptive power."[13]

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[8] Carl Schmitt, Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 7.
[9] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Sage, 1994), 69.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 65.
[12] Ibid., 81.
[13] Ibid.

In both cases the death of the sovereign, the corpse on stage, operates as an emblem, an allegory: this is what I have proposed in relation to my reading of *L'Orfeo* thus far. It is only as corpses devoid of life, exposing the materiality and fragility of mortals—as opposed to the instantaneous transformation of the soul in tragic *peripeteia*—that the characters of the *Trauerspiel* can "enter into the homeland of allegory."[14] The Dionysian finale of *L'Orfeo* could be a candidate for such an emblem in the birth of opera. Yet, it is not the simple presence of the body onstage what makes it an allegory of death, in defiance of what the French classicists would call *bienséances*, but precisely as a point of articulation between natural history and theology. To understand its function in a Catholic context, Benjamin must trace it back to the Christian, medieval tradition: "There is a threefold material affinity [*sachliche Verwandtschaft*] between baroque and mediaeval Christianity. The struggle against the pagan gods, the triumph of allegory, the torment of the flesh, are equally essential to both…And it is only in these terms that the origin [*Ursprung*] of allegory can be illuminated."[15] The passage from pagan antiquity to modern Christianity, moreover, is a task of translation realized by the medieval Church and repeated by the neoplatonic Renaissance. Allegory emerges as the strategy to mediate between the two: "If the church had not been able quite simply to banish the gods from the memory of the faithful, allegorical language would have never come into being; for it is not an epigonal victory monument; but rather the word which is intended to exorcise a surviving remnant of antique life."[16] Allegory ensured the survivance [*Fortleben*] of the world of the ancient gods in a time which was acutely aware of the impermanence of things, both during the middle ages as in the period of crisis of the seventeenth century.

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[14] Ibid., 218.

[15] Ibid., 220.

[16] Ibid., 223. Peter Burke also notes role of allegory as mediation between the pagan and the Christian world. Burke sees the entry of Mercury in the prologue of Poliziano's *Orfeo* as replacing the angel that commonly introduced Italian mystery plays or *rappresentazioni sacre*. Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 23. Another important genre to consider in this context are the Spanish *autos sacramentales*, for example Calderón's *El Divino Orfeo*, a highly allegorical work where the Orpheus myth is christianized through, among other devices, a prologue where actors on stage spell the word EUCHARISTIA and then re-spell it as CITHARA IESU. Pilar Martín-Retortillo, "Notas a «el Divino Orfeo» de Calderón de La Barca," *AISO Actas* IV (1996): 251–61.

In the face of transience, of the threat of disappearance, "allegory established itself most permanently where transitoriness and eternity confronted each other most closely."[17] And in the context of Christianity, this permanence was ensured by a conflict between a two conceptions of nature, a fallen one which produced guilt, and a purer one belonging to the pagan gods who could only be admired through statues, through the mournful contemplation of their corpses, where pagan divinities appear in the deadness of their concrete tangibility.[18]

There are two mimetic dimensions to this *survivance* of the gods: first, the revaluation of statues as *eidola*, not as representations, simulacra, or hallucinations—whose debased status depends on the Platonic mimetology—but as earlier forms of what Jean Pierre Vernant calls the "double": a specter whose presence is a sign of absence and whose embodiment in stone, in the *colossos*, mediates between this world and the world of the dead.[19] Second, this mournful revaluation of mimesis is an introjection by which the lost other is made part of the self.

The mourning that the Renaissance would develop over the pagan gods and which guaranteed their *survivance* was not so much about their "loss," since in truth they never had them, but it was a form of a primary, identificatory mimetism through which the self is constituted through separation, through in-completion, a point that Judith Butler argues after the groundbreaking analysis of mimesis and trauma from the perspective of psychoanalysis and affect theory developed by Ruth Leys. For Butler, separation and loss is what constitutes the self as self, a loss which is primary because the self does not exist without this loss. This initial loss is provisionally resolved through a melancholic incorporation of the other, which makes up for loss but also makes it impossible for that self to achieve self-identity. "It is as it were always already disrupted by that Other; the

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[17] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 224.
[18] Ibid., 226.
[19] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 311. Euridice, as Orpheus finds her in the underworld, also belongs to the category of the *eidolon.* in the *Symposium*, Phaedrus says that Orpheus was shown a *phasma* of Euridice.

disruption of the Other at the heart of the self is the very condition of that self's possibility."[20]

At the end of the *Trauerspiel* book, Benjamin writes: "As those who lose their footing turn somersaults in their fall, so would the allegorical intention fall from emblem to emblem down into the dizziness of its bottomless depths[.]"[21] The only thing that stops the endless deferral, the dissemination of images and writing of the allegorical drift is a turnaround, an *Umschwung* [which also translates *peripeteia*], by which the panorama of fragmentation, decay, and destruction, is interpreted as "an allegory of resurrection. Ultimately [*Zuletzt*] in the death-signs of the baroque the direction of allegorical reflection is reversed; on the second part of its wide arc it returns, to redeem."[22] This decision abandons playful abandonment [*spielerisch*] and turns seriously [*Ernsthaft*] towards heaven; it "does not faithfully rest in the contemplation of bones, but faithlessly leaps forward to the idea of resurrection [*Auferstehung*]."[23]

The limit of allegory, the moment when the movement of allegory is arrested, is the securing of a signified, of a presence. Not earthly, immediate presence but the absolute securing of all presence by which death is submitted, made accessory, to the resurrection, to the preservation of life; the Evil that appears as signified is itself only "the non-existence of what it presents."[24] The turn towards heaven, to recall an earlier term, is a *Verwertung*, a liquidation of the potentiality of the allegory for securing the highest value. "In the allegorical image of the world, therefore, the subjective perspective is entirely absorbed [*restlos einbezogen*] in the economy of the whole."[25]

But if the signified of the allegory is another signifier, this means—although Benjamin does not need to spell it out—that the final signified, resurrection, does not need to be taken as the final word. Allegory, the materiality of the signifier, as he stated

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[20] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 27. This is a similar logic as the one presented in chapter 4, after Lacoue-Labarthe, as desistance.
[21] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 232.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 233.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 234.

from the beginning, thwarts intention, and only faithlessness—i.e., metaphysics—allows for play to turn into seriousness. If representing the impossibility of representing the Good is the function of allegory in the *Trauerspiel*, this does not mean that the iterative and mimetic logic that Benjamin unearthed by arresting the moment of allegory's liquidation in awakening exhausts all allegory as such. Rather, by identifying its social, historical, and theological origins, by distinguishing between its manifest and its latent content, Benjamin identified the key to interpret seventeenth-century allegory beyond its metaphysical aspirations and against the ideological dismissal of his time.

CHAPTER 6

THE RETURN BEFORE THE TURN: DISENCHANTMENT, SOVEREIGNTY, AND MACHIAVELLIAN FUTURITY IN *L'EURIDICE* (1600)

Orpheus descends to the underworld—a feat that no human can normally accomplish—and manages to persuade Pluto to yield Eurydice. Pluto accedes but imposes a new law: not to turn back, which repeats the first law (not to go into the underworld) and which Orpheus again transgresses. This fatal turn, which is a repetition of the transgression, restores the ordering of living and deceased, gods and mortals, that for a moment music had seemed to overturn. These two transgressions illustrate, present or re-present, the laws of nature as they apply to mortals: the vertical separation between the mortal world and the underworld and the linear or horizontal passage of time from the past to the present. They establish, in short, the fate of mortals, their finitude. This poses a problem: either the repetition of the transgression undoes the first transgression, or by repeating it it reaffirms the first one. How to decide?

What enables these transgressions—at least the first one—is music, Orpheus' song. Its power over gods, animals, stones, and all creatures is well known; his song tames, persuades, moves, overpowers its listeners, it stops the wheel of Ixion and makes the Eumenides weep—hence, everyone seems to agree, the obvious appeal of the myth for the first opera. This feat, this mythical testimony of the magical power of musical excess—the association of love and persuasion in the affective power of music—constitutes the paradigm of Early Modern "musical aesthetics," of music's power to move the affections. Yet in the context of these transgressions and when addressed to Pluto, ruler of the underworld, we are past the magical realm or persuasion, but we are not yet into the self-contained world of aesthetics.

We are in a particular space created by the intersection of humanist reconstructions of a silent musical past and the visibility of political configurations in the present. These coordinates (interest in the artistic past, political reconfiguration or crisis) create a paradoxical space which aims to be present and past, in which the legitimacy of

the political is obtained through the authority of the past. We would say that with *Orfeo* time becomes space if it wasn't because this turn, in such a turn or re-turn, is a time that exceeds the space of its (re)presentation. In Althusser's reading of Machiavelli, this space is also the space of a new politics, of a new possibility for a historical transformation, for the emergence of a new class. For Machiavelli, "one needs to be…a man of the people to understand properly the character of rulers," or, in Althusser's gloss, that "there can be no knowledge of rulers except from the viewpoint of the people."[1] This space is occupied by no-one: it is a space designed to be filled, a utopian space. What defines it is a certain theatrical perspective, with the sovereign at the center of the stage, facing the people. Thus, perspective, sovereignty, and politics coincide in a historical conjuncture, staged in the courts of the very Prince that Machiavelli sought to describe. This space, we may now add, is produced, maintained, and transgressed by mimesis—the representation of a second birth, from a narrow stage (the *angusta scena*) to the *Theatrum mundi*—and its limits can only be defined by joining two terms that constantly exceed each other: aesthetic politics.[2]

It would seem, then, that the only way of grasping the logic of this space without space, which produces time anew or a new time by abandoning it, by turning towards the past, was through the power of music, through the staging or representation of the power of music: hence—once again—Orpheus. Music, many have claimed in more or less words, "exceeds beyond social and rational structures. It structures the nonstructurable and represents the nonrepresentable (which is the Kantian definition of the sublime)."[3] For Mladen Dolar, this excess is represented paradigmatically by Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, which "is based on two *primeval*, perhaps *original*, functions of music that defined most of its fate throughout its entire history: the religious and the erotic."[4] These two primeval functions are joined in Orpheus, who wins Pluto's mercy through music yet loses Eurydice out of an excess of love. In his paradigmatic formula (paradigmatic of all opera,

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[1] Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. François Matheron (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 24.
[2] In chapter 5 I referred to Derrida's reading of Machiavelli in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). For the mimetic aspects of the *Theatrum mundi* trope in Machiavelli, see Potolsky, Matthew. *Mimesis*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.
[3] Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 10.
[4] Ibid. emphasis mine.

according to Dolar, from *Orfeo* to *The Magic Flute*, until mercy disappeared after two centuries): "the power of music elicits mercy, the power of music is the only thing that equals the power of love, music is another word for love and its irresistible force…love=mercy=music."[5] By placing *L'Orfeo* as the origin of this schema, with culminates with Mozart's operas, Dolar suggests a way in which we can begin to map the coordinates of this paradoxical space of political aesthetics, as "the birth of opera from the spirit of absolutism."[6]

The only problem, which is more evident for the musicologist than for the philosopher—although as philosophers we could also object to its teleological framework—is that these so-called primeval and original functions of music are not as self-evident and are historically far more problematic than Dolar and Zizek might reckon. Nor is the singular place afforded to *L'Orfeo*, which appears here again as a foundational moment, a unique event. Philosophy, once again, posits music as an origin and a limit, but characteristically stops short of questioning what it means to posit it as such. The power and the unrepresentability of music are the ultimate philosophical axioms. Hence the task of reconstructing historically the genealogies of these original functions and events. In this case, a traditionally musicological strategy, that of tracing the influences of an earlier work upon another, will show that what is presented as original in *L'Orfeo*, the association between music and sovereignty through love and mercy is already a transformation of a structure that is found first in Peri's version of *Euridice* (1600), to which this chapter is dedicated.

DISENCHANTED VOICES OR, PRELUDE TO A MISS

And yet, it has not been remarked enough, in musicology, that in the most well-known settings of the Orpheus myth as early opera, music has, in fact, little of its fabled power to enchant and move its listeners.[7] When we approach the work with historical distance we

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 5.

[7] More often, his failure is taken to be a rhetorical one, that is, choosing words the inappropriate, modes, or styles. See John Whenham and Richard Wistreich, *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi* (Cambridge:

already grant Orpheus these powers: we await the spectacle of a magical capacity elsewhere lacking in the world, and we know where to expect it—in all those laments and pleas—even if it does not actually take place. To repeat a joke by Carolyn Abbate, it seems that in *L'Orfeo* song has had more power over its post-Wagnerian audience than it does in the opera or for the audiences of its own time.[8] Our belief in song's magic precedes its effects, and so we seem to take it for granted, while in fact such a power borders on the unrepresentable. This paradox is at the center of the Orpheus myth and determines its operatic actualization, its becoming-modern. When the world turns towards representation, when "what is" is defined as "what is seen," magical song remains behind as audible as it is invisible: the unrepresentable. Within a progressively dis-enchanted world, magical song signifies—and identifies—both a bygone world and the unrepresentable itself (as Dolar would argue).

The reflections offered in this chapter should help us to see the equivalent scene in *L'Orfeo* from a different perspective. Consider the reasoning behind the various interpretive strategies that seek to account for the many oddities in "Possente spirto," a number which, as Abbate writes, "has acquired such mythic status that there may seem little aria left to contemplate."[9] As in *L'Euridice*, it is somewhat odd that an opera that

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Cambridge University Press, 2007) and especially; Joel Schwindt, "'All That Glisters': Orpheus's Failure as an Orator and the Academic Philosophy of the Accademia Degli Invaghiti," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26, no. 3 (November 2014): 239–70. The failure, for Schiwindt, can be read through the Horatian aesthetics of Tasso, where the poem is a "double animal," composed of "Imitations" that delight, and "Allegories" that instruct. However, it is within the Ciceronian oratory of the *Accademia degli Invaghiti*, which was in charge of the production of *L'Orfeo,* and more generally within the context of the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy that Schwindt elaborates on the issue. "The contradiction between Orpheus's musical skill and his ineffectiveness as an orator may have been meant to convey a subtle message on music's ability to move the heart and mind of the listener, as well as its limitations in regard to moral instruction." 256. Schwindt's setting of the problem is illuminating throughout. Here, I elaborate on the political and historical aspects that encompass, but are not limited to, these purely aesthetic reasons. See also Russ VerSteeg and Nina Barclay, "Rhetoric and Law in Ovid's Orpheus," *Law and Literature* 15, no. 3 (2003): 395–420. VerSteeg, & Barclay show this rhetorical failure to be also in Ovid (as they show, moreover, classics scholars have been more quick to criticize the style of Orpheus' plea than opera scholars). I elaborate on this last point below.

[8] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 19 Whenever its absence is noted, it is only to posit a further development of which *L'Orfeo* is an incomplete beginning, either in Monteverdi's technique (Tomlinson, Rosand) or in opera as a whole (Kerman, Abbate's "post-Wagnerian listeners"), problematic teleological narratives which are of little historical or philosophical interest.

[9] Ibid., 18. The first commonplace, advanced by Kerman and Schrade, is the observation that Orfeo's song becomes persuasive only when he abandons ornamented singing for natural declamation. The first four

takes it as its theme to display the power of music, where the most important moment is Orpheus's plea to Pluto to release Eurydice, should avoid doing it. The obvious reason is that music is unrepresentable, yet such a turn is not without its consequences. In *L'Orfeo*, not only magical song is utterly ineffective, but the place of the plea is strangely displaced by the theatrical *non sequitur* pointed out by Abbate: "Possente spirto," the hit number, the paradigmatic lamento-plea, is not addressed to Plutone, as in *L'Euridice*, but to Caronte. Orpheus has not yet crossed the Styx when he sings the piece. Moreover, it does not have the desired effect: Caronte says he enjoys the music yet refuses to yield—pity is "unworthy" of him. Orfeo only makes it into Hades after Caronte falls asleep to an instrumental *Sinfonia* that represents Orfeo's lyre. This, Tim Carter argues, is the true success of Orfeo's song: not moving to pity but sending to sleep, casting an enchanting spell. The third act concludes with a "Chorus of Spirits" after Orfeo takes Caronte's boat. Act IV then opens with Plutone and Proserpina along with the spirits from the chorus, and it is the Queen who convinces Plutone to grant Orfeo's plea. But, as Abbate notes, it is nowhere clear if, and how, Proserpina heard Orfeo, or if she heard the same number as we did.

Beyond any discussion that seeks to identify natural declamation with lack of coloratura—which Abbate rightly denounces as having a retroactive Wagnerian bias—the other puzzling duplicity in "Possente Spirto" lies in the two versions given in the score (present in both the 1609 and 1615 editions) for the first four strophes of Orfeo's song: a simple, unadorned version in the *stile rappresentativo* of Peri, and the ornamented one of dazzling virtuosity described by Kerman. There is no agreement as to why the two versions are given, and the indication on the score states that the Orfeo sings only one of them (a counter-argument to the claim that the score registers the event as it

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strophes are as spectacularly ornamented as they are ineffective. For Kerman, it is only by "forgetting himself" and turning to recitative in the fifth strophe and then to the "vaguely ecclesiastical" style of the sixth one, that Orfeo manages to persuade the "stony-hearted" Charon, although Kerman seems to forget, too, that Charon simply falls asleep to Orfeo's lament. Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, 35. For Schrade too, the number shows a progression of rising intensity as Orfeo passes from the virtuosity of the first strophes to the simplicity of the last one. Schrade, *Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music*.

happened: here it gives no indication of which one, if any, was performed in 1607).[10] In Calcagno's suggestion Orfeo is here addressing both Caronte (with the unadorned one) and the audience with the virtuosic, crowd-pleasing aria. Focusing more on the deictic elements than in the style of each aria, Calcagno argues that the first version is mimetic (in a narratological sense): it is addressed to Caronte and sung in a style that might persuade him, it remains within the narrative and hides the role of the singer as performer. The second one operates in the diegetic mode, it presents Orfeo as a performer and is directed to the audience instead of Caronte. The representational one, Calcagno argues, is never performed because it is ineffective: it does not persuade Caronte but sends him to sleep. Thus, Calcagno tacitly agrees with Abbate's indictment of "hermeneutical stitching" that aims to resolve the non sequitur in the scene.

By "hermeneutical stitching" Abbate means those interpretations that suggest that the linearity of the performance can be interpreted outside of its presentation in real time on stage, such that, for example, "the singing that Proserpina describes in act 4 is the same singing Charon yawns over in act 3, and that she overheard the aria though she was not present in the scene."[11] This solution is offered in, among other places, Ponnelle's production of which, like Calcagno, Abbate is not a fan.[12] In that production, act 3 and 4

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[10] For Pirrotta, the first aria is a lamento in *stile rappresentativo*, while the second is nothing short of "an 'orphic' rite, a highly stylized and hieratically formulated incantation, through which a superhuman singer soothes and subdues the forces of darkness crossing his path." Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 277. Carter suggests, based on period performance practices, that the first one might be for amateur singers, or else Monteverdi's attempt to record and notate the original performance; or indeed how he wished it had been. Tim Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 133. One could also imagine that the first one is given as a kind of Schenkerian middleground elaboration of the basso continuo, while the second one gives a version of a possible foreground, where the singer is free to follow or to improvise a similar one; that the entire passage is built on the form of strophic variations could support this interpretation, as no formal constraint forbids more versions of the same basso continuo to be composed or improvised by the singer.

[11] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 19.

[12] Whenham argues, after Pirrotta, that in observation of the unity of action all acts were performed without other interruption than the changes of scene after acts 2 and 4—into the Underworld and back to the Thracian fields. It follows that acts 1 and 2, but especially 3 and 4, are connected (there is in fact no indication for a scene change) so that Proserpina was in effect present for Orfeo's "Possente spirto." The reason for the separation, for Whenham, is to fruitfully employ Caronte as a reference to Dante to evoke the poet's description of *Inferno* as the setting for both acts, an effect that would be ruined by separating them. John Whenham, ed., *Claudio Monteverdi, Orfeo* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 71.

are separated by an *intermedio*, staged over the opera's ritornello, in which Vincenzo and Eleonora walk on stage and meet another couple dressed in red armors and royal garb. The scene camera focuses on the Gonzaga coat of arms in the proscenium. When it focuses back on stage, the scene has magically changed: we are in Hell, replete with skulls and smoke. Vincenzo leads the other male figure—we now recognize him as Plutone—to join him on the left side of the stage, while Proserpina takes her place on the right. Eleonora remains on stage, as she also doubles as La Speranza. Orfeo appears. Thus, the infernal couple is present during Orfeo's plea to Caronte and attend to his performance. In fact, Plutone's hand can be seen reaching from the screen, magically putting Caronte to sleep at the end of the number. Abbate's own solution to the problem is equally suggestive. I quote her at length:

> But [supposing that Proserpina was present during "Possente spirto," as in Ponnelle] is a contrivance in the reading, an attempt to erase the non sequitur, responding to anxieties about theatrical logic that are historically conditioned, troubling to post-Wagnerian habits of libretto appreciation. Perhaps the uncontrived, literal assumption is inherently preferable, as less strained: Proserpina heard some other song, one neither Charon nor the theater audience has witnessed. But this reversion to the uncontrived, ironically, opens up the possibility for several strange elaborations. The first is that "Possente spirto" is a red herring: Orpheus's most important song is being excluded quite carefully from any actual onstage manifestation. Just as the song by the floating head was suppressed, so the mythic song before Pluto is suppressed, once more in response to dismay, since no opera can discover the song that brings back the dead, and any attempt to create it fails before a note has been written or sung. An ultimate operatic noumenon can be kept safe (along with one's compositional self-respect) by being shown indirectly, or not at all. Thus the netherworld performance in the opera is not the primal operatic scene at all, but a prelude.[13]

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[13] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 19.

If "Possente spirto" is not the song we expected to hear, Abbate nevertheless locates a magical moment in it, which "contains and conceals [the song that Proserpina claims to have heard], a mythic performance that exists only by implication. Thus, the prelude or preamble, the song heard by Charon and the theater audience, harbors the primal song without ever allowing it to be heard."[14] Abbate invites us to hear Orpheus' "phantom singing" in the famous instrumental echo effects within strophes; the various "passionately vocal" instruments echo each other in "expulsions of coloratura, pauses for breath, and repeated floods of singing," without bearing any resemblance to Orpheus's own lines. Rather, she suggests, they are echoes of the primal song that we never hear: they imitate Orfeo's voice yet not exactly what he sings. What she suggests, in short, is that these repetitions, these musical copies, create their model, the original primal song, the one we cannot hear.

Or at least this could be a reading of her point, a reading she nevertheless resists, recoiling into a more traditional mimetology: "Thus the instruments seem to hear an Orpheus voice that is not present. But they suggest its presence without ever suggesting that their melodies provide exact copies of its unimaginable music. This 'brings the beyond' into orbit, not as a distant physical space, but as a transcendent object."[15] I have to admit that, as suggestive as I find this interpretation, I do not find it less lacking in hermeneutical stitches than the options she otherwise dismisses. In the end, Proserpina is also either present in act 3 and hears in "Possente spirto" the parts that we cannot, or else there is a missing scene that needs to be posited, along with a more problematic "unsung" plea.

I am not too concerned with debating that point. However, there is an issue that is of direct relevance for this dissertation. Abbate's response preserves a mimetology based on a pure original and defective copies along with its musicological version, the idea of a "metaphysical" or "transcendental" music, of the unrepresentable, that serves as model and paradigm for its physical versions. Although it is suggestive to hear the echo instruments in "Possente spirto" as copies of something we do not hear, I find it

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[14] Ibid., 20.
[15] Ibid.

surprising to find them mobilized for positing the existence of a "transcendental" music which appears at every move as uncritical, ahistorical, and apolitical. I elaborate on these aspects in chapter 7, where I introduce the trope of the dorsal turn that preserves and carries along an unseen music which stands in for the metaphysical, and which is surprisingly recurrent in the musicology of the past decade. I elaborate upon the disciplinary consequences of this in the second disciplinary excursus in order to signal this problem: that in the recent turn towards materiality and performance, the discipline has carried along, unquestioned, its own metaphysical history. The more we strive to grasp the musical experience as such, turning in the direction where it properly should be, the more we preserve the traditional mimetology that we sought to turn away from in the first place. This issue, I argue, characterizes all the recent musicological turns, since its mimetologies have not been critically questioned; one of the merits of Abbate's insightful work is to expose—instead of masking—the way the discipline still depends on the dualism between the metaphysical and the material in order to make sense of musical experience, including the fascination opera exerts upon its enchanted listeners. For this same reason opera becomes a crucial text for beginning to deconstruct such opposition and the mimetology that grounds it.

I defer beginning such a deconstruction until chapter 7 and the disciplinary excursus. Here I focus on the issues of unrepresentability and disenchantment in Early Modern Italian settings of the Orpheus myth, specifically in Peri's *L'Euridice*, following on yet another suggestion by Abbate. As quoted above, "Possente spirto" is the prelude to the primal scene of opera. The idea of a prelude to a primal scene is characteristic of Abbate, but it also has a deconstructive ring to it: posing anything as the preparation of a primal scene, of an original event, undoes its originality and makes it derivative. But we only know it is a prelude of the event if it shares something with that event, something we already identify as primal in the event and which the prelude anticipates: the prelude is thus a copy of an event that was presumed to be original. Calling it a "primal scene," moreover, brings in the issue of Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*, whose structure complicates

the one just described: an undefined "something" leaves a mark in memory, which is afterwards reinterpreted as a traumatic event.

Nachträglichkeit, in fact, sets in crisis the metaphysical interpretation of time based on causes and effects. Insofar as it reorganizes what comes and what follows, time does not seem to precede its development but rather emerge from it. This is also evident in the thought that a copy produces the paradigm, and we will see more of its consequences in what follows. What leaves the mark can be insignificant or violent, common or unique, but it is charged with meaning and singled out—thus constituted—as a traumatic event only after the fact. The primal scene is made an origin only after it has passed, in the *après-coup*. If the prelude of the primal scene undoes the originality that *Nachträglichkeit* constitutes for it—and the prelude, as we have seen, also comes after the event, *après-coup*, but presents itself as preceding it, *avant-le-coup* (as one says that something is *avant-la-lettre*). It might be too bold to suggest that such a prelude has the therapeutic effect of undoing the trauma that is produced through *Nachträglichkeit*, that setting the stage for the trauma makes it disappear. Perhaps, to return to the terms of chapter 5, it does not make it disappear but, in challenging its originality as a primal event, it in-completes, opening it to other possibilities, to the possibility of being otherwise, or of not being at all. Perhaps this is the therapeutic power of history and historiography.

The reader might be well advised to know that I will not return to *L'Orfeo* in this chapter, and will not discuss "Possente spirto" any more. Yet, according to the above, if examining the prelude of the primal scene has any capacity to re-open its possibilities, then attending to Peri's *Euridice*, to *L'Orfeo avant-la-lettre*, whose importance for Monteverdi's composition is as recognized as it is underplayed, might prove productive.

L'EURIDICE BEFORE L'ORFEO

Orfeo and Euridice, *L'Orfeo* and *L'Euridice*: one follows another, one precedes the other. *Euridice* follows, but she (it) was first. But if we look back to *Euridice* it is only from the perspective of *Orfeo*. *Orfeo*, the male, the singer, the work of the better composer. In the ending of Ovid's telling—a *lieto fine*, after all, Eurydice follows Orpheus, who looks

back (*respicit*) at her: *respicere*, which often means imitation.[16] Model, precursor, motivation, or prelude, *Euridice* still remains disciplinarily subordinate to *Orfeo*, caught within a mimetology of *aemulatio*, where Monteverdi's merit is shown in how skillfully he succeeds in surpassing his model. Within this interpretive scheme, one is limited to finding elements in common between the two works, or points of divergence, often those where Monteverdi can be shown to improve on Peri's version—examples are legion. A less common approach is to attempt to repeat what happens in the myth: what disappears when we look back to *Euridice* from the position of *Orfeo*; what does *not* return in the imitation.

In chapter 5 I showed the place of sovereignty in *L'Orfeo*, which only Ponnelle's performance attempts to stage as central to the work. With this I sought to reintroduce the issue of history and politics, taking Benjamin's insight that the baroque is a unique moment of their intertwinement. Insofar as the intertwinement of sovereignty and history in *L'Orfeo* depended on allegory, however, its centrality was as soon suggested as it was undone. In *L'Euridice*, on the other hand, I argue, its centrality is unescapable although it takes no less effort to bring it to light. But once it does it will be unmistakeable:

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[16] Shane Butler, "The Backward Glance," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 17, no. 2 (2009): 67.

> hie modo coniunetis spatiantur passibus ambo,
> nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevius anteit
> Eurydicenque suam iam tu to respicit Orpheus. *Met.* (11.64-6).

The case for *L'Euridice* as the direct model for *L'Orfeo* has been made by scholars since Pirrotta, most forcefully in the case of Tomlinson. As Tomlinson shows, *L'Orfeo* takes many expressive, harmonic, and poetic devices from *L'Euridice*, even when Striggio's libretto seems to offer little motivation. In Tomlinson's argument, the similarities between the pieces are consistently shown to be borrowings, while the departures attest the genius of Monteverdi's innovations. In our terms, they show Monteverdi as appropriating the model, to the extent that *L'Euridice* is now most commonly approached as just that: the model or source that regulates Monteverdi's innovations. The similarities and differences between the two works that I trace below (and their relation to their sources) should be read outside of this logic of original and copy, and rather as variables and invariables that repeat themselves—for reasons we will need to analyze—as *L'Orfeo* looks back to *L'Euridice* (to borrow the terms from Buller's and Butler's work, cited above). Gary Tomlinson, "Madrigal, Monody, and Monteverdi's 'via Naturale Alla Immitatione,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 1 (1981): 60–108; Frederick W. Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Sternfeld, "The Orpheus Myth and the Libretto of Orfeo"; Jeffrey L. Buller, "Looking Backwards: Baroque Opera and the Ending of the Orpheus Myth," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1, no. 3 (1995): 57–79.

sovereignty is a central issue in *L'Euridice*, as I argue, at a structural, formal, harmonic, and dialogic level. From this central position the sovereign appears as the one who can decide upon the exception, upon life and death. In this way, *L'Orfeo* and *L'Euridice* become early exemplars of the intimate relationship between sovereignty, biopolitics, and spectacle. But placing the sovereign at the center also brings about a change of perspective, which I articulate through the political and theatrical writings of Machiavelli.

Machiavelli is not often mentioned in connection with Early Modern Italian opera, even though he can be said to be one of its precursors—another prelude—given his role in writing not only the first Italian comedies in the vernacular, but especially in using musical interludes between acts and as frame, thus giving birth to the *intermedi*.[17] With my reading of Machiavelli I offer a way to understand the central and yet inconspicuous place of sovereignty in Early Modern opera. I suggest that, like *The Prince*—in Gramsci and Althusser's reading—, *L'Euridice* is a text addressed not to the prince but to the people, a people that perhaps does not exist yet but that it helps constitute and which addresses a prince that also does not exist.

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[17] For Machiavelli in the history of the *intermedi*, Pirrotta and Povoledo, *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi*, 128ff. John Bokina, "Deity, Beast, and Tyrant: Images of the Prince in the Operas of Monteverdi," *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 12, no. 1 (1991): 48–66, sees King Ulisse as "a Machiavellian half-beast willing to use both force and guile as means to secure his kingdom," 51. *Il retorno de Ulisse in Patria* is for Bokina "an artistic representation of Machiavelli's famous notion of the beastly prince." He argues also that seventeenth-century audiences were very familiar with [the injunction that the ruler should be cunning like a fox]. Despite the banning of his books by the Index, Machiavelli's books were typical parts of Venetian aristocratic libraries in this period. (Bouwsma, 1968: 501). My approach here will be somewhat different. I will not try to claim that Rinuccini, Peri, or their audience had any familiarity with Machiavelli, nor that they needed it. The works are not so much a representation of Machiavelli's idea, but a staging in which the opera partakes of the same political crisis and turns that Machiavelli responded to. In any case, Machiavellian thought can be said to permeate Florentine politics at every level, for centuries after he wrote. As Samuel Berner shows, a significant part of Florentine political theory during the the seicento consisted in working through Machiavelli's politics without mentioning him, and the favorite strategy was using Tacitus. Given the mimetic relationship that all Florentines hoped to maintain with Rome, it was easy to produce a double writing when issuing commentaries on Tacitus: writing on Tacitus was like writing on Florentine history, and moreover, camouflaging the name of Machiavelli under the name of Tacitus; as Curcio puts it, "a Machiavellianism without Machiavelli." More directly, Scipione Ammirato (1531-1601), who published the most influential commentary on Tacitus, would write "Ma il bello si è che egli è tanto imbevuto di Machiavelli che non s'intende se egli imiti più questo o Tacito." Quoted by Berner, 198.

ORFEO BEFORE THE DIAMANTINE LAW

The problem of representing the unrepresentable, of staging a miracle, is as old as the story of Orpheus itself: already in Ovid's telling there is a disjunction between what we read and what we hear (even if the poem is recited). The difference can be seen at a narratological level. Orpheus's plea to Pluto is in the first person (in Plato's mimetic *lexis*), but we learn about the music and its effects in narrative (diegetic) form:

> And through the unsubstantial throngs and the ghosts who had received burial, he came to Persephone and him who rules those unlovely realms, lord of the shades. Then, *singing to the music of his lyre* [*pulsisque ad carmina nervis*; emphasis mine.],[18] *he said*: "O ye divinities who rule the world which lies beneath the earth, to which we all fall back who are born mortal, if it is lawful and you permit me to lay aside all false and doubtful speech and tell the simple truth: I have not come down hither to see dark Tartara, nor yet to bind the three necks of Medusa's monstrous offspring, rough with serpents. The cause of my journey is my wife, into whose body a trodden serpent shot his poison and so snatched away her budding years. I have desired strength to endure, and I will not deny that I have tried to bear it. But Love has overcome me, a god well-known in the upper world, but whether here or not I do not know; and yet I surmise that he is known here as well, and if the story of that old-time ravishment is not false, you, too, were joined by love. By these fearsome places, by this huge void and these vast and silent realms, I beg of you, unravel the fates of my Eurydice, too quickly run. We are totally pledged to you, and though we tarry on earth a little while, slow or swift we speed to one abode. Hither we all make our way; this is our final home; yours is the longest sway over the human race. She also shall be yours to rule when of ripe age she shall have lived out her allotted years. I ask the enjoyment of her as a

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[18] The ablative absolute with 'ad' has a sense of causality or movement, so it is literally "with the strings having been plucked into songs," i.e. a metamorphosis. I thank Tim Chandler for this moving insight (and many others).

boon; but if the fates deny this privilege for my wife, I am resolved not to return. Rejoice in the death of two.

 As he spoke thus, accompanying his words with the music of his lyre, [*Talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem*; "the strings moving with the words"; my emphasis] the bloodless spirits wept; Tantalus did not catch at the fleeing wave; Ixion's wheel stopped in wonder; the vultures did not pluck at the liver; the Belides rested from their urns, and thou, O Sisyphus, didst sit upon thy stone. Then first, tradition says [*fama est*], conquered by the song, the cheeks of the Eumenides were wet with tears; nor could the queen nor he who rules the lower world refuse the suppliant. They called Eurydice.[19]

Faithful to the Platonic program, the mimetic mode presents Orpheus' pleas directly, transparently. Mimesis adds nothing: the words appear as words—good if their model is good, bad if the model is bad.[20] The diegetic mode, on the other hand, introduces distance and mediation, and with it a dimension of criticism and doubt. While the eponymous transformations of the *Metamorphoses* are described with an exemplary *hypotyposis* (i.e., making the scene vivid before the reader's eyes), music is stripped down to its most basic unit: a plucked string.[21] Orpheus' words reach us unmediated and seduce us just as they seduce Pluto, we are captivated by them—that is, until we hear from the diegetic narrator about a music we can't hear and of magical effects we can't see.

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[19] *Met.*, 10.15-47 Ovid, *Metamorphoses: books IX - XV*, ed. George Patrick Goold, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), 64–67.

[20] This distance, moreover, might make us look back to the mimetic moment and doubt its verisimilitude, as Barclay and VerSteeg do, arguing that Orpheus' plea is cast in an ironic mode, parodying legalistic rhetorical manuals and using their terminology. By means of this parody, Ovid skillfully sidesteps the challenge of representing the unrepresentable. VerSteeg and Barclay, "Rhetoric and Law in Ovid's Orpheus."

[21] And is not *nervos* a rather material thingly metonymy for music, along with the pun on human nerves, fruitfully exploited in the Apollo and Marsyas myth. Consider, in contrast, the scene of Daphne's metamorphosis, coming at the end of Apollo's chase that extends for over 100 lines: "Now was her strength all gone, and, pale with fear and utterly overcome by the toil of her swift flight, seeing her father's waters near, she cried: 'O father, help! if your waters hold divinity; change and destroy this beauty by which I pleased o'er well.' Scarce had she thus prayed when a down-dragging numbness seized her limbs, and her soft sides were begirt with thin bark. Her hair was changed to leaves, her arms to branches. Her feet, but now so swift, grew fast in sluggish roots, and her head was now but a tree's top. Her gleaming beauty alone remained." *Met.*, 543-552.

To be sure, there is a certain musicality in Ovid's verse, be it mimetic or diegetic; but what we call musical in verse (what the Romantics would call "lyricism") is not the same as music "proper." Although we do not hear as a full, sonorous event, the power of Orpheus's song in Ovid seems to be thoroughly effective: "conquered by the song, the cheeks of the Eumenides were wet with tears." Ovid reports on Orpheus' success as "tradition says (*fama est*)," amplifying the distance produced by the diegetic narration, but also diminishing our possible doubts about Orpheus' powers. Among the most effective devices in this passage is precisely that of Orpheus's performance isn't what happens, but what *doesn't* happen: "Tantalus did not catch at the fleeing wave; Ixion's wheel stopped in wonder; the vultures did not pluck at the liver; the Belides rested from their urns, and thou, O Sisyphus, didst sit upon thy stone." Even if we cannot hear Orpheus's song without Ovid's mediation, this mediation serves to preserve song's magic. Music's unrepresentability is part of the literary medium and its narrative techniques.

For our humanists on the other hand, inflamed as they were by Ficino, Mei, and Galilei, musical power resided not only in the words but also in rhythm and harmony. It was necessary to sing while reciting, *recitar cantando*. But if music was always on stage, there seemed to be no way of avoiding, in a representation of the Orpheus myth, to represent in sound, the magical aspects of his song. This is the source of an everlasting problem for opera: if all the characters are singing, how to make it clear that Orpheus song is different? To use Abbate's terms, how to distinguish not only between "noumenal" and "phenomenal" music—where only the second one is recognized by the characters *as* music, while the first one is only music for the audience—but especially how to make "phenomenal" song be itself magical. Rinuccini clearly saw the difficulty, indeed the impossibility, of living up to the task:

> To some I may seem to have been too bold in altering the conclusion of the fable
> of Orpheus, but so it seemed fitting to me at a time of such great rejoicing
> [*allegrezza*], having as my justification the example of the Greek poets in other
> fables. And our own Dante ventured to declare that Ulysses was drowned on his

voyage, for all that Homer and the other poets had related the contrary. So likewise I have followed the authority of Sophocles in his Ajax in introducing a change of scene, *since it is not possible to represent otherwise the prayers and lamentations of Orpheus* [*non potendosi rappresentare altrimenti le preghieri et i lamenti d'Orfeo*].[22]

If magical song is unrepresentable, how did it appear in its early modern stagings? Or more precisely, what aspect of Orpheus' song is represented in those early works and with what purpose? In fact, looking at *Euridice*, we can see that magical song is not at the center of the work. Rinuccini not only introduced a change of scene (nor only a *lieto fine*), but displaced the focus of the myth and the role of song within it. In *Euridice*, as I show below, Orfeo's magical song turns into affective song at the same moment as a new figure—the sovereign—enters the stage.

Plutone's words to Orfeo sum up the argument of this chapter and provide its motivation, and I will return to them often. After Orfeo has reached him, addressed him as an "*Eccelso Re*," and asked him for mercy, offered pleas, tears, and the music of his lyre to have Euridice back, Plutone makes a crucial distinction, in the form of an opposition, a contrast, between *affect* and *law*:

> Dentro l'infernal porte
>
> Non lice ad uom mortai fermar le piante.
>
> Ben di tua dura sorte
>
> Non so qual novo affetto
>
> M'intenerisce il petto:
>
> Ma troppo dura legge,
>
> Legge scolpita in rigido diamante,
>
> Contrasta a' preghi tuoi, misero amante. (*Euridice*, 474-481)

> Within the gates of Hell

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[22] Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1969, 1:107; translation modified after Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, 368; Notice here, incidentally, Rinuccini's appeal to the mimetological strategy of *imitatio* for justifying novelty and variation: the new is valid as long as it is not new, as long as a model, an exemplary example, justifies it as insight and not as deviation.

No mortal is allowed to take his stance

And yet, hearing of your hard fate

I don't know what new emotion

Softens my breast:

But a most rigid law,

Laws sculped in the most rigid diamond

Opposed your pleas, wretched lover.[23]

Orfeo's music does not touch, does not move Plutone. Orfeo's tough luck, his hardship, might do it; it touches his heart, it moves him with a new affection, a *je ne sais quoi*. If the terms of the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy are still ringing in our ears, we cannot avoid hearing music—the music that Plutone does not, or does not want to hear—in this "non so qual novo affetto." However, with his response Plutone preempts—or seeks to preempt—the effective claims of the new music, its powers not only to delight but to affect, to transform and change, to transgress the law. He preempts it, moreover, with a "however": "*ma* troppo dura legge," a very hard law, a solid, immovable law, sculpted in rigid diamond that contrasts, *however,* not only with the miserly pleas, the eponymous *preghiera*, of Orfeo but also with his own heart—moved, susceptible (unlike diamond) to be moved, to be softened (*intenerire*, "to make soft or tender"). The rigidity of the law contrasts with the tender heart of the sovereign, and against this contrast, against this rigid opposition, music—however affective, however touching and moving—is helpless. Music and affect on one side, the rigid law on the other; this is a sovereign distinction, the sovereign distinction that opera seeks to transgress.

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[23] Translations from *L'Euridice* modified after Jacopo Peri *Euridice*. Roberto de Caro, Conductor (Arts Music 472762, 1992, CD).

DISENCHANTING UNREPRESENTABILITY

Scene 4[24] of *Euridice* opens with Venere escorting Orfeo to the gates of Hell, leaving him with an exhortation to sing his noble song to the sound of his golden lyre, hoping that as his gentle tears moved heaven may they also move hell:

> Prega, sospira e plora:
>
> fors' avverrà che quel soave pianto
>
> che mosso ha il Ciel, pieghi l'inferno ancora. (415-17)

> Pray, sigh and weep;
>
> Perhaps it will come to pass that the soft lament
>
> Which moved Heaven
>
> may cause Hell yet to submit.

Orfeo addresses the shadows of Hell in a through-composed three-strophe lament, the famous "Funeste piagge" (*endecasillabi* and *settenari* lines, 10, 8 and 12 verses respectively, in free rhyme), imploring them to weep along with him: "Lagrimate al mio pianto, Ombre d'Inferno," a refrain that punctuates each of the strophes of his plea.[25] The setting of this lament is a textbook example of *stile rappresentativo*: as Peri writes in the

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[24] In Solerti's edition, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1969, 1:129. The original text has no scene divisions. Solerti's division coincides with a break in Rinuccini's text that states "Qui il Choro parte, e la scena si tramuta." It is not unlikely that this change of scene is all that Rinuccini meant in the preface by saying that Orfeo's pleas and lamentations could not be represented otherwise (that is, than by introducing a change of scene from the earlier setting to the underworld—thus breaking the Aristotelian unity of place. Ottavio Rinuccini, *Poesie del signor Ottavio Rinuccini.* (In Firenze: Appresso i Giunti, 1622). Peri's score has no act divisions either: the change of scene occurs after a five-part shepherd's chorus ("Finito questo a v. il Coro si parte, e la scena si muta in inferno," and Scene IV finishes with another change of scene after the "Coro di Ombre e Deità d'Inferno"). Line numbers are after Solerti. See also Bojan Bujić, "'Figura Poetica Molto Vaga': Structure and Meaning in Rinuccini's 'Euridice,'" *Early Music History* 10 (1991): 33 and; Jacopo Peri, *Euridice: An Opera in One Act, Five Scenes*, ed. Howard Mayer Brown (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1981), for a division into five acts.

[25] As Sternfeld notes, the plea or prayer (*preghiera*) is, since Poliziano's *Orfeo* through "Possente Spirto," "an important subdivision of the lament, combining eloquent pleading with poignant bewailing," and he suggests for this reason treating it indistinctly with laments, elegies, threnodies, and so on, the important aspect being reference to the protagonist's chagrin or pains, or more generally the "melancholy note." Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera*, 145–6. This passage confirms Sternfeld's thesis, for this is as much a lament as a plea, addressed to the Ombre d'Inferno before the one addressed to Plutone, to be examined below. For the formal irregularity of "Funeste piagge" and the unifying role of the refrain, see F. W. Sternfeld, "Aspects of Aria" in Iain Fenlon, *Con Che Soavità: Studies in Italian Opera, Song, and Dance, 1580-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 113.

prologue, the aim is to find a kind of music that is "lying between the slow and suspended movements of song and the swift and rapid movements of speech." Instead of reaching for madrigalisms that create sounding (yet abstract) parallels to the text's meaning, Peri sought to create a style of singing that resembled speech, where the notes seek to reflect the contour of spoken speech as it is affected by emotions such as joy and grief:

> I knew likewise that in our speech some words are so intoned that harmony can be based upon them and that in the course of speaking it passes through many others that are not so intoned until it returns to another that will bear a progression to a fresh consonance. And having in mind those inflections and accents [*a che' modi et a quegli accenti*] that serve us in our grief, in our joy, and in similar states, I caused the bass to move in time to these, either more or less, following the passions [*affeti*], and I held it firm throughout the false and true proportions until, running through various notes, the voice of the speaker [*la voce di chi ragiona*] came to a word that, being intoned in familiar speech [*nel parlare ordinario*], opened the way to a fresh harmony [*nuovo concento*].[26]

Peri's Orfeo talks in passionate speech, not song. He does not seek to enchant but to move his interlocutors to tears, to persuade them through sympathy and pity. Persuasion is less "magical" than what we would call "rational": the effectivity of Orfeo's voice [*la voce di chi ragiona*] does not depend on it being a magical song but a rational speech inflected and affected by emotion. Its affections are punctuated by the music, which moves along to highlight the crucial words through dissonance and consonance.

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[26] Reproduced in Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, 374; Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1969, 1:107.

Figure: 9 Peri, L'Euridice, *mm 100-119.*

The first strophe of the song begins in G minor, tending towards D major (in *cantus mollis*).[27] When it reaches the last verse, the refrain "Lacrimate al mio pianto, Ombre d'Inferno," the tonal ambiguity makes for precisely the type of effects championed by the Camerata. In this exemplary refrain, the melody remains within the D major triad, with leaps that emphasize the accented syllables of the words: to A in La-cri-

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[27] Jacopo Peri, *Le Musiche di Jacopo Peri nobil fiorentino Sopra L'Euridice del sig. Ottavio Rinuccini* (Florence: Appresso Giorgio Marescotti, 1600); hereafter Peri, *Euridice*. Examples taken from *Euridice: An Opera in One Act, Five Scenes*. Edited by Howard Mayer Brown. Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1981.

MA-te, and especially a minor sixth rising to D, sustained for half a measure in "Ombre." There, Peri (to say it in his own words) "caused the bass to move…following the passions [*affeti*]" to C, forming a ninth with the melody, moving back to D and cadencing on G (Figure: 9, mm. 107-112). The second strophe cadences in D at various points and returns to G minor with the same refrain, while the third one—where Orfeo apostrophizes Euridice, calling her "Luce di questi lumi" (l. 437)—moves to E minor, again closing with the refrain in G minor.

Yet the prevalence of D in the first part of the first strophe makes the arrival on G minor in the refrain poignantly ambiguous, an effect which is emphasized by the immediate turn to G major in the *cantus durus* under the exhalations "Ohimè, Ohimè" that begin the second strophe, harmonized with a juxtaposition of G major and E major, which highlights the false relation G-G#, and a D major chord with a melodic descending tritone C-F#, returning to G minor for one bar, only to move to A minor in "Misero, Misero," thus resolving the E major chord in the first "Ohimè" (Figure 10, mm. 114-116).

Figure 10: L'Euridice, mm. 124-134.

Just as with "Ohimè," wide leaps and long-held dissonances emphasize the plagal arrival on "Misero" in contrast with the conjunct motion and rapid movement of the surrounding music (Figure 10; mm. 122-125).

This madrigalist juxtaposition of G major (sometimes G dorian) and E major and the harsh false relation it produces is a veritable leitmotif in *Euridice*. It appears in Dafne's description of Euridice's pallor, (scene 2; p. 15) and no less than three times in Orfeo's first lament, "Non piango et non sospiro," (p. 17). More importantly, the device made its way into *L'Orfeo,* and thus for Tomlinson, and for us here, it is crucial for tracing Monteverdi's emulation of Peri.[28] As I show below, moreover, the keys in which each character sings, and their arrangement in contrasting pairs, (such as G and E Major) are part of an organizational strategy aimed to center the listener's attention upon Plutone, which also made its way into *L'Orfeo*.

The repetitions of *Ohimè* and *Misero* (which are not in Rinuccini's libretto),[29] are intensified through *rappresentativo* melodic contour and the large-scale harmonic relation (the unexpected E major resolving to A minor five bars later). Other lament-like madrigalisms include a melodic chromatic descending tetrachord (G-F#-F-E-D, the G forming a 4-3 suspension when the bass moves to D) on "Morte spense i bel lume," echoed in the following verses in a diatonic descent motive transposed upwards by steps

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[28] See Tomlinson, "Madrigal, Monody, and Monteverdi's 'via Naturale Alla Immitatione'", and Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera*, 146.

[29] As reproduced in Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1969 they are also not in Caccini's setting. These repetitions confirm once again what Sternfeld writes about repetition as a crucial expressive device in lament settings: "the device that intensifies this expressive vocabulary [of 'a' and 'o' to 'addio' and 'ohimè'] is repetition in some form or other, and repetition carried out to a surprising degree: without fear of introducing the sensation of 'repetitiousness.' The operatic lament wallows in grief and scorns the danger of monotony." Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera*, 144. See also Tomlinson, "Madrigal, Monody, and Monteverdi's 'via Naturale Alla Immitatione,'" 77: "Sequence occurs rarely in Peri's *Euridice*. His favorite rhetorical device is, instead, varied repetition; and his most subtle musical transformations of Rinuccini's poetic structures usually depend on rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic equivalences matched to the poet's syntactic parallelisms. In addition, Peri employs repetition as a large-scale structural device; his speeches often unfold as a series of variations on their opening gestures." Varied repetition is the key, for—as we argue here—all repetition is alteration, all repetition is varied repetition, repetition that alters and changes. The baroque dimensions of *L'Euridice* can be seen then in the *mise-en-abyme*, traced here, by which the trope of change is changed through repetition. Thus, there should not be such a strong opposition between Peri's *stile rappresentativo* and, for example, Monteverdi's elaborations on it with respect to repetition understood as a rhetorical and expressive function of speech. Joachim Steinheuer, "Orfeo (1607)" in Whenham and Wistreich, *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, 121.

(A-F# on "e fredd'e solo restai," Bb-A on "frai pianto el duolo," this time over an

appogiatura E#-D in the bass, with a 7th in the figuration) and restated in the last verse

(C-G, on "piaggia il verno"), where it connects with the refrain on F#. The only element

that marks "Funeste piagge" as song and not speech is the refrain that splits it into three

"strophes" of unequal length.[30] When that device disappears, the style in which Orpheus

sings his address to the *Ombre d'Inferno* is very much like the style in which he answers

Plutone in the duet that follows (ll. 448-501).

Although the verse in this exchange is freer and the refrain is gone, Orfeo's music

sounds much like the previous song, including syllabic, conjunct movement, expressive

madrigalisms for the lament-like exclamations of "Ahi Lasso" and "piangendo," and a

particularly poignant chromaticism (Eb-C to E-C#) in "Lacrimando." Some elements of

repetition also appear in his plea ("Rendi a ques'ochhi il dessiato sole" is echoed as

"Rendi de le la dolcissime parole," ll. 469-71; "Mira, Signor, deh mira" in l. 458 is

repeated in l. 462), but these anaphoras have a more expressive or rhetorical than formal

effect. In a celebrated tonal contrast to Orfeo's G dorian, Plutone sings in F (in *cantus

mollis*) without any madrigalisms, abrupt modulations, or other expressive effects,

defending the law with a stentorian voice that seems to lack any affection, or that presents

itself as lacking any: the voice of sovereignty.[31]

The G-major-E-major juxtaposition and the tonal contrast between Plutone and

Orfeo (and others we will find below) are some exemplary examples of Peri's attention to

a device also prized by Rinuccini: the Petrarchan *contrapposto*.[32] We already encountered

the most important of these, Plutone's contrast between the diamantine law, on the one

hand, and musical affect on the other.

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[30] For considerations on referring to these units as strophes, see Tomlinson, "Madrigal, Monody, and Monteverdi's 'via Naturale Alla Immitatione,'" 83 n. 31.

[31] With respect to this passage, Tomlinson emphasizes the tonal juxtaposition and contrast in melodic style, especially Plutone's triadic, foursquare melodies that "define the affective charge of each key—F major unyielding and bright, G minor plaintive, soft," and notes how the same dichotomy is emulated in the two Underworld acts of *L'Orfeo*. Ibid., 62.

[32] Bujić, "Figura Poetica" 31.

For Bujić, such devices are not merely manneristic commonplaces, but serve a crucial political and historical function. *L'Euridice* was composed and performed for the marriage between Maria de' Medici and Henri IV of Navarre, a wedding that served various political and dynastic functions for the Medici dynasty, such as rising their status above the other Italian aristocracies and, most prominently, maintaining the stability of alliances with the Holy Roman Emperor and the Habsburgs. This delicate balance was crucial to reaffirm Medici dominion of Tuscany and re-align the dynasty with France as well (already underway with the 1589 wedding between Francesco de Medici and Christine of Lorraine). As Bujić shows, by marrying his daughter Maria above the ducal status with a member of the French nobility, Francesco achieved a symbolic union between the Habsburgs and the Valois-Bourbon.[33] The marriage was achieved after several setbacks, including disagreement about Maria's dowry and various attempts by Spain to disrupt it. For Bujić, then, the motives and devices of union and reconciliation of opposites are directly symbolic of the event through which the Medici brokered a European-wide alliance, only two years after the end of the French Wars of Religion.

Specifically, Bujić shows how the line (quoted above) by which Venere sends Orfeo to the underworld, "Che mosso ha il ciel, pieghi l'Inferno ancora" (l. 41) is a transformation of the famous line by Virgil, "flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo," with which Venus seeks to prevent the wedding between Aeneas and Lavinia, *Aen*. VII, 31. In Rinuccini's version, the meaning of the opposition (moving heaven and hell) is inverted, achieving a marriage instead of disrupting it. Finally, since the marriage was brokered by Francesco and was seen as his greatest achievement, the line by Virgil refers not only to the accomplishment of the union but to Francesco as its agent.[34] The marriage, after all, is a large scale political affair, of which Maria is only a means. For Bujić, the central allegory of the work does not revolve around Euridice/Maria but around Orfeo/Francesco.

These *contrapposti* signal the articulation of myth and history as inversions or transformations that the myth undergoes to become effective, to be actualized in, or as,

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[33] Bujić, "Figura Poetica Molto Vaga" 52.
[34] Ibid.

history. The *contrapposto* that binds law and affect (in Plutone's "legge scolpita in rigido diamante") is a key transformation of the myth in *Euridice*. For the first time, that is, unlike the tellings in Ovid, Virgil, or Poliziano, it places the relation between sovereignty and mercy (the crucial articulation for Dolar) at the center of the myth. In the classic sources, as we have seen, Orpheus' magic song—however unrepresentable—easily fulfills his desire. Music is effective and transgressive, although as readers we are not exactly privy as to how this occurs. In *Euridice*, on the other hand, not only is magical song not represented—or representable—but also not effective. Plutone, recall, is moved by Orfeo, but not enchanted. The concern in what follows is to understand how and why Plutone finally accedes to the disenchanted plea of Orfeo.

My wager is that such a transformation of the myth has historical significance, in the sense I have been elaborating, namely, as an actualization of the myth, a transformation of its potentiality into another form of potentiality that alters the myth—its ending, to the puzzlement of all audiences to follow—to make it effective within a new context, one defined, as Peri writes in the prologue, by *allegrezza*, a specific affective disposition that regulates the entire spectacle.

ENTER UPSTAGE, CENTER: THE SOVEREIGN

The section that follows "Funeste piagge" is contrasting in various respects, including length: 106 lines (ll. 448-554) against the mere 29 (ll. 418-447) of Orfeo's lament. As opposed to Orfeo's paradigmatic solo lament, the longer section is distributed among Orfeo, Plutone, Proserpina, Caronte, and Radamanto (judge of the dead in *Aeneid* VI). The structure of Scene 4, in fact, can be recognized as a typical one that opposes expressive solo singing to the "choral" finale (the scene ends with a four-part, *spezzato* "Coro di Ombre e Deità d'Inferno").[35]

For the sake of analysis, the ensemble number could be divided in two parts of roughly equal length (ll. 448-501; 502-553), the first comprising the duet between Orfeo

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[35] For an analysis of the lament as a structural device of this type in various settings of the Orpheus myth, see Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera*, 140.

and Plutone, joined in the second part by Proserpina, Radamanto and Caronte, a disposition that again mirrors the solo-ensemble cast of the whole scene. When the chorus takes over (ll. 554-583), the scene falls in a symmetrical arch-like structure of contrasting parts.[36]

Table 1: Peri, L'Euridice, Scene 4; formal scheme.

Section	Character	Incipit	Line
Introduction	Venere	Scorto da immortal guida	398
	Orfeo	O dea, madre d'Amor, figlia al gran Giove,	401
	Venere	L'oscuro varco, onde siam giunti a queste	406
Solo	Orfeo	Funeste piaggi	418
		Ohimè ! che su l'aurora	428
		E tu, mentre al Ciel piacque	436
Duet	Plutone	Ond'è cotanto ardire	448
	Orfeo	O de gli orridi e neri	451
	Plutone	Sì dolci note e sì soave accenti	457
	Orfeo	Deh, se la bella Diva,	460
	Plutone	Dentro l'Infernal porte	474
	Orfeo	Ahi ! che pur d'ogni legge	482
Ensemble	Proserpina	O re, nel cui sembiante	502
	Orfeo	A si soavi preghi	511
	Plutone	Dunque dal regno oscuro	521
	Radamanto [Caronte]	Sovra l'eccelse stele	524
	Plutone	Romper le proprie leggi è vil possanza;	531
	Orfeo	Ma de gli afflitti consolar l'affano	533
	Caronte	Quanto rimira il sol, volgendo intorno	535
	Plutone	Trionfi oggi pietà ne' campi inferni	540
	Orfeo	O fortunate miei dolci sospiri!	551
Choir	Coro 1	Poi che gli eterni imperi,	555
	Coro 2	Unqua nè mortal piede	560
	Radamanto	Or di soave pletro	566
	Coro 1	Si trionfaro in guerra	572
	Coro ambedui, e cori insieme	Scendere al centro oscuro	578

A short introduction featuring Venere and Orfeo leads to his solo which is balanced by the chorus at the end; this pair, solo-chorus, frames the ensemble number, which is also contrasting: duet-ensemble. Each individual part has also an arch-like structure,

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[36] This formal sketch should be complemented with the thematic one offered by Bujić, which shows what he rightly calls "an extraordinarily fastidious plan which relies on small, strategically placed details that ensure that the shape, resembling a giant arch with two sub-arches, is firmly held in place." Bujić, "Figura Poetica Molto Vaga" 45-6. I offer a possible approach below.

determined by the number of characters and their respective parts. In the short introduction, two interventions by Venere frame one by Orfeo. The ensemble section falls in two parts as well, the first half involving Proserpina, Radamanto, Plutone and Orfeo, the second half replacing the former two by Caronte.[37]

The final chorus consists of five *sestine* (*settenari* verses, ABABCC). The first two strophes are sung by each half of the *coro spezzato* (Cori 1 and 2, or Shades and Deities), followed by a solo by Radamanto in the middle. The fourth strophe is set to the same music as the first one and is sung by Coro 1, while the last one, set to the music of the second one, combines both choruses ("Coro ambedui, e cori insieme") for the full choral finale of which *L'Euridice* would become paradigmatic.

The effect of this symmetrical structure, however, is not of rigidity. Rather, it sustains a dazzling play of contrasts and oppositions, of *contrapposti*, that intensify as the scene progresses. The number of characters on stage grows (Venere departs→Orfeo solo→Orfeo + Plutone; Orfeo + Plutone + Proserpina + Caronte (+ Radamanto) →Coro spezzato→full chorus) as the general affect of the scene changes from Orfeo's despair after losing Euridice to the joyful, collective celebration that closes the scene, a local *lieto fine* that mirrors that of the whole opera.[38] Scene 4, framed by two changes of scene—setting it in the Underworld—starts at the very middle of the opera (790 lines in total).[39] It is the lowest point of Orfeo's catabasis and the turning point of the story, a turn that is announced by the chorus of nymphs that closes scene 3, echoed by Proserpina and Caronte, and finally affirmed by Plutone.

As Bojan Bujić shows, this turn shapes the work into a general pattern (happiness-sorrow-happiness) that displays, in affective form, the programmatic announcement of La Tragedia in the prologue: not only to change the ending of the myth into a *lieto fine*, to turn from sorrow to joy, but of thematize change and affect together, or change through

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[37] In Peri's score, Radamanto's lines in the ensemble (ll. 524-530) are given to Caronte, while Radamanto is given one strophe of the choral finale (ll. 566-571). Thus, the balance between the two sections of the ensemble emphasized in the opera. But, as we shall see, this is not the only effect of this change.
[38] Replacing Caronte for Radamanto also helps maintain the progressive increase of characters on stage.
[39] Bujić, "Figura Poetica Molto Vaga" 34.

affect. The event, the transformation announced by La Tragedia is not just to change one affect for another, but to make change sensible through affect, to make change into an affective event, to make change into a stage character by presenting it as affect, and to return, thus changed, to the stage of the royal wedding:[40]

Lungi via, lungi pur da' regii tetti,

simolacri funesti, ombre d'affanni:

ecco i mesti coturni e i foschi panni

cangio, e desto ne i cor più dolci affetti.

Hor s'avverrà che *le cangiate forme*

non senza alto stupor la terra ammiri,

tal ch'ogni alma gentil ch'Apollo

inspiri del mio novo cammin calpesti l'orme,

…

Tal per voi torno, e con sereno aspetto

---

[40] The prominence of the *lieto fine* in early modern opera and the apparent contradiction it produces with the typical endings of the ancient Greek tragedy that the humanists aimed to revive has been frequently noted, at least since Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. For a classic elaboration of the *lieto fine* as aesthetic principle in early opera, see Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera*. I address the discrepancy between pastoral operas and ancient Greek tragedy with respect to Benjamin's treatment of the distinction between *Trauerspiel* and tragedy in the first "excursus" (above). But the apparent contradiction between tragedy and pastoral seems to have played out. Blair Hoxby has recently argued that the only reason the *lieto fine* seems to be at odds with ancient Greek tragedy is because today we have a skewed vision of the latter, mediated as it is by German Romanticism and Nietzsche, which makes a few works by Aeschylus and Sophocles into the paradigm of tragedy. This interpretation dismisses the much more popular Euripides, whose works have as many "tragic" as "happy" endings, and which—more appropriately for the humanists' purposes— emphasize the affective role of music. Focusing on cinquecento readings of Aristotle (who praises Euripides), Hoxby demonstrates that this was a prevalent view in the seventeenth century. Even the Apollonian ending of *L'Orfeo* can be argued to be inspired by the ending in Euripides' *Orestes*. Blair Hoxby, "The Doleful Airs of Euripides: The Origins of Opera and the Spirit of Tragedy Reconsidered," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 3 (2005): 253–69. In his reading, (and close to Benjamin) it is not the tragic or the unhappy as such that makes tragedy, but the more general principle of organizing and shaping affection through artistic means, of leading the soul (psychagogein) through an "art against grief." Hoxby thus concludes that "[Euripides'] *di ex machina* are not just a way to tie up his plots, or to pander to a taste for spectacle. They are a means, or so seventeenth-century readers could reasonably interpret them, of completing the affective script of his tragedies by stirring the audience to intense wonder - a passion that, according to many commentators, had its own purgative qualities. They are, in other words, an integral part of his 'art against grief." On music and tragedy in Euripides, see Peter Wilson, "Euripides' Tragic Muse," *Illinois Classical Studies* 24/25 (1999): 427–49.

ne' reali imenei m'adorno anch'io,

e su corde piu liete il canto mio

tempro, al nobile cor dolce diletto. (9-24; emphasis mine)

Away, away from this royal house,

Funeral simulacra, shades of sorrow!

Behold, my gloomy buskins and dark robes

I change, to awaken in the heart sweeter emotions

Should it now come to pass

that the world admire

With great amazement,

these *changed forms*,

So that every gentle spirit

that Apollo inspires

Will tread in the tracks of my new path,

…

Thus changed, I return; serenely,

I, too, adorn myself for the Royal wedding

and temper my song with happier notes,

Sweet delight to the noble heart.

At the center of the work, at the bottom of the *katabasis* and at the moment of the turning point, of the articulation and change of polarity of the opera's affective charge, is the ensemble, and at the center of the ensemble is Plutone. He is the formal axis upon which all the articulations and all changes turn. He is after all the one who can decide on Eurydice's fate: it is him who can make sorrow turn into joy. His centrality is also emphasized at a dialogic level: the characters in the ensemble do not address each other, but only speak to Plutone, who stands alone at the center. Even when Orfeo refers to Proserpina—in an echo of Ovid ("you, too, were joined by love." *Met*. 10.29)—he does

so indirectly, turning to from G dorian to A major (through E-flat and a neapolitan-sounding, first-inversion G dorian). A double speech, speaking about her without speaking to her, making her turn towards him, all the while addressing Plutone:

> mira, signor, deh mira
>
> com' al mio lagrimar dolce sospira
>
> tua bella sposa, e come dolci i lumi
>
> rugiadosi di pianto a me pur gira. (458-461)

> Look, lord, see
>
> How at my weeping
>
> Your beautiful wife sweetly sighs,
>
> and how, sweetly
>
> Her eyes, dewy with tears, turn to me.

Proserpina does not respond to Orfeo. If she turns towards him, as Orfeo claims ("a me pur gira"), she does not speak to him but to the king, specifically to the king's face, looking up to his face—leaping from E to C through an A minor triad, ("O Re, nel cui sembiante,"[if only English preserved the sense of appearance of the "face" as semblance])—where she sees change, the memory of change, of the bright skies that she left behind to live in the shades of the underworld after being reaped by Plutone ("si che'l ciel sereno e chiaro/con quest' ombre cangiar m'è dolce e caro"; 503-505).[41] Thus, in a device that would become popular in comic opera, Orfeo and Proserpina talk to each other while addressing a third. I will argue it is a case of a double speech, a dialogue with a third, an allegorical speech, for reasons that will come clearer when I turn to

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[41] A bolder interpretation of this passage might still insist on the magical powers of Orfeo, such that he is able to move Proserpina to his side, to make her (and Caronte) speak on his behalf, to make her do the work that he is unable to do, either through magical psychagogy or at least a magnificent ventriloquy, using them as his marionettes. This reading would invite us to examine magic in relation with the art of the marionette, which, as Derrida says, is also mimetic: "is a question of art, of *technē* as art or of *technē* between art and technique, and between life and politics." Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 1:186. Perhaps the marionette, mechanical and rigid, has the capacity to break the diamantine law that Orfeo's affective song lacks.

Machiavelli.[42] With Proserpina on his side—next to him, turning back to G major, both facing Plutone—Orfeo opposes the single soul of Euridice to the many that will remain in Hades, for what is a single soul in comparison with all those that will remain, and all those that will return after they have lived their allotted years?

> Che fia però se fra tant'alme e tante
>
> riede Euridice a rimirar il Sole ?
>
> Rimarran queste piagge ignude e sole ?
>
> Ahi !, che me seco, e mille e mille insieme
>
> diman teco vedrai nel tuo gran regno.
>
> Sai pur che mortal vita a l'ore estreme
>
> vola più ratta che saetta al segno. (511-520)

> What, if, from among so many souls,
>
> Only Euridice returned to gaze at the sun?
>
> Would these shores be bare and solitary?
>
> Ahi! Thousands and thousands of souls,
>
> And me among them
>
> Will you see here with you
>
> in your kingdom tomorrow.
>
> For you know that at the last hour
>
> Mortal life flies here
>
> As swiftly as the arrow to its target.

This *contrapposto* is a key argument in Orfeo's plea that builds on Ovid (*Met*., 10.32-37), and which Caronte will have transformed.[43] In fact, it has been building up along with—

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[42] From a Lacanian perspective we could say that what happens is the reverse: we always address only the Other, even when we think we are simply talking to one another.

[43] For Versteeg and Barclay, the equivalent passage in Ovid's telling is, "in terms of legal argument, this [the] only allegation of substance that Orpheus raises. Thus, it is logical to assume that this is the argument that Hades and Persephone find persuasive. In one sense, Orpheus' argument reminds us of warranty law. Orpheus asserts that, like all mortals, Eurydice too will return to the Underworld but only after she has lived a fair number of years (*cum iustos peregerit annos*).… Both legally and logically, Orpheus'

or through—the trope of change, of the turn as change, which is also a central structuring device in the libretto.[44] It is the law of mortals: all things change, nothing is eternal, and every mortal must return to Hades, "Sai pur che mortai vita a l'ore estreme/Vola più ratta che saetta al segno." But it is also the principle formulated at the beginning, in La Tragedia's prologue: sorrow must turn into joy. It is repeated by the chorus of nymphs, at the end of scene 3 at the very middle of the work, announcing and preparing the change of scene and the change of affect that will soon follow:

> Al rotar del ciel superno
>
> Non pur l'aer e 'l foco intorno,
>
> Ma si volve il tutto in giro :
>
> Non è il ben né 'l pianto eterno;
>
> Come or sorge, or cade il giorno,
>
> Regna qui gioia o martire. (384-9)

> As heaven rotates in its course
>
> Everything, and not just air and fire, moves with it:
>
> Neither the good nor the unhappy is eternal;
>
> As the day now rises, now falls,
>
> So joy reigns on earth for a while, and then sadness.

Here, as Bujić shows, change is presented as transformation, as the necessary flux of night to day, from one thing into the other, from joy to sorrow. No earthly state is eternal, however: everything changes—*ma si volve il tutto in giro*: everything turns; everything changes with the turn—however. But this eternal change is cyclical, like the turning

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argumentation in lines 32-37 is sound. He begins with a syllogism that has an unstated but obvious premise. He acknowledges that all humans eventually go to the Underworld where Hades ultimately controls them. All humans go to the Underworld. The unstated premise, of course, is that Eurydice is human. He then concludes this strand of reasoning by noting that Eurydice, too, will eventually go to the Underworld. Interestingly, there is yet another legal basis for this claim in Roman law. In the Roman law of real property, a landowner was considered the owner of all things both above and below his soil. Thus, in one sense, Hades, in addition to owning all things in the Underworld, owned everything and everyone above as well.

" VerSteeg and Barclay, "Rhetoric and Law in Ovid's Orpheus," 405.

[44] Bujić, "'Figura Poetica Molto Vaga': Structure and Meaning in Rinuccini's 'Euridice,'" 35. See note on trope and change above.

skies. The passage of joy to sorrow is as inevitable as sunset and dawn; it is no change at all.

And yet there *is* change, since the trope is changed as it returns—a repetition of the trope which involves its alteration—in Caronte's address to Plutone, at the end of the ensemble. The turning skies no more signify renovation but transience and impending death: the life of mortals is as brief as one day; everything returns to the Underworld.

Quanto rimira il sol, volgendo intorno

La luminosa face,

Al rapido sparir d'un breve giorno

Cade morendo e fa qua giù ritorno :

Fa' pur legge, o gran Re, quanto a te piace. (535-539)

All that the sun can see, turning about

His luminous torch,

At the rapid disappearance of one short day

Will fall, dying, and return here below:

Make your laws, O great King, as you please.

If the programmatic theme of the opera is change, Caronte's last verse expresses the ideological message of the work by presenting change as the decision of the sovereign. As argued above, in Ovid the decision is beyond Pluto—it lies with the fates—, and by appealing to him Orpheus seeks less to persuade than to enchant. Orpheus' reasoning, or even offering himself in sacrifice, is not what makes Pluto return Eurydice: pure (unrepresentable) magical song does. The natural order, the division between mortal life and sovereign power, cannot be transgressed neither by reason nor by force, but only by song. Pluto offers no counter-argument, no resistance to the magical enchantment.[45]

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[45] "Hither we all make our way; this is our final home; yours is the longest sway over the human race. She also shall be yours to rule when of ripe age she shall have lived out her allotted years. I ask the enjoyment of her as a boon; but if the fates [*fata*] deny this privilege for my wife, I am resolved not to return. Rejoice in the death of two." (*Met.* Bk. 10, 33-39).

When Caronte recalls this passage in *L'Euridice*, associating change, transience, and inevitability through rhyme (volgendo intorno/un breve giorno/fa qua giù ritorno), he inverts the sense of the trope: change is no more the passage of time, the cyclical transformation of day into night or the inevitability of death.[46] For Caronte,—who joins Orpheus in his plea, echoing him as he transforms the trope—these laws are secondary, they are only the background for the law of the sovereign, which alone is his to make. In Caronte's formulation the law is the law of the sovereign, in both senses of the double genitive: the law that belongs to the sovereign, that he makes and that he imposes, but also the law that makes him the sovereign, the law by which he becomes a sovereign as he makes the law. If the law of mortals is transgressed in this scene, it is not because of Orfeo's magical song, but because the law has been displaced, because it now belongs to the sovereign as his decision, hence as his being sovereign. For Bujić, as for many allegoric readers of *L'Euridice* and *L'Orfeo*, the hero of the work is meant to represent and flatter the ruler, in this case Ferdinando de' Medici, and through the devices elaborated in the previous chapter. In *Euridice*, Bujić argues, Ferdinando was to be seen as the effective ruler who managed to unite the Habsburgs and the Valois-Bourbon through the mediation of the Medici.[47] Allegory, however, never gives us just one meaning. Its semiotic drift does not end with the author's or the reader's intentions, which it thwarts at every step, but proliferates through the materiality of its signifiers. What is opened is the possibility of reading such allegories from a historical perspective and not simply from the particular historicity of their deployment.

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[46] Compare also the same motive in Poliziano which in this respect is closer to Ovid's:
"Ogni cosa nel fine a voi ritorna,
ogni cosa mortale a voi ricade:
quanto cerchia la luna con suo corna
convien ch'arrivi alle vostre contrade.
Chi più chi men tra' superi soggiorna,
ognun convien ch'arrivi a queste strade;
quest'è de' nostri passi estremo segno:
poi tenete di noi più longo regno."
(*Orfeo*, 205-212).
[47] Bujić, "'Figura Poetica Molto Vaga': Structure and Meaning in Rinuccini's 'Euridice,'" 54. See also Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450-1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 97ff.

I see the possibility of opening more interpretations in the conflict, the *contrapposto*, between Orfeo as the hero of the story, and the formal and dialogic centrality of Plutone, which we can now formalize in the following diagram. I take this formal disposition—on stage—along with its structural centrality in the opera, as having a material effect upon perception. The keys each character sings repeat or redouble the formal disposition. Plutone's F major is the tonal center. It is in contrast with Orfeo's G major; it has Proserpina's A as its mediant; and it is shared with Caronte. Proserpina and Caronte are on both sides of Orfeo and do not address each other but only Plutone and, instead of sharply contrasting with his tonal areas, provide modulations (through E-flat in Proserpina) or share them, as in Caronte's last and final appeal, just as he shares Plutone's F major:
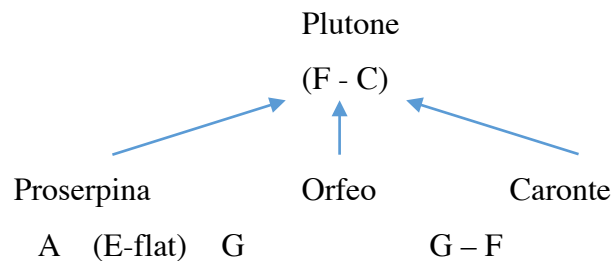
Thus, not only is Orfeo's first plea devoid of magical effectivity, but in the end it is not even Orfeo who succeeds in winning Euridice back. If Caronte is the last one to speak— and the one to articulate the reason for transgressing the law, the reason of transgression (which is also the reason of sovereignty, as we shall see)—his appeal is only the last in a mounting series of pleas by which the sovereign is put in crisis at the same time as it is placed at the center.

THE CRACK IN THE DIAMANTINE LAW

Before Caronte's explicit formulation of the ideological message, the point had been prepared by Radamanto (replaced by Caronte in Peri's setting) in a more indirect, and affectively charged way, and earlier by Plutone himself. In fact, Orfeo explicitly utters it, too early perhaps to have any rhetorical effect: "Ahi ! che pur d'ogni legge/Sciolto è

colui, che gli altri affrena e regge (ll. 483-4)." He is unbound from any law, who rules and commands others. This formulation, itself a *contrapposto*, is not elaborated upon at this juncture. Rather, Orfeo turns suddenly towards Proserpina, appealing to Plutone's affection once more. At this point, he only echoes the opposition that Plutone has just made, so the point falls flat.

However, we can trace the preparation for Caronte's formulation to the moment when Orfeo makes the Ovidian point that thousands of souls will soon come (so that Euridice's can be spared without loss for the Underworld). There, Plutone voices what might be a dismissal of Orfeo's argument, but which sounds as a fracture, as a crack in the rigid, diamantine law: the possibility that the hard law might be spurn (*sprezzata*), that its necessary solidity might be ignored or given up, that it might be broken. This is a possibility that he intimates and averts at the same time, but not without leaving it open as a question:

> Dunque dal regno oscuro
>
> Torneran l'alme al cielo, et io primiero
>
> Le leggi sprezzerò del nostro impero ? (521-523)

> From this dark kingdom
>
> Are souls thus to return to earth
>
> And should I be the first
>
> To scorn the laws of our empire?

Figure 11: L'Euridice, *mm. 445-454*

He means it as a negation, but it sounds like an affirmation: as if he was tempted, at the same time as he denies it, to break the law, to be the first in breaking the law (*io primiero*). This ambiguity, this ambivalence in his regard for the law, is audible: it is, if not the first, at least the most expressive passage in his music. The moment when his sovereign, stentorian voice is most touched and inflected by affect. We hear it in the madrigalism that paints the souls as they return from the "regno oscuro" to heaven, from C to A over the plagal B-flat→F, and again in the conjunct-motion, trochaic fall from C to F in "Le leggi sprezzerò," but especially in the spurning chromaticism F→F#→G and the arrival on C that emphasizes the open question (Figure 11).

Caronte, in Peri's setting, responds to Plutone, picking up on the arrival on C and leading it home to F just as he picks up on the sovereign's doubts and dissipates him in a mocking, but effective, admonishment. Once again, the affective device is the *contrapposto*, a series of them: The *vasto Inferno* is as wide as the law is narrow; Nettuno

and Giove (Neptune and Jupiter) command the skies above and the ocean below, at will; *a talento/ a suo voler*. Only Plutone, in a space between, or outside them, is an unfree lord: *non libero signor*. The sovereign, to be such, must be absolutely free, unbound by any laws, however rigid they might seem:

> Sovra l'eccelse stelle
>
> Giove a talento suo comanda e regge;
>
> Nettuno il mar corregge
>
> E move a suo voler turbi e procelle;
>
> Tu sol dentr'a i confin d'angusta legge
>
> Avrai l'alto governo,
>
> Non libero signor del vasto Inferno ? (524-530)

> Above the lofty stars
>
> Jove commands and rules according
>
> to his own wishes;
>
> Neptune commands the waves
>
> And creates storms and tempests as he will;
>
> Should you alone have your high power
>
> restricted within the bounds of a narrow law,
>
> You, unfree Lord of the vast Hell?

This ironic formulation reveals the contrast made earlier by Plutone—law/affect—to be ill-posed or besides the point, to be a false opposition. The real *contrapposto* is between himself as sovereign and the rigid law which he does not dare to break. Seen from the perspective of Caronte, he can only be a sovereign if he is above the law, if he has "alto governo." It makes sense, then, that Caronte should receive these lines instead of Radamanto, as they repeat, or prepare, what I called above the ideological message of the opera: that the sovereign is outside the law.

We reach here the figure that Benjamin identifies as central to the *Trauerspiel*: the sovereign, Plutone, at the center of the stage, who must make a decision in the face of crisis. An enemy, Orfeo, is inside his realm; but he also faces an internal crisis: his sovereignty is now in question. Plutone, to paraphrase Benjamin, holds in his hands the course of the story like a scepter. To recall Carl Schmitt's argument, there is a mutually constitutive function between the sovereign and the emergency or the crisis. The justification for the sovereign's power relies in the need to create a figure that will be capable of ruling when the limits of the law are put in question, when the extreme circumstances of a crisis, of a state of emergency that suspends the law demand that a decision be made. But the emergency is, by definition, unpredictable. It is an event. The decision is not only how to deal with the emergency but to decide whether there is an emergency in the first place. Thus, the decision is made by someone who is outside the law, who is above it, capable of suspending it and declaring the emergency. Yet, insofar as the sovereign is required by an emergency that does not exist until he declares it, the decision also the decision of his self-constitution. The sovereign "decides whether there is an extreme emergency as well as what must be done in order to eliminate it. Although he stands outside the normally legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety."[48]

For Benjamin, the ideological function of the *Trauerspiel*—and here we are concerned with establishing how close or removed opera might be from mourning drama—consists in placing the sovereign on stage, presenting him as a figure that embodies history, power, and spectacle, legitimizing his power as necessary for averting the crisis, all the while masking the scandalous vicious circle by which sovereignty and crisis presuppose each other.[49] The reason of the sovereign, the principle by which the sovereign is who he is, is at the same time the reason for transgression, the argument or justification for the law to be transgressed.

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[48] Schmitt, *Political Theology*. 5.
[49] Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason*, 69.

Here, then, is the paradox: by asking the sovereign of the underworld to suspend the law, in addressing Plutone as sovereign, is not Orfeo *making* Plutone the sovereign, constituting him as such? We can call this the Orphic apostrophe of sovereignty, which is also an enchantment, a magical creation of sovereignty through his plea. Hence, in the performance of the myth as opera, a figure is identified and localized on stage as having the capacity to institute the law, to dictate the new laws of the community, its *nomos*. In general, it matters less which specific laws are uttered (e.g., do not enter the underworld; do not look back) than the formal identification of such a nomothetical capacity. But we should go further: in appealing to Plutone, Orfeo not only addresses someone who rules and has the capacity of suspending the law. He addresses him not just as a guardian of the law, but as the condition of the law, as sovereign. More specifically, he addresses him as a supreme sovereign, the one who has the capacity to rule over life and death themselves.

When Orfeo asks Plutone to return Euridice, we should not hear it so much as a plea out of love, out of his lost wife in a romanticized relation, but as a statement on the role of the sovereign on deciding upon life and death. Orfeo's apostrophe, in Early Modern Italy, speaks the inauguration of the modern intertwining of sovereignty and biopolitics. In asking for Euridice, Orfeo asks for the suspension of the death penalty. His plea is not a plea motivated by love or mobilized by the mythical power of music, but the declaration of a new power that thus constitutes itself, embodied by one figure in the performance, validated through the structure of the myth, and actualized through the spectacularization of its role and function.

As Derrida has shown in the "Death Penalty" seminars, the relationship that Schmitt identified between sovereignty and the exception—the self-constitution of sovereignty as the capacity to decide upon the exception—finds its most extreme form in the right to decide upon life and death: the death penalty is the exceptional exception, the extreme case of the exception, and as such regulates sovereignty in general.[50] As Schmitt shows,

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[50] Jacques Derrida, *The Death Penalty. Volume I*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2014), 85ff.

and as Benjamin had emphasized, this power of decision upon the exception, coming from outside the law and hence from outside of the political, has a theological structure:

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy we can appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last century.[51]

The relation between politics and theology, the relation between the exception and the miracle, is one of analogy, hence a mimetic relationship. The absolute sovereign is analogous, hence imitates, the absolute power of God. In other words, what Schmitt called "political theology" is the mimetopolitical operation by which the absolute power of the sovereign legitimizes itself by locating God as a model of imitation, and hence of authority and legitimacy. Schmitt locates its explicit formulation in Rousseau: "imitate the immutable decrees of the divinity."[52]

This mimetic relationship began to emerge in Renaissance Italy in the form of the idea of the "King's two bodies": a mortal one, subject to persuasion or error, and "a Body politic," immune to the human deficiencies.[53] By the end of the nineteenth century, the unity of these two bodies was a magical feat for English jurisprudence; but as Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz shows, its origins are well grounded in the context of medieval and Early Modern political theology. However, this theory was never developed as such during the period. Rather, as Samuel Berner shows, it emerged slowly and almost imperceptibly in funerary orations and other political instruments. Unsurprisingly, the

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[51] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.
[52] Ibid., 46.
[53] Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957).

point of culmination of this slow process is in the funerary oration devoted to Duke Ferdinando de' Medici in 1609, where the Duke was consistently compared to a god due to his inscrutable designs; for Berner, the rhetoric of these texts is "obvious and at times quite ludicrous, because the genre was so new."[54] In this line, then, we have to see court spectacle as another field in which this theory was developed and mobilized.

To be sure, the importance of divine-right theory for Medici spectacle has been highlighted by James Saslow and Nina Treadwell in the case of the *intermedi*. I, however, argue that *L'Orfeo* and *L'Euridice* are even more important stages where this occurs. The crucial, mimetological point, is that we cannot see spectacle as "representing" a divine-right theory that existed elsewhere—since it did not—but that spectacle was the very stage of the constitution of such a theory. I return to these issues in chapter 7, but first we have to see what kind of a sovereign, what kind of being is Plutone. Is he a man or a god? Or both, like the sovereign himself?

Orfeo's plea addresses—and constitutes—this magical double being; but which of these is subject to its power? For Mladen Dolar, crucially, both are: the ruler gives in to the plea by an exceptional act of mercy by which the monarch affirms himself as beyond the law—capable of transgressing it—and is simultaneously subject to it as human, since the act of mercy is an act of love.[55] In Dolar's reading of *L'Orfeo*, which for him exemplifies and programs early modern opera, Plutone resembles not the magical double being of Kantorowicz but Montesquieu's monarch, whose greatest attribute is to be able to show mercy. In this reading, hegemony—to use an appropriate anachronism—is obtained not by legitimizing the beyond-the-law of the sovereign but rather, taking his being-beyond-the-law for granted, displaying him also as a human being. "His true humanity can come to the fore only if he is a sovereign and not a tyrant, insofar as he is a just and noble ruler and not the capricious Other, insofar as his superior justice surpasses the dead letter of the law."[56]

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[54] Berner, "Florentine Political Thought in the Late Cinquecento," 189.
[55] Žižek and Dolar, *Opera's Second Death*, 22.
[56] Ibid.

The capriciousness that such a sovereign needs to avert is also that of the providential God of Protestantism, as seen from the perspective of Italian Catholicism. In this context, Dolar argues, self-sacrifice and renunciation win mercy: "once the subject has shown the unconditional readiness to sacrifice his/her life without reservation, God, or monarch, grants him his/her life."[57] What Dolar fails to see, however, is that mercy is here already subordinated to sovereignty, precisely on the condition of the exception.

As we have seen, the story in Rinuccini's *Euridice* goes in a different way. Nowhere does Orfeo, as it does happen in Ovid, offer himself in sacrifice.[58] His request for mercy, the first time he addresses Plutone, falls flat against the rigid law. The call for mercy appeals to Plutone's heart, it touches it with new affections, yet, *however*, it cannot touch the diamantine law. What succeeds, instead, is a displacement of the opposition, precisely by placing the sovereign beyond law and beyond affect, and hence beyond mercy.

But affect does not leave the stage as soon as that. Plutone seeks to preserve his opposition for the third time (the first being the diamantine law [ll. 480-481], the second the spurning of the law [523]): "Romper le proprie leggi è vil possanza/Anzi reca sovente e biasmo e danno," to which Orfeo replies "Ma de gli afflitti consolar l'affanno/È pur di regio cor gentil'usanza." Thus, Orfeo finally identifies (matching his rhyme pattern but emphasizing the tonal contrast that characterizes the couple, F and G dorian) what seems to be Plutone's true concern: not so much the impossibility of breaking the law, but of the status of the sovereign, his appearance, saving his "face" if he were to break the law. Plutone is not as afraid of breaking the law—he even seems tempted to do it—as he is of the shame that will come if he does and whether this will correspond to the nature of the sovereign he purports to be. His concern is with spurning the law, afraid of the blemish

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[57] Ibid., 23.

[58] Besides, that is, transgressing the gates of Hades, although, according to Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium,* this was precisely the opposite of sacrifice. "Orpheus, *however*, they sent unsatisfied from Hades, after showing him only an image of the woman he came for. They did not give him the woman herself, because they thought he was soft (he was, after all, a cithara-player) and did not dare to die like Alcestis for Love's sake, but contrived to enter living into Hades. So they punished him for that, and made him die at the hands of women." *Sym.* 179 d-e. Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M Cooper and D. S Hutchinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 1997); emphasis mine.

(*biasmo*) and wrong (*danno*) that comes through "breaking one's own laws" (*Romper le proprie leggi*). When he says it, a mostly unadorned, triadic F major passage, it is the rigidity of the law that he now begins to distance himself from which makes his line ring hollow. It is as if affect passed from being the opposite of law to being the mark of a true sovereign. This mark, *pace* Dolar, is now not a natural quality of the sovereign as human, but a mark of display of the sovereign as a noble. Affect is how the sovereign appears to others, how he performs, and hence becomes, what he is.

THE MACHIAVELLIAN RE-TURN: MIMESIS AND FUTURITY

What Orfeo and Caronte have to do is to give Plutone—and the audience—a lesson in Machiavellian politics: not only that helping others (i.e., showing mercy) is proper to noble hearts, something that would belong to him if he were the sovereign that he would like to be, if he possessed the *virtù* of the successful ruler, but rather, and especially, that they are not *his* laws if he cannot break them, that he is not the sovereign that he would want to be if he did could not show sovereign power, the freedom to "Make your laws, o great King, as you please."

Many things in this scene begin into fall in place if we see it from a Machiavellian perspective. We can displace the level at which the allegorical interpretation should take place, not so much at the level of the action—the successful wedding between Orfeo and Euridice thanks to the power of music—but at the level of narrative, recalling the structural centrality of Plutone. As in Ponnelle's opening shot for *Monteverdi: Orfeo*, all the lines in the tableau of scene 4 converge on the same point: the sovereign. Such a displacement could account for the somewhat uneasy identification between Orfeo and Ferdinando de' Medici (suggested by Bujić) where the unifying trait would be the Prince's achievement in bringing together the two families.[59] This interpretation, of course, relies on the various precedents of Medici attempts to appropriate the image of Orpheus mentioned in the previous chapter, and confirms the generally acknowledged function of early modern spectacle as flattery to the patron, on the one hand, and as means of "performing nobility," as suggested by Calcagno.

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[59] Bujić, "Figura Poetica Molto" 55.

However, as I argued, such an interpretation has a mimetological flaw: in a strict sense, an allegorical identification between a mythical and a historical character is no sooner made than it is disrupted by the allegorical mechanism itself, by its tendency to thwart intention. As I see it, we assign at the same time too much and too little effectivity to spectacle if it remains within the boundaries of performance and flattery. Too much, for we cannot be sure that such allegorical identifications were understood, and if they were, that they were believed through and through, that they were effective. Too little, because as flattery we undermine other political functions that such spectacle had in such a spectacular economy of power. Thus, in what follows I suggest a way in which we can complicate the mimetology involved in such allegorical interpretations from the perspective of Machiavelli, who I argue most radically and rigorously defined the political function of mimesis in Early Modern Italy.[60]

In his analysis of Verdelot's setting of the prologues and *intermedi* of Machiavelli's comedy *La Clizia*—arguably the first allegorical *intermedio*—, Calcagno notes the role that Machiavelli assigns to music and *imitatio* "as part of his his larger, ideological discourse."[61] In the prologue, Machiavelli writes that "[i]f men reappeared in the world in the same way as do events, not a hundred years would go by before we would find ourselves together once again, doing the same things."[62] The plot of *La Clizia*, based on Plautus' *Casina*, is also, or so Machiavelli tells us in the prologue, based on real life events: "Would you believe that the very event [as happened in ancient Athens] occurred not so many years ago, once again, here in Florence?"[63] This somewhat gnomic

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[60] For the relation between Machiavelli and Schmitt with respect to sovereignty and exception, see Andrea Moudarres, "On the Threshold of Law: Dictatorship and Exception in Machiavelli and Schmitt," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 18, no. 2 (September 1, 2015): 349–70, doi:10.1086/683136; for a reading of mimesis in Machiavelli from the perspective of Girard's mimetology, see Harald Wydra, "Human Nature and Politics: A Mimetic Reading of Crisis and Conflict in the Work of Niccoló Machiavelli," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 7, no. 1 (2000): 36–57.

[61] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 109.

[62] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Comedies of Machiavelli*, trans. David Sices and James B Atkinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2007), 279.

[63] Ibid., 281.

statement, which we could call a mimetology of the eternal return, contains a powerful theory of the imbrication of history, literature, and music, where the latter servers, according to Nino Pirrotta, as the means to bridge the past and the present, just as it serves since the *intermedi* of Machiavelli's comedies to bridge the passing of time between acts without breaking the unity of action.[64] It could be argued that this statement is the philosophical formulation, *avant la lettre,* of the ideological role that allegorical *intermedi* would take on during the sixteenth century, culminating with the Medici 1589 celebrations, and passed over into opera with *L'Euridice* and *L'Orfeo.* From this perspective it matters little whether we can advance any positive proof of Rinuccini's knowledge of Machiavelli, or to demonstrate any textual connection between *L'Euridice* and *The Prince*, to which I turn below. What matters, as Hugh Grady argues in his reading of Shakespeare's Machiavellian moments, "is that we can observe the discursive parallels among them [*sensu* Foucault] parallels which help us read the plays in new and (sometimes old) ways…"[65] I elaborate on Machiavelli's mimetology and highlight its various relations to *intermedi* and early modern opera as a means to articulate a more rigorous account of the political effectivity of such spectacular productions and their mimetological underpinnings in the late Renaissance and the Baroque.

The two maxims that Plutone utters with respect to the law (i.e., that it is rigid and diamantine, and that it is unbecoming to a sovereign to break it) sound like pieties taken from the Renaissance precept-books written in imitation of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca that Machiavelli rallies against in *The Prince*. Both these classical sources and their imitations are for Machiavelli based on ideal, non-existent models of how a ruler should be. Rather, in what many consider to be the beginning of realist—or materialist— political philosophy, Machiavelli proposes to focus on fact: "[B]ecause I want to write what will be useful to anyone who understand, it seems to me better to concentrate on what really happens rather than on theories or speculations. For many have imagined

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[64] Pirrotta and Povoledo, *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi*, 128ff; Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 107. Calcagno emphasizes the autobiographical aspects of *La Clizia*. Incidentally, the fact that it is impossible to read the prologue without thinking of the "Eighteenth Brumaire" shows what a careful reader of Machiavelli Marx was.

[65] Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30.

republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist.[66] Instead, Machiavelli tacitly examines the precepts of these books and presents them with examples from history and mythology, who he advises his princely reader to emulate:

> As for mental exercise, a ruler should read historical works, especially for the light they shed on the actions of eminent men…and above all, to imitate some eminent man, who himself set out to imitate some predecessor of his who was considered worthy of praise and glory, always taking his deeds and actions as a model for himself, as it is said that Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar imitated Alexander, and Scipio imitated Cyrus."[67]

Machiavelli's mimetology can be grasped in this passage: there is a bad mimesis, closer to *aemulatio*, which consists in following the ideal models, however perfect these might be. The ruler that follows persists in following models or speculations, constructed according to what "ought to be done," cannot withstand the changing circumstances, the unexpected crisis: they are helpless against *Fortune*. Machiavelli's good mimesis, on the other hand, consists on examining what happens in fact, in real life situations, and selecting as models those historical figures those which are most appropriate for its own circumstances.[68] These models, then, are historical particulars. They are located within precise circumstances—a singular conjuncture—and each of them displays a specific quality that the ruler should pick up as model according to his own particular situation. Models are not defined as being good or bad but rather as variably apt or unapt according to the situation. Or, more precisely, the historical individuals are taken up as exemplary of specific virtues (e.g., mercy, cruelty, fidelity to one's own) that are neither good nor bad, in fact, which do not exist outside of those conjunctures in which they are put to test

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[66] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner, trans. Russell Price (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 54.

[67] Ibid.

[68] "Likewise, it was harmful for Caracalla, Commodus and Maximinus to act like Severus, because they lacked the ability required to follow in his footsteps. Therefore, a new ruler in a new principality cannot imitate the conduct of Marcus, nor again is it necessary to imitate that of Severus. Rather, he should imitate Severus in the course of action that are necessary for establishing himself in power, and imitate Marcus in those that are necessary for maintaining power that is already established and secure, thus achieving glory." Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 71.

by historical individuals. Their effectivity can only be measured within the political, not the moral sphere.[69] Thus, reasoning along the same lines as in the prologue to *La Clizia*, there is a relation between men and events based on imitation and repetition: while "the same men" might not be able to return in the same ways that events do, a wise ruler might still imitate the men involved in such events when these recur in his own time, and thus expect similar outcomes. It is thus not a matter of choosing the "good" ideal models from a moral perspective, but the most appropriate models from a historical perspective.

Returning to our interpretation, Caronte seems to speak in such a voice when he shows the difference between Plutone on the one hand, and Nettuno and Giove on the other, whom he instills Plutone to emulate. These gods command ocean and heaven, they rule over them. Giove commands and rules (*commanda e regge*) above the lofty stars; Nettuno corrects (*correge*) turbulences and storms, sets them right at his will. Plutone rules over a realm that is as vast as theirs, and yet, in this case, facing Orfeo, he is bound to a law that Orfeo has exposed to be narrow: Euridice is but one soul among many—what does it matter? Furthermore, Orfeo has already succeeded in entering Hell alive, that is, he has already transgressed one of Plutone's laws and is facing him. He is an enemy past the gates. And he not only demands to have Euridice back, but he puts Plutone in a position where his sovereignty is at stake, upping the ante in Plutone's performance of nobility: whereas Plutone finds it unseemly to scorn the law, Orfeo shows it is *gentil'usanza,* a good habit, of a royal heart to offer consolation to others, to show mercy.

When Caronte and Orfeo make this distinction clear, they lay bare the crisis of nobility that threatened early modern Italy, the disjunction between being a noble and looking like one. From this moment on, the noble's concern, especially if he is to be also a sovereign, is to appear as one, to engage in the performance of nobility, in the production of his value as noble (see chapter 5.) In the context of spectacle, moreover, it is an inversion of Platonism or rather, a hyper-Platonism, which I address below.

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[69] Thus, politics and morals are separate and autonomous realms, in Croce's famous interpretation of Machiavelli. See Benedetto Croce, "The Autonomy and Necessity of Politics" in De Lamar Jensen, *Machiavelli: Cynic, Patriot, or Political Scientist?* (Boston: Heath, 1960).

Caronte's advice—who is no more moved by Orfeo's pleas than Plutone or Proserpina—is not that Plutone should give in to Orfeo's pleas. Rather, the advice is not to persist in acting the role that Orfeo already has undermined. Caronte advises that Plutone should act like Giove and Nettuno: to preserve his sovereignty by acting like a sovereign, like those joyous rulers who gain admiration and respect from their might as much as they do from their freedom. As Machiavelli would say, "every ruler should want to be thought merciful, not cruel; nevertheless, one should take care not to be merciful in an inappropriate way."[70] Constant mercifulness easily becomes indulgence and, as with cruelty, leads to hatred and contempt for the ruler, which is the worst threat: "a ruler must avoid contempt as if it were a reef." Instead, Machiavelli advises, "[h]e should contrive that his actions should display grandeur, courage, seriousness and strength…He should maintain this reputation, so that no one should think of lying to him or scheming to trick him."[71] For all that Plutone insists on the law being rigid and diamantine, he has, as a ruler, been shown to lack precisely these qualities. In fact, there is already an intimation of contempt in Caronte's own advice by calling Plutone a "non libero signor."

THE VIEWPOINT OF THE PEOPLE—TO COME

But now the scene begins to look not simply as a telling of the myth but of a staging of the relation between the sovereign and its others—the other of the Other, Dolar *dixit*. Plutone is at the center, yet he does not seem to know how to be a sovereign, how to act as one. Unlike the *Trauerspiele* analyzed by Benjamin, we do not see a sovereign making decisions, "performing sovereignty," but one that is advised on how he is to behave and *appear to be* a sovereign. The *mise-en-scène* described here, centering on the sovereign from the perspective of various characters who address him without addressing each other, or who address each other by addressing the sovereign, recalls the Althusser's reading of Machiavelli where what is at stake in *The Prince* is not so much defining the role of the sovereign but of establishing the place of a people, a point of view, a

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[70] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 58.
[71] Ibid., 64.n

perspective from which the sovereign can uniquely be defined.[72] In his dedication to Lorenzo de' Medici, Machiavelli describes his position as a man "of a man of a very low and humble condition," as a cartographer who places himself on low ground to better understand the character of the mountains: "It is necessary to be a man of the people to understand properly the character of rulers."[73] Althusser identifies here the definition of "the *space* of the political," a topological position that Machiavelli occupies as an observer and that he secures for his text in order for it to become a political act, "an element in the transformation of this space." This political space is defined by a paradox, that in addressing the sovereign, what is secured is instead the place of the people. To recall the terms of chapter 5, in Monteverdi's dedication of *L'Orfeo* to Francesco Gonzaga, a dedicatory is a countersignature that betrays the prince as it flatters him. Furthermore, Althusser notes that in the prologue, Machiavelli speaks of a singular "people" in opposition multiple "princes."[74] This not only defines his class position as a member of the people with a specific point of view, a perspective, upon the sovereign, but also, in talking about princes in the plural, Machiavelli emphasizes the possibility that there be different princes and that there must be a choice between them "from the viewpoint of the people."[75] In this sense, Althusser agrees with Gramsci in reading the Prince as a manifesto that speaks to the people as it addresses the sovereign. However, Althusser continues, *The Prince* does not establish who will occupy the position of the sovereign. Although the ruler must be popular, he does not himself belong to the people, and the people are not summoned to become the ruler,

> So there is an irreducible duality between the *place* of the political *viewpoint* and the place of the political force and practice; between the 'subject' of the political viewpoint— the people—and the 'subject' of the political practice: The Prince. This duality, this irreducibility, affects *both* the Prince *and* the people. Being uniquely and exclusively defined by the function he must perform - that is to say,

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[72] Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, 24.
[73] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 4.
[74] "…a conoscere bene la natura de' populi, bisogna essere principe, et a conoscere bene quella de' principi, bisogna essere populare."
[75] Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, 25.

by the historical vacuum he must fill—the Prince is a pure aleatory possibility—impossibility.[76]

Since the Prince has no ties to the people, no compromise with class membership, his success depends solely on his *virtù*, thus the centrality of this concept in Machiavelli's text. This gives *The Prince* a utopian character, concerned with defining the place and the conditions which the ruler will occupy, without specifying who this will be.

And although Althusser does not emphasize the theatricality of this space, it is not hard to conceive of his analysis as a politicized version of the *Theatrum mundi* that opens it to the future. Instead of being a mere ideological tool where the message is centralized and distributed, the viewpoint of the people is a body, a collective, whose gaze upon the stage is assigned a transformative power, namely the capacity to decide what type of ruler there should be in front of them. In *L'Euridice*, the people is not only the audience in the theater, but especially the three figures—Orfeo, Proserpina, Caronte—that face the sovereign, situating him at the center, demanding, reminding, and advising him on how to act and how to appear. These figures, addressing each other while addressing each other in an allegorical speech, occupy Althusser's political space, the people from whose viewpoint alone can the sovereign be understood.

Returning to the prologue of *La Clizia*, to Machiavelli's mimetology of the eternal return, where new subjects are expected to occupy their place in returning events, we could begin to see the role of theatrical allegory in such a mimetology as concerned not only with the representation and flattery of patrons in their precise historical conditions, but as setting the stage for *future* transformations in the repetition of the coming event, for an impossibility. Machiavelli's political and theatrical writings hint at such futurity: if *The Prince* is the turn of the political towards a people that is not yet, *La Clizia* is the return, as *imitatio*, of the comic theater of Plautus, itself an *imitatio* of Athenian New Comedy.[77]

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[76] Ibid., 26; emphasis in the original.
[77] Machiavelli's first theatrical work, in fact, is a translation of another Latin play in the style of the New Comedy, Terence's *Andria*. Machiavelli, *The Comedies of Machiavelli*, 5.

When it returns in Machiavelli, the chorus of such tragedies is transformed into prologues and canzonas, which will begin to return, insistently, as *intermedi* and finally as opera. This gives us a new perspective on the history of opera: the turn towards earlier models is not only an attempt to revive past forms or, as I have described the economimesis of *imitatio* up to this point, as a means to accrue on the value of the models thus constituted. Here, a turn towards the past does not only have the effect of producing something in the present through constituting a model for it, but also, or especially, it has the effect establishing future sites for something to return. The logic of this return is not empty utopia nor the programming of what is to come, since what returns does not return as its copy. The future that is opened through the return is without name and without model: it is the unrepresentable.

When contemplating *L'Euridice*, when seeking to account for its ideological message—given, as we saw, by Caronte—as the sovereign's position beyond the law, we must take into account this opening, the necessary incompletion that each performance carries along. For if centering on the sovereign, making all the voices fall upon him at the center of the stage, his centrality cannot appear without at the same time positing the people, the spectatorship, that constitutes and conditions him. *L'Euridice* dramatizes this by making Plutone quite inept about his own place, but once established it is a structure that persists in all "ideological" usages of opera, at the same time their condition of possibility and impossibility.

This is precisely what Lacoue-Labarthe finds Mallarmé and Wagner engaged in, many centuries later (see introduction, VII). It consists in determining art as having a political purpose, and of using a particular mimetology—an ontotypology—to ground this function. In Wagner it was the myth of the German people, while for Mallarmé it was a post-Christian communion brought about by the "type." In Machiavelli, if we take the title of the "Exhortation to Liberate Italy" as a guide, it would also be a question of nationalism. (This is emphasized by the fact that the title of this chapter is in the vernacular, as opposed to the Latin titles of the previous chapters). His address to Lorenzo de' Medici, like the dedication, is done from the viewpoint of the people. Machiavelli contrasts the failures of previous leaders like Francesco Sforza and Cesare

Borgia with the Italian people. What is needed is a leader that brings new military techniques and that is "willing to emulate those great men" that he posits as models. As we have seen, these model are always contingent, depending on the situation (and they do not have a national character either). What Machiavelli says to Lorenzo is simply that the right circumstances are set for the Medici to take upon their role if they decide to. The crucial point, the site where the onto-typology shows itself, is here:

> The reason [for the failed campaigns] is that our old military practices were unsound, and there has been nobody capable of devising new ones. Nothing brings so much honor to a new ruler as new laws and new practices that he has devised. Such things, if they are solidly based and conduce to achieving greatness, will make him revered and admired; and in Italy *there is no lack of matter to shape into any form* [in Italia non manca materia da introdurvi ogni forma].[78]

It is not clear that by *materia* he means the people, in the sense of a receptacle for a national character or an *ethos* that would be imprinted—typed—by the *forma*. The people is rather defined by its power, not its character and what it is lacking is just guidance. To be shaped into form does not necessarily imply here a hylomorphic or ontotypological model, but rather the disposition of the forces that are already in place. He goes on to say "Here individuals [the soldiers] have great skill and valor; it is the leaders who lack these qualities. Look how in duels and combats between several men Italians are superior in strength, skill and resourcefulness. But when it comes to fighting in armies, they do not distinguish themselves."[79]

What he seems to be calling for is a sort of formalism, which is just as aleatory and impossible as the prince itself, depending on contingent possibilities that might be seized and lost to fortune at any moment. Further, he opens again the space of this impossibility by emphasizing that what is needed of a new prince are "new laws and new practices." The unrepresentability of the prince is matched by the incompletion of the laws. It is against this radical mimetology that all other theories of divine sovereignty and

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[78] Machiavelli, *The Prince,* 89.
[79] Idem.

their appropriations of the political spectacle that Machiavelli devised would have to measure themselves against in the following centuries.

CHAPTER 7

AFFECT AND SOVEREIGNTY IN THE MEDICI 1589 *INTERMEDI*: BETWEEN SPECTACLE AND SPECTRALITY

Chapter 5 approached Orpheus' turn as a trope for the peculiar historicity of the humanist interest in ancient tragedy and the pastoral—an effort to transform art by looking back towards the past. Chapter 6 saw *L'Euridice* as the presentation of a paradoxical space between the political and the aesthetic, where the centrality of the sovereign on stage works towards producing a return of the unrepresentable. We can also take such a turn more generally as a trope about modernity, understood as a turn towards a vision-centered and mechanized universe. For the turn to modernity at the end of the Renaissance was precisely that: a new ordering the cosmos in which the human eye and the new technology of painterly perspective—or rather the new "symbolic form," to use Cassirer's and Panofsky's term—signified the triumph of the distancing and objectifying sense of the real, as well as the "triumph of the distance-denying human struggle for control; it is as much a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self."[1]

To put it in more general terms, for example Peter Burke's adoption of the history of mentalities approach, the Renaissance ends with (and already contains the beginnings of) the "mechanization of the world picture," in which a traditional, "animate" vision of the world organized by correspondences and not causality was finally replaced by the rationalist and Enlightened rule of instrumental reason.[2] But the more explicit formulation of the importance of vision in modernity is advanced in Jay's *Downcast Eyes*.[3] Jay forcefully demonstrates the progressive emergence and imposition of vision,

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[1] Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 1991), 67.

[2] Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 211.

[3] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

"the noblest of senses" from Plato to the early twentieth century, and locates the end of the Renaissance as the turning point of his narrative, which climaxes with the Enlightenment and begins its decline with the perceptual transformations brought about by the impressionists and symbolists.

Now, if this narrative about the modern as a turn towards vision, to technical perspective and objectifying distance looks like a worn-out trope with little to offer to musicology, seeing it as embodied in Orpheus's turn might give us a different view.

On the one hand, in the words of Christine Buci-Glucksmann, what is tragically at stake in Orpheus' turn is that he chooses "the visibility of love over the invisibility of Hearing."[4] Orpheus is granted access to the underworld and is given Eurydice back through the magical, persuasive power of music. Yet by turning back, by *seeing* Eurydice, he loses her. According to this myth, to see is not necessarily to gain or to possess, especially when seeing is opposed to music; here, the gaze undoes the musical spell.

But turning back, for the human, is also to render invisible what is in front. More precisely, turning backwards is choosing one visibility over another, denying the full visibility of frontality and suggesting the possibility of another visibility, while at the same time negating the visibility of what one turns away from. The turn produces both visibility and invisibility through a decision, a determination that chooses what is concealed behind as visible over the visibility of what is in front.[5] Closing one's eyes, one may suggest, also is also a possible way to make "invisible" what is in front. Yet when turning, the invisibility of what is left behind is *necessary*. This is, to put it bluntly, the structure of finitude at its most basic: it is not simply the purely biological fact of having our eyes always pointing forward, just as it is not simply the fact that we eventually will die. If being human is being-[turned]-towards death, then we will have to count turning

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[4] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 3.
[5] This undecidability is fodder for medieval and Neoplatonic allegorical interpretations of the myth, for example by suggesting that Orpheus gives up the worldly beauty of Eurydice in order to turn towards the true beauty of the immutable ideas. See Frederick W. Sternfeld, *The Birth of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

itself as one of the ontological (and not simply ontic) determinations of the human.[6]

Alluding to Heidegger in this context brings me impossibly close to the question of his

"*Kehre*" (turning), which I will have to turn away from (remembering, again, that turning

"away from" does not at any point involve making something disappear but involves a

repetition that carryies it along).[7] I rather return here to the tension between the written

and the spoken word, or more generally between the visual and the audible, between the

gaze and sound and between literacy and orality. To turn towards vision is at once to

choose vision over hearing, and to determine hearing as invisibility. And because the

invisibility of hearing is necessarily produced by the turn towards visibility, we must

consider sound as inseparable from the turn, as essential and determining of it.

On the other hand, to speak of modernity as the progress of reason, as a passage

towards technology and the rationalized view of the world is to repeat a trope that, as

David Wills writes, negates an articulation that is as old as the human itself or that, more

precisely, makes the human as such: anthropogenesis is always already technological, a

turn towards the technological.[8] There is never a simple, natural human that then turns

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[6] That is, turning is an *existential* and not simply *existentiell* matter. Heidegger, Martin, and Joan Stambaugh. *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996, §4.

[7] Arne Melberg, to give one example, suggests that it is not a matter of turning away form the question of Being as pursued in *Being and Time*, but simply a matter of approaching it differently—a repetition. Instead of facing it frontally, Heidegger returns to the question of Being through a turn towards art, poetry, and sound. *Theories of Mimesis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 161ff. See also her reading of Orpheus (including the tension between the visible and the audible) through Blanchot in Kierkegaard's "Repetition," 148.

[8] David Wills, *Dorsality: Thinking Back Through Technology and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5. Anthropogenesis has been a problematic close to deconstruction since Derrida wrote in *Of Grammatology* the enigmatic proposition that *differance* is "the history of life," of which restricted writing is but a stage. In fact, insofar as the genetic code itself is a form of inscription which spatializes itself as life (thus also "temporalizing" itself) then we have to understand life as being already *technical*: from amoebas to *homo sapiens*, life writes itself. Considering the work of paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan, Derrida argues that restricted writing (and everything we understand by *technē*, such as *mousikē*) are exteriorizations, a form of "liberation of memory" of what is already a made possible by the trace (84). In other words, there is an originary technicity (the 'trace') such that on the one hand, the human is always already prosthetic and, on the other, that technics is not an essential characteristic of the human that would oppose it to "nature" or *phusis*. In this context, Bernard Stiegler, goes on to argue that it is technicity *itself* that creates the human, insofar as, as Leroi-Gourhan shows, the brain and the hand evolved through the fashioning of tools, or in other words, co-evolved. And, as he argues, it also follows that technical entities are themselves self-organized, only operating within a longer timeframe (or indeed

technological. Rather, as soon as the human moves its articulated limbs, uses a tool, or stands erect thanks to the vertebral column in its back—and even when it walks—there is articulation and deviation, a turning back from the "natural" which would be opposed to "technology." For Wills, the technological turn is originary, but this means that there is no purely natural origin, nor a purely technological one; they are originally imbricated. To move forward is already to acknowledge the technological origin. But in taking up tools, the anthropoid turns its back on what is behind him. "We know how it abandons the animal, refines the senses by downgrading smell and hearing, and reconfigures the knowable other within a frontal visual perspective, prioritizing a certain version of the *fore-seen* or *fore-seeable*."[9] In such a turn, however, the human does not truly abandon what it radically leaves behind but carries it along: nature and technology are joined in the dorsal turn.

In this context, understanding the dorsal turn as the originary articulation of nature and technology in the human exposes as problematic those narratives of modernity based on an opposition from *phusis* to *technē*, as the progressive abandoning the "animate" world for a "mechanized" one (*sensu* Burke) or even a discontinuous shift of archeological grounds (*sensu* Foucault), which in the case of modern music means leaving behind a world where the connection between affect and musical devices such as the lament "is not founded in the given similitudes of things, in a folding-out of the world on itself [but instead in] a new and arbitrary connection between the world and a

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another conception of time altogether). Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 134ff. However, Geoffrey Bennington has warned about this reading which seems to conflate a particulr form of technology with the more general technicity that Derrida describes (that is, by taking human technology as the paradigm for technicity as such), with the consequence that Stiegler turns out to be more anthropocentric than the metaphysical framework he seeks to question. Geoffrey Bennington, *Interrupting Derrida* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 169. In this context, moreover, it bears noting that in considering the various oppositions to *phusis* that are overturned when considering the originarity of *differance*, Derrida writes notes that, in considering all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is founded in terms of *differance*, as differing-deferring from each other, is one might see "the site of a reinterpretation of *mimēsis* in its alleged opposition to *physis*"). It is this task, of course, that is being suggested in this dissertation. Jacques Derrida, "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 17.
[9] Ibid., 9.

deontologized [sic] langauge."[10] Conceived as a passage — however fluid — or a break —

however deep — this narrative implies that myth, magic, and the mimetology of

similarities are simply left behind as modernity leaps towards reason, technology, and

Enlightenment. Conceived as a turn, instead, we recognize that neither myth nor mimesis

are abandoned with the onset of modernity. If *phusis* and *technē* are not opposed but

constitute and supplement each other, and if the new is not a step forward but a

deviation — a deviation which is also a form of retroversion —, then what Enlightenment

affirms as progress carries over the past that it seeks to leave behind. Seeing modernity as

a turn and not a forward development is another way of emphasizing the negative

dialectics by which Enlightenment reverts to myth, while myth is already Enlightenment.

Mimesis and magic, in fact, constantly fall on both sides of the opposition

between *phusis* and *technē*. In describing the world as "an animal," Leonardo,

Machiavelli, and Michelangelo, says Burke, can be seen as saying not so much that the

world is "like an animal" than as saying that it is "like a work of art."[11] This is precisely

the analogy that Aristotle deploys in the *Poetics* to insist on the need for a teleological

arrangement of parts to wholes, where *mimesis* is understood as *technē*, "imitating"

nature but at the same time "supplementing" nature.[12] Similarly, magic is a technology, as

shown in Martha Feldman's description of the singer as *magus* (which she elaborates

following Alfred Gell's analysis of technology and Mauss's theory of magic as ensemble

of techniques). Its performance and effectivity relies on the formal and structural patterns

(and their degrees of variation) that can be found in the arias of eighteenth-century opera

seria. These patterns, she argues, serve to mobilize political objectives through the

narrative of myth. For Feldman, their effectivity in mobilizing the collective relies

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[10] Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 240.

[11] Burke, *The Italian Renaissance*, 214.

[12] Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 49.

ultimately on virtuosity and spectacle, in the "ineffable power of the human voice."[13] Quoting Gell, Feldman recalls that magic haunts technical activity like a shadow.[14]

Orpheus too stands at the interstice between magic and technology: as a singer, having the capacity to enchant animals, mythical creatures and stones, he is on the side of *phusis*; his magical song, for Ficino, was a means of divine inspiration.[15] Yet, in Bacon's 1607 *De Sapientia Veterum*, as John Hollander shows, the harmonious structure of Orpheus' lyre is an allegory of the civilizing influence without which humanity returns to barbarism.[16]

As these glosses show, turning away from nature and myth makes them invisible, as a specter is invisible: only for a certain conception of vision, an instrumental and empiricist reason that only takes as real what it can see and dominate, a restricted anthropocentrism in which what is not its object is no object at all. *Spectacularization*— the ontological determination of the real as what is visible for, in front of, the technological human—turns into, or rather comes with *spectralization*—the production of an invisible "behind" that haunts any attempt to reduce the real to what is in front of the anthropocentric human. For Wills, the space of obscurity produced by the turn stands in for the unknown, the unforeseeable, and the Other.

But sound, as we know—as Orfeo learned—is not bound to frontality. For the forward-facing gaze, the specter may be unseen, but it is already audible. It manifests itself through sound, through the effectivity and operativity of noise, song, harmony, and other sounding forces—it does not announce its location sooner than it repeats and dislocates itself—as resonance, echo, and feedback—multiplying its position without ever presenting itself as frontal. Sound is always behind and invisible, whatever direction one turns towards, as Nina Treadwell shows in her reading of the first *intermedio* in the Medici Wedding of 1589, where Dorian Harmony ended her performance by singing

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[13] Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 26.
[14] Ibid., 28.
[15] D. P. Walker, "Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16, no. 1/2 (1953): 100–120.
p. 100. See also Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), chs. 4 and 5.
[16] John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 169.

echoes of her own song by hiding behind a rock.[17] Ronconi's production of *L'Orfeo*, analyzed by Calcagno, makes the further point: La Musica already stands behind Orfeo, singing the prologue behind and through him. He does not need to turn to hear her—and even if he did, he would not lose her as he will have lost Euridice, since he is blindfolded.[18] Even if Harmony hides, La Musica remains. From unseen dorsality to invisible music, the semantic drift easily drives towards a familiar commonplace in the recent musicological approaches to the operatic voice, a voice that gives access to the beyond, to the metaphysical (as in Walker's and Tomlinson's Ficino, Hollander's Bacon, and Feldman's singing *magus*). Attending to Orpheus in his turn, in the turn to modernity, allows us to understand why it seems necessary to insist on the metaphysical as the correlate of the modern point of view and of music's role in it, without presupposing that there is effectively something like "the metaphysical" that precedes and opposes the modern.

Joining these two themes—of the turn to visuality and technology with invisibility and myth as their counterparts—this chapter retakes a suggestion offered in chapters 4 and 5, namely that Monteverdi's (or *Signor &c.*'s) claim for a "Second Practice which should be called first with respect to origin" has a structure that is emblematic of modernity, that of a retroactive split which at the same time inaugurates and repeats time. In this chapter I offer an overview of the very-well known story of the establishment and development of the "world picture," of the general determination of the world and being itself as visible, with the corresponding affirmation of representation as its ruling mimetology (here, more than ever, an onto-mimetology; Heidegger, as we see, is still there).

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[17] Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for La Pellegrina* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 73.
[18] Mauro Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera: Monteverdi's Staging of the Self* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 63.

LITANIES OF THE SPECTACLE: VISION, PERSPECTIVE, AND THE *THEATRUM MUNDI*

If the elevation of invisibility and the "metaphysical" in contemporary musicology are the result, and not the origin, of an economimimetical redistribution of musical value, then we can reassess the place of music, specifically early opera, in the spectacularization of the world, and examine its ideological function. Music and sound constitute the "behind" of the spectacle, its condition of possibility: what holds the spectacle together without appearing as such. But in this sense it is also its condition of impossibility, insofar as, by not appearing, by supplementing the dominance of the visual with a constitutive behind, it undoes its claims to universality. Which does not mean, however, that the behind is first or that the invisible (the "metaphysical") is more real: it remains a by-product of the turn.

This can be seen clearly in accounts of modernity as the passage from orality to literacy (whose basis on a problematic mimetology of writing as mediation, specifically in Havelock, is examined in chapter 2), particularly in the theological dimension of Walter Ong's approach that Jonathan Sterne has denounced as the "audiovisual litany."[19] This trope consistently associates vision with perspective, surfaces and distance, hearing with interiority, immediacy and presence, and so on.[20] The litany thus corresponds to narratives of disenchantment and rationalization where the modern gaze is the aesthetic correlate of instrumental reason, while the ear preserves the qualities of presence, immediacy, and empathy. One of Sterne's key insights in his reading of Ong is pointing out how the orality/literacy paradigm is in fact created, as every paradigm is, out of two particular forms of experience as interpreted by mid-twentieth century biblical scholars, projected backwards into his analysis of Ramus' pedagogical revolution at the end of the Middle Ages. For Sterne,

> Ong essentially extrapolated the general categories of oral and literate from the figures of the Jew and the Greek in mid-century Christian theology. Ong's "oral man" was [biblical scholar Thorlief] Boman's Jew, who lived in a dynamic,

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[19] Jonathan Sterne, "The Theology of Sound: A Critique of Orality," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 36, no. 2 (2011): 207–25.

[20] Ibid., 212.; See also Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 15.

ephemeral, and engaged world shaped by sound as an event, where the power of words is carried in their sound. Ong's "literate man" was Boman's Greek, who lived in a world defined by sight and oriented toward distance, objectivity, rationalism, disembodiment, and form, where words derive their power from being seen.[21]

According to Ong's schema, then, sound has a privilege in Judeo-Christian experience (of a certain interpretation of the word as an event) as the means by which men are brought "close to each other and therefore closer to God."[22] The disappearance of orality with the emergence of literacy is thus understood as a second falling of man, as the sinful perversion brought about by mediation, while the notion of "secondary orality" appears as a new promise of salvation, and this messianic logic organizes the whole: "Ong's sensory history is the story of the fall from innocence and a possible future redemption."[23]

Along this narrative of redemption, we can place a complementary one, as told by Martin Jay, in which the ancient Greeks determined vision as "the noblest of the senses," a determination which was kept alive through both philosophy and religion through very pervasive mimetologies. *Theoria*, as everyone knows, is a densely charged word. In Heidegger's famous etymology, it has two roots: *thea* and *horao*. *Thea* (cf. 'theater'), is the outward appearance in which something shows itself, its *eidos*. *Horao* means to contemplate something attentively. "Thus it follows that *theorein* is *thean horan*, to look attentively on the outward appearance wherein what presences becomes visible, and, through such seeing, to linger with it."[24] Yet Heidegger suggests that in *Theoria*, the Greeks also heard *Thea ora*, the respect and honor bestowed on the goddess *Aletheia*: "*theoria* is the reverent paying heed to the unconcealment of what presences."[25] As Jay notes too, theory also suggests a potential intertwining of viewer and viewed, prevalent in

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[21] Sterne, "The Theology of Sound" 214.
[22] Ibid., 218.
[23] Ibid., 219.
[24] Martin Heidegger, "Science and Reflection", quoted in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 93 n. 80.
[25] Idem.

presocratic thought, while Gadamer emphasizes that for the Greeks it had a dimension of "sacred communion," "namely being totally involved and carried away by what one sees," an experience that, as we know, depended on *mousikē*.[26] Yet, if *theoria* could preserve such a sense of communion, at least to ancient Greek tuned ears, its translation into *Speculatio* emphasized a mimetology of reflection, hence of separation. Aiming to be a perfect mirroring, the pure knowledge of self-reflection, or at least an earthly mirroring of divine knowledge, speculation was a purely Platonic mimetology: presenting itself as the pure contemplation of the idea, it was a "specularization," a trick or turn of the mirror that sought to dominate mimesis by presenting the restricted, visual mimesis of mirroring and reproduction as a general mimesis, as a science.[27] We saw how this generalization of mimesis operated in Part I; here we attend to its modern consequences.

Medieval Christianity also preserved the purity of vision in the form of a "metaphysics of the light" and which was further "purified" by Aquinas by distinguishing between "representation and fetishism" in the Church's quarrels against idolatry, which, Jay argues, prepared the way for the "the secular autonomization of the visual as a realm unto itself," which was crucial for the preparation of the "scientific worldview." For Jay, then, the "rational" and "mystic" aspects of vision were somehow kept together as they became modern. Thus, "vision, aided by new technologies, became the dominant sense in the modern world, even as it came to serve new masters.[28]

Both of these narratives converge in the period that we can properly call the *baroque*. For Jay, the baroque occupies a particular place in the passage from the medieval, Christianized elevation of vision towards its secular, Enlightened dominance in modern scientific reason and political representation as elaborated by Panofsky. For Panofsky, art's embracing of mathematized perspective made it possible, in the early modern period, to "reduce the divine to a mere subject matter for consciousness…but, for that very reason, conversely, it expands human consciousness into a vessel for the divine." And by affirming the certainty of perception over the truth of being, this turn

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[26] Quoted in Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 31.
[27] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 95. See also chapter 2, above.
[28] Jay, *Downcast Eyes,* 44.

towards vision entailed a turn towards the spectacle, the spectacular, and the *meraviglia*, or what Panofsky calls "the visionary," by which the miraculous and the divine becomes part of direct human experience, signaling the passage from "theocracy" to "anthropocracy."[29] The perspectival techniques developed towards the end of the sixteenth century, doing away with the mirror, with speculation—and thus presumably with mimesis—, transformed "real space" into "visible space" by positing an abstract, immobile "eye" as the apex of a visual pyramid connected with the individual points in the visual image. Further, the position of the eye determines the position of the vanishing point towards which every line—and hence all content—is directed. In this way, Panofsky argues, perspective constructs an entirely modern understanding of space, by abstracting not only ideal positions from the objective world, but also from the particular characteristics of actual subjective optical impression.[30] That is, the space created by perspective is neither coextensive with the "material world" nor with the purely subjective perception of the observer, but is instead a mathematized, homogenous space constructed to overcome both psychophysiological perception (including retinal distortion caused by projection on a concave surface) and the "discontinuous space" of antiquity. By accomplishing a representation of systematized space, mathematized perspective is the "symbolic form" of modernity: a concrete, material sign endowed with a particular meaning, namely that of making the observing subject the rational locus of the systematization of the world.[31] Thus, the representation offered by mathematized perspective attained an ontological, formative power that sought to replace the specular mimetology of the world as *Imago dei* for a frontal re-presentation of the world as it appears to the eye. This operation is the aesthetic instrumentalization of the ontological power given to the eye in the baroque, which as Buci-Glucksmann puts it, proclaimed that "to be is to see."[32]

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[29] Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 72.
[30] Ibid., 29.
[31] Ibid., 41.
[32] Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision*, 2.

But to see, and Orpheus knew this all too well, is also to lose what is behind, or above—or to make them invisible. The dorsal imbrication of the visible and the audible is quite evident (or audible) in the religious schisms of the baroque. As the primacy of the voice as unmediated connection with a personal God is made one of the central tenets of the Reformation, the Catholic Church, especially under the direction of the Jesuits, turns to what Jay, after Barthes, calls an "imperialism of the image." Through a conjoint operation, the Church and the Court turned towards the spectacularization of both secular and religious ritual, reaching its apotheosis in the absolutist court of Louis XIV.[33] Where Protestants turned their back on spectacle, the Counter-Reformation embraced it and brought it to unseen extremes. The consequence, as Jay shows, was the production of the baroque "ocular regime," a subterranean presence or an "uncanny double" of what we might call the dominant scientific or 'rationalized' visual order," which complicated reason's claim to universality.[34] The seeing subject appears as the locus of two opposite claims: the unifying center of a rational view of the world, and an object on display, a participant in the spectacular display of the baroque court. Art operates as the mediation between these two functions of the subject, and more broadly as the mediation between power and religion: this is the operational mode of the general dispositive of aesthetic politics in the baroque. This ocular regime was not restricted to religion, art, or science, but pervaded them all, constantly pitting each camp against each other: The Church against Galilei; Kepler against Fludd; Kircher against Kepler; Descartes against Kircher. At stake in these conflicts was how to ground—or re-ground—the possibility of empirical knowledge based on the senses upon a form of reason that was not theological or speculative. Or, alternatively, how to preserve order and the religious and political institutions. A typical example of this tension is the prevalence of anamorphosis as the paradigm of baroque visual mimetology (in Holbein), which, by combining two visual orders in one planar space, "subverted and decentered the unified subject of vision painstakingly constructed by the dominant scopic regime."[35]

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[33] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 46.
[34] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 45.
[35] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 48.

The trope of the *Theatrum mundi* stages this dualism in a paradigmatic way: the world is a theatre, a *theatron*, a place to see, and a spectacle. As Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf remark, a theatricalization of political life characterizes the European seventeenth-century in general, especially in Spain and England.[36] If the structure of the world is theatrical, the theatre attains a privileged role for structuring the world. We are familiar with this chiastic structure of the mimetic mediation of power from Elizabethan theatre.[37] If the medieval deployment of the trope emphasized the role of men as actors with no free will, its elaborations from the Renaissance to the baroque pointed towards the spectacle, the world as given-to-be-seen in which the lack of immediate contact with God was supplemented by the spectacularization of experience. A world, moreover, separated between objects enclosed within defined frames and subjects who contemplated them.

Writing about the role of the world-as-theatre metaphor in English Renaissance poetry, Frank Warnke points to the specific mimetic difference that will define the trope's deployment in the baroque: "To see the world is to see it as it is—not because life, in its 'dramatic' texture, sometimes *resembles* a stage spectacle, but because life, recognized as a conflict of opposites and as a shifting phantasmagoria of appearances, is fully identifiable with a stage spectacle."[38] In other words, the world and the theatre are not two different spheres which can sometimes coincide due to perceived similarities or because the theater imitates actions; rather, they constitute two aspects of the same *ontological determination* of reality according to an earlier and more pervasive mimetology, one which affirms a radical separation between what is and what appears. For Warnke, this metaphysics produces a general experience of confusion, which José Antonio Maravall describes as a simultaneous affirmation of mutability (everything is transitory) and immutability (natural laws—and even historical laws, for Vico—are

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[36] Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 337 n. 2.

[37] See Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis*; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

[38] Frank J. Warnke, *Versions of Baroque: European Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 69.

simple and unchanging).[39] The common ontology between world and theatre as a play of simulacra allows for the specifically baroque nature of its deployment, namely that the relation is invertible: in the baroque, "the stage of the world," *Theatrum mundi*, means both that the world is *on* stage and that the world *is* a stage. Or again, "If reality is theatrical, if the spectators find themselves submerged in the great theater of the world, what they contemplate on the stage is a theater to the second degree."[40]

Yet, if poetry—in Marvell, Burton, Browne, Gracián, Calderón, and Shakespeare, in Warnke's reading—exploits this identity by "expressing the radical conviction that the phenomenal world is illusion," it is also necessary to remark that this affirmation is the correlate—or rather the means—of the theologico-political apparatus through which illusion becomes an ideological technology of what Maravall calls the "captivation of the will."[41] The invertibility of the *Theatrum mundi* trope evidences or conceals—depending on how one reads it—the imbrication of aesthetics and politics of the baroque.

IDEOLOGY, AFFECT, AND SPECTRALIZATION

In fact, as much as the stage and the theater might claim to a shared reality, there is a constitutive schism in its very structure which complicates its presumed invertibility. The predominance of modern perspective in the theater has been described by Bonnie Gordon as an ideological formation that, by isolating the viewer from the represented world, also segregates the spectator and the stage. For Gordon, "the increasing spatial, temporal, and ideological detachment of stage worlds from the real world opened up a rift" that made it possible, in the theatre (but also in museums, laboratories, botanical gardens and anatomy theaters), for what Gordon calls the "ventriloquization" of women by composers such as Monteverdi (in compositions such as the *Combattimento* and *Ariadne* in which male

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[39] Antonio José Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque Analysis of a Historical Structure* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 200.
[40] Idem.
[41] Citing Spanish novelist Gonzalo Céspedes y Meneses (1585-1638): "Novelty draws one's eyes and they, one's will." Ibid., 228.

narrators overpower female characters on stage), it made it possible "for the emergence of a modern male subject who colonized the female object."[42]

Gordon's attention to the structure of power in spectacle is crucial for highlighting the "ontological" power of the eye in the baroque. Gordon here is in accord with the general reading of the baroque as consisting on a large-scale repressive apparatus which effectively organizes its subjects through its monopoly of all forms of representation. This thesis, which lies at the core of the New Historicism, insits on the separation between "real worlds" and "stage worlds" and at the same time supposes that what is represented on the second corresponds to the first, such that, effectively, we can read artistic works as bearing the traces of the societies that produced them—that is, that artistic works are representations of reality—mimesis.

But this thesis is not exclusive to that school. Consider the work of a Marxist historian such as Maravall. For him, the paradigmatic tropes of the baroque—the elevation of the new, the delight on illusion, awe through excess, difficulty and obscurity but also laconism (in *conceptismo* and *culteranismo*, respectively) which Maravall groups under the term "artifice"—are psychological expedients and mechanisms (*resortes*) through which absolutist monarchs shaped the lived experience of the people.[43] The baroque hyper-Platonism (i.e., the oppositions between appearance and essence, between mutability and substance, and so on) which was exploited and affirmed through art and philosophy, was a general ideological strategy by which "a force reconstitutive of traditional interests was smuggled in by means of the novelty that one was attracted to for

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[42] Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 180.

[43] See the translator's preface to *The Culture of the Baroque* for Maravall's usage of the word "resortes," where it is noted that the term captures the crucial ambivalence with respect to agency that characterizes ideology, since "the will [la voluntad] is both subject and object, it is acted upon in order to act, or (to put it another way) it acts by means of having been acted upon. This complexity becomes even greater, for ideology cannot be described in simply teleological terms, in the familiar sense of 'instrumental reason'" Ibid., xxvii.

enjoyment."[44] In his account, the "baroque" is a historical concept which describes the period between 1605 and 1650 in Spain, where,

> [T]he crisis economy, monetary upheavals, credit insecurity, economic wars, and (along with this) the strengthening of seigniorial agrarian landholdings and the growing impoverishment of the masses foster a feeling of being threatened and of instability in one's personal and social life, a feeling that is held in control by the imposing forces of repression that underlie the dramatic gesticulation of the baroque human being and permit us the use of such a name. So the baroque is a concept of epoch that in principle extends to all the manifestations making up this epoch's culture.[45]

Maravall thus identifies the conjunction of political elites and the Catholic Church led by the Jesuits in seventeenth-century Spain as having a determining role on the shaping of the cultural life of Europe, consisting on widespread strategies of repression and control

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[44] Ibid., 227. From this position one can question the established narrative, in Tomlinson's account, according to which the transformation in Monteverdi's late style depends on his having "succumbed" to the new and fashionable poetry of Marino, such that "Marinist idioms in dramatic texts could not help but dilute the potent rhetoric, joining poetry and music, that Monteverdi had mastered in Ariadne's lament." Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 179. If, according to Maravall, the baroque operates by means of extremes, if both laconism and studied complexity are but faces of one same artifice, then it is not enough, as Carter attempts, to show that Marinist poetry—and Monteverdi's treatment thereof—is more than "the empty wit, the tawdry eroticism, and the superifcial cult of the 'marvelous' for which the poet was so often derided, at least from the late seventeenth century on" if this "something more" is nevertheless understood as the elaborate play on intertextual referentiality and manipulation of voices, which would only make it pass—to use now outdated terms, from *conceptismo* to *culteranismo*—while still remaining a form of artifice. Tim Carter, "Beyond Drama: Monteverdi, Marino, and the Sixth Book of Madrigals (1614)," *The Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69, no. 1 (2016): 41.

[45] Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*, 6. The importance of Maravall's work for understanding early modern spectacle is well acknowledged, although from my perspective, the mimetological conception of power and ideology that it upholds (the real vs. appearance; the elite vs. the masses) is insufficiently critical. Nevertheless, Maravall is alone in identifying the characteristic conjuncture of politics and aesthetics of the baroque and describing the multiplicity of strategies by which experience and affect are shaped, organized, and directed through dispositives that are still cursorily (and anachronistically) understood as purely "aesthetic," that is, as autonomous art. Another aspect that must be reconciled is the disregard Maravall shows for music, which has a role in seventeenth-century monarchic Spain that is arguably not lesser than that of the theater to which Maravall gives sustained attention. For works which make up for this omission while elaborating on the ideological function of opera in Spain and the New World with recourse to Jacques Attali's and Frederic Jameson's theories of ideology, see Chad M. Gasta, *Imperial Stagings : Empire and Ideology in Transatlantic Theater of Early Modern Spain and the New World* (Chapel HIll, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); see also Louise K. Stein, *Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the Gods: Music and Theatre in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), who subscribes more fully to Maravall's formulation of the problem.

of the masses. Where Benjamin identified a theologically produced melancholy, Maravall suggests an affective disposition marked by insecurity and instability which the dominant class, in the midst of the crisis, simultaneously produces and seeks to conceal through the production of cultural spectacle—indeed a mass spectacle.[46]

To put it in the orthodox Marxist terms that Maravall does not make explicit, there is a distinction between real material conditions and merely superstructural reflections, between sovereign power and repressed masses, which leads him to state that the *Theatrum mundi* metaphor and the question of the use of the theater as an instrument are "unrelated."[47] Thus, while identifying the ideological function of the metaphor, Maravall leaves unquestioned the mimetology that grounds it—real subjects and transitory roles, i.e. substance and appearance—which is also preserved in the dogmatic distinction between infrastructure and superstructure.

As we know, ideology is also matter of turning. In Althusser's well known scene, the subject is recruited into ideology through the hail of "hey you, there!" upon which the individual turns round.[48] And this turn, like every turn, is conditioned by dorsality. The point of Althusser's example is that the individual turns without having seen who is doing the hailing, and indeed if it is directed to him. The turn, the "mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion" is an acknowledgment of his identity as a subject, turning to face the point from which the interpellation comes. Coming from behind, the interpellation is invisible yet audible. In order to press the point that ideology is

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[46] According to Maravall, the baroque developed the Medieval interpretation of the trope—we are all actors since our fate is in written in the script of Providence—in three simultaneous ways: 1. The role of each is as transitory as it is in in the theater; 2. There is a rotation of roles, so that what one is today is someone else tomorrow; 3. Since everything is an appearance, nothing really affects the substance of the person who endures the changing roles. For Maravall, these three interpretations have the explicit ideological function of preserving the status quo and impending mobility, since it convinces everyone, especially those enduring inferior roles, that there is no reason to protest or struggle because these transitory roles will eventually be switched. Ibid., 155. Compare this interpretation with the Shakespearean *locus classicus* of the *Theatrum mundi* trope: "All the world's a stage, /And all the men and women merely players/They have their exits and their entrances/And one man in his time plays many parts." This is, of course, not the only place in Shakespeare's corpus where the metaphor is deployed. See Warnke, *Versions of Baroque*, 75ff.

[47] Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque,* 154. This claim is ignored by authors who take Maravall as a point of departure for an analysis of early modern spectacle as, for example, "re-presentation of reality itself."

[48] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 286.

"everywhere" and "eternal", Althusser subsequently rewrites the scene to insist that there is no such sequentiality, that the existence of ideology and the interpellation of individuals are one and the same thing. But this indicates only that frontality is always already the result of a dorsal turn: just as there is no outside of ideology, there is no directionality that is not conditioned by dorsality and the invisibility that it implies. Moreover, the example (and Althusser's frequent comparisons of ideology with the Freudian unconscious) makes it clear that there is necessarily a disjuncture between the call and the response which is entirely irreducible to the logic of mystification.

From this position we can see the limit in Maravall's analysis of baroque ideology: it depends on the orthodox notion of ideology in which the people are fed fictions and illusions by the ruling class in order to keep them enslaved by dominating their imaginations. Not only this account cannot show why would the people simply believe these stories when the contrast with their material realities was as sharp but it fails to explain how the particular cultural objects, especially "high" creations such as poetry and all sorts of allegorical constructs, would have a such an immediate effect upon a people that was barely literate.

The spectacle is not ideological because it keeps an audience enthralled in contemplating what is presented in front of them while keeping their backs away from their real conditions or the truth—as in the very ideological allegory of Plato's cave. Indeed, as Althusser would say, what is ideological about such a model is only its name: that it is oriented towards an *idea*, an *eidos*, which is defined in terms of true or false. Althusser's version of ideology seems to shatter this mimetological conception of ideology. Rather, Althusser insists on a "materiality of ideology," wherein ideology exists thoroughly in its practices, in rituals that are inscribed within the material existence of an ideological apparatus, such as the church or the theater.

Althusser describes the mimetology of ritual through an example that is also classic: Pascal says: "Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe."[49] It is the actions, in their very materiality, that give rise to belief, to the idea of God. By acting

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[49] Idem., 278.

the role of a believer, by enacting the performance or ritual of prayer, the subject produces not only the model of such a prayer but even the ideas that organize it. Ideas are produced by matter just as paradigms are created from copies. In fact, it is a repetition of instances of materiality, an assemblage, which produces ideology's ideas:

> I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject*.[50]

Althusser insists throughout the text on abandoning "metaphors," "representations" and "descriptions" in order to arrive to a thoroughly "theoretical" or "scientific" discourse. This tension traverses the entire text with surprising results. In the telling example of the ideology of the Church, Althusser moves from the voice of God, who speaks to his subjects in the first person, to showing that the subjects are indeed interpellated as mirrors, and reflections. From this restricted example he draws, as a general consequence and expressed in "theoretical language," that

> We observe that the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject, is speculary, i.e. a mirror-structure, and doubly speculary: this mirror duplication is constitutive of ideology, and ensures its functioning.[51]

Interpellation works just as God commands: ideology depends on the *Imago dei*. What then is the difference between the "bad" notion of ideology that is defined with respect to its content, from the "theoretical" one that arrives to its own formulations? But it is not that Christian dogma determines Althusser's scientific notion of ideology. Rather, it is the very Platonic mimetology he sought to reject with a single blow, and with results that are equally "ideological." The general question that orders "Ideology and Ideological State

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[50] Idem., 279. Emphasis in the original.
[51] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", 294.

Apparatuses" is how is to assure the reproduction of the the relations of production. The answer, in a spectacular *thaumaturgia*, is the same as is offered in the *Republic* to define mimesis: it is a mirror that does no other work than reflecting—which then passes as production.

Among the productive objections that have been posed to Althusser's still relevant model is Butler's questioning of the notion of sovereignty that is at stake. Returning to the example of God, Butler focuses on the performative power of God's word (which she elsewhere calls magical), a voice that brings the subject into being. Ignoring the appearance of the mirror, Butler objects to the generalization of the divine performative as the paradigm of ideology, arguing that "Interpellation must be dissociated from the figure of the voice in order to become the instrument and mechanism of discourses whose efficacy is irreducible to their moment of enunciation."[52]

Instead of such a logocentric notion, which relies entirely in a notion of sovereign power as emanating from a subject and activated through a voice, Butler mobilizes the logic of iteration to show that interpellation works even where there is not a voice and even where it is not directly emanating from a center of power or addressed to a particular subject. This is a crucial amend to Althusser, for indeed the presumed power of the performative is presumed on the problematic notions of performative utterances (which depend on the simultaneous presence of speaker and statement) and of power as sovereignty emanating from a single point.

Crucial, too, is that Butler disavows the mirror (which has to be shown in its complicity with the model she denounces) and especially the turn. As she writes, "The subject need not always turn around in order to be constituted as a subject, and the discourse that inaugurates the subject need not take the form of a voice at all."[53] Yet even if there is no turn, interpellation is conditioned by dorsality: one does not know from where the hail comes from or whether it is directed to oneself or someone else until it is too late. And it is always already too late: any frontality always implies a turn.

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[52] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 32.
[53] Idem., 31.

We end up with various models of ideology that, in one way or another, imply a mimetology *on the side of theory*. Whether it is the orthodox model of superstructure and infrastructure and its correlatives, or Althusser's various reformulations and even Butler's amend, it seems impossible to describe ideology from the outside. What remains are a series of oppositions—real/illusion, voice/mirror, subject/God, matter/idea, infrastructure/superstructure, and so on. Mimesis, as a productive force, is effectively what separates these distinctions while exceeding them. As such, mimesis is not *in* or *of* either of these, for example the infrastructure or the superstructure but always in alterity with them—making it possible to distinguish, for example, between an economic situation and its aesthetic counterpart in terms of model and copy or reflection. Thus, elements that belong to the economic or the political do become aesthetic functions—the new, illusion, drama, the difficult and so on—and conversely that aesthetic elements— opera, the theater, myth—become repositories of value and power with political effectivity, while affects such as fear, rivalry and dispossession are shaped, mobilized, and incorporated into a general assemblage. What is crucial, however, is that mimesis constantly overturns the primacy of each.

I will retain, for my purposes, something about the Pascal model. Kneeling down is effective as a performative not because it magically brings into existence the belief that one does not have before, but because in its repetition—and iteration—it constitutes a disperse network of practices and technologies in which ideology is inscribed. But also, because in praying, in turning towards oneself, one already determines the dorsal as the (non)place of ideology: either a voice that is heard or an address that one does not acknowledge until it is too late (and it always is), ideology is thoroughly material but also thoroughly invisible.

Which is not surprising given how well music works as ritual, hail, or mystification. Going back to Maravall and Benjamin, I emphasize the affective dimension of the ideological rituals of the baroque. Kneeling down is also turning the body into a site of affection, just as going to the theater or participating in any other Court spectacle. The effect seems to be the same in the case of the German and the Spanish

baroque, where the dominant affects were melancholy and sorrow. In the Italian case, as I will argue below, we might first speak of display and ostentation, *meraviglia*, and *magnificenza*; *gioia* and *allegrezza*. In fact, in the baroque *festa* everyone is hailed by a voice that comes from nowhere, by a sovereign power that—even at the center of what we consider the origin of absolutism—is invisible. And yet everyone responds to its call. It says: enjoy!

As a counterbalance to Maravall's top-down model of power, or Saslow and Treadwell's invisible center model, we can conceive of a different mode of production of the collective, operating through a certain affective interpellation, that does not conceive of the public as a mystified mass, on the one hand, nor as the abstract spectator of painterly and spectacular *prospettive*.[54] Where perspective depends on a single and immobile "eye," the spectacle makes it possible for this eye to embody a collective gaze. Rather than uniting several views under one sovereign eye that stands for all, the baroque spectacle in its Italian form is a collective phenomenon which depends on a particular mimetic inversion described in Gino Stefani's provocative reading of the ideology and the poetics of the baroque, to which we now turn.

For Stefani, the *festa*, which constitutes the symbolic and productive center of baroque culture, appears as a total theatre, as the "global manifestation of an integral society." In this society, baroque life constitutes the "natural model of which melodrama is the artistic and artificial imitation."[55] A crucial difference in the Italian context, made prominent by Stefani's emphasis on the *festa*, is the collective aspect of this theatricalization, unlike the absolutist stages of Spain and northern Europe described by

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[54] For Maravall, it should be noted, perspective is another *resorte,* a mechanism which permits organizing the disorderly world of appearances while affirming its nature as changing, mutable, and irreal; moreover, Maravall notes that this role of perspective is not only a painterly one, but also political and theological: 'Perspective is the way whereby the world came into view and and was captured by baroque painting. What we are saying about painting is valid for every type of consideration: for art and for thought. Paravicino, in indicating the central theme of one of his funeral orations, would say: 'The entire field of eloquence is foreshortened to this perspective,' a text in which the introduction of the concept of foreshortening reinforces the function of the concept of perspective. Lope tells us about 'the distant views that perspective reveals to us.... But this manner of seeing was projected onto whatever fell in the human world, even though it was considered something as transcendent vis-à-vis the world as the interventions of divine providence.'" Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*, 195.

[55] Gino Stefani, *Musica barocca* (Milano: Bompiani, 1974), 20.

Maravall. In Italy, the figure of the Prince acts as a symbolic center for a collective that contemplates itself as spectacle, rather than the elevation of the monarch or the Sun King as absolute center. In this total theatre, artifice is not secondary or deceptive: it remarks the fact that the *festa* is itself an act of self-display, it is an autocelebration. The society becomes "integral" when it gives itself to be seen, when it places itself as the essential center of the *theatron*.

While the *festa* is an event and a spectacle in itself, melodrama is a celebration which, by imitating festivity, allows the collective society to contemplate itself in the theatre, an operation that depends on the baroque invertibility of the *Theatrum mundi*. Remarking on the global and systematic aspect of the celebration—the concatenation of events such as ceremonies, processions, panegyrics, banquets, and concerts into a whole—Stefani notes that music participates in every aspect, as an autonomous event as well as connective tissue or backdrop.[56] Even if the structure is theatrical, spectacular—visual—, the effect is synesthetic: from the ensemble machine/music, hearing is presented as the binary counterpart of sight, but it also shares with smell the pervasive adjective describing "una soavissima armonia," which remits one to the incense in the church and further to invisibility, impalpability (thus to touch), delicacy, levity, immateriality and so on.[57] This synesthetic experience, a total, affective assemblage not unlike ancient Greek *mousiké* (as described in chapter 2), is epitomized in melodrama, which adds a further philosophical function: initially only a fragment, the melodrama acquires a central role in condensing the total experience of the festivity.

> In the Baroque, *festa* gives form to society just as melodrama gives form to *festa* (where "just as" has the strength of homology, of isomorphism [we may add, of course, of mimesis]). If melodrama is the mirror of baroque society, it is so through the diaphragm of *festa*.[58]

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 23.
[58] Ibid., 26.

We have thus passed from the trope of the *Theatrum Mundi* to that of macro- and microcosmic correspondence, the great chain of being and the harmony of the spheres. The joint operation of these two tropes in regulating and producing a global conception of the universe, a cosmopolitics, attains its apotheosis in Athanasius Kircher's 1650 *Musurgia Universalis*, explored the excursus to this dissertation. These tropes share a mimetic structure (art repeats—and thus constitutes—the structure of the world as theatrical and harmonic) and thus an economimetic function: they serve less as illustrations or explanations of social, aesthetic, or ontological orders than as a way of controlling aesthetic practice as a means of producing these orders.

For Stefani, the collective and systematic aspects of *festa* (as total theatre) define the character of opera. The *festa*, enclosed in itself, is only concerned with autocelebration, with self-display. It exists in the now, evanescent fireworks and the melodies consuming themselves and vanishing in the night. The celebration of a wedding, a victory, a banquet, as a particular event, is simply an event in history but it does not belong to it.[59] Myth, Stefani argues, provides the mediation that joins these particular celebrations with history, "and the continuity between history and symbol is so narrow that it sometimes gives the vertiginous impression of continuity."[60] Myth, true for all times and thus specific for none, is an empty universal.[61] The celebration is a particular event, embodied by the Prince, the court, and the people, and limited to their immediate existence; while they come together as society in the celebration, this union has no permanence beyond the celebration itself. Conversely, in the words of Stefani, without the people, myth lacks actualization: it lacks the material to compose. When opera employs mythological themes for the festivity, it sublates both the immediacy of the celebration and the abstract character of myth into the concrete, and collective, universal. Music, more specifically opera, constitutes such a singularity: it is both history

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[59] In a different reading of this characterization, that would go by way of Bakhtin and Bataille we could say that the celebration is a pure expenditure, not a celebration in history but the denial of history, a sovereign event in the now, and not the bureaucratic operation of family marriages. It remains a further task to continue this line of though and confront it with Stefani's analyses. See also Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*.

[60] Stefani, *Musica barocca*, 28.

[61] Here I follow Stefani's characterization of myth, highlighting a Hegelian framework that will be modified below.

and myth, event and celebration, total spectacle and universal harmony. Stefani then turns to Orpheus, the symbol that culminates festive and musical representation in baroque society; with Orpheus, he writes, myth becomes rite.

We already encountered the interpretation of *L'Orfeo* as a rite in Calcagno's and Annibaldi's reading, where Orfeo's *catabasis* was to be seen as a transformation that Prince Francesco himself underwent (see chapter 5). Departing from this interpretation, I suggested that there is a limit to the power of allegory in maintaining these identifications, a limit that depends on the mimetic nature of allegory. No sooner is the allegorical identification suggested than it is eliminated. But this does not mean that the identification did not take place at all. It is made and subsequently undone, and it is within this play, I argue, that we can consider the ideological role of such identification as ritual.

My contention is that the allegorical identification of Prince Francesco with Orfeo works towards creating a certain perspective, a spacial and affective distribution which organizes the collective celebration around one figure. However, the perspective through which the Prince is placed at the center of this spectacular disposition does not mean that its effects as ideology are exhausted with the affirmation of his centrality or the production of its invisibility. As I showed in chapter 6 by looking at *Euridice* through Machiavelli, centering on the sovereign is also a way of questioning sovereignty and defining the place of a people, a viewpoint, from which the sovereign is contemplated. This displacement from the center, even if there is a center, recalls Buci-Glucksmann's point that the baroque is concerned with a proliferation of perspectives, where the traditional mimetology of the *eidos*, of a distinction between the original and the copy, is carried to its hyperbolic consequences, such that any privilege assigned to a central point as a center or an origin is relativized by the differential points of view.

MIMESIS OF NOTHINGNESS (INTERLUDE)

This proliferation of points of view, however, is not without its dorsal complications. In fact, the interpretation of modern turn towards the visual for the history of mimesis

cannot be underestimated, for what is at stake is a recasting of the Platonic mimetology of original and copy, which, as presented in chapter 2, is subordinated to a restricted, visual conception of mimesis. This restricted mimesis, recall, is presented as general, displacing other forms of mimesis, such as that of *musikē*. Something similar happens with the implementation of perspective, as analyzed by Panofsky. Perspective—and here lies the "modern" aspect that interests us—does not betray the true being (*ousia*) of things by producing a deformed appearance (*phainomenon*). Rather, by constructing the system upon an abstract point of view, and by affirming the point of view—and not the object seen—as true being, it complicates the revaluation of the traditional metaphysical opposition between essence and appearance.

In the history of music, the mimetological consequences of this ontological determination of the world as visible are well-known through Tomlinson's *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance*. Monteverdi's late style, for example in *Il Ritorno* and *Poppea*, is for Tomlinson characterized by "a delight in musical language itself, in the versatile and virtuosic manipulation of its varied linguistic devices…[which often] do not so much reflect changing passion as give iconic or mimetic treatment to individual images," for example in the new *concitato* portrayal of rage, or "mimetic laughter."[62] Tomlinson traced this change to Monteverdi's embracing of the Marinist aesthetics of *meraviglia* and *acutezza*, characterized by a lack of introspection and an intensification of the devices from the Petrarchean tradition, such as the *contrapposto*. Monteverdi's librettists, Badoaro and Busenello, privilege the tendency "to objectify poetic utterance through reference to things in the real world. Their protagonists forsake the unmediated emotional expression of Orpheus and Ariadne and often seem unable to voice their feelings except by comparison to natural objects or objective concepts."[63]

Tomlinson rephrased his appraisal of Monteverdi's late style in his *Music and Renaissance Magic* to argue, through an appeal to Foucauldian epistemes, that it was not so much a matter of superficial aesthetic transformations but of deeper ones, only

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[62] Citing Spanish novelist Gonzalo Céspedes y Meneses (1585-1638): "Novelty draws one's eyes and they, one's will." Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*, 228.
[63] Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance*, 223.

accessible through an archaeological approach that revealed the massive shift from the episteme of similarities, which allowed for the musical interiority of *L'Orfeo* and *Ariadne*, towards one of representation, characterized by the separation between subject and object, of which the *Lament of the Nymph* is paradigmatic. For Tomlinson, the new music cannot be said to be mimetic since it does not replicate in its form or substance some elements of the nonmusical world, as opposed what would be "a true and deep imitation in music of the nymph's ethos of lament, as it happens in a work like "Sfogava con le stele," for example. Rather, what characterizes the *Lament* is a thorough separation of music and speech. It operates in a space where "its relations with the world of which it is no longer a part are artificially, not ontologically defined."[64] Tomlinson thus locates here the emergence of a sort of autonomous musical syntax whose reference to the world is arbitrary and which abandons the interior connections of magical similitude.

But if the development of perspective through the Renaissance is structured on a polarity between the seeing and the seen, it will not be long until such a structure is exceeded by the very logic that makes it possible. If the Renaissance mimetology affirmed a single point of view as the axis upon which the total construction could be ascertained as certain and true, the baroque consists in the affirmation of multiple points of view. Considering the way in which the eye is made into the "central physical organ of the baroque system" through the work of painters such as Brueghel, Rubens, and Velásquez, Buci-Glucksmann emphasizes that in the baroque vision is understood not so much as the center but as the possibility for affirming multiplicity and plurality, since vision offers an "inventory of multiples." As in Baltasar Gracián and Leibniz, "vision is the sense of plurality, infinite multitudes, profusion, and differences—beauty."[65]

Buci-Glucksmann's unique work bridges her reading of the baroque through Benjamin with Merleau-Ponty's late work, the most rigorous formulation of the ontological power of vision, of the existential "madness" in which vision bridges subject and object, where seeing is first of all the affirmation of "a sort of insensate preexistence

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[64] Ibid., 243.
[65] Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision*, 3.

in which, even before taking place, 'I am looked at from all sides.'"[66] In her reading, all the topoi of baroque visuality—speculum, mirror, omnivoyant world—are the same elements that operate in Merleau-Ponty's chiasmic intertwining between the seer and the world. Thus, the proliferation of points of view and the exuberance of the visible that characterize the baroque effectuate the same displacement from a phenomenology of perception, where a single, abstract point of view defines the totality of the world as what falls within its perspective, towards an ontology of seeing "Being is plural sight that is subjected to 'points of view,' to the realities of intersections and encountering sights."[67]

This ontology of the seen, however, is not a pure act of grounding. Along with Lebnizian perspectivism is an affirmation, and obsession, with nothingness—*Il niente*, emptiness, *la nada*, that negates the doctrine of a pre-established harmony—thus, a Lebnizianism without Leibniz—turning instead towards a more Nietzschean perspectivism—found in Tesauro—where there is no Being, *ousia*, behind the multiplicity of perspectives, neither as Platonic forms or as Aristotelian *morphé*, but rather as the result of a *technē*, an artifactual proliferation of points of view, which Buci-Glucksmann calls a *mimesis of nothingness*.[68] Furthermore,

> [T]he resort to nothingness—the art of nothingness—coincides with a crisis of "mimetic" models of knowing and statements of Platonic origin. The empty interval, like the articulatory silence in baroque music or the compelling opening in a painting by Tintoretto, permits artifice, dramatization and the advent of form, the power of antithesis, metaphor, and metamorphosis, beyond all referent or signified. A true *oxymornonic practice of nothingness* delights in its sophistry against Platonism.[69]

Nothingness, that is, of being: there is nothing, no being behind appearances. The proliferation of points of view is possible by the denial of an original or a common point towards which the perspectives are oriented. There is nothing behind or in front of the multiplicity that the baroque produces so that, as Gracián writes, "the art of display fills

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[66] Ibid., 26.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 14.
[69] Ibid., 31.

many voids and offers *a second being.*[70] The praise of the simulacrum, as we have seen with Eggington's "minor strategy," is a common theme in affirmative accounts of the baroque and it is easily identified with anti-Platonism and with a rejection or an end of mimesis.

Calcagno, furthermore, emphasizes the centrality of the theme of nothingness, *Il Niente*—through the 1634 *Le Glorie del Niente* (The Glories of Nothing), written by Marin Dall'Angelo—for the Venetian *Accademia degli Incogniti,* active between ca. 1623 and 1661, of which Marino, Badoaro, and Busenello were members. Through the treatise of Dall'Angelo, the Incogniti rejected the possibility of using language to know a world that they argued was "nothing." As for Tomlinson, these authors are exemplars of the episteme of representation, where words and things are separated by a void and thus, "the former, emancipated from the latter, become free to wander off in their own and to play with themselves as pure sonorous entities."[71] Similarly, he argues that this separation allows for a music that is progressively autonomous, where the semantic weight of words tends to give place to their sonorous qualities, and similarly the musical techniques take prevalence over intended meanings, and thus that "the Renaissance ideal of art imitating nature loses its raison d'être, and verisimilitude becomes dispensable."[72]

We also found this radical separation of signifier from signified in Benjamin's theory of allegory, where, crucially, it was presented less as a rejection or an overcoming of mimesis than as an exacerbation of the tension between two forms of signification, expression (of magical similarities) and convention (arbitrary signification, or nothingness), instead of the overcoming of one by the other. As Benjamin puts it, allegory is expression of convention, that is, a redoubled reading of the arbitrary or conventional signification of language, which rather than offer a nihilistic and libertine

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[70] Ibid., 26; emphasis in the original.
[71] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 243.
[72] Ibid., 244.

vision, as the Incogniti had been, shows this process to be a part of natural history and a question of political theology.[73]

Benjamin's concept of allegory indicates the problem with the affirmations of simulacrum and autonomy *per se*. As I have argued in the previous chapters, these interpretations not only presume that a new representative regime or episteme cleanly supplanted the other one, but that it can only affirm this logic by positing a "magical episteme" of pure natural expression, of an unbroken continuity of similarities without mediation, alteration, or interference of writing, of a fall into the exteriority of meaning, and moreover, that these changes occur either in the archeological substratum, or in the autonomous sphere of the aesthetic.

As I show in chapter 4, however, this episteme is also the result of a mimetological operation where what is at stake is the repression of mimesis as the production of alterity, or, in its seventeenth-century name, "novelty": by affirming natural expression as the continuity of being and thought, this mimetology affirms an eternal, self-same world, the rule of the same over the insistence of alterity. The preservation of this unbroken fulcrum of similarities was an operation of power, of the enforcement of a certain mimetology over others. As Luiz Costa Lima defines it, Renaissance *imitatio* is a mechanism by which a certain notion of truth and history—as divine creation—was reconciled with the then-emerging individual that was considered a source of unruliness and uncontrollable impulses (an individual that, although Costa Lima does not make explicit, is feminized by its very description and the mimetology that is implied). By affirming the primacy of models over individual, "subjective" production, *imitatio* served as a reconciliation—that is, a hegemonic suppression of conflict—of the opposed camps of ecclesiastics and Humanists, serving as "legitimation for the subjectivity to the extent that it presents itself according to a model acceptable to all, *doctores* and commons, Humanists and representatives of ecclesiastical thought alike."[74] However, he writes, "[that] reconciliation was successful only if *imitatio* permitted the *control* of the

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[73] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 175.
[74] Luiz Costa Lima, *Control of the Imaginary: Reason and Imagination in Modern Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 17.

individual subjectivity and if one of its possible discourses, the fictional, were controlled aprioristically as well, through its subjugation to legitimated models."[75]

If the baroque broke with this continuity, if Monteverdi's dissonances were able to provoke new *concenti*, and thus new *affetti*, as L'Ottuso put it, this is not just because the archeological ground had shifted underneath, so that a new, more dissonant musical syntax could emancipate itself from the web of similarities and emerge in its free, autonomous glory. Rather, as with all other transformations during the crisis of the early modern period, one type of hegemony gave way to another one. The obscene truth that Machiavelli denounced, that sovereignty and nobility are a matter of performance and not of substance, novelty itself became a function of power, a means by which the play of appearances could be regulated, replacing the "hard" hegemony of Scholastic argument with the "soft" fascination with the new.[76] Thus, what can be seen as an emancipatory affirmation of individuality coming from Republican Venice—or even the aestheticist emergence of pure forms of art—is better understood as the replacement of one mimetology for another one, which simultaneously produces and adapts itself to new social conditions as it distributes experience between power, knowledge, art, spectacle, and so on.

No overcoming of mimesis or magic, then, but a turn, a crisis or a catastrophe (from the Greek *katastrophein*: overturning or subversion) by which Platonic mimetology is brought to its extreme, turning back on itself. If words and sounds are separated from the world, if they seem to be emancipated, transformed into autonomous things with their own syntax, allegory harnesses them in their flight and insists on the tension between the written and the spoken, between the visual and the aural, between materiality and ideality. If we can describe the mimetology of Renaissance *imitatio* as a turn towards a model that is thus created, then baroque allegory repeats the turn: first it makes copies into autonomous entities—simulacra—but then forces these simulacra into being.

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[75] Ibid., 19.
[76] Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*, 228 Hard and soft hegemony are my terms, not Maravall's.

In the quote by Gracián we see that the same mimetology is at stake in such a play of appearances, of ostentation and display. Holding that there is no being behind the appearances is only a step towards the affirmation of *a second being*, so that baroque mimetology is nothing other than the production of a multiplicity of points of view with which to challenge the centrality of the single perspective, whereas the end continues to be the production of new originals. The affirmation of nothingness is no more an unruly or subversive theory than it is a displacement or a readaptation of the same mimetology to new experiences of the world, in which ostentation and display become integrated into the warp and woof of political life—as they already have been at least since Machiavelli. We have seen, in my readings of *L'Orfeo* and *L'Euridice*, to what purposes this production can be put in the space of courtly spectacle: to produce the values of nobility through which a decaying dynasty can maintain itself in power, or to decenter the place of the sovereign by exaggerating the perspective upon him, by placing him radically at the center so that the multiplicity of views can undo him even as they constitute him.

What was truly new in these spectacular productions, especially by turning back to the paradigm of ancient Greek *mousikē*, was to conceive them as performative assemblages, using rhythm and harmony as a means to synchronize the proliferation of images, sounds, and words, into events with a consistency and spectacular dimensions enough to accomplish the "captivation of the will."[77]

The major discovery, which also depended on the actualization of *mousikē* into modern spectacle, was with respect to the mimetology of performance: it was not simply a matter of producing spectacular images for a captivated audience, who would be fooled into thinking that such images corresponded to reality. Seeing their rulers transfigured as gods would not make them hate or praise them any less. In fact, it is questionable whether audiences were capable to make sense of the allegories as they were presented, especially in the absence of the written-out, authoritative libretti that explained them, as Saslow and especially Nina Treadwell in the case of musical performances, have shown.[78]

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589;* Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court.*

If the spectacularization of the world of the *Theatrum mundi* established a continuity between the world and the stage, the medium of this continuity was not pure, frontal vision. As the mimetology that insisted on the sharp distinction between originals and copies and its stubborn, restricted visualism reached its point of "madness," the claims that Humanist musicians were making for music as a matter of producing new affections—*affetti* and *costumi*—started to be implemented within large scale spectacles: they became once again, performative assemblages of inscription, whose central functions were to inscribe the *ethē* and *nomoi*, the customs and the laws, of the society. More precisely, early modern spectacle was to make possible the ontological power of the "madness of vision" by making it into a question of affect: distributed, impersonal, exceeding restricted senses and moving through and across individuals, shaping a collective, a new people.

INVISIBILITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

The Medici Wedding of 1589 between Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici and Christine de Lorraine is the paradigm of such an affective spectacularization of the world. Saslow has made this point eloquently, starting from the subtitle of his 1996 study: *Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi*. For Saslow, the *festa* epitomize the way Ferdinando sought to control the entire principate. The Medici court is the embodiment of the modern increase towards rationalization and total control of all spheres of life, a strengthening of command over both physical nature and human societies over three overlapping spheres: 1. "Physical nature," dominated through technology and economics, specifically by the developments on infrastructure, *apparati*, and the famous account-books; 2. the social, through governmental administration, surveillance, and the formalization of etiquette in court life, oriented towards sacralizing the monarchy and the ruling family "by shrouding them with an aura of mystery and pomp";[79] 3. The "discursive-intellectual sphere"— political and social thought—is controlled by monopolizing representations of the monarch and the state through intellectual and visual conceits oriented towards

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[79] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 14.

maintaining order and uniformity, for example through the founding of the Accademia della Crusca and the Uffizi museums, to standardize the Tuscan language and appropriate cultural history for the dynasty.[80]

The celebration, then, unifies these three spheres, mobilizing at the same time economic and technological resources, centralizing the ritualization of social life, organizing it around their proprietary symbolic discourse, thus fashioning everything into a total experience. The *Theatrum mundi*, then, is first of all the whole spatial environment: the natural world was physically rebuilt as a stage for human actions, especially the city, which becomes a stage for all urban dwellers. Secondly, and in correspondence with the baroque invertibility of the metaphor, actual theater buildings constitute a space "where the apparatus of state presentation could operate at a more contained and private—but correspondingly intensified—level."[81]

However, what makes the 1589 celebrations a paradigm of such a total organization of experience is the theme of the *intermedi*, which included compositions and texts by members of the Florentine Camerata led by Bardi: Giovanni Battista and Piero Strozzi, Caccini, Rinuccini, and Peri. While most of the music was composed by Cavalieri, Bardi was in control of the *concetto*, the underlying conception of the entire production, and hence the theme was predictably enough the power of musical harmony. Thus, the first *intermedio* was conceived as a representation of the Platonic cosmology of the Harmony of the Spheres, as presented in the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*, as well as episodes from Virgil, Ovid, Plutarch, and the *Laws*. According to the official *Descrizione* of the *intermedi* issued by the Medici, written by Bastiano de' Rossi,[82] *musica mundana* was represented in three of the *intermedi*, nos. 1, 4, and, 5 (1. Harmony of the Spheres; 4 Prophecy of the Golden Age; 5. Arion and the Dolphin) while *musica humana*, the influence and power of music over gods and mortals, was represented in the

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid., 15.

[82] *Rossi, Descrizione dellapparato e degl' intermedi. Fatti per la commedia rappresentata in Firenze. Nelle nozze de' serenissimi Don Ferdinando Medici, e Madama Cristina de Loreno, gran duchi di Toscana.* Partially reproduced in Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court* and Angelo Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, vol. 2 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969).

other three (2. The Contest of Muses and Pierides; 3. Apollo and the Python; 6. The Gods send Rhythm and Harmony to Earth).[83]

In Saslow's reading of the *descrizione*, the theme of the harmony of the spheres was to be read as an allegory of social and political orders as microcosmic reflections of the macrocosm, such that "the political cosmos of individuals and social classes revolved around the monarch just as the heavenly bodies revolved around the earth."[84] The allegory was made explicit on the *mise-en-scène* or *prospettiva* of *intermedio* 1, where the main characters, Dorian Harmony at the center—the "best of all the harmonies" according to Plato and Aristotle in Rossi's libretto—with the "celestial Sirens" in the circumference of the spheres, floating above a representation of Imperial Rome.[85] The timeless and ahistorical—but also generic, as Saslow notes—nature of this device is then actualized through spectacular, instantaneous transitions of scenarios, changes of *prospettiva* which were the *non plus ultra* of theatrical engineering, through which the Platonic cosmos and Rome were transformed into contemporary Pisa for the performance of the comedy *La Pellegrina*. A further device for such actualization was *intermedio* 4, the "Prophecy of the Golden Age" in which a sorceress from Virgil's *Eclogue* 4 flies over Pisa, retelling the restoration of the peaceful and glorious mythical times thanks to the *virtù* of the newlyweds, a messianic political device the Medici had adopted since Lorenzo the Magnificent's motto "Le temps revient."[86] Combined, *intermedi* 1 and 4 stage the mimetology of the turn towards the ancients which would bring about the return of their glory, a historical movement supported by the concentric harmonic structures of the spheres, turning around the immobile axis of the divinized sovereign.[87]

There is a disjunction between the abstract and timeless character of the allegorical devices, and the pragmatic and material realities that made it possible and

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[83] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 33.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Judging from later accounts, the representation of Rome was dropped before the actual production: it is only mentioned in Rossi's *descrizioni*, which were only published 10 days after the first performance of the *intermedi* due to various production mishaps. Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 19; For the publication history of the descrizione, Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 60.
[86] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 32.
[87] Ibid., 35.

which the spectacle endeavored to obscure. More insightful, in Saslow's reading, is that the *concetto* of the *intermedi* also figure this ideological contradiction:

> The principal performances may be likened to the concentric universe they figured: the closer one approaches to the physical and symbolic center—the granducal theater, as the axis of sacred power expressed in purest fantasy—the less reference is made to mundane realities. Where such acknowledgments do intrude, they are now restricted to the margins of this solar system, defined either discursively, politically, or socially.[88]

Allegory, to say it again with Benjamin, thwarts intention. For all the strict control and determination that the prince and his team could exert upon the production, the hyperbologic of allegory implies that it can never be arrested in one predetermined meaning. In Saslow's dialectical reading, the more it emphasizes its unity and totality, the more it makes evident its total disconnection with the social reality that made it possible. In its attempt to represent the prince as a divinity, as the center of the universe, Medici spectacle fails to present, or to produce, the actual reality it aims for: it only produces a spectacle, a representation or a fiction of what it aimed for. In Lacoue-Labarthe's terms, the more it resembles, the more it differs.[89]

This is the case even more with the *intermedi*'s musical components, which, as Treadwell forcefully demonstrates, constantly exceeded the capacities of the audience. When comparing the official *descrizione* with unofficial accounts produced by other members of the audience, the numerous discrepancies make it clear that not only they failed to identify the characters and thus the general conceit of the production, but even the words themselves in the musical performance—a fact that, as Treadwell notes, flies in the face of musicological certainties about the predominance of the text as the main aesthetic pronouncement of the Florentine Camerata. Focusing on the elaborate Neapolitan-style ornamentations in the part of Dorian Harmony in *intermedio* 1, performed by soprano Vitoria Archilei in a cloud that descended from the sky, Treadwell argues that the entire performance, from swift changes of *prospettive* to ethereal singing

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[88] Ibid., 34.
[89] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography,* 260.

was intended to produce a "dreamlike state," to "initiate the spectator into the magical world of the *intermedi*" that sought above all to achieve the effect of *meraviglia*.[90]

This effect is for Treadwell as ideological as the attempt for total control in Saslow's description, linked to the increasing dominance of theories of divine-right sovereignty, which replaced, or rather supplemented, those of continuity. As mentioned in chapter 5, the main conceit in the introduction to the *descrizione* is that of presenting Florence as an imitation of Imperial Rome, specifically in the reconstruction of their buildings and spectacles, a task that each ruler of the Medici dynasty has carried through imitation of his predecessor, as a manifestation, through his works (*opere*) of the love for their *virtù*. With Ferdinando, officialist publications such as funeral orations tended to emphasize the divinity of the prince. Besides these rhetorical devices, the favorite means to mobilize an image of the god-like prince was, as Treadwell shows, to present him—or rather not to present him—as invisible. The city was furnished with spaces that allowed the prince to see without being seen, such as private balconies and grills, and especially the Vasari corridor that connected the Pitti Palace with the Uffizi through the Ponte Vechhio, which allowed high-rank officials and guests to go unseen from the ducal palace to the Uffizi offices and theater.[91] With total control of the urban space through this panoptical infrastructure, the Prince was as much an omnipotent god as he was a neoplatonic *magus*. Even if the more overt neoplatonic aspects of the *intermedi* were missed, Treadwell argues, the entire production was based on the mimetological magic of similarities, especially Ficino's, which, in Tomlinson's reading, privileged sound and music as the most effective means to manipulate the hidden correspondences between things. For Treadwell, this is especially true of the *intermedi*, where the comprehensibility of the text in performance gives way to a mystical, hypersensorial experience where *meraviglia* and invisibility are privileged.

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[90] Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 72.
[91] Ibid., 23.

Although Kircher, as I show in the last part of this dissertation, would make explicit the bridge between Ficinian natural magic and divine-right monarchy, I find it less suggestive as an explanation for the otherwise crucial aspect, pointed out by Treadwell, of the sovereign's invisibility and music's role in its production in the context of Medici *intermedi*. In the previous section I showed how ideas about the "invisibility" and "metaphysical" nature of music were the necessary consequence of the mimetology of modern frontal perspective, by which only what is in front is defined as being. Turning towards texts, materiality, or performance and spectacle always produces a site of invisibility, a behind, of which music is a paradigmatic figure. Treadwell's work demonstrates how this continues to be the case, drawing the further, necessary consequence: if the entire spectacular production is organized around the sovereign, where the attempt is made to produce only one perspective which, in the Uffizi theater coincided with the seat of the ruler, as Saslow shows, then the sovereign himself is such a point of invisibility.

The spectacularization in the *Theatrum mundi* carries within itself the spectralization of the sovereign. Call it the mimetopolitics of the spec(tacu/tra)lization of the world.

In Treadwell's reading of the *intermedi*, the sovereign is godlike because he acts like a hidden puppeteer, or magician, producing spectacular effects for a mesmerized audience focused only on saturated *meraviglia*. But one should go further. The situation is mimetological: as soon as the Medici begin to attain the visibility and *magnificenza* they desired for decades, as soon as they effectively become the center of the spectacle and have all gazes upon them, they are forced to disappear. As Barber shows, allusions to divine-right theories of sovereignty in cinquecento Florence begin to appear (no full theory was ever developed) as a means to supplement the lack of accountability of the absolute monarch, making him work, not for the people, but for god's grace, who elected him for that purpose.[92] Thus, in more "Machiavellian" terms, one could argue, as Barber does, that the emergence of divine-right theories responded to more real, historico-

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[92] Berner, "Florentine Political Thought in the Late Cinquecento," 193.

political situations—such as the need to remove the prince from the common world and protect him from the scrutiny of the people. None of these aims require or benefit from a prince who fashions himself as a neoplatonic *magus* or by throwing the court into a hyper-stimulated frenzy.[93]

Saslow's and Treadwell's accounts share the same mimetology that dominates New Historicist readings of the intersection of arts and politics, and they reach the same limits. This mimetology presumes that one can simply invert the model-copy schema and suggest that, as there is a relation between the reality and its representations, then having control of these representations—their means, objects, and spaces—equals to a transformation of the world. At its most uncritical, this mimetology suggests that power is made through its representations and corresponds to them. This would mean that the people would in fact believe, in their saturated world of *meraviglia,* that Ferdinando was a neoplatonic *magus*, capable of accomplishing everything. Saslow and Treadwell, of course, take a critical position: they describe the mechanisms, contents, and symbolic meanings through hermeneutical readings, and show how these fail to live up to their own ambitions, either because of complications in its production (Saslow) or its reception (Treadwell and Feldman). Thus, the people could have believed, would have believed, the divinity of the ruler, and hence all spectacle would have been constitutive of reality, but it failed. Representation has in fact no power for constituting reality as such; it only works through an *as if,* or in a social mystification, in a world of ideology and absolutism which "we" have overcome. This double strategy allows such approach to delight in the materials, producing works with lavish illustrations, descriptions, erudite interpretations of the symbolism, and most of all rejoicing in the virtuosity of the vocal performances while keeping clear of the absolutist "intentions" of the productions by denouncing them and showing their limits in listener's capacities, distracted attention, and so on. The glorification of the "invisible," the "metaphysical," the magic of similarities, and so on, is

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[93] For similar and other objections to Treadwell's interpretation of the intermedi and her use of divine-right theory, see Tim Shephard. "Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for *La pellegrina* (review)." *Music and Letters* 92, no. 2 (2011): 285-287.

entirely complicit with this operation, especially when coupled with Tomlinson's principle of history as "an anthropology of the other," which grants the historian the security that the absolutist world she lavishes on describing is radically distant and different distant from ours. But the mimetology remains in place.

And what this mimetology hides is the essential, dorsal connection between sovereignty and spectacularity, a complex spectacularity that produces a site of invisibility to be occupied by the sovereign. And this position, this invisible, unaccountable place which the Medici produced through their spectacular productions, their spec(tacu/tra)lization, and which passed into opera, is not a relic of the past. Rather, it was precisely spectacle and opera what allowed for the logic of sovereignty to be disseminated and affirmed before being codified, and what enabled it to survive, to have an afterlife, even after absolutism was, as we tend to think, abolished.

In the fourth chapter of his "Political Theology," Schmitt develops a "sociology of concepts" which demonstrates, against dogmatic idealist and materialist histories, that political concepts do not simply "mirror" but correspond entirely to each other: "the metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organization. The determination of such an identity is the sociology of the concept of sovereignty."[94] For Schmitt, this is evident in the similarity between the Cartesian system, Lebnizian, and Hobbesian systems and absolutism: in all there is a continuous thread that runs through "the metaphysical, political, and sociological conceptions that postulate the sovereign as a personal unit and primeval creator." As we have seen, it also extends to its "artistic" productions such as spectacles and drama, where the sovereign is on stage (as in *L'Euridice* and soon literally with Louis XIV), or at the privileged axis of the entire perspectival construction of the spectacle, located at the center of the entire spectacular structure but protected by dazzling effects of invisibility supported by music. Schmitt, however, does not specify what kind of "a continuous thread" it is that runs through all spheres, but we already know that it is of a mimetic kind. Not a mirror, as he argues

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[94] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 46.

(especially against orthodox materialist history) but a different kind: analogy, imitation and so on, in short, mimesis itself, specifically mimesis as an affective continuity, as affect.

Accounts of the beginning of opera which see the multimediatic assemblages of the Medici celebrations and their rivals as a means to demonstrate power, impress supporters and terrorize opponents, greatly underestimate the productive aspect of these aesthetic politics.[95] True enough, power is put on display in these performances and their effect is certainly through the affective mobilization of technologies, bodies, texts, and sounds, but to limit their purpose to these ends is to miss precisely what is political about these affective assemblages: not because they display some specifically located power for friends and foes, but rather because they constitute power as such at the level of affect: they organize and constitute the political bodies which, as a result, appear as supporters or enemies.

Mimesis here produces a collectivity that differentiates itself from others by organizing a series of machines and sounds around a "model" that invokes, defines, and implements the ethos of such a political body, and its economimetic aspect consists on the distribution of bodies that the Prince and his court are able to produce. To be affected—overwhelmed, impressed, terrorized—is certainly the political objective of Early Modern opera, and these affects are constitutive of the political. In this sense, there is a continuity, and not a rupture, between Florentine and Mantuan celebrations and the later Venetian carnival. Baroque opera is political because it constitutes—by means of affect—the political bodies that it addresses, whether takes place in a court or in a public space.

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[95] For an exemplary example of this deflationary position it is enough to turn to Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker's *A History of Opera* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2012), 40. What, if not a simplistic understanding of mimesis, of its productive power especially in this context, explains the reductionism of this characterization of early opera, which necessarily leads to the phantasy of an autonomous aesthetics for opera as a whole, that most political of the arts, whose permanent inscriptions are now offered to "posterity (ourselves included) to wonder at their scope and ambition"?

AFFECT AND SPECTACLE: THE POLITICS OF *ALLEGREZZA*

The relation between affect, mimesis, and spectacle is traditionally located in tragedy according to Romantic readings of Aristoteles' *Poetics*, where mimesis is understood as the successful representation of an action such that its *peripeteia*, its turning point, will have a transformative effect upon the spectator, a catharsis. But Benjamin's analysis of allegory has a different approach to such an affective dimension, which is more appropriate to understand early modern spectacle. For Benjamin, mourning, sorrow, lament—*Trauer*—are not the same as *catharsis*. Benjamin devotes an entire section of his treatise to show the Romantic misapprehension of tragedy, arguing against Nietzsche over the claim that in tragedy the audience and the chorus are one insofar as they occupy the same space and experience the same *pathos*. For Benjamin, however, this identification—if it existed—does not mean that what is crucial about tragedy is an emotion. As Benjamin reads it, the death of the sovereign in tragedy does not aim to provoke any horror or sorrow in the spectator. It is not a representation but a social ritual through which the community is brought together, more specifically a sacrifice of atonement to the gods, on the one hand, and on the social sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the emerging community. As Benjamin puts it, "the tragic death has a dual significance: it invalidates the ancient rights of the Olympians, and it offers up the hero to the unknown gods of a new harvest of humanity."[96] The death of the tragic hero has for Benjamin an almost legal dimension. It is equated with a trial—paradigmatically the death of Socrates—and in this sense it is "a decisive, cosmic achievement. The community is assembled to witness and to judge this achievement."[97] This sacrificial aim—more a foundational, nomothetical event than a sublimation of desire—, Benjamin argues after his contemporary Franz Rosenzweig, does not have a place or any effectivity in modernity given the centrality that individualism and consciousness acquire, given that

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[96] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 106. This reading of tragedy of tragedy as ritual sacrifice must be distinguished from that of René Girard, where art is posited as a means of release for mimetic desire, for the desire of identifying with the other to the extent of taking the place of the other, of killing the other. Mimetic desire, for Girard, amounts to a foundational violence that is sublimated in art. This theory, moreover, forms the core of Attali's theory of noise and music as prophecy, discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

[97] Ibid., 119.

the sovereign is made a sovereign through decision. Sovereignty and individuality presuppose each other insofar as both are defined by the emergency as the unexpected event; the sovereign is such because the decision is always a specific decision that cannot be regulated in advance.

In Greek tragedy, on the other hand, the hero is not an individual as much as the expression of timeless laws that transcend him and of which he is the expression; while his sacrificial function is that of secularizing these rules, this does not make the hero a specific individual. Rather, "the hero, as tragic hero, always remained the same, always the same self, defiantly buried in itself."[98] A conception of the individual, of the nature of the law, and of the figure of the sovereign absolutely separates ancient tragedy from any modern attempt to revive it, including the *Trauerspiel*.

Distinguishing the tragic dimension of death as a community-building operation from any sense of psychological pain or sorrow is also crucial to understand the role of affect in the images of death in the *Trauerspiele*, which bring us closer to the mimetology of *L'Orfeo* and early modern courtly spectacle in Italy. Just as it is wrong to assume that allegory operates as a simple sign, is it wrong to suppose that because the *Trauerspiel* has mourning as its content, its aim is to cause mourning in the spectator. For Benjamin, rather, the *Trauerspiele* are

> plays through which mournfulness finds satisfaction: plays for the mournful [*über dem die Trauer ihr Genügen findet: Spiel vor Traurigen*]. A certain ostentation [*Ostentation*] is characteristic of these people. Their images are displayed in order to be seen, arranged in the way they want them to be seen. Thus the Italian renaissance theatre, which is in many ways an influential factor in the German baroque, emerged from pure ostentation, from the *trionfi*, the processions with explanatory recitation, which flourished in Florence under Lorenzo de Medici.[99]

The portrayal of a certain emotional quality on stage, then, does not mean that the spectator reacts with the same emotion to it. Rather, there is a shared affect that precedes

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[98] Ibid., 112.
[99] Ibid., 119.

and transcends its specific representations and thus enables the spectator to "find satisfaction" in them; he is moved by something that should be sorrowful, but given his mournful disposition, he is moved by what he contemplates as mournful. Benjamin's discussion of the tragic as an expression of fate aims to distinguish the tragic from the categories of empirical psychology (*Kategorien der empirischen Psychologie*) parallels the distinction between emotion and affect elaborated by contemporary affect theory. "If the laws which govern the *Trauerspiel* are to be found, partly explicit, partly implicit, at the heart of mourning, the representation [*Darstellung*] of these laws does not concern itself with the emotional condition of the poet or his public, but with a feeling which is released from any empirical subject and is intimately bound to the fullness of an object."[100] Just as the tragic does not depend on a feeling but on the affirmation of human laws in contraposition to ancient divine laws, so the mournfulness of the *Trauerspiel* does not depend on any emotional reaction to the image of death, but rather in the contemplation of a world on stage in which history is represented "in the form of a mask," as natural history, as a history of decay and death.

This notion of history, as we have seen, is the specific affect of a Protestant conception in which salvation depends entirely on grace, such that earthly life is entirely divorced from redemption. The rigorous attachment to duty produced a sense of the world as empty, devoid of purpose (insofar as nothing would make a real difference *sub specie aeternitatis*). This insight, Benjamin argues, is what made the great men of the time into melancholics, who ended up taking pleasure in seeing the world revealed as a ruin.[101]

Additionally, there is "a certain ostentation" that has its origins in the Italian renaissance. This formula, based as it is on the *intermedi* and *Theatrum mundi* trope, already points us towards the meeting point of *Trauerspiel* and *L'Orfeo*: there is a specific affect, mournfulness, that results from a socio-religious context, on the one hand, and a specific mimetology of spectacular identification, of the objectification of this affect in the stage. It is as if the point was not to be moved by the performance, but to

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[100] Ibid., 139.
[101] Ibid., 139.

produce a performance that was as thoroughly permeated by affect as the social world was. In chapter 4, the mimetology of the Renaissance was described as a seamless thread of similarities, antipathies and analogies by which, in Foucault's words, the same remains the same, riveted onto itself; by which the "new" was denied any ontological role or function. In this mimetology, which the Second Practice seems to threaten, the affective listener is nowhere present: the continuous fulcrum of similarities is woven in such a way as to leave no place for her.

What I now call a mimetology of spectacular identification functions along the same lines, it functions because of the Same: The *Theatrum mundi*, in this case, affirms that there is an affective continuity between the world and the stage, that whatever happens on the stage is an extension of the world, and hence is the world. The mournfulness of the court is satisfied by seeing itself on stage, by the comforting satisfaction of seeing itself in the form and in the order that the court wants itself to be seen. Affect, in this case, is but a medium through which the heterogeneous elements of the performance—the performance on stage but also the court's performance, its ostentation—are synchronized, through which the continuity of the fulcrum of similarities is made sensible not only for the natural magician or the humanist, but for all those involved in the performance.

Thus, whereas the *meaning* of death and finitude in the *Trauerspiel* is ultimately—that is, lastly but not necessarily—resurrection and transcendence, its *function* is that of preserving a mimetology of spectacular identification on place while constituting (which is also an in-completion) the modern *as* modern, as the irredeemable present, as fallen time. Allegory shows modernity's distance from the past not through signifieds but through affect, that is, an affect that replaces the new with crisis. This affect constituted a common medium by which the spectator could see herself in the performance, how she could "identify" with the world on stage or take that world as real.

We can see why for Rinuccini it seemed necessary to transform the ending of the Ovid telling into a *lieto fine* in his *Euridice*: "To some I may seem to have been too bold in altering the conclusion of the fable of Orpheus, but so it seemed *fitting* to me at a time

of such great rejoicing [*mi e parso convenevole in tempi di tanta allegreza*], having as my justification the example of the Greek poets in other fables."[102] This "convenience" has been interpreted in the sense of a "happy ending" that is fitting for the "happy" celebration which is the wedding. If, however, we approach allegory from the perspective elaborated here, this interpretation appears restricted and even misleading. As we have seen, the referent of the allegory does not correspond with its meaning in a straightforward sense; that is, what is "happy" as a crucial difference is not in whether Orpheus gains Eurydice back or loses her again and finds his death at the hands of the maenads. The "convenience" of the Orpheus story for a celebration such as the wedding is not limited to the theme of a wedding and its outcome. Nothing in Rinuccini's dedication allows us to draw such a conclusion. Rather, what it suggests is that the function of such performances in Italian courts around 1600 preserved, and perhaps intensified, what Benjamin described as "a certain ostentation." It suggests that if the concept of sovereignty was also undergoing a crisis in Italy (and it was), the affect that defined and mobilized was not mourning as in the Protestant north, nor simply the splendor of Counter-Reformation Spain, but rather something like an "*allegrezza*" or "*gioia*" an imperative to enjoy and contemplate enjoyment, to avert both the new and the crisis with the affirmation of a permanent joyful celebration guaranteed by the prince. In fact, in the Medici *intermedi* of 1589 it was delivered precisely as an imperative, delivered by an ensemble of gods that arrived from the sky. Giove, Apollo, *più che ma giocondo, e allegro*, accompanied by Amor (in the words of Rossi), Bacchus, the Graces, and the Muses, distributed in seven moving clouds that descended from the sky; at the center was castrato Onofrio Gualfreducci, dressed as Giove, singing (to a chitarrone, with music by Cavalieri):

> Godi turba mortal, felice, e lieta,
>
> Godi di tanto dono
>
> E col canto e co suono:
>
> I faticosi tuoi travagli acqueta.

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[102] Reproduced in Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, 368; Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1969, 1:107.

> Rejoice, happy and joyful mortal throng
>
> Rejoice in such a great gift;
>
> And with song and music
>
> Rest from your toilsome travails.[103]

Early modern Italian courtly spectacle and culture have been commonly approached through the affects of *Meraviglia* and *Magnificenza*, for example in Treadwell's study, but little attention has been given to the affects of *gioia* and *allegrezza* which, I argue, are crucial for the aesthetics of the pastoral and the *lieto fine* especially as adopted by early opera, particularly since these were born in the same scenario of *festa*, of Carnival and Wedding celebrations. If *meraviglia* and *magnificenza* as affect have the ideological role of representing the sovereign as being beyond any human measure and thus form an essential part of the political theology that was developing simultaneously in various spheres, then *allegreza* and *gioia* are the affective mechanisms by which the people, separated as they are from the divinized sovereign, are also made a part of the sovereign state and kept as subjects. After all, carnival and weddings are another type of exception, another exemplary moment in which the sovereign constitutes and defines himself. *Magnificenza* and *meraviglia* might help to produce a vision of the sovereign as divine, but it is only through *allegrezza* and *gioia* that the people can be made a part of the spectacle, both as laborers and as the bodies upon which the sovereign's power is actualized.[104]

   Treadwell and Saslow emphasize the role of *intermedi* 4, "The Prophecy of the Golden Age" and 6, "Dono degli dei" as establishing a symmetrical structure to the work, where the primordial harmony and peace, at first only juxtaposed to earth, is announced

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[103] Translation in Treadwell, Music and Wonder at the Medici Court, 214; Solerti, Gli albori del melodramma, 1969, 2:38.

[104] Saslow emphasizes the role of the citizens from all social strata and genders into producing the celebrations, such as the housewives that sew the costumes and backdrops for the *intermedi* and the livery for the guests or the cooks that were in charge of producing the banquets and hors d'ouvres that were distributed throughout the events, and even the patricians that were asked to build their own model ships for the *naumachia.*

as returning and then regained as a gift of the gods—allegorized by Jove's golden rain. This structure of happiness—sadness—happiness is the same in *L'Euridice*, *L'Orfeo*, and countless other productions that affirmed the *lieto fine*. As Treadwell writes, "even though most mythological intricacies of the return were lost on the audience, the visual symmetry was not, and its attendant meaning was likely understood, at least on a subliminal level."[105] This "subliminal" level is the same one in which the *lieto fine* of *L'Euridice* operates and that makes it effective in spite—or because—of its transformation of the myth. In this way, by means of *allegrezza*, myth is actualized into an affective dispositive of political theology, as the rewriting or performance of history in which the sovereign not only holds the scepter, but also delivers the "gift" of happiness to his people.

As in *Euridice*, *intermedio* 6 works by accumulating musical resources on stage until reaching a massive choral epithalamic finale—the most ambitious work of the evening, as Treadwell says. After Giove's *O Turba mortale*, a thirty-part madrigal with two singers on a part follows, titled "O Fortunato Giorno," with lyrics by Rinuccini and music by Malvezzi.

O fortunato giorno

Poi che di gioia e speme

Lieta canta la terra e '1 ciel insieme!

Ma quanto fia più adorno

Quando farà ritorno

Per Ferdinando ogni real costume,

E con eterne piume

Dall'uno all'altro polo

La fama andrà col suo gran nome a volo.

O fortunate day

Because of joy and hope

---

[105] Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 158.

Heaven and earth sing happily together.

But even greater adornments will come

When every royal custom,

Will be returned by Ferdinando

And with eternal wings

From one Pole to the other

Fame will fly with his great name.[106]

The madrigal was followed finally by a collective *ballo* over a musical dialogue between the three Graces—speaking in name of the gods—and a chorus of men, which for Saslow is "the ultimate metaphor and ideal spiritual form of the Neoplatonic cosmology" on the one hand, and an archaic fertility ritual, on the other, where "the proximate goal of all this sensuously pulsating movement was symbolic orgasm, with its ecstatic promise of renewal and continuity in the birth of an heir."[107] The three Graces, as Treadwell shows, were performed by the Florentine court's leading female sopranos—Vittoria Archilei (who also sang Dorian Harmony in the first *intermedio*), Lucia Caccini, and Margherita della Scala,[108] singing from a cloud at the center of the stage, as can be seen in Epifanio d'Alfiano's sketch (Figure 12).

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[106] Translation in ibid., 162; Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 2:39.
[107] Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 158.
[108] Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*.
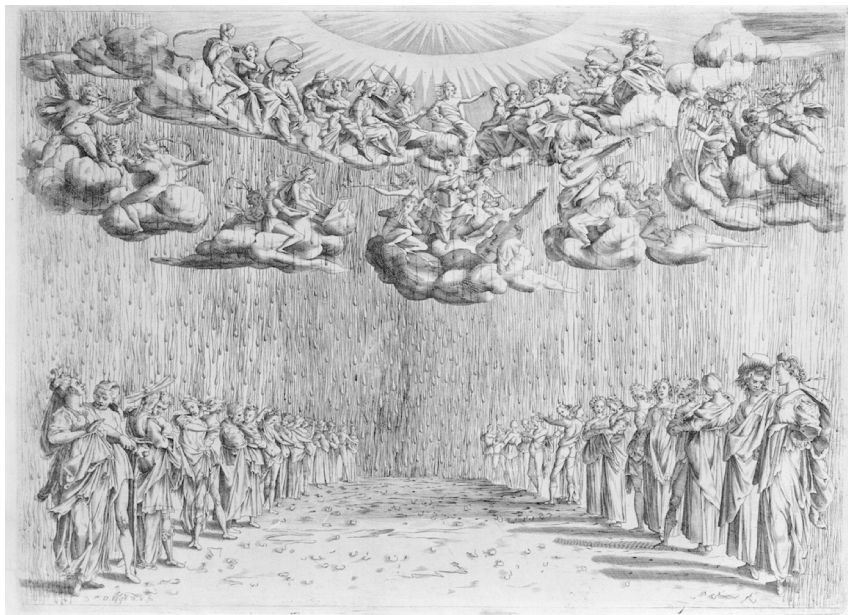
Figure 12: Epifanio d'Alfiano's sketch for intermedio 6.
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1931, no. 31.72.5(16)

Not only does the final *intermedio* provide the conclusion for the tripartite affective structure and the affirmation of *gioia* and *allegrezza* and not only does Giove delivers it as an imperative, but the entire *intermedio* is itself a thematization of such arrival, of the return of the "Golden Age," of a time of happiness guaranteed by Duke Ferdinando. I already noted the ideological meaning of this structure, remarked by Saslow and Treadwell.

But there is more at stake. Firstly, the figure of the Graces, which, as Denis Vidal argues, constitute the origin of logic that equals or anticipates that of the gift as analyzed by Mauss. As Seneca puts it in his *allegoresis* of the three Graces,

> Some people advance the view that one of them stands for giving a benefit, one for receiving it, and one for returning it. Others hold that they represent three kinds of benefactors: those who confer benefits, those who return them, and those who accept "benefits" and return them at the same time. But no matter which of these interpretations you decide is true, what good does this specialized knowledge do for us? And what about the fact that the group dances in a circle with intertwined hands? It is because a gift (or "benefit") goes through an orderly sequence, passing from hand to hand and yet returning to the giver, and loses its

integral character if the sequence is at any point broken, being most beautiful if the continuity is maintained? In the dance, though, the older sister has a greater value, like those who confer "benefits." The Graces have joyful expressions, just as those who give and receive benefits generally do. They are youthful because the remembrance of "benefits" should not grow old. They are virginal because benefits are unspoiled, pure, and revered by all. Benefits should not be constrained or obligated—that is why the Graces wear loose robes. And the robes are translucent because benefits want to be in full view. (Seneca 2011: lines 20–21)[109]

Seneca's passage, Vidal argues, combines two different notions, the Greek *charis* and its Latin translation *gratia*. *Charis*, found in texts as early as Homer, he argues, is close to the Polynesian *hau* on which Mauss bases his analysis on the gift. Both Vernant and Detienne emphasize the binding nature of the gift as reciprocity in Greek *charis*, and note their origin in economies of transactions in which a woman gives herself to a man. Further on, they were associated with the fertility of nature, the pleasure and joy in love and human relations. In early Christianity, *charis* came to signify, especially in St. Paul, the free, self-giving act of God in the person of Jeusus Christ. Thus, Vidal shows,

> the notion of gratia, however, disseminated and preserved the Greek connotations of charis, but also altered them quite significantly. It came to denote an increasingly particular type of exchange ("gracious," "gratuitous") and specific qualities, be they sensible—the beauty of a woman—or, on the contrary, immaterial—Divine Grace.[110]

The allegory was adopted and elaborated upon by Ficino, who made it a centerpiece of his neoplatonic conception of a universe that revolved around Amor so that "The image of the Graces, linked by the knot of mutual charity (*segnesque nodum solvere Gratiae*),

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[109] Quoted in Denis Vidal, "The Three Graces, or the Allegory of the Gift: A Contribution to the History of an Idea in Anthropology." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 2 (October 31, 2014): 339–68.
[110] Vidal, "The Three Graces", n.p.

supplied a perfect figure to illustrate the dialectical rhythm of Ficino's universe."[111] This interpretation had become a house staple among the Medici through not only through Ficino, but also through Boticelli's *Primavera*, which, as Vidal notes, seems directly influenced by Seneca's passage. Rossi notes that, as in both these sources, the three "fanciulle" held hands with each other. In fact, the Graces and their allegorical meaning—both neoplatonic and Senecan—was so familiar to the audience that Rossi finds it superfluous to explain why they are dressed in "very bright, and transparent robes" ("di drappi lucentissimi, e transparenti"): *le cagioni son manifeste*.[112]

The reasons are transparent and for all to see. As Seneca puts it, "the robes are translucent because benefits want to be in full view." But it is hard to imagine that all of these superimposed meanings were so evident for all to see *and* understand (the words were not clearly audible; only one unofficial description mentions recognizing Giove, but not the Graces, who are referred to as *Ninfe*). However, they are quite telling for us. The Graces, acting as the mouthpieces of the gods, come in a pagan celebration of joy and pleasure, a collective orgy of fertility in which the Princess gives herself to the Duke, ensuring not only the reestablishment of the "Golden Era" of harmony in the neoplatonic cosmos, but also its permanence through their descendants, called demigods in the final epithalamium. Moreover, by giving joy as a gift through harmony and rhythm, by ensuring that the audience of the *intermedi,* the "Turba mortale, felice e lieta" was the recipient of such a gift, they also ensured that the gifts would return to them, that, as Seneca writes, they would "go through an orderly sequence, passing from hand to hand and yet returning to the giver…[losing its] integral character if the sequence is at any point broken."[113]

Such happiness, however, is a particular gift. In this most happy scene [*nella più lieta*] scene, Rossi explains, the poet sought to represent a passage from Plato's *Laws:*

Jove, having compassion for fatigued and distressed humanity, decided that, in order to give some relief, Apollo, Dionysos, and the Muses [would] take care of

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[111] Edgar Wind, *Pagan mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958) quoted in Ibid.

[112] Rossi, *Descrizione dell'apparato*, 67.

[113] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *On Benefits*, trans. Miriam Griffin and Inwood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 21.

this, and he sent them to earth, carrying Harmony and Rhythm, so that, dancing

and singing, cheered by such delights, ["e con si fatti diletti rallegrandosi"]

[humanity would] be somewhat revived after so much toil.[114]

The passage in question is at the opening of book 2 of the *Laws* 653 c-d, a book that, to

simplify vastly, repeats or reinscribes the legislation upon music in book 3 of the

Republic.[115] As Létitia Mouze shows, the *Laws* discusses not only selection and control of

what is already given, as in the *Republic*, but also offers an aesthetic analysis for the basis

of such control. And it is, moreover, a question regarding the educative function of

music, firstly in what the correct education consists of and secondly what are the

conditions that music must satisfy in order to be educative; more specifically, it is a

question about the relation between education of the affects and *mousikē*, as the latter is

not aimed to reason but to *aisthesis*. Education, as the Athenian holds in the dialogue, is a

matter of correctly disciplined feelings of pleasure and pain, and the role of harmony and

music is that of ensuring that this discipline continues throughout life.

In other words, the gods' gift of *allegrezza* is precisely the economimetic role of

mousikē as the possibility of inscribing the citizens' dispositions, their *ethos*. The gift of

allegrezza through harmony and rhythm binds the community to the prince as the

dispenser of gifts. "Cheered by such delights," by such acts of selfless entertainment, the

audience of the Medici did not only see the Duke—or did not see him—as a neoplatonic

magus, with a supernatural capacity to orchestrate spectacles of dazzling *meraviglia*, but

was in fact bound to him through a widely distributed performative assemblage that

inscribed their bodies with a collective *ethos—allegrezza*.

The ritual of spectacle fulfills crucial functions in the "age of the world picture."

In the context of the Church and the Court (and other "sites" of power), it organizes and

commands a general visibility which has a thoroughly ideological function: it posits a

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[114] Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court,* 159.

[115] For the relation between the Laws and the Republic on the question of *mousikē* and education, see
Létitia Mouze *Le Législateur Et Le Poète: Une Interprétation Des Lois De Platon* (Villeneuve d'Ascq:
Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2005) and Rachana Kamtekar, "Psychology and the Inculcation of
Virtue" in Bobonich, Christopher, *Plato's Laws* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 127-148.

center that gathers (and hence brings into existence) the community around it according to a mimetology in which "to see is to be." Similarly, the centrality of vision is countered with a proliferation of points of view, of perspectives and simulacra, that seek to undo the dominant mimetology which disposes everything into being and appearance. Furthermore, the turn towards the visual is always characterized by dorsality, by the production of a space that remains behind, invisible yet audible. It is occupied by different elements that challenge the rational-speculative dominance of the visual by through a certain spectrality: from magic, to music, to the voice of god and the hail of interpellation. These become the support, indeed the condition for frontal vision's claim to universality (and hence are the condition of its impossibility). The ideology of baroque spectacle consists in the negotiation of this behind with what is in front, through the turn, towards producing and maintaining a community. As soon as such a center is defined, a multiplicity of perspectives upon the center arise that threaten its power. What results is a form of sovereignty that, while in principle located in the specific body of the prince, does not necessarily appear as the center or does not necessarily appear at all. Political theology depends not only on the discursive identification of the prince with god, but especially on occupying the spaces of invisibility that guarantee its ideological hegemony. Music always occupies such a dorsal space, even taking its determinations as "metaphysical." It does not only provide a common support for the multiplicity of perspectives—a certain "harmony"—but moreover provides a generalized medium of affective continuity that organizes the ritual and hence the community through a mimetology of spectacular identification in which the difference between the stage and the world seeks to be undone.

It is through these affective means that sovereign biopower penetrates both the political and the physical bodies during times of peace. In *The Odd One In: On Comedy*, Alenka Zupančič has emphasized the ideological function of positivity and humor. She speaks of the spectacular rise of a "bio-morality" in which affect is charged with moral injunctions aimed towards determining a specific set of affects and dispositions as being socially acceptable while others are silently, or explicitly, corrected. Thus,

Negativity, lack, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, are perceived more and more as moral faults—worse, as a corruption at the level of our very being or bare life. [This bio-morality or a morality of feelings and emotions] promotes the following fundamental axiom: a person who feels good (and is happy) is a good person; a person who feels bad is a bad person. It is this short circuit between the immediate feelings/sensations and the moral value that gives its specific color to the contemporary ideological rhetoric of happiness.[116]

As Butler emphasized, it is not necessary to hear the voice to be interpellated into ideology—but there is always the turn. The specific form that Zupančič describes corresponds to a thoroughly neoliberal ideology in which every subject is compelled to turn into his own entrepreneur down to his very biological being. In the case of early modern Italy, the emphasis of this ideological dispositive was not individuality but collectivity, yet we can also speak of a general biopolitical dispositive of ideology through which a certain social organization is naturalized, inscribed in the body as its *ethos* by making it turn a certain way. Early modern spectacle, then, contains the archive of today's widespread biopolitical apparatus of enjoyment.

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[116] Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One in: On Comedy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 5.

Returning the Gift of the Drastic
(Second Disciplinary Excursus)

In chapter 5, I examined a recent proposal to combine interpretation and performance, identifying its important features and outlining its limitations in order to obtain a more rigorous, account of the mimetological relation between text and performance, which produced the notion of opera as actualization and incompletion. In that chapter, however, I do not engage directly with what I consider the call to arms of the performative turn in musicology, as inaugurated by Carolyn Abbate's *In Search of Opera* and, more pressingly, her 2004 "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?"[1]

Significantly, the essay that opens Abbate's *In Search of Opera* focuses on Orpheus' songs, more specifically in the "last" song, the one escaping from his disembodied head in Ovid's telling which, as she notes, "every one left alone."[2] In the first section of this excursus I examine Abbate's critique to hermeneutics within the performative turn in order to identify the complicity of the metaphysical (sensu Tomlinson), the materiality of texts and the performance network privileged by the New Historicism as a reactionary, ahistorical, and apolitical reply to post-Adornian critical musicology. Continuing the previous chapter's reading of performance as incompletion, and through Benjamin's injunction to approaching history as awakening—a condition for any non-positivist historiography that allows for a critical account of the present—, the first section of this chapter aims to reopen the Orpheus myth in its operatic form from its performative closure in Abbate's reading. Following Amy Cimini and Jairo Moreno, I focus on the logic of musical value deployed in Abbate's drastic musicology, where everything is distributed between an ineffable, pure musical gift and the radical materiality of presence. For the specific purposes of this dissertation, I highlight the economimesis that (silently) underpins this distribution, one that remains tied to the uncritical mimetology of secondary copies and debased inscriptions that also

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[1] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) and "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004): 505–36.
[2] That is to say, it was never the subject of any operatic representations Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 2.

characterized the post-Adornian musicology of the past three decades. By turning its back on questions of representation and inscription, the performative turn is haunted by the very force—mimesis—that it sought to leave behind.

What do we lose in what we seek? This seems to me to be a crucial historiographical question; and there is a certain pathos when formulated in this way, one which recent musicology seems to mobilize at every (disciplinary) turn. As the status of the musical work (along with the figure of the composer) loses its unity and authority, a new archive appears which is as rich as it is unassailable. Abbate, for example, signaled Tomlinson's *Music in Renaissance Magic* and *Metaphysical Song* as a thorough reinterpretation of opera's origins and its essence as providing "access to the supersensory." Through this reinterpretation, musicology opened a new archive for sources and techniques for analyzing works but also discovered a new referential space outside of the opposition between restricted imitative and expressive music on the one hand, and absolute thus non-referential music on the other. A new "realm," in fact: the "metaphysical." This realm is as formally unified—validated by historically-situated philosophical constructions which posit an "immaterial" world in opposition to the "material" world available to the senses and which the voice mediates—as it is empty of any content just as soon as it is made into such a historical constant, even if approached, in Adorno's terms, as a "shimmering."[3] Music, in the most Orphic way, opens access to the beyond. Descriptions of this continual transformation are counteracted and complemented by the rigorous work of the New Historicism joined with the lineage of Nino Pirrota, which seeks to reconstruct a historical listening experience, networks of production and

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[3] I am paraphrasing Tomlinson's preface to *Metaphysical Voice*. With respect to the passage in Adorno's "Bourgeois Opera" essay (to which I return below) which he quotes, it bears insisting in that what the metaphysical might mean for Adorno has little to do with the opposition between "immaterial" and "material," and lacks any historical continuity: if anything, it represents precisely the irruption of the unexpected, the event, which is always outside of any opposition and which no amount of historicization can level. At least, as we saw, it is not even clear that it remains as consistent within the spaces of continuity outlined by Tomlinson.

performance, and authorial intentions through extensive examination of archival material and close readings of musical works: Eurydice awaits in the material text.[4]

There seems to be no way of arresting this movement, as we are only presented with the choices of accounting for the metaphysical by historicizing it (so that it simply stands in for an epoch's idea of "the invisible" *tout court*) or by embracing the apparent contradiction of this injunction so that we end with music that is itself inaudible along with its very material counterparts, the bodies and machines onstage. We still find ourselves on this eponymous search, namely of looking for ways of accounting for the elusive "materiality" of sound that would stop the metonymical drift at the very moment of its emission, of its embodied performance, looking for things that *feel* and *look* material—objects that turn out to be often the traditional materials of the historians (scores, lists, letters and other "inscriptions") which are presented as the permanent counterpart of the very metaphysical constructs of the work and the voice themselves.

These apparently divergent ends, the "metaphysical" and "materiality," are constantly intertwined: they constitute, in Abbate's words, "a paradoxical amalgam—one could even say, [a] quintessentially operatic phenomenon."[5] What they have in common is nothing other than what Abbate would later name the "drastic": an experience of an ineffable but full meaning afforded by attention to musical performances and which opposes the "cryptographic sublime," the fascination produced by the encoding mechanisms that both criticism (which she calls hermeneutics) and formalism posit and seek to disclose as knowledge (a rather mystical knowledge, hence "gnostic") in musical works.[6] By calling attention to the meanings of live musical performance, Abbate

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[4] Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Tim Carter, *Monteverdi and His Contemporaries* (Aldershot; Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2000); Tim Carter and Richard A Goldthwaite Tim Carter and Richard A Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace: Jacopo Peri and the Economy of Late Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice the Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991); Ellen Rosand, *Monteverdi's Last Operas: A Venetian Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women*; Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*; Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*.
[5] Abbate, *In Search of Opera,* vii.
[6] Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 524. See the responses by Karol Berger, "Musicology According to Don Giovanni, or: Should We Get Drastic?," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 3 (2005): 490–501; Lawrence Kramer, "Oracular Musicology; Or, Faking the Ineffable.," *Archiv Für Musikwissenschaft* 69, no.

outlines the closure of the "new musicology" by exposing its dependence on the same attitudes as the formalism it sought to overcome, the privileging of "works" as abstractions that precede the performances—which for the formalist as well as the critic are only secondary sources of information. Hermeneutics and formalism, she argues, are twins because they have a common enemy: "performed music's action, as opposed to an abstract musical work's formal shapes or representational implications."[7] Moreover, where the "new musicology" aimed to reintroduce a critical dimension to musicology by posing its objects as more than "beautifully moving forms," Abbate denounced rather an attempt to mystify and monumentalize "unremarkable" claims—"historical patterns (the emergence of fascist states) and cultural force fields (biologism and utopianism) and biographical data (Stravinsky's anti-Semitism)"—through what she calls "the opera gambit," by which ordinary claims take an aura of revelation by being clothed with music.[8] Musical ineffability, unlike the sounding structures of formalism or the cyphered objects of hermeneutics, Abbate argues, is experienced rather than decoded. It is unintellectual and hedonist, taking pleasure in the unmediated significance of musical performance's aural presence as such.

The strong attack on hermeneutics in Abbate's text includes an antimimetic position of a particular historicism: the historical pendulum has swung, she says, and we cannot conceive of music as mimetic any longer. With this offhand remark, which is also "not just quaint" (as she says of a claim by Janet Wolff), she bids farewell to both "hard" historical narratives of autonomy as the telos of musical development as well as "Sub-low" accounts based on the discontinuity of changing paradigms, regimes, epistemes, and so on.[9] For Abbate, what matters is that there has been a change, that there is only

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2 (2012): 101–9. and further Michael Gallope and Brian Kane, eds., "Colloquium: Vladimir Jankélévitch's Philosophy of Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 1 (2012): 215–56.

[7] Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 530.

[8] Ibid., 517, 520.

[9] Ibid., 516 emphasis mine. Abbate refers to "low" and "soft" hermeneutics, the former referring to "a musical hermeneutics craving the blessing of history or the dead and seeing immanent supra-audible content in musical artifacts from the past (low) from that which acknowledges such content as a product born in messy collisions between interpreting subject and musical object (soft)." As one of her critics notes, "low" refers to writers such as Susan McClary and Lawrence Kramer, but especially Adorno, while "soft"

historical contingency. This contingency, however, is precisely what criticism, in her view, seeks to erase, since,

> Contemporary music-hermeneutic writings can present their *faith* as a truth that terminates history by deeming it wrong, permanently false to think, for instance, that musical works are neither *ciphered media nor decipherable text* or that music's *beauty is an aspect of its humane value*. Yet the forms assumed by hermeneutic faith are culturally and historically contingent…for instance, in the sense that it could be seen as one minor byproduct of classical music's slow-motion death in the twentieth century.[10]

Abbate's dismissal of hermeneutics implies, from the start, that music is nothing but "beautiful noise," and everything that the critic claims to find in music is but a projection. Music, as the formalists would have claimed, is entirely self-referential, it means nothing outside of itself. But this antimimetism, as it happens with any mimetology, is simply the displaced affirmation of a broader, more incisive mimesis that remains repressed. The disjunction between "drastic" and "gnostic" is thus a choice of *faith* (or more precisely *belief*, according to Cimini and Moreno—more on this difference below) linked to a determination of music's ontology either as "coded" or as "ineffable," in other words as inscribed (or at least inscribable)—as text—or as pure event. For Abbate, these two are incompatible, self-exclusive. Music's ineffability means denying the fundamental claim that grounds the hermeneutic claim to approach musical works as having historical specificity beyond themselves:

> *Faith* in specificity and legibility means believing that musical artifacts at later points can be read for exact localizable traces, that once upon a time something

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seems to refer to Richard Taruskin. "Hard" here refers to an equally unfair and uninformative generalization that aims to account for historical narratives such as Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700.*. "Sub-low" historical narratives here refer to post-Marxist historiographies based on underlying continuities and discontinuities acting as the condition of possibility for "historical" transformations which avoid narratives of development, telos, emancipation, or progress, for example Attali, Foucault, Rancière, and others writing under their influence.

[10]Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 515; emphasis mine.

left a mark, and that reading such traces for the facts they reflect accesses the proper meaning that one should attach to musical sounds[11]

It is here, in this denial of the trace—and not in her (also "not just quaint") dismissal of "scoffing at presence"—that a deconstructive approach to the distinction between drastic and gnostic can prove useful for an elaboration of mimesis in music, for the denial of the trace implies an affirmation of autonomy, self-identity, and closure—paradoxically the same characteristics that romanticism affirmed and with which, according to its own ideology, music aimed to emancipate itself from its subjugation to nature and its demoted place in the hierarchy of the arts in the eighteenth century.[12] Why, in this argument about historical contingency, are the values of antimimetic music taken up to counter the discipline's efforts to historicize? How did mimesis become a threat to the turns to performance and materiality in the discipline?

As she would recognize, her retort includes the very position she defends: the drastic is also culturally and historically contingent. As she also recognizes, the work of historicizing cultural products has been a successful task, one that hermeneutics has taken up as a way of reintegrating critical work and political action into the academic sphere; if, however, she sees it as a "byproduct" of the death of classical music, if she sees hermeneutics as a violence done onto the freedom afforded by the ineffability of the musical gift, is not her position even more reflective of the self-defensive isolation of the musicological institution?

If the drastic appears as an ahistorical and apolitical gesture, it makes up for this lack by proposing instead an ethics of gratitude and distance from the performance's gift

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[11]Ibid. emphasis mine.

[12] See the response by Judy Lochhead in Gallope and Kane, "Colloquium," 231 who argues that "Jankélévitch aesthetics remains fixated in the nineteenth century"; Lawrence Kramer also denounces the ineffable as tied to Romantic ideals, "a secularization of the metaphysical impulse" and a sanctification of the secular experience of music, p. 103; he further compares the discourse on the ineffable to negative theology, defined with Derrida as itself a type of language that produces its own emptying out, its own kenosis. Kramer, "Oracular Musicology; Or, Faking the Ineffable," 104.

of (interpretive) freedom.[13] Essential to this ethics is music's ineffability, an excess of meaning that hermeneutic statements can only limit, fix, and reduce. To the gnostic, which seeks meanings inscribed in the world, the drastic opposes an inexhaustibility of meaning that abolishes all meaning.[14] Yet this excess, this plenitude, has a remarkable temporality which is irreducible to presence. It is not simply, as her critics were quick to point out, that, "there is no such thing as pure experience, uncontaminated by interpretation."[15] On the contrary, before being given in the aural presence of performance, music's plenitude is given in the form of "*potential* meanings in high multiples."[16] Its gift is the "promise" of a "vast future" of which "we" (but who's listening?) are the recipients. Given as a promise, the ineffable musical gift avoids the structural aporia that threatens all gifts, whereby the recipient of the gift is in turn indebted to the giver, such that the gift is in fact not a gift but a command to repay which annuls the gift as gift.[17] The musical gift is therefore a pure gift, because *it is never given*: it remains potential—hence unrealized—while deferring repayment to the future. Since it is potential, thus not given, it does not command repayment from the recipient. And, even if it were given, what is given is a promise: a deferral of fulfillment—another promise. Musical meaning is ineffable because it is never given as such.

Furthermore, by structuring its logic in terms of a gift which gives itself as a promise of repayment in the future, the value of the musical gift is a hyperbolic form of the fiduciary—and Abbate's talk of faith already evidences it.[18] The fiduciary, as Cimini

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[13] Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 512, 517. Yet isn't there is something narcissistic about this ethics where, as James Currie put it, "we seek to see ourselves in an ethically flattering light by proving that those things that feel good to us are therefore of the Good"? James Currie, "Where Jankélévitch Cannot Speak" in Gallope and Kane, "Colloquium," 251.

[14] For a different view, see the reappraisal of Jankélévitch beyond Abbate formulated by Gallope, which sees the ineffable as an affirmation of music's heterogeneity. Michael Gallope, "Jankélévitch's Fidelity to Inconsistency" in Gallope and Kane, "Colloquium,"239.

[15] Berger, "Musicology According to Don Giovanni, or: Should We Get Drastic?," 497.

[16] Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 516 emphasis mine.

[17] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[18] Lawrence Kramer also identifies the economic dimension of the resurgence of the trope of the ineffable. Kramer asserts, ironically, that "The I and its institutions are no longer a safety net but an entanglement, a trap. But what saves us is still the ineffable, particularly in its durable, accessible, and nowadays portable form: music…Forget for a moment that the everyday world is so saturated with music that *the currency of music's ineffability is debased at best*, which is why, perhaps, some writers on the topic have worked so hard, rhetorically, *to refurbish it*." Kramer, "Oracular Musicology; Or, Faking the Ineffable," 107.

and Moreno write, "structures the production of value, for music, sound, and sense perception, according to their capacity to faithfully work on behalf of something else."[19] As the authors show, the recent turns to performance and affect in musicology are implicated in a general economy that banks on the assumption "that sound and music, as well our capacity to engage them in and as sense perception, are inexhaustible."[20] This inexhaustibility is entrusted to—made to work for—a diversity of political claims, yet it operates under a "radical contradiction": "if music and sound are considered as inexhaustible, non-rival commodities—their use by anyone does not impinge on the use by others—"they nevertheless "appear to be limited or at least to demand that they be limited to carry out a particular purpose or use."[21] In the case of 1990's feminist musicology, nothing restricts the disidentificatory claims made on behalf of the feminized performer body to also be made of the male analytic mind, since by retaining the dualistic schema, it retained the latter as the constitutive exclusion necessary for the revalorization of the former.[22] Moreover, the turn to performance in musicology required a "dialectic of dematerialization" by which the substantiality of music was selectively reduced to the act of its performance (instead of an acknowledgment of broader, distributed materialities including the laboring bodies of performers whose decay Abbate would register as a mere act of failure, not of expenditure, *sensu* Bataille, an investment without return within a general economy). Thus, music's inexhaustibility is entrusted to work on behalf of a historically and culturally reduced beneficiary and to do so indefinitely into the future. Music's promise is precisely that of its inexhaustibility.

In Abbate's case, however, this selectivity is not at play. While she benefits theoretically and effectively from the revaluation of the body of 1990's musicology,[23] the

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[19] Amy Cimini and Jairo Moreno, "Inexhaustible Sound and Fiduciary Aurality," *Boundary 2* 43, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 8.
[20] Ibid., 6.
[21] Ibid., 7.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Abbate anticipates Cimini and Moreno's distrust of the risk of co-optation of the embodied performative's fiduciary, writing that, "while one can distinguish devils from angels based on liking or loathing the social conclusions they have drawn out of musical works, *the hermeneutic process is the same on both sides*. Neither the process nor the global conviction about musical legibility it supports can separate

drastic marks a distancing from the politics of identity that binds the embodied performative turn to the contradictions of the fiduciary. Abbate seems to preempt Cimini and Moreno's attacks avoiding these political commitments, and while the selectivity of the reduction of the musical to the act of performance seems even more radical than her predecessors, the real difference lies in the type of faith demanded by the drastic, which is not only an upping of the ante of the distinction between the feminized body and the masculine mind of some feminist musicology or the celebrated pliability of fixed genre categories, after Judith Butler. While the embodied performative claimed a stake in a form of knowledge that could exist simultaneously with that of the analytic mind, the drastic makes them self-exclusive, thus declaring the game to be a winner-takes-all.

This is accomplished, again true to Cimini and Moreno's analysis, by giving up identity politics. On the one hand, the musical gift is not given by "anyone" but the musical experience as such, thus no claims can be made on behalf of any beneficiary: music is only on the side of true (disembodied) angels. On the other, and more importantly, the musical gift is never received, it is never actualized. In fact, what Abbate articulates as "the coherent stance towards the situation" of the pure selfless gift of musical freedom is refusing the gift, "not taking advantage of it, hesitating before articulating a terminus, or restricting music to any determinate meaning within any declarative sentence. And, perhaps, drawing back."[24] For Abbate, every determination is a negation of the whole, a blemish that threatens the purity of the gift. This principle should be taken in all its rigor, for not only is this the ethical stance that she expressly formulates, but it is also the only way of distinguishing musical ineffability from the sublime, romantic autonomy, or hermeneutic's cyphered objects. In Gallope's reading of heterogeneity in Jankelevitch, the drastic depends on preserving ineffability as an excess of meaning such that any specific meaning can be ruled out as partial. Even the sublime, *pace* Lochhead, is already a determination: in fact, it is the paradigm of all determination of intuitions by reason. The drastic must remain drastic, excessive, and irreducible to any

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the scurrilous or low quality answer from the acceptable answer." Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 519 emphasis mine.

[24] Ibid., 516.

particular expression. Embracing the drastic, after all, is "a radical step."[25] Any "declarative sentence" in the face of the musical gift acknowledges reception of it—identifying the listener as a political subject—and thus annuls it. This non-transaction is what appears effectively as ineffability: even an applause, a sigh here or there, or the synaptic fires by which an operatic performance becomes her experience, receives the gift, acknowledges it, and thus destroys it. There is no more future repayment, the gift is given in part and this part delivers the whole.

If the "radical contradiction" in Cimini and Moreno's view was that the claims made on behalf of music banked on its inexhaustibility yet effectively mobilized it as if such inexhaustibility was in truth limited, the drastic turns this contradiction into an article of faith. Or, to put in more radical terms: the gnostic represents a violence, a violation and hence a complete devaluation of the purity of the musical gift.

The term "violation" hints precisely at the patriarchal logic that underpins this general economy, whereby the value of a woman within bourgeois patriarchy is predicated upon the profit obtained through her marriage, and which depends on the unconditional purity—that is, the virginity—of the woman as a guarantee that 1. She will give a child to her husband (who will work for him if he is a male, or repeat the same operation in the case of a female) and 2. That there will not be illegitimate claimants over these profits in the case of illegitimate children.[26] Since the deferred temporality of the drastic locates music's value within the space of potential meanings and the promise of "a vast future" whose fulfillment depends on retaining such a purity, of preserving its status of pure gift until it is delivered as full plenitude, any blemish, any unsupervised contact with its suitor, can bring the whole enterprise into bankruptcy.

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[25]Ibid., 510.

[26] In his anthropological critique of political economy (which also doubles as a genealogy of morals), David Graeber argues that posing barter at the origin of economy is a liberal construction, and shows instead a logic of debt at the origin of money and other economic concepts, a debt for which the currency was often people—slaves or family members. He argues, following feminist historian Gerda Lerner and Jack Goody, that the value of virginity, and the modern notions of honor and price (both meanings of the ancient Greek word *tīme)* are the result of a moral crisis stemming from Mesopotamia which stands at the origin of patriarchy and extends onwards. David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2011), 176ff.

It hardly needs mentioning that Abbate does receive the gift, under the condition of not receiving it. The pure musical gift is torn asunder, split into the "two quintessentially operatic phenomena," two remainders which require and annul each other: the "metaphysical" and the "material." Abbate invites us to hear them together in Orpheus' "last performance," the song that continued to resonate from the disembodied head of our hero after his terrifying *sparagmos*. The invitation is as radical as always: Orpheus's inaudible music—with its repression in operatic stagings—is a paradigm "not only with respect to opera, but in thinking about music *in general*…the sound is *a wholly operatic motif*, one could even say *the* operatic motif in his myth…Orpheus' last performance reflects on *the nature of musical execution in general*, as well as the forms of musical power and how such power is construed."[27] A hyperbolic logic as always, it does exactly the opposite of what the drastic would soon interdict, namely determining music as a symbol, a paradigm, or as meaningful in any way. Yet it follows the logic of the drastic to the letter: on the one hand, it does not determine the myth as having this or that meaning. On the other hand, and again true to the structural logic of the pure gift, she never receives the musical gift as music: such is the strategic role of this metaphysical inaudible music, which she thus preserves in its purity.

Rather, through this strategy she affirms the particular as a totality. The myth says something about opera, nay music, *in general*. Inaudible music is the paradigm for all music—and thus all works and performances of the myth which focus on any other aspect miss the point. We are familiar with this strategy from Plato's *Republic* as examined in chapter 2 ("what is mimesis, in general?"), which is here in plain sight: the paradigm is produced by making one particular aspect stand in for the totality, while the particular—which preceded it—is made into a secondary copy. Abbate rejects a conventional sense of mimesis—the hermeneutic notion that music bears the traces of its social and historical context—only to (covertly) affirm a more pervasive form of mimesis while abandoning historicity and politics as a whole.

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[27] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 5.

Unheard music on one side, materiality on the other. Yet this materiality, as Cimini and Moreno argue, is thoroughly dematerialized: it selectively chooses one aspect of music's ontology complex distribution and affirms to the exclusion of the others. The drastic, as we noted, is explicit and radical about it: recordings (even of live performances), scores, and all the other elements in this distribution are nothing but "souvenirs"—that is, degraded copies.[28]

Even the privileging of performance and action is selective, for it privileges a particular mode of experience by presupposing it as empirically given. In this respect, the difference between faith and belief that Cimini and Moreno posit as the crux of the production of value in their analysis is made clear, as well as Abbate's denunciation of hermeneutical faith in the possibility of reading social traces in music. Faith, for Cimini and Moreno, is relational, it produces a "symbolic pact" and "binding agreement" between the human, on the one hand, and sound and music, on the other.[29] Thus, hermeneutics truly has faith, it expects something in return—meaning—which proportionally limited to what it deposits, *i.e.* it does not expect plenitude from music but rather conditioned, historicized, specific meanings which are subject to further elaboration, contention, and destruction. Belief, on the other hand, depends on a "quasi realist" posit of sensorial experience as given and as true, which, as Currie remarks, is modulated into an ethics by being identified with the Good.[30]

The demotion of musical inscription to the level of secondary copy serves to uphold the primacy of unheard music as paradigmatic, to monopolize it as the only source of value and preserve it in its purity. The same logic, it bears noting, is there even before its formulation in the drastic essay, where Orpheus' head—along with the monstrous spectacle of his dismemberment—is there only as support, as "master symbol," which aims to stand in for a broadly distributed performance network. Writing with respect to the turn to affect, Cimini and Moreno contrast the "reduced" body of the

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[28] Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" 506.
[29] Cimini and Moreno, "Inexhaustible Sound and Fiduciary Aurality," 7.
[30] Ibid., 9. James Currie, "Where Jankélévitch Cannot Speak" in Gallope and Kane, "Colloquium," 251.

embodied performative with a "diffuse body," where the singularity of bodies and things is bracketed with the affirmation of a common affect that traverses and joins them. The "performance network" that is acknowledged before the drastic is one such type of diffuse body bound by affect, and Abbate reduces it to one single affective dimension:

> Put bluntly, the singing head *represents* the *uncanny* aspects of musical performance, operatic performance in particular, precisely because we cannot say *how* it sings, *who is in charge*, *who is the source* of the utterance, and *what is the nature* of the *medium* through which musical ideas become physically present as sound.[31]

In short, the performance network is reduced, in the monstrosity of a disembodied head that sings and which no one hears, into the representative of a set of humanist values (autonomy, sovereignty, self-presence, mediation, the humanity of the human), which are assembled together under the affective blank slate of "the uncanny." Far from being rejected, criticized, historicized, let alone deconstructed, these values are preserved and delivered as the necessary support for the non-transaction that preserves the purity of the musical gift. And the most traditional mimetology is there to uphold them.

The space, the gap, between invisible performances—the "metaphysical"—and the "materiality" of the performance network remains as wide as ever, and the crucial question is not their unification or the privilege of one over the other, but the turn from one to the other, their actualization and operability. If in Abbate's analysis the singing, disembodied head unifies them in a symbol that represents music "in general," this symbol does not, after all, exhaust all the possibilities of the opera, as Abbate would recognize. Nor does it explain how the two extremes arise; they are posited as faith in the promise of the musical gift, and as belief in the performance network; but this fiduciary structure remains concealed in Abbate's essay. Because, if the analysis of the fiduciary structure of the drastic as a pure gift above is correct, Abbate's opening gambit in "Orpheus' Last Performance"—identifying three moments in the opera that display Orpheus's singing (the plea to Pluto, his mourning after Eurydice's second death, and the

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[31] Abbate, *In Search of Opera,* 5.

disembodied head [p. 2]) only to retain the latter (the impossible performance) as the truly symbolic of music *in general*, constitutes a closure of the potentialities of the myth. And this closure, as I have argued, is absolutely necessary to preserve the purity and the value of the musical gift. Only by listening to unheard voices is it possible to receive the gift without acknowledging reception so that it does not turn into a transaction or an obligation to repay. Understanding the economimesis involved in the production (or more importantly, the preservation) of the drastic, then, is crucial to reopening the myth and its operatic actualizations if we want to find an alternative between the impossible performance and the dematerialized performance network, between the "metaphysical" and the "material."

CHAPTER 8

THE NOISE BEHIND: CORRECTING MYTH, PUSHING HISTORY, INSCRIBING *NOMOS*

Pieter Paul Rubens
Orpheus and Eurydice
1636 - 1638. Oil on canvas, 196.5 x 247.5 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado

CORRECTING MYTH

It seems everything has already been said about the paradoxical and tragic gaze of Orpheus which constitutes itself (as gaze and as trope, as the trope of the gaze) in the dorsal turn, by losing what it turns to look at. As critics of *L'Euridice* will not cease to repeat, Orpheus would not have been what he always was without the loss of Euridice. The point was best made by Blanchot: by losing Eurydice, Orpheus becomes himself, his

turn in turn organizing the myth about this movement where the constitutive loss of the modern subject is staged.[1]

The definition of modernity, or more precisely "modernism"—the attempt to be thoroughly original, without past dependences or any trace of secondariness—is analyzed by Paul de Man and more recently by Jean-Michel Rabatè as symptomatic of the current disciplinary state of literary criticism. For Rabatè, the backlash against deconstruction and poststructuralism that characterizes the new historicism (and we may add, more recently, the affective turn, the material text turn, and the distance-reading methods stemming from the digital humanities turn) is a politically reductionist, "regressive urge that welcomes—with joy and relief—the restoration of 'full' meanings," based on the uncritical mimetological assumption that texts imitate a reality "'out there,' easily described and verified."[2] This becomes only more complicated in the case of historical musicology (to make explicit the polemical stance of this chapter), which faces the traditional issue of the "materiality of sound" that makes more enticing the fantasy of the "full meaning" promised by the new historicism. The end of the story is up to one's taste: an Apollonian ending in which opera rises to its artistic apotheosis—with the return to the stage of *L'Orfeo* and Stravinsky's 1948 *Orpheus* and as its culminations—or the Dionysian *sparagmos*, where Orpheus' disembodied head resonates with the uncanny tension between the enthralling metaphysical voice (sound, invisibility, magic) and the materiality of the text and the performance network (visibility, technology, reason).[3]

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[1] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature.*

[2] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (Gainesville, FL: Univ. Press of Florida, 1996), xi.

[3] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). This dichotomy, of course, is offered "programatically," so to speak, and is restricted only to the musicological interpretations. The field of literary criticism has many more diverse interpretations, some of which will become pertinent to this essay below. See MacGahey, *The Orphic Moment*; Strauss, *Descent and Return; the Orphic Theme in Modern Literature.* These works take as its point of departure Elizabeth Sewell's classic *The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960). For a work combining these interpretations with an emphasis on music, see Jason R. D'Aoust, "The Orpheus Figure: The Voice in Writing, Music and Media" (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2013), http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/1857.

In this sense, then, the critical question to pose with respect to Monteverdi's *Orfeo* is this: how does it actualize—and thus in-complete—Orpheus as myth, one might say as *the* myth of the humanist project? And further, what does it mean to actualize, to turn a timeless myth into a story that speaks to the present and has actuality and effectivity, that is, an opera? What is the medium of this actualization, the matter that gives it consistency and singularity in the present, and what changes with the medium? And, in this context, what does the myth mean for historical musicology as a critical discipline, today? What, as we repeat the Orphic turn, is it that we seek—and lose—in, and as, history?[4]

The mutual entwinement of constitution and loss as embodied in Orpheus lays out, for Adorno, the effectivity of opera as a bourgeois artistic form—that is to say, as the aesthetic mouthpiece of Enlightenment. Opera, he argues, is no simple copy or imitation of myth. It does not work by simply replacing mythical interconnections with musical ones (as Wagner and Lévi-Strauss after him supposed). Instead, opera seeks to "correct" the inescapable ties of fate and nature through music. Thus, Orpheus manages to persuade Pluto "only to fall prey to the very fate he had just escaped because of his inability to break the spell and to tear his gaze away from that infernal realm."[5]

But the way in which Orpheus is the archetype of opera is not spelled out in this passage in all its consequences. Before understanding what "correcting myth" means for Adorno, we need to ask what exactly is "the spell" that Orpheus fails to break with, where it is coming from and how it is enforced. Is the spell, with its overtones of magic and enchantment, what nevertheless binds Orpheus as a progressively modern and disenchanted subject to the past? Is the spell another name for the dialectics by which Enlightenment only discover freedom by developing further forms of magical

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[4] This is not, however, to make the Orpheus myth into *the* myth of modernity, the principal myth or the one that holds the key to everything—especially since, as commentators from Guthrie on point out the Protean quality of the Orpheus myth. We understand it rather, with Levi-Strauss, as "simply a transformation, to a greater or lesser extent, of other myths originating either in the same society or in neighboring or remote societies…From this point of view the key myth is interesting not because it is typical, but rather because of its irregular position within the group [a position which we could gloss, with Agamben, as paradigmatic: a part of the whole and simultaneously outside the whole and representing it as a whole]. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 2.

[5] Theodor W Adorno, *Sound Figures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 21.

submission? If this is so, although Adorno does not spell it out, Orpheus would be a better figure than Odysseus for the dialectics of fate and logic described in the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, whereby the mythical passes into modernity only to preserve its magical contents in new structures that negate the freedom that Enlightenment promised as emancipation. As Adorno puts it in "Bourgeois Opera," turning in the sequence of "authentic operas" from *Orfeo* through *Magic Flute* to *Fidelio*, "this interlocking of myth and Enlightenment defines the bourgeois essence of opera: namely, the combination of imprisonment in a blind and unself-conscious system with the idea of freedom, which arises in its midst."[6] This is why it is surprising to find how disenchanted Orpheus is when he reaches the operatic stage. We already saw in chapter 6 how in *L'Euridice*, which does not even include the fatal turn (and which Adorno does not mention), Plutone's mercy was won less through musical enchantment than through political persuasion. In *L'Orfeo* it happens much in the same way, but with a crucial transformation, a displacement, a de-centering of the law. The importance of Caronte— who in *L'Euridice* delivers the most effective parts of the collective appeal to Plutone—is at the same time foregrounded and eliminated—put to sleep—in *L'Orfeo*. Just as in *L'Euridice*, the plea to the sovereign is at the formal center of the work, yet that place is occupied in *L'Orfeo* by Caronte, not Plutone: the subordinate takes the place of the sovereign, but only to preserve the sovereign's proper place. Further, the *contrapposto* between affect and law in *L'Euridice*, the diamantine law that Orfeo's misery could not move, and which Plutone sought to defend until the end, is replaced by an equally unmoved Caronte, for whom pity is "an unworthy feeling of his courage," and whose heart is full of "bitter memory" and "just anger" against ancient offenses. However, Caronte does not mention the law. Thus, if law and sovereignty were a central concern in *L'Euridice* in their opposition to affect, or to the Machiavellian display of affect as politics after Caronte's admonishing, in *L'Orfeo* law and sovereignty seem to be just the background over which this ineffective display of affect is performed. In the end, Caronte

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[6] Ibid.

offers no major resistance to Orfeo and he falls asleep to "Possente spirto," to the puzzlement of audiences to come. The "primal scene," the operatic moment *par excellence*, the moment to which we will never cease to return in search of music's magical powers, comes as a disappointing *non sequitur*—if not as a comic gag, depending on how a production manages to deal with Caronte's defeat.

In this light—and besides issues of fidelity to the original myth or the appropriateness of the *lieto fine*—the prominence that this episode acquires in Striggio and Monteverdi's setting becomes an important site for understanding the myth in modernity and the modernity of the myth in—and as—opera. In other words, if Orpheus' gaze is now what constitutes the turning point of the myth, and if "all opera is Orpheus," as Adorno claimed, if music has the power to affect and move not only the souls and bodies of an ontologically diverse array of listeners—humans and gods, animals and stones—but also to alter fate or transgress the law, we would have to say that, nevertheless, what music does in opera, i.e. "correcting myth," is undone by the eye.[7]

The notion of "correcting myth," from the essay on "Bourgeois Opera," presents us with the fundamental mimetic problem to be addressed in this chapter. If opera does not cease turning towards myth—from its Florentine origin onwards—it is not simply as an imitation or a repetition of myth but its transformation into a performative practice. By affirming the magical aspect of operatic mimesis, opera accomplishes what Enlightenment rationality utterly fails to do: it transforms the myths that serve as their models without presuming to overcome them, thus allowing for man's reconciliation with nature. Just as a child—in Benjamin's evocative image—displays the mimetic impulse constantly when playing, for example, at being a windmill, Adorno sees the in childish delight on the operatic "aura of disguise"—and not in an aesthetic appeal, pure virtuosity, or drama—in which the child "wants to confirm its own pleasure in dissimulation."[8]

The value of opera is of preserving a certain magic, which is thoroughly mimetic, and which has been lost through the process of disenchantment, using rational means—from harmony to costumes and machines. This dialectic merits closer examination: for

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 16.

Adorno, opera strives to preserve the magical element of art, its primitive, communal role, in a world that tends towards disillusionment by using its own disenchanted means. More precisely, opera constantly exposes Enlightenment as myth, while presenting music as capable of intervening in and transforming what myth presents as "fate's blind, inescapable ties to nature."[9] Unlike drama, opera never meditated directly upon philosophical or social issues, thus becoming dialectically more philosophical than drama: opera is a "vacation spot" whose distance to reality allows it "to mirror so crassly the developing tendencies of bourgeois society itself."[10] Thus, opera's libretti (especially in the nineteenth century) incessantly deal with exogamy (a ritual escape from natural ties) and incest (a "law" that blurs the distinction between nature and culture). The mediation between nature and culture, however, is nowhere best achieved than in music: through song, mortals are exalted and transfigured into gods; social orders—mirrored in operatic conventions—become identified with the "the order of the absolute or the world of ideas."[11] Yet, at the same time, Adorno finds in passionate song the only escape, or rather the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of the dialectics of Enlightenment, as "the hope of the reconciliation with nature":

> Opera's song is the language of passion: not just the exaggerating stylization of existence but also an expression of the truth that nature prevails in man against all convention and mediation, *an evocation of pure immediacy*. Ever since the invention of figured bass and opera, there has been a doctrine of musical affect, and opera is in its element wherever it gives itself over breathlessly to passion. *In this "giving itself over to nature" lies its elective affinity with both myth* and the modern successor to the epic, the novel. But passion, which thus finds expression, is appeased insofar as sung passion comes flooding back like an echo, and insofar as the sound of the immediate is reflected, rising above the mediations of the hardened life. And thus the constrained existence of those who sing in the opera is appeased as well, so that they appear unconstrained. *That is why opera is no simple copy of myth but its rectification in the medium of music, which is both an element of nature and the refraction of nature through the intellect*. In opera, song

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[9] Ibid., 21.
[10] Ibid., 23.
[11] Ibid., 24.

allows free rein to that which, as passion, incorporates people into the context of nature. At the same time, in song, people experience themselves as nature, which their prejudice against nature resists, and it is thanks to this that the mythic element—that is, passion—is appeased. Their freedom does not lie in the intellect, which high-handedly raises itself above creation. Instead, *as music, intellect becomes similar to nature and, on the strength of that similarity, discards [the intellect's] lordly essence*.[12]

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[12] Ibid., 25 emphasis mine. This piece was first delivered as a talk in 1955 and published with slight revisions in *Klangfiguren* in 1959. David J Levin, *Opera Through Other Eyes* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 25. It is interesting to note, as Steve Smith has remarked to me (in conversation), that is quite an odd piece in Adorno's *ouvre*, since he allows himself to affirm the emancipatory power of song, as we find it in this passage, without the qualifications that one would find in *Aesthetic Theory* or *Negative Dialectics*. Just as interesting, and adding a level of irony which complicates these unqualified assertions, is that the musical motivation for this passage is not Orphic song but "such as it sounds at the loveliest point in Wagner's Ring poem, in the words of the forest bird." Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 25.
This passage also presents various aspects of Adorno's *theory* of mimesis that can be mentioned here in a quick sketch: 1. Artistic mimesis—conceived as the simple imitation of nature—is incapable of truth or transformation of what it imitates. Only by remaining at a distance from what appears, by exaggerating alienation, is art capable of exposing the truth concealed under the appearance (*Schein*) of reality. In the case of opera, this distance is not through abstraction—as in Schoenberg—but through its "crass" mirroring of reality. In both cases, what is really mimetic is not the imitation of reality but the fact that artworks "imitate themselves" as totalities; their "truth content" consists not in their being such a totality, but rather of giving the "semblance" (*Schein*) of totality, and this semblance is what artworks share with reality— exposing, that is, that reality is itself shattered. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 130ff; Max Paddison, "Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression," *Music Analysis* 29, no. I (2010): 126–48.
2. But mimesis characterizes not only art but also history through the dialectic of Enlightenment. The Benjaminian "mimetic impulse" characterized by a tension between play (*Spiel*) and semblance (*Schein*) stands opposed to Enlightenment rationality in the form of irrational nature or magic. In fact, art is the refuge for the mimetic comportment within Enlightenment: it separates itself from magic and employs Enlightenment's means to preserve the mimetic impulse. This impulse, moreover, makes art resemble Enlightenment rationality as much as it makes it regress into literal magic, and in this tension its forces are set free, thus opening the space for hope and reconciliation: "Art is rationality that criticizes rationality without withdrawing from it." Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 55.
3. The dialectic that obtains between nature and culture, by which each seek to overcome each other and ends up identifying with its other—and which here illustrates historical development—also can be expressed more abstractly: negative dialectics is a form of mimesis in which each pole in an opposition tends towards identifying itself *with* or to be already *in* what opposes it. Where instrumental reason always aims to subsume the particular under the universal, doing violence to the particular's uniqueness and reducing them to the level of exemplars, "mimetic reason" is a compassionate, nonviolent affinity that brings the subject and the object together in a nonidentical relation. This sympathetic identification may be accomplished as a false semblance (*Schein*) leading to reification, or as reconciliation where for example intellect, as music, becomes similar to nature. Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 25. There is thus a "bad" mimesis— which is still associated to semblance—and a "good" mimesis—one that depends on sympathy, magic, and play. For more profound accounts of mimesis and music in Adorno and Benjamin, see Joseph Weiss, "The Idea of Mimesis: Semblance, Play, and Critique in the Works of Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno," *College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences Theses and Dissertations*, August 1, 2012, http://via.library.depaul.edu/etd/125; Paddison, "Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression"; See also Steven Decatur Smith, "The 'Transfigured Flesh': Natural History in Theodor Adorno's Musical

If *L'Orfeo* is a paradigmatic opera, if what it represents is precisely music's power of transforming or correcting myth—which we understand now to be the dialectical accomplishment of myth's enlightened purpose—this is only because music appears there as a privileged form of mimesis: a rationalized remnant of its magical origins which, due to its nearness to nature as passionate song, accomplishes the reconciliation that Enlightenment rationality is unable to. But for Adorno, Orpheus' turn undoes this work. Orpheus, he writes, falls prey "once again to the very fate he had just escaped because of his inability to *break the spell* and to *tear his gaze away* from that infernal realm."[13]

An enigmatic allegory, perhaps, but the dialectic could not be clearer: while Orpheus's song challenges fate and frees humanity from nature's bonds—an enlightened myth—his spellbound gaze rebinds him, in effect forces him to turn back: the turn is a regression into mythical past. Gaze—the privileged sense in Enlightenment—is what keeps Orpheus bound to the law of mythical nature.

If we approach *L'Orfeo* as a "Bourgeois opera," then, one where the dialectics of music's unstable place between nature and reason is at stake—and not just the sheer enchantment of vocal virtuosity—we might hear other things. For example, in how the sober sentence spoken by the Infernal Chorus as Orpheus jumps onto Caronte's boat pre-echoes Bacon's *Novum Organum*:

> Nulla impresa per uom si tenta invano
>
> Ne contr' a lui più sa Natura armarse

Thought." (Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 2013); Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); For a lucid confrontation of Adorno's and Lacoue-Labarthe's mimetologies, see Martin Jay, "Mimesis and Mimetology - Adorno and Lacoue-Labarthe," in *The Semblance of Subjectivity*, ed. Lambert Zuidervaart and Tom Huhn, 1997.

[13] Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 21.

No undertaking of man is tried in vain,

Nor can Nature arm against him further[14]

So much for the magical Orpheus; this statement make us reconsider the distance of Striggio's libretto from the natural magic episteme in which we sometimes still try to place it.[15] We may venture to say that, as "the first authentic opera," *L'Orfeo* is as enlightened—bourgeois—as opera itself.

To say it once more, Orfeo's plea is strangely not at the center of the opera. Rather it is Proserpina, whom in *Euridice* Orfeo addresses without addressing, who delivers his plea to the sovereign, having presumably heard "Possente spirto" or Orfeo's "unsung voice" which the brass instruments and strings imitate without imitating with their echoes.[16] Also as in *Euridice*, Proserpina appeals to Plutone's sympathy, reminding the sovereign of their shared history, placing herself in the position of Euridice— although from Orfeo's perspective, since, it must be recalled, Euridice is by far the most silent character in both works (i.e., a fulcrum) constituted only by the gazes of the male characters.[17]

Plutone gives in. The major displacement from *Euridice* to *Orfeo*, which began by dividing the Underworld scene across two acts, separating Orfeo from Plutone, giving up the progressive build-up of solo lamento to choral finale, is, significantly enough, also voiced in *Orfeo* by Plutone in his response to Proserpina, and also in the form of a *contrapposto*: "Benchè severo ed immutabil fato/Contrasti, amata sposa, i tuoi desiri." Fate—not law—stands between Euridice and Orfeo. Severe and immutable fate, in contrast with the Queen's desires (which are Orfeo's).

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[14] Bacon in fact includes Orpheus in *De Sapientia Veterum* (1607), Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700*, 169 offers an interpretation that has its source in Horace's *Ars Poetica* where Orpheus is a civilizer and law-giver.

[15] Tomlinson, for example, for whom "Peri's Euridice and Monteverdi's Orfeo are at an archeological level more closely related to 'Sfogava con le stelle' than they are to the *Lament of the Nymph* or *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*" Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others*, 244 To be sure, Tomlinson is here discussing the indifference between solo song and polyphonic song that the magical episteme allows, and which the representational one begins to enforce.

[16] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 20.

[17] For a suggestive feminist interpretation of the myth, centering on Euridice, see Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

But this reinscription of "fate" in place of "law" is only possible because, as we know, Plutone gives a new law: a single glance from Orfeo's "desirous eyes" will ensure Euridice's eternal loss. As if echoing Caronte's (in *L'Euridice*) "make your own laws, O great King, as you please," a "spirito del Coro" declares:

> O degli abitator de l'ombre eterne
>
> Possente re, legge ne fia tuo cenno,
>
> Che ricercar altre cagioni interne
>
> Di tuo voler nostri pensier non denno.

> O of the dwellers in eternal shadows
>
> powerful King, let your order be law,
>
> that to seek other reasons
>
> for your will our thoughts must not turn.

Immutable fate, which the sovereign suspended for a moment, returns as law, as sovereign decision, as a new *nomos*. If in *L'Euridice* the *lieto fine* involved producing a change of perspective by which the sovereign's position beyond the law was affirmed while at the same time producing the space from where that viewpoint was constituted, restoring the mythical ending in *L'Orfeo* cannot be done without producing a new reinscription of fate as law. Fate, said to be immutable—as the laws of nature—is immediately transgressed only to become sovereign law. Thus, as Benjamin and Schmitt would argue, Orfeo's plea for mercy works towards constituting the sovereign as such, by identifying the figure that can transgress the law (declare an emergency) and posit a new law—the Orphic apostrophe of sovereignty. This new law, as we also know, is bound to be transgressed as well. Yet the transgression of the second law is not like the first transgression. Transgressing fate gave the sovereign the possibility of making a new law, of showing or positing himself as that who decides upon the law thus transgressed, upon the exception. Plutone already won by having made a new law. If Orfeo breaks the

second law—which he will have done—this reaffirms the sovereign decision, and lose Euridice on top of that.[18]

MA CHE ODO? THE REASON BEHIND THE TURN

We are back to the most basic question posed by the myth. Why does Orfeo turn? What is the necessity of such a turn? *L'Orfeo*, as it turns out, has a surprising answer to this question, riding on a detail of the libretto that, to my knowledge, has hardly been mentioned. There are several answers about Orfeo's turning due to character flaws, his lack of control upon his own emotions—an interpretation motivated by Apollo's moral in the final apotheosis and which could be read as the neoplatonic admonishing to the ruler—his intemperance, his impulsiveness "as much out of overconfidence as for love" (Kerman), giving into doubts whether Euridice "is following him as had been promised" (Schrade), or because he "succumbs to panic and self-doubt" (Russano-Hanning).

For Mladen Dolar, Orfeo responds to Plutone's act of mercy by a new subjectivation, by succumbing to his own humanity, while for Žižek, elaborating on Theweleit, a bourgeois Euridice sacrifices herself for Orpheus's, to make him into the great poet he would be, "intentionally provoking Orpheus into turning his gaze towards her [by coughing and thus sending her back to Hades.]"[19] No one, however, has put it more poignantly than Euridice herself, blaming excess of love through a paradigmatic *contrapposto* and an anaphora that emphasizes excess (*troppo*) through repetition: "Ah, too sweet and too bitter a sight:/so through too much love, then, do you lose me?" ("Ahi, vista troppo dolce e troppo amara:/Così per troppo amor dunque mi perdi?").

Accounting for the reason of the turn seems to be not only a matter of accounting for the unity of the libretto, for showing its consistency. It is as if, given that *L'Orfeo* is the paradigmatic opera, where the structure of musical plea, sovereign display of mercy, transgression and reinscription of the law determines the history of opera, then giving a reasoned account for the turn becomes the crucial task for the interpreter, for any attempt

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[18] Žižek makes a similar point, but draws the opposite conclusion: "the Master ultimately makes a virtue out of necessity, in that he promotes as a free act what he is in any case compelled to do - if he refuses clemency, he takes the risk that the subject's respectful entreaty will turn into open rebellion." Žižek, "The Ridiculous Excess of Mercy."

[19] Ibid.

to make critical and historical sense of *L'Orfeo* as an effective telling of the myth, an opera.

But what if there is no reason or justification for the turn? That makes it necessary, that accounts for the rationality of Orfeo's actions, either from the teleological perspective of drama and tragedy by which the turn is discovered as necessary at the moment of recognition, or as a character fault which the spectator is supposed to see and criticize in herself? Accounts like the examples cited above are of this type. Characteristically, they ignore—as if they had not heard it, even if Orfeo did, even if he asked "ma che odo," turning around—a noise, a *strepito,* made behind the curtain (Figure 13).[20]

This noise interrupts the music and even the flow of the printed staves (an arrangement that does not occur elsewhere in the score) and frightens Orpheus forcing the fated turn. "Ma che odo?" Orfeo asks himself, leaving the answer to us. The acoustemological question *par excellence*, "what do I hear?" requires and implies an interpretation of the myth, of the roles of music and sound, equivalent to answering why does Orfeo turn, and hence, as argued above, answering "why opera" at all. If all we hear is a noise, an irrational sound, does not this make the turn itself, and thus the opera and the myth as well, irrational? Is it not a strange situation, a scandal almost, that the reason for opera—which we seek to find in song, voice, or drama—rides upon a noise? Perhaps this is why no one hears it—or feigns not to. Among the few ones who do hear it is Sternfeld, for whom the noise is a reference to Virgil's account, where a thunderous crash

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[20] Lat. *Strepitus*: a (wild, confused) noise, din of any kind; a clashing, crashing, rustling, rattling, clattering, clanking, rumbling, etc. E. A. Andrews et al., *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary (Online)* (Medford, MA: Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University, Classics Dept.), accessed June 2, 2016.

Figure 13: Monteverdi, L'Orfeo (1609 score), act IV, 80. (The Turn).

that "marks the breaking of Pluto's and Proserpine's stern decree [and which becomes] in *Orfeo*, the unnerving noise which finally causes Orpheus to turn round."[21]

In the fourth book of Virgil's *Georgics*, the first poetical telling of the myth and an acknowledged source for Striggio, especially for the Underworld scene, we read,

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[21] Whenham, *Claudio Monteverdi, Orfeo*. Sternfeld and Wenham, in the same volume, are the only authors, to my knowledge, who make explicit mention of the noise.

cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem,

ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes:

restitit, Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa

immemor heu! victusque animi respexit. ibi omnis

effusus labor atque immitis rupta tyranny

foedera, terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis.

…when a sudden frenzy seized Orpheus, unwary in his love, a frenzy meet for

pardon, did Hell know how to pardon! He halted, and on the very verge of light,

unmindful, alas, and vanquished in purpose, on Eurydice, now regained looked

back! In that instant all his toil was spilt like water, the ruthless tyrant's pact was

broken, and thrice a peal of thunder was heard amid the pools of Avernus." [22]

Perhaps not incidentally, Caronte also appears in Virgil *after* Orfeo turns, not before; but his displacement had already been produced by Rinuccini, a reference that Striggio duplicates by also referring to Dante and which, as Whenham argues, helps the audience picture Dante's description of *Inferno* as well as establishing further references between Mantua (with Virgil) and Florence (with Dante).[23]

Orfeo stops. Seized by frenzy or dementia—a lack of mind, of mindfulness, but also, as Euridice calls it later, a frenzied possession, *furor,* which does not fail to recall Platonic love and enthusiasm. His soul or his will defeated—he turns. To say that the thunders represent "fate" would be too rash. But they are truly a dramatic, even operatic or cinematographic touch. They make audible for the reader the mythical violence of the broken promise, of the fateful backward glance. Virgil does not say that the thunders echoed *because* Orfeo turned: the thunders were heard there or in that instant, *ibi*, almost as if the pact was a branch or a scepter—or the diamantine law in *Euridice*—which could be heard as they were shattered by Orpheus' mindlessness and excessive love. Three thundering clashes that contrast with the lyre, that mark the undoing of what the lyre

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[22]Virgil, *Virgil*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 2000).
[23]Whenham, *Claudio Monteverdi, Orfeo*, 67.

accomplished.[24] As Sternfeld says, then, the thunders *mark* the broken law, they belong to the pact that Orpheus broke by turning, but only because he turned.

The lyre, the turn, and even the disembodied head have been kept alive through commentary, representations, and adaptations. The thunders were never heard again until *Orfeo*—an instant too early: before he turned.

Three thunders become one noise, which precede and cause the turn. It is at the same time the mythical necessity of the broken pact, of transgressed natural laws in Virgil, and a mechanical causality, a material event. It binds them without being either. It separates them without reason. The noise is the (modern) efficient cause for Orfeo's turn, an immanent causality that seeks to rationalize the tragic turn by recasting it as a contingent event. Here it is noise—and not music—what seeks to correct myth, to fend-off fated necessity through disenchanted, material means. The tension between the two is what gives rise, more often than not, to the rather comical and underwhelming effect of this intervention in performance, much like the way Caronte simply falls asleep to Orfeo's music.

But there is much more to this seemingly unremarkable or comical noise. Its timbral indetermination as noise, not a thunder, or coughing (as Žižek would want, nor Orfeo's phantastic clapping, as Theweleit suggests), embodies the two aspects of Abbate's polarity: the unheard/unseen, and the all-too material. The score says "Qui si fa strepito dietro la tela," which we could translate literally to "here a noise is made (or as imperative: 'make a noise') behind the curtain." As is well known, the score for *L'Orfeo*, published two years after the original performance, has two kinds of indications, which can be distinguished as descriptive and prescriptive ones.[25] Both provide timbral indications, specifying which instrument or group of voices must be used in the realization of the score. Since indications of the first type are in the past tense, they can

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[24] Commentary on Virgil also seems to make deaf ears to such effects. Gary B Miles, *Virgil's Georgics: A New Interpretation* (Berkeley, CA, 1980), 278. Miles, however, notes that the pact is also called *leges* (478), which in the *Georgics* are chiefly "the inflexible laws that govern nature," so that Orpheus' punishment "confirms the inevitability of man's failures to arrest the natural process of degeneration and the stern inflexibility of nature's laws."

[25] Mauro Calcagno, "Performing the Self," *The Opera Quarterly* 24, no. 3–4 (2008): 248; Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti, *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8.

be read as referring, as records, to the 1607 performance, for example "this song *was* accompanied by all the instruments" ("Questo canto *fu* concertato al suono de tutti gli stromenti," 8). The prescriptive ones, such as "Two shepherds sing to the sound of the organ and a chitarone ("due Pastori cantano al suono del Organo di legno, & un Chitarrone," 42)" are in the present tense, indicating that the score is not only or not so much a record or a souvenir of the performance, but is aimed to be performed again.[26]

The indication that mentions the noise, however, belongs to none of these types. It appears also in Striggio's libretto (as given by Solerti) in brackets and cursive type between Orfeo's lines: "(*Qui si fa strepito dietro alla Scena*.)"[27] Four lines below, also in brackets and cursive, it states: "(*Qui si volta*.)" The libretto has no other stage indications, besides scene changes at the ends of acts 2 and 4 (for the Underworld, not in brackets). In the score, it appears under Orfeo's blank staff, an empty space that signals the unrepresentability of such a strident event. The *continuo* is interrupted to provide a "prescriptive" indication that changes the timbral accompaniment for Orfeo—who has been singing to the violins of the ritornello and continuo—to *clavicembalo*, *viola da braccio*, and *chitarrone*. This ensemble drops out a few bars later, after Orfeo turns. The second indication, the one that properly defines the turn, "Qui si volta Orfeo, & canta al suono del Organo di legno" inverts the graphic disposition of the previous mark: the continuo line has an empty bar, while Orfeo's staff is entirely interrupted to introduce the indication. He then sings to the organ that accompanied him and Caronte in act 3, and which stays for the remainder of act 4. I will return below to this short passage, where a new timbre and a new key (F major) separate the noise from the turn.

In both cases, score and libretto, "Qui si fa" indicates a change in the temporality of the performance. *Qui*, here: where? When? Every libretto and stage indication has an orientation towards the future, a prescriptive dimension, which specifies who and what performs a specific action. It is a void in the text, a visible lack of referent, like a deictic,

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[26] As Calcagno argues, the score and the performance fulfill two different roles, hence it is unproductive to examine the score for traces of the performance.

[27] Angelo Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, vol. 3 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969), 267.

that must be filled in performance—it opens the text towards its future performance, towards its in-completion. In the score, moreover, it happens outside all meter, following a fermata in the melody and the continuo that extends for an undetermined duration. It introduces a new temporality, not given by the music and thus not determinable either by metrical or affective rhythms.

But "Qui si fa," especially when heard as an imperative, occurs within a different futurity—unlike, for example, the indications that state that Orfeo sings to the organ, which establish a strict synchronicity between the different forms of notation, making it possible to adapt gestures to musical time—as in the movements that La Musica performs during the prologue in Ronconi's production in Calcagno's analysis.[28]

Here, both the melody and the continuo are arrested, even as musical inscriptions. The fermata, and the blank spaces are not the same as a tacet or even a written out silence, as we find at the end of Orfeo's "Qual onor," as he stops singing to listen—in an anticipation of the noise to come—whether Euridice is following. The blank staff on top and the empty space below can be eternally long or infinitely short in performance. They exceed or abolish the space and the possibilities of musical representation. Perhaps the music is interrupted by the sound, but it can also be stopped earlier to make the noise more audible. Both are performance decisions—and thus interpretations—, since the inscription itself is undecidable. Thus, "Qui si fa" displaces the sound from the instant of its inscription in the text towards an instant that cannot be fixed beforehand. The noise, coming from nowhere and having no cause or origin is an event—unpredictable and unrepeatable—as much in performance as in the narrative.

This could be said of any type of musical inscription. The condition for any mark to be performed in time, within time, is that it is somehow outside time, expected but undetermined, realized in performance under the condition that its eventality is given up for its integration as music, for the subordination to all other marks. "Qui si fa" simply exacerbates the possibility that a non-musical mark becomes musical, by entering musical time, to show it as a necessity for every mark and every sound.

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[28] Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera*, 62.

For just as "Qui si fa un strepito" leaves undetermined its temporality, it also leaves the instrumental source, the agent of the noise, entirely undetermined, and thus also its timbre. "Si fa" is an impersonal expression, just as "one" in English or "on" in French: it could refer to a collective or an individual, but more literally it refers to no one. It is an impersonal fate. Similarly, a *Strepito* can be any sound, any noise: crackling, rattling, clapping or coughing, thunder or clash. Yet any decision upon it abolishes precisely the indeterminacy by which the noise is what it is in *Orfeo*. As in translation, a decision in performance to render *strepito* as a thunder, for example, involves an interpretation of the noise's cause and meaning, not only an answer to Orfeo's "Ma, che odo?" but a decision as to its role in the story, an account of the reason for Orfeo's turn.

In both Jordi Savall's 2002 production with Le Concert des Nations, as well as René Jacobs and Ronconi's 1998 production, the noise is in fact realized with a presumably historically accurate thunder sheet, a common decision that points both to Virgil and to historical practice that employs artificial sounds to supplement the musical depictions of storms and thunders in the baroque. With Virgil, it aims to retain the mythical meaning of the thunder, the intimation of catastrophe in the voice of nature that announces the imminent broken promise and thus propels the fatal turn. Ponnelle's decision, on the other hand, is no less "historically accurate": the *strepito* is rendered as a clamor, a collective gasp or a wordless exclamation uttered by the chorus which also doubles as the seventeenth-century audience. This audience knows the story all-too-well, and is unable to contain itself from gasping at Orfeo's turn—except in this production Orfeo begins to turn *before* the *strepito*. The chorus thus interrupts, rather than cause, the turn—a first turn, for Orfeo nevertheless turns after delivering the passage in A minor. For an instant, for a few bars, the ending of the story could have been different: Orfeo could have turned and not turned.

There is one more aspect of the inscription in the score that needs mentioning. If as I have been arguing, the indication "Qui si fa strepito dietro la tela" exceeds the temporality of the performance, it nevertheless defines the space of the performance as no

other indication does.[29] The libretto, as seen above, mentions instead the more conventional *Scena*, a general term indicating any performing space by default, hence a more abstract and undefined space (suggesting that the libretto was finished before the space where *L'Orfeo* was to be performed had been chosen). *Tela*, on the other hand, tells us that there was a backdrop in what we know to be—thanks to the dedication—an *angusta scena*, a narrow scene in the Ducal Palace. The backdrop not only defines the *Scena*, the space of the performance, but also, as in the dorsal turn, a space of invisibility behind it. The noise is made "behind" the backdrop and thus the action occurs "in front" of it. If the space "in front" is the present fictional time, the "behind" is outside of time, it is transcendent. The *tela*, like any theatrical background, is the interface of the *Theatrum mundi*, placing the world on stage and joining the stage with the world. Everything that happens in front of the background is for all to see: it is the spectacle, the space of what happens and of what is. But it cannot produce this space of visibility without producing its own invisibility, a space behind it that is excluded yet belongs to the performing space. Only noise, coming from behind the backdrop, can overcome this barrier, which thus becomes an acousmatic screen, although acousmaticity is not so much at stake here since, as I argued, the impersonal "si fa" and the undefined *strepito* make the noise more ambiguous than the simple separation of sound and source of acousmatic sounds. Rather, what makes this noise interesting is its spatialization, which is entirely determined by the backdrop.

DORSALITY RETURNS

Coming from outside the space of the performance, from the beyond, the noise is as transcendent as the unheard voice in Abbate's reading of "Possente spirto," and yet we hear it, as Orfeo hears it—in her terminology, it is both noumenal and phenomenal.[30]

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[29] Similar "spatial" indications are at the beginning of the score, stating that the toccata is played before rising the curtain; for the ritornello at the beginning of Act 2 and during Orfeo's "Vi Ricordo Bosque Ombrosi", stating that it was played "from within" ("fu sonato di dentro"). Another one, at the opening of Act 5, mentions two *organi di legna* which play at each side of the scene. More interesting than these examples is that there is no stage indication for the placing of Eco.

[30] And Ponnelle's interpretation of strepito as clamor given by the chorus/audience strongly complicates this undecidability.

More importantly, Orfeo hears it, and he turns back to find it. The source of the noise is unseen, hidden from the audience by the backdrop, and coming from behind Orfeo. Before he turns, the noise is already a dorsal event: an answer to Orfeo's *ma che odo* is that he hears what he cannot structurally see (see chapter 7). He hears what is hidden behind and hence is beyond him. The noise undoes the security afforded by his frontal perspective, his determination to move forward, to progress, to reach the *lieto fine*. As in Virgil's description of the turn: *victusque animi respexit*, his soul or his will vanquished—he turns. The dorsal noise reminds him not only that Euridice is behind him, but that she might not be, that what lies behind him is unknown as long as he does not turn, and the is *tela* just a dramatization, an affective device, that redoubles this structural necessity.

Still, it is impossible to say if Orfeo turns because of the noise. For one, he does not turn immediately—which would be a rather slapstick turn—but indicates instead the fateful intrusion in its aural register through a display of interiority, introduced through the acoustemological question:

Ma che odo, ohimè lasso?

S'arman forse a' miei danni

Con tal furor le Furie innamorate

Per rapirmi il mio bene ed io'1 consento ?

(Qui si volta)

But what do I hear? Ah me, alas,

perhaps to my loss there arm themselves

with such fury the enamored Furies

to take my love from me, and I let it happen?

(Now Orpheus turns)

But before turning back, Orfeo turns towards himself. The exclamation introduces subjectivity as the gap between material cause (the noise) and effect (the turn) is in fact a

repetition, or a series of repetitions. It reproduces the contrast between the ornamented style and the more direct and "natural" delivery he uses to address Caronte in act 3. When Orfeo comes back in act 4, he sings a "number" aria to his lyre: "Qual onor di te fia degno/Mia cetra onnipotente." After three strophes of light music and joyful celebration, in rhymed settenari (ABAB) over a walking bass in G major separated by violin ritornelli, he interrupts this diegetic song to ask himself: "But while I sing, ah me, who can assure me /that she follows me? /Ah me, who hides from me /the sweet light of her beloved eyes?" (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Ohimè, in G minor. Silence. *Ohimè*, in E major. The same expressive *contrapposto* of *L'Euridice* here sounds like an echo, a repetition, of the laments he uttered before recovering Euridice. There is a kind of rhythm articulated by the sequence of *contrapposti*—from the lightness of "Qual honor" to the introspective passage, which is introduced by juxtaposing G major and G minor and then with E major—that prepares the audience for what Orfeo cannot be prepared for. Orfeo speculates that Plutone is spurred by envy and decides, as he regains his G major, that "What Plutone forbids, Love commands/The more powerful spirit/that overcomes men and gods I must obey." He is ready to turn backwards, not because of doubt or indecision, nor out of an excess of love, but by a sheer misrecognition—and some *hubris*. He sees Plutone's mercy as envy. He sees the prohibition not as the reinstauration of law but as the selfish act of a challenged sovereign (and in this sense he is right, as I suggested above). But he fails to see—and this is the true misrecognition—that transgressing the law here amounts to confirming it. In obeying to one god he fulfills the other's (the Other's) command.

te   felice a pieno Vedrò l'amato   volto E nel candido   feno   De la mia Donn'oggi fa-

rò   raccolto Ma mētre io canto   oi   mè   chi m'afficura   Ch'ella mi fegua

ohimè·   chi mi nafconde   De l'amate   pu   pilleil· dolce   lame?

The noise leaves him singing, literally, off key: his *Ma che odo* outlines an F major triad—Plutone's characteristic tonality since *L'Euridice*. He follows with another *Ohimè lasso,* again over E major, with a poignant diminished fourth (D-G#) that resolves one bar later into A minor (Proserpina's key in *L'Euridice*; in *L'Orfeo* she sings in G dorian), only to return again to F through G major. All the important tonalities by which *L'Orfeo* repeats *L'Euridice* occur in a few bars, framed by silence, blank spaces and empty bars; interrupted by a noise coming from behind; and a turn backwards—which happens over another silence of undetermined duration. In yet another striking tonal effect, the second silence is followed by G dorian (changing to the *mollis* hexachord) accompanied by the wood organ, thus returning to the affective, infernal soundscape of act 3. If we understand the distribution of tonal regions among characters through their reference to *L'Euridice* to be one of the devices for musical interiority that characterize

the Rinuccini-influenced style, as opposed to the superficial style of Marinism, as Tomlinson does, then we would have to hear this fragment as the instant in which Orfeo's interiority shatters into a tonal disorientation that leads him to the key of his adversary (his supporter, Proserpina), a mimetic identification with the Other, in this case a regressive one, turning back to face the sovereign, returning to his original place in front of him.

In his confusion, Orfeo also seems to look forward. He imagines that the Furies—the maidservants of Necessity or Fate—are stealing Euridice from him, hence fulfilling the transgression that he himself is just about to realize. Imagining the enamoured Furies, *le furie l'innamorate*, as the ones who break the law—and are hence the cause of the noise—blaming them for the imminent transgression of the law they are supposed to preserve, Orfeo anticipates—visualizing, bringing about—his own death: the Maenads, angry at Orpheus for scorning them but in fact in love with him, are metonymically called Erinys—the Latinized Greek name for the Furies—in Ovid's telling as they begin to throw rocks at the bard at the end of the myth before dismembering him. (They were also said to weep for the first time at Orpheus's song.)

> alterius telum lapis est, qui missus in ipso
>
> aere concentu victus vocisque lyraeque est
>
> ac veluti supplex pro tam furialibus ausis
>
> ante pedes iacuit. sed enim temeraria crescent
>
> bella modusque abiit insanaque regnat Erinys; (*Met*. 11.10-14)

> Another threw a stone, which, even as it flew through the air, was overcome by the sweet sound of voice and lyre, and fell at his feet as if t'would ask forgiveness for its furious attempt. But still the assault waxed reckless: their passion knew no bounds; mad Fury reigned.

And in the Bacchic ending, the Maenads are filled with the "divine fury" (*divino furore*) of Lyaeus (Dionysus):

Euhoè padre Lieo

Bassareo

Te chiamiam con chiari accenti,

Euhoè liete e ridenti

Te lodiam padre Leneo

Hor ch'abbiam colmo il core

Del tuo divin furore.

Evoe! Father Lyæus,   Bassareus,

we call on you with clear voices,

Evoe! Happy and laughing

we praise you, father Lenæus,

now that we have our hearts filled

with your divine fury.

We are close to Žižek and Theweleit's interpretation of *L'Orfeo*, according to which its central theme is sublimation tied to the death drive: Euridice is immortalized in the stars and in Orfeo's lyre, to such an extent that Orfeo turns in order to lose her and attain sublimation as an artist. In Theweleit's version, Orfeo turns because he hears the noise as a phantastic clapping to his performance; in Žižek's, because Euridice sacrifices herself: she is the noise, she makes him turn back. This seems to me a strange inversion of the "normal" order of things, since the drives are primary, while sublimation is simply a secondary formation, a displacement of the investments that result from the repression of the death drive. Moreover, why should Orfeo's death drive produce Euridice's death? But this inversion shows that Žižek's interpretation is too forward-gazing: for him Euridice is a figure of Wagner's characters, the suffering, self-sacrificing bourgeois woman, who,

> is aware of the fact that, by means of her suffering which remains invisible to the
> public eye, of her renunciation for the beloved man and/or her renunciation to him
> (the two are always dialectically interconnected, since, in the fantasmatic logic of

the Western ideology of love, it is for the sake of her man that the woman must renounce him), she rendered possible man's redemption, his public social triumph - like Traviata who abandons her lover and thus enables his reintegration into the social order.[31]

Perhaps this reading anticipates too much of bourgeois opera, while failing to point out a more specific aspect of *L'Orfeo* in the context of courtly sovereignty, and is problematic too since it goes on to suggest, along the well-trodden mimetological paths of Rousseau and Schopenhauer, that the sublimation occurs in early Music will soon be impossible the minute music discards its subservience to speech and begins to speak for itself.

What is clear is that the noise and Orfeo's evocation of the Furies (we could suggest that he either imagines the noise, or that he freely associates a completely unrelated event with the Furies) is a hint that his unconscious motivation is the death drive, he seeks it by descending into the underworld in search of Euridice, and again repeats it when looking back, when seeking to see her, to identify with her in her death. This is what Orfeo's narcissism seeks in his aim to introject Euridice, not her as an Other, but as the radical other, as death.

Incidentally, too, the style in which Orfeo's line is delivered, a fast, syllabic declamation in repeated eight notes that ascends through a tritone (B-F) seems to anticipate the *stile concitato*, especially with the mention of furor, fury, and violence—not to mention misogyny, the defining affect of the style developed in the *Madrigali guerreri e amorosi*, as Suzanne Cusick shows.[32] As Monteverdi would write later, in his failed attempt to write the first "mad scene," musical madness was best accomplished by

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[31] Žižek, "The Ridiculous Excess of Mercy."

[32] Suzanne Cusick, "'Indarno chiedi' Clorinda and the Interpretation of Monteverdi's Combattimento," in Cypess, Glixon, and Link, *Word, Image, and Song*, 1:130. "Gossip, erotica, and the male spy in Alessandro Striggio's *Il cicalamento delle donne al bucato* (1567)," in Todd Michael Borgerding, *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jean Toscan, *Le carnaval du langage: le lexique érotique des poètes de l'équivoque de Burchiello à Marino (XV-XVIIe siècles* (Lille: Atelier reproduction des thèses Université de Lille III, 1981). Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century readings of Orpheus as a signifier for homosexuality, as well as the many ways of censoring or indirectly alluding to it are well documented in Ellen T. Harris, *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

imitating "the single word rather than the sense of the phrase."[33] Framed between noise and silence, the first opera already contained the first "mad scene," which Monteverdi wrote in advance of himself. In this respect, then, this passage is paradigmatic of McClary's contention that Monteverdi's depiction of Orfeo precipitated "a crisis that perhaps influenced both its own reception and subsequent operatic conventions. While sexuality and madness remain favorite themes of music drama, they prove extremely problematic when enacted by male characters."[34]

In this interpretation, Orfeo's own response to "*Ma che odo?*," the noise is the sound of a mounting series of transgressions: the imagined transgression of the pact by the jealous Furies when stealing Euridice from him; the actual transgression he commits by turning back, and finally the symbolic transgression of patriarchal, heteronormative laws which the original myth inevitably evokes and represses.[35] One could suggest, along Cusick's reading of the *Combattimento*, that Plutone's condition, and Orfeo's transgression, are in fact to be read as allegorical regulations on same-sex love—hence the prominent function of the death drive. Thus, in producing a crisis of representations of sexuality *L'Orfeo* also turns back to the issues of patriarchal filiation in which we found *Signor &c*. (Part II).

To turn, as Sarah Ahmed notes, is to acquire or retake an orientation, one that specifies one's place in relation to objects in the sense of the direction one takes towards them.[36] Just as frontality already implies a turn and a dorsal invisibility, it also implies an

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[33] Claudio Monteverdi and Domenico De' Paoli, *Lettere, dediche, e prefazioni* (Roma: De Santis, 1973), 244; translation in Gary Tomlinson, "Monteverdi's 'Via Naturale Alla Immitatione,'" *JAMS* (34: 1, 1981), 102. See also Tomlinson, "Twice Bitten, Thrice Shy: Monteverdi's 'finta' 'Finta pazza'" *JAMS* (36:2, 1982) 303-311. I elaborate on these texts in the introduction and chapter 4.

[34] Susan McClary, "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 3 (1989): 203–33.

[35] One could find it, with Cusick's "carnivalesque" hearings, in Poliziano's version: "Io te la rendo, ma con queste leggi: che la ti segua per la ceca via." As Christina Fuhrmann shows, based on Jean Toscan's taxonomy of seventeenth-century sexual double entendres, in carnivalesque hearings "seguire" (to follow) also meant "to possess in sodomy," while "via" could mean either sexual orifice, which the adjective "ceca" could specify as referring to the anus. Christina Fuhrmann, "Gossip, *Erotica*, and the Male Spy in Alessandro Striggio's *Il Cicalamento Delle Done Al Bucato* (1567)," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, ed. Todd Michael Borgerding (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[36] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), 21.

orientation that is given from behind, just as hailing in interpellation. In a patriarchal, heteronormative context, this orientation is naturalized in terms of straightness, of regularized directionalities between subjects of opposite sexes, where one's sex is aligned with one's desire, turned towards the other sex, one that can be argued to structure phenomenological space in general, and even an ontological constitution: "The line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it 'is not' and what it 'is not' then confirms what it "is."[37]

What is more, this directionality determines or gets attached to values, such as decent, conventional, direct, and honest.[38] Plutone's injunction, "not to turn back," can be heard as a statement of the eternal laws of nature, of the mortality of men, but also as the naturalized laws of society: do not turn back, to not turn away from the straight line, from the values of rectitude, honor, and especially—Apollo tells us in his final speech—self-control. In the context of patriarchal nobility, these values are not exclusively moral but are the very means of regulating and enforcing the social order, and especially of maintaining political power—of ensuring the permanence of the Gonzaga dynasty in Mantua and especially Habsburg dominion in the north of Italy.

That the tension between patriarchal filiation and homoerotic desire is a tension in *L'Orfeo* should be obvious through both endings of the opera, which tacitly suppress—or rather, repress—Orfeo's relinquishing of women after the loss of Euridice. How can we tell what Orfeo's orientation is before he turns? Should we assume, with the myth, that Orfeo turns away from women *after* he loses Euridice, as if after a trauma that he thus repeats? Or perhaps suggest, as is often done, that it is the result of a melancholy turned into narcissism? Answering this will require not a small deal of hermeneutics and guessing, and I must turn towards a conclusion.

IN-CONCLUSION

> Allegory goes away empty-handed. Evil as such, which it cherished as enduring profundity, exists only in allegory, is nothing

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[37] Idem., 71.
[38] Idem., 70.

other than allegory, and means something
different than what it is. It means precisely the
non-existence of what it presents.[39]

Here, through the dorsal turn, embodied in Orfeo, we return to the question that opened
this reflection on turns, spectacle, and sovereignty. Why, again, would these courts spend
so many resources in producing lavish and costly spectacles, in producing libretti,
descriptions, and other memorabilia employing elaborate allegorical constructions that
not even the most learned of their humanists could entirely explicate (and not because of
a lack of knowledge, as we have seen)? What did these performances offer and
accomplish such that they would be iterated with such insistence? What was so potent in
the mimetologies that organized not only the composition of these works but also the
entire humanist framework that they mobilized? But also what satisfaction did they
derive from gathering to watch these spectacles? As should be clear from my approach in
the previous chapters, these questions are not simply antiquarian nor motivated by a
desire to revive them—to speak with the dead, as in Greenblat's famous pronunciation.

Especially since I do not presuppose that these mimetologies and what they
mobilize have ceased to have any effectivity in the present. Where the New Historicism
focuses in shattering the aura of autonomy that these works have attained in our times by
reconstructing the historical context in which they were produced and reconnecting the
works within them, I have sought to question the idea that these structures need to be
reconstructed at all. For I consider them to be everywhere present today. In fact, I suspect
that the shattering of their aura is rather a displacement of the same aura to history, to the
creation of the "historical past," which keeps the historian safe in his own present with
the satisfaction that the oppressive structures of the past have been replaced with
enlightened, universal rationality and democracy, one that sees itself as a form of
conjuring or exorcising away the ghosts of the past. Literary criticism, as Peggy Kamuf
shows, sets itself as a "strictly filial" inheritor that appropriates the ghost's power as the

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[39] Benjamin, *Origin of Baroque Tragic Drama*, 233.

power of imagination that can conjure up the ghosts' realities in order to make them disappear. This power of intelligence, besides being thoroughly romantic is, Kamuf says, a specular structure.[40] Greenblatt, that is, leaves unquestioned the King's statement in *Hamlet* that he is "thy Father's Spirit," he accepts their identity at face value, in a statement that reassures the scholar that "the father is indeed dead and buried, hence his son need not fear the spirit that he sees, or reads, before him; not only need he not fear it, but it is a sign of his own power, the power of his own imagination, the fearsome father is not a castrating agent but an agent of his own excitement.[41]" Against this security, Kamuf recalls Derrida's own reading of the scene in *Specters of Marx*, where Derrida emphasizes "the visor effect," according to which we cannot see the face of the ghost that speaks to us from history. We cannot be sure that the one who says "I am thy Father's spirit" is who he says he is. We have to take him at his word. For Derrida, this determines the law of inheritance: we do not know what we receive from history, and we cannot presume to be the rightful inheritors of any specific lineage or tradition which is thus entrusted to us. For Kamuf, then, history consists in the possibility of the becoming-historical of that of which one can have no knowledge until it happens (and, we might add, this "happening" will always be undecidable). Scholarship refuses to think history when it presumes and assumes all-too-well what it is looking at, a specular gesture that consists, Kamuf writes, in nothing other than raising an apotropaic mirror that is "put in place as a protection against the *trope* of plurality, against the more than one but also the other than one."[42]

This is somewhat different in the case of music history. Even if *L'Orfeo* ends with the death of the singer—both endings, for Orfeo's "ascent" to heaven is just a slightly more sublimated version of it—musicologists seek to preserve his voice while doing away with the power structures and values that enabled him to sing. Orpheus' disembodied head, in Abbate's work, expresses just that (see second excursus). In the case of more historicist approaches, the attempt is also to conjure up the power structures

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[40] Peggy Kamuf, "The Ghost of Critique and Deconstruction," in *Deconstruction: A Reader*, ed. Martin McQuillan (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2001), 205.
[41] Idem., 206.
[42] Idem., 207.

to explain them away, putting them out of sight so that their beautiful voices can be heard again. The only way of maintaining the illusion and enchantment of music is by thoroughly outlining the ideological structures that music helps supports, with the presumed conclusion that one must be out of ideology in order to be able to see its contours (Martha Feldman's approach is a good example). What the dorsal turn demonstrates, however, is that wherever we turn, there we carry the blind spot from which we are always already hailed. There is no pure frontality. The dorsal turn and the visor effect have something in common: they both play on the constitutive difference of vision and hearing, questioning the possibility of a pure eidetic knowledge that sees what is true in its immediacy, and emphasizing the non-coincidence of the voice (or the noise) with its source, such that any voice can come from any place. All we know is this finitude, which turns into a principle for historiography: history is what comes up unexpectedly and makes us turn.

On the other hand, the mimetologies seem to have changed little: everywhere they repeat the same inversions of "Platonism," seeking to abandon one pervasive form for another which is just as pervasive. They reveal as much as what they conceal, but precisely not in terms of truth.

I have showed how there is a general process by which originals, paradigms, models, or laws are created through repetitions, returns, inversions, and turns. What turns, returns, and is repeated in these iterations are always particulars, purely mundane and material things that have no priority over the others. Yet, when taken up and carried along as examples, they become exemplars, indeed paradigms, which organize and reorganize the context from where they are culled. They do not have any more universality than the others, or more explanatory power; yet they stand in for the totality. It is quite a magical effect.

This process seems to be as common in the discussions of the humanists as it is in the latest theories of performance, ideology, or historiography (which are the disciplines I have mostly engaged with). The break between seventeenth-century mimetologies and

our own does not seem more radical than the continuity that the humanists had the confidence to suppose between them and the ancients, such that they could in fact aim to become like them. It might be an effect of what I called Machiavelli's mimetology of the eternal return: events repeat themselves, it is only because subjects do not return that history is not purely cyclical.

The dorsal turn would say: what returns is the turn, and the subject is constituted there where he turns. This is the event.

What this means is that, at the risk of conjuring up eternal structures, mimetologies will not disappear. This is not to say that they are outside of time or history, that they have some self-identity in a Platonic world of ideas. Rather, that, as I have just shown, that they don't stop repeating themselves. They will continue to return for as long as we keep using the same languages, texts, and philosophies, listen to the same music and look at the same images. There is no jumping out of mimetology. I hope to have showed that narratives of development, discontinuity or emancipation simply replace one mimetology with a different one that serves a better purpose (to someone). It is this gap between a narrative and its function that has made me grown suspicious of them. In fact, it is no less fanciful to propose that one or all mimetologies will disappear, or that we will return to this or that mimetology which seems better than the one we currently live in and which, as it becomes apparent, has been created through the negative mirroring of the current state (examples of this are Foucault's epistemes and, especially, Attali's *orders*).

But how does this affirmation of the permanence of mimetologies square up with the idea that history is the arrival of the unexpected? Does not this presume that mimetology will determine the shape of what will arrive, thus making it entirely predictable? Recall Kamuf's characterization of the New Historicist's gesture: raising an apotropaic mirror that protects one from the arrival of the "more than one but also other than one." The apotropaic function and the mirror have been familiar to us since Part I, in fact since one of the first extant mentions of the word mimesis and one of the first (Greek) accounts of the origin of music: Pindar's *Pythian 12*, which speaks of the art, or *technē* which Athena invented by weaving together the dirge of the Gorgons,

so that she might imitate (*mimesthai*) with instruments the echoing wail

that was forced from the gnashing jaws of Euryale.[43]

Athena's *technē* was an apotropaic (as was the likeness of Medusa that she carried in her shield and which the Romans adopted). Imitating the gorgon's cry, the art of weaving together a melody with every sound was the protection that she gave mortals against the monster (against what shows itself, what appears as an omen). Plato reproduced the gesture, banishing *mousikē* and using a mirror to reduce mimesis into a simple trick. Whatever was threatening to Plato—disorder, madness, "hysteria," femininity—it was a matter of keeping it under control. Mimetologies are such attempts to fend off the unknown, to reduce difference into sameness and plurality into unity. They have an immunitary function and we have incorporated them everywhere to the point of making them invisible (we have seen often that mimesis is a matter of contagion). But at the same time, as per the structure of the immunitary, these modes of protection have become coextensive with our ideas of sovereignty, power, and life. The task of outlining mimetologies is not to conjure anything away, but to make these apotropaic gestures visible and to underline the conditions of finitude and vulnerability that the modern ideologies and metaphysics everywhere seek to repress. Being open to the unexpected is a matter of constant vigilance, vigilance of one's own immunitary practices, denegations, and evasions.

What the dorsal turn and the visor effect teach us, in the end, is that understanding how these inescapable structures operate is, if not the only possibility, at least the necessary condition for surviving in a time when the very ideas of openness and difference seem to be in crisis. The affirmation of difference as such has been transformed into a forceful tool of a pervasive neoliberalism which thrives on producing fragmentation and disempowerment on the name of values such as individuality, originality, and all the epithets of the entrepreneur. Difference has been integrated seamlessly into a conception of sovereignty based on the liberal ideology that presents

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[43] Pindar. *Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes,* (Trans. William H Race, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Translation modified after Steiner, "The Gorgon's Lament," 206.

freedom and ownership of oneself as the ultimate values while reducing individuals to the status of bare life.

In this light, the rigorous theoretical work done in the past decades, for which mimesis as simulacrum was central, seems to be in a dangerous complicity with the spread of neoliberalism. The limitations of postmodern simulacrum are many, and I hope that this account mimetology might serve to outline them as such. But it is all the more important to resist the straightforward assimilation of these discourses to the form they have been taken in—and transformed—by neoliberalism. This too is a consequence of iterability. Just as it is possible for ultra-right demagogues in Colombia to adopt the language of opposition and civil resistance, nothing keeps neoliberalism (nothing, it seems) from taking up the words and concepts that have been forged precisely in the name of what opposes it. Nothing keeps it, either, from also producing bodies that are disempowered, fragile, and exposed, and setting them against each other.

As an immigrant in a nation that has produced the most contradictory (the best and the worst, but there's no count on either) statements on difference and alterity, an immigrant however in what I still think are the best possible conditions, I wake up every day (especially when trying to bring this dissertation to a close) to read about millions of forced displacements, of the radical uprooting of entire communities which are expelled from wherever they are and placed on a drift with no seeming end. Only to be received here and in Europe with the most vicious xenophobia (which is worse than no reception at all). And, in the starkest contradiction, the people that have become more vocal in their rejection of difference are precisely those that have paid the highest price for the totalization of neoliberalism. Two equally disempowered and fragile groups are then set against each other on account of a "difference" that is reduced to identity (of religion and race). That the same ideology that has "coopted" difference as one of its commercial war-horses is also bringing back a discourse against difference is enough to see that we are not, and will not, be done with a thinking of difference. A practice of identifying mimetologies—mechanisms of defense against alterity—is at least a form of keeping this thought alive.

These are some of my conclusions (and they are offered here as an interlude; I return to *L'Orfeo* and history below). Others might follow and others have been left out. I have always found it problematic to reach conclusions, to settle the matter. Perhaps this is what has attracted me to deconstruction and what has motivated me to return to a problem and a set of texts and works that will never be closed. What I have learned from this practice is that returning to texts, places, songs, is not only to keep them alive but to make them do something they never did before, to open and transform themselves and transform anything that comes near them. In this sense, they are new: they incomplete themselves every time. It is this condition that enables deconstruction and that keeps me coming back to them, returning to their side—as Orpheus keeps coming back, as he keeps turning, knowing that he will lose what he seeks—and yet keep turning, hoping they will incomplete me as well: this is why deconstruction is love.

SIC ERAT IN FATIS (THUS IT WAS FATED)[44]

Assuming, then, that there is an allegorical identification between Orfeo and Prince Francesco, *L'Orfeo*, and recalling the perspectival structure of *L'Euridice* in which the sovereign is only put on stage the better to be advised by his subordinates, then we can return to the "moral" of the story in the Apollonian ending. As in *L'Euridice*, it can be read as a stern reminder to the Prince—"now listen to me"—of his role in preserving the Gonzaga dynasty and clearly stating what the values of a true noble should be in terms that echo Machiavelli's advice to the Prince: that above all he must show himself as being both generous and stern—in control of his emotions—in order to gain "praise."

> Apollo (descende in una nuvola cantando)
> Perchè a lo sdegno ed al dolor in preda
> Così ti doni o figlio?
> Non è, non è consiglio
> Di generoso petto

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[44] Pieter Paul Rubens, mourning the fall of Mantua to Emperor Ferdinand II in 1630. Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627," 365.

Servir al proprio affetto;

Quinci biasmo e periglio

Già sovrastar ti veggio,

Onde movo dal ciel per darti aita.

Or tu m'ascolta e n'avrai lode e vita.

Apollo (descending on a cloud, singing)

Why to anger and grief in prey

do you so give yourself, O son?

It is not, it is not the counsel

of a generous heart

to serve its own feelings.

Since with reproach and danger

already I see you overcome,

I come from heaven to give you aid.

Now listen to me and you shall have praise and life.

Thus heard, *L'Orfeo* seems to be uncannily prophetic: the Gonzaga dynasty was entering a period of intense crisis, not only because of the European wide conflicts that would escalate into the Thirty Years' War, but more locally since, as Susan Parisi has shown in her fascinating study of the Mantuan court, Duke Vincenzo was less Apollonian than the opera would like us to believe. Having inherited sovereignty of Mantua and Monferrat at age twenty-five he lived at the end of a relatively prosperous and peaceful time, during which his frugal father Gugielmo had managed to amass a considerable fortune. Unlike his father, however, Vincenzo quickly spent the fortune and debt quickly rose. Parisi notes imprudent economic decisions such as lavish celebrations for his coronation and decreasing the tariff on wine—which was the second largest source of income for the city-state. He had four illegitimate children and kept a mistress, Agnes di Argotta, Marchesa of Grana, in the Palazzo del Tè. More problematic was Vincenzo's fondness of warfare, which led him into several careless military endeavors in Hungary and Turkey,

and his conspicuous gambling problem: he lost 50,000 ducats in Florence in 1598 and 100,000 in Genoa in 1607. In addition, he was so fond of traveling and hunting and fishing (in the company of Alfonso II d'Este), that he was constantly absent from his duties at court. A 1608 letter by the Venetian Francesco Morosini, quoted by Parisi, in fact reads as the very opposite of Apollo's admonishing to Orfeo:

> The duke, now forty-six years old, is not in the best of health, in fact, he has many light illnesses which often plague him, made worse by the lack of order in his life and by his continued conviction that he will nevertheless keep doing what gives him pleasure and enjoyment, such that, for good reason, what the Grand Duke of Tuscany has said is quite right: that his youth has never ended, because he has not yet put an end to any of the pleasures and delights of his earlier years.[45]

He seems as little Apollonian, then, as he looks Machiavellian. Another of his unreasonable economic expenditures was building a citadel and military garrison for the cost of one million ducats in Casadel, Monferrato to protect it from Spanish and Savoyard interest—a decision Parisi declares to have been "a serious error in political and economic judgment."[46] The Venetian ambassador to Mantua said that it had not served to protect the territories but had rather increased the envy of foreign states: in fact, the Savoyard had a first attempt at taking the castle in 1613. The ambassador was simply repeating Machiavelli, who had warned about such endeavors in chapter XX of *The Prince*—his example was the Sforza castle in Milan—warning they are often more harmful than productive. As always, it depends on the circumstances: "if a ruler is more afraid of his own subjects than of foreigners, he should build fortresses; but a ruler who is more afraid of foreigners than his own subjects should not build them."[47] Instead of fortresses, Machiavelli advises, the ruler should focus in fending off hatred from their own people, since no fortress can protect him from an uprising: "Hence, the best fortress

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[45] Ibid., 117.
[46] Ibid., 114.
[47] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 75.

a ruler can have is not to be hated by the people."[48] This seems to have been the only thing in which Vincenzo followed Machiavellian as well as Apollonian advice. He was admired because of his good nature and compassion for others, and his spending, which after all remained within the principality, contributed to his popularity—or, as in the more abstract terms of chapter 5, produced his value as noble by putting in circulation his economic and symbolic capital instead of accumulating it. Parisi mentions an anonymous chronicler who states that Vincenzo's "long tenure in office also endeared him to his subjects who, by the early 1600s, began to grow accustomed to his human faults and to accept them—even to hold them dear."[49]

As we know, Vincenzo made music and spectacle a central part of his economic performance of nobility, aiming to recruit the best musicians in Europe—including Monteverdi—and engaging in the courtly agonistic *emulatio* of Florentine spectacle, his most lavish event being the performance of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* in 1598 and the celebrations for Prince Francesco's marriage to Margherita, daughter of Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy, in 1608, which featured Guarini's *Idropica* with a prologue by Monteverdi and *intermedi* by Gabriele Chiabrera, along with the Rinuccini-Monteverdi collaborations *Arianna* and *Balletto delle ingrate*. These celebrations, Parisi notes, where over four times as expensive as the Medici weddings of 1600 and 1608.[50] Thus, the carnival of 1607 when *L'Orfeo* was premiered and the wedding events of 1608 were to be the last of the great spectacles produced by Vincenzo. The cost of these events and other wedding spending meant that in the next few years, such productions declined. In 1610 the Po overflowed, causing such illnesses, deaths, and damage, that Leonora wrote to Francesco—who was enjoying carnival in Turin—that "if you were here it would almost seem to you as if it were not carnival; for the misfortunes that happened around here this year have taken away everyone's desire to indulge in carnival amusements and

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627," 114.
[50] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 144.

pastimes."[51] Gone were the times of *allegrezza*. Orfeo's turn, in 1607, would have been a prophetic event, anticipating the crisis to come.

Leonora and Vincenzo died two years later, one month apart, leaving Prince Francesco in charge. Parisi notes that he took it upon himself to set aright the court finances after decades of spending by his father. The strict measures he took in correcting Vincenzo's excess—including the dismissal of the artists and personalities then employed at court, including Monteverdi—and a more circumspect personality, earned him a negative reputation among his people, used as they were to the lavish personality and spending of Vincenzo. But the wars were coming. In 1611 the equally warlike Duke of Parma seized in territories in Parma by accusing the landowners of plotting with Vincenzo Gonzaga against him. Francesco sought to defend his father's honor by diplomatic means, but was finally forced to move troops in preparation for war, a move that was countered by Parma. The Spanish king intervened and the troops retired. The feud was never solved, and in 1612 Francesco's children, Princess Leonora and Prince Lodovico—heir to the throne—died. Francesco followed them a year later, leaving no male heir to the throne.

Francesco's brother Cardinal Ferdinando arrived in haste as Duke Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy sought to claim succession rights for Mantua through Princess Maria—then aged three—and Francesco's widow Margherita. This is where the patrilineal descent allegorized in *L'Orfeo*, if nothing else, was to help the Gonzaga, for the Savoyan scheme was thwarted. Thus, Duke Emanuele I changed his approach and invaded Monferrat—which had been Savoy territory in the fourteenth century—and Nice, thus bringing Spain into the conflict. The Spanish army interceded and five years later, an international court declared Monferrat to be rightfully under Mantuan rule.[52] This is where, in another turn, patrilineal descent was to become more problematic. Ferdinando transferred his cardinalate to his brother Vincenzo II and married Caterina de' Medici,

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[51] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627," 151.
[52] Ibid., 275.

but Vincenzo II secretly married his distant relative, Isabella di Noevellara, and was stripped of the cardinalate. Both couples failed to produce male heirs.

Vincenzo II died in 1627, designating as his successor a member of the French side of the family, Carlo I Gonzaga of Nevers-Rethel and married Maria Gonzaga to Carlo's son, Carlo II. Both Habsburg Spain and Savoy saw this as an incorporation of Mantua to France, and together invaded Monferrat and laid siege to Casale, while advancing Ferrante II Gonzaga, Duke of Guasalla, as the legitimate heir (since the Savoy effort to advance Maria had failed). France sent troops to defend Mantua, and Emperor Ferdinand II intervened, declaring himself in control of the principate until the succession was defined—thus making the internal conflict an official theater of the Thirty Years' War. The Emperor's troops sieged Mantua in 1629, the same year as the plague broke, and the city fell in 1630. All of this could have been avoided if Maria Gonzaga had been recognized as rightful inheritor: even if Mantua defended patrilineal descent, Monferrat had been annexed through marriage, and thus was inheritable by women. As Rubens put it, Emperor Ferdinand's decision to negate her the privilege was a truly sovereign decision: "In fact, I see here no grounds for exclusion, unless *sit pro ratione voluntas* (it be will instead of reason)."[53] In the end, it was an perverse kind of *deus ex machina* that restored peace in Mantua: as the papacy mediated to end the conflicts, King Gustavus Adolphus was invading the German states, forcing Emperor Ferdinand to abandon his three-day control of Mantua and return to the north.

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[53] Quoted in ibid., 364.

Epilogue

Harmonia Mundi: Music, Mimesis, and Cosmopolitics in Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis* (1650)

The "Lion of the North" began his attack on Germany with the disembark of a small army in Pomerania, in 1630. Or at least it seemed small to Emperor Ferdinand II of Austria, until he realized he would not be able to move his troops across the continent, from Mantua to the north, in time to offer any resistance.[1] To be sure, King Gustavus Adolphus was only attempting to fend off Habsburg attempts to control commerce in the Baltic, and his first move only led him as far as the Prussian coast—like the emperor, he could not foresee the coming events. It was persuasion (and money) from the French— who, to Richelieu's regret, had agreed not to directly attack the Empire after the Mantuan war—which motivated him to continue moving south.[2] But Ferdinand II and his army's commander, Tilly, did not expect that Protestant Brandenburg and Saxony would also support Gustavus. And so, when attempting to defend Breitenfeld in 1631, the Imperialists were not only tired and outnumbered, but they could not compete with the Swedes' now famous military technique. Tilly's army was defeated in two hours, with two-thirds of the troops captured or killed. As Gustavus Adolphus advanced at full tilt towards the south, Franconians—both Catholic and Protestant—preferred to flee the king or to be forced to join him—in either case, the consequences seemed similar.[3] No one was prepared for the attack. Finding virtually no opposition, the king subjugated the entire region in two weeks.

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[1] Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (Routledge, 2006), 103.

[2] Ibid., 109–11.

[3] After the Lutheran Margrave Christian of Brandenburg-Kulmach surrendered and swore allegiance to Gustavus, the king's troops proceeded to sack the town. "When the peasants attempted to drive out the intruders, in November 1632, they were massacred: a chronicler who visited the site of the peasants' last stand was appalled to find the vineyards and fields red with blood, with corpses scattered in bizarre positions over a three-mile radius. Meanwhile, the margrave locked himself in his only defensible castle, the Plassenburg, and waited for the storm to subside. Such were the consequences for the former "neutrals" of Sweden's victory at Breitenfeld." Ibid., 114.

In the Catholic town of Würzburg—whose army of 1700 surrendered before the Lion's arrival—it seemed as if the world had been turned upside down.[4] But there, a thirty-year old priest teaching mathematics and Syriac at the Jesuit university after the recent defense of his dissertation on magnetism, saw the sack of the town six months before it happened:

> In 1631, when the whole of Germany was subject to the emperor, and the Catholics were enjoying the most profound peace, when no one had the slightest idea that the enemy [Haereticorum] could so easily raise his head again, I was in the middle of one night disturbed in my sleep by an unusual noise and I saw my window lit up by a sort of twilight glow. I promptly slipped out of bed to find out what the unusual glow meant. I could clearly observe that the entire spacious courtyard of the college was filled with horses and armed men drawn up in rank and file. Gripped by fear, I hurried to the adjoining cubicles.
>
> On finding everyone sound asleep, I thought I had been deceived in the depths of my own sleep. I sought out yet again my window. But the same spectacle was still there. Again I hastened away to summon witnesses for what I had seen, but I soon discovered that the vision had vanished. During the days which followed I was tortured by such intense mental agony that I could not bear to stay anywhere in one place and ran to and fro as if mad.
>
> I pictured to myself the casualties which would ensue with such graphic certainty that I could see them depicted as if in a mirror. Many, noticing my distress, asked me what was bothering me so much, among others my superior. I told him.
>
> 'Father let us pray to God, for I can sense that great disaster is impending not only for our college but also for Franconia and the whole of Germany. Reverend Father, give orders for the valuables in our church to be put somewhere safe. The new building too, which Your Reverence has begun, will not be completed'.[5]

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[4] "Ecce novi et repentini bellorum turbines omnia susque deque verterunt." Athanasius Kircher and H. A. Langenmantel, *Vita. Fasciculus Epistolarum,* (Augsburg: S. Utzschneider, 1684), 38.

[5] The majority of the information we have about Kircher's early years is given in his autobiography, transcribed in Athanasius Kircher and Giunia Totaro, *L'autobiographie d'Athanasius Kircher* (Peter Lang, 2009); English translation in John Edward Fletcher, *A Study of the Life and Works of Athanasius Kircher,*

This prophecy, however, only met with laughter, so that when Gustavus Adolphus took the city in October 1631, leaving it without food, garrison, or defense, "each and every person threw together what he owned and tried to save his life by fleeing." The Jesuits fled first, dissolving the entire college within twenty-four hours, having heard the enemy would spare no Jesuits.[6] This would have been the third time that the immortal Kircher escaped from enraged Protestants, the first having been in 1622, when "the heretical bishop of Halberstadt," a.k.a "The Mad Christian," self-declared mortal enemy of the Jesuits, invaded Westphalia and eventually attacked the city of Paderborn, where Kircher was enrolled at the Jesuit University. Escaping to Cologne, Kircher finished his studies, before being transferred to Heiligenstadt.[7] Enroute he was attacked—second time—by "Lutheran horsemen," probably the remnants of Christian's army after their defeat to Tilly.[8] After threatening to kill him Kircher was released in a fit of tears. As a member of the order of Jesus's soldiers, Kircher's place seemed to be among books (he would be denied his request join missions to North Africa and China). Gustavus Adolphus was killed in 1632, but since "everything in Germany had been overturned and there was no hope at all of returning," Kircher was sent to France.

He was not to remain there long. The already famous priest was appointed as mathematician to replace Kepler at the imperial court in Vienna, but he never filled the post. He embarked from Marseilles, was shipwrecked on his way to Genoa, and landed eventually in Civitavecchia. Having lost his money and provisions, he set out to Rome instead, where none other than Pope Urban VIII and his nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, awaited him. In Avignon, Kircher had met parliament senator Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc, a learned nobleman who shared an interest in ancient languages. When Kircher was summoned to Vienna, Pereisc interceded, contacting Barberini to arrange for

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"Germanus Incredibilis": With a Selection of His Unpublished Correspondence and an Annotated Translation of His Autobiography. (BRILL, 2011). For a highly entertaining and light-humored biography, see John Glassie, *A Man of Misconceptions: The Life of an Eccentric in an Age of Change* (Penguin, 2012). For a soberer account, see Paula Findlen's introductory essay in Paula Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[6] Kircher, *Vita. Fasciculus Epistolarum,* 40; Fletcher, *A Study*, 485.

[7] Fletcher, *A Study*, 476, 480.

[8] Ibid., 513.

Kircher's transfer to the Collegium Romanum where he could continue his work on Egyptian hieroglyphs—this, Kircher had not predicted. He remained in Rome for the rest of his life.

ART OF CONSONANCE—ART OF POLITICS

When Kircher published the *Musurgia Universalis, Ars Consoni e Dissoni* in the Jubilee year of 1650, he did not dedicate it to Cardinal Barberini or to Urban VIII—the latter had died in 1644—nor to the new pope, Innocent X, who commissioned him to erect the famous obelisk at Piazza Navona and translate its hieroglyphs. Neither did he dedicate it, like many others, to his new patron, Emperor Ferdinand III.[9] Instead, he addressed it to the Emperor's brother, Archduke Leopold William of Austria.[10]

From the outset, Kircher makes it clear that the *Ars Consoni, et Dissoni*, the art of consonance and dissonance, is a thoroughly political matter. He presents it to the Archduke as that art by which Germany—father of the Roman Empire and many Princes—restores to the tranquil harmony or consensus [*concentum*] of peace the too-dissonant character [*mores*, or *ethos*] of the Christian Republic.[11] The *Musurgia*, then, is

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[9] Nor to Cardinal Pamphili, who showed early interest in Kircher's combinatorial methods and was, as Eric Bianchi holds, one of the early motivators for the *Musurgia.* Eric Bianchi, "Prodigious Sounds: Music and Learning in the World of Athanasius Kircher" (Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 2011), 31. Cardinal Pamphili renounced the cardinalate for marriage at the same time as Ferdinand III showed interest in Kircher's work on music. Ferdinand III declined the dedication of the *Musurgia* since, as his confessor Johannes Gans wrote, "not every work has to be dedicated to the same person." Quoted in Gábor Almási, *A Divided Hungary in Europe: Exchanges, Networks and Representations, 1541-1699; Volume 1 – Study Tours and Intellectual-Religious Relationships* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 163.

[10] Leopold William had a modest role, to say the least, at the end of the war. He led the Spanish troops against France in August, 1648. The army was crushed and Ferdinand III was forced to capitulate to France, as Bohemia was falling again to the Swedes. Incidentally, Leopold William also fought against the Swedes near Breitenfeld led by Torstensson, who "won a victory almost as complete as that of Gustavus, on the same terrain, eleven years before." Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, 152, 167.

[11] Sistit se conspectui fulgentissimo Serenitatis tuae Ars Magna Consoni, et Dissoni, quo potissimum tempore plus nimio dissonantes Christianae Reip mores ad tranquillum pacis concentum revocat TUA, et Imperii Romanum et magnorum Principum parens Germania. Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis Sive Ars Magna Consoni Et Dissoni: In X. Libros Digesta : Quà Vniuersa Sonorum doctrina, & Philosophia, Musicaeque tam Theoricae, quam practicae scientia, summa varietate traditur; admirandae Consoni, & Dissoni in mundo, adeoque Universa Natura vires effectusque, uti nova, ita peregrina variorum speciminum exhibitione ad singulares usus, tum in omnipoene facultate, tum potissimum in Philologia, Mathematica, Physica, Mechanica, Medicina, Politica, Metaphysica, Theologica, aperiuntur & demonstrantur.* (Rome: Corbelletti, 1650); I have consulted various copies available through Google Books, plus copies in the Rare Books collection of the University of Pennsylvania and in the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá. I have also used the facsimile edition by Ulf Scharlau, *Musurgia universalis*

an *ars politica,* a means to bring harmony, to command and control the mores of the people. Or, more precisely, the *Ars Consoni, et Dissoni* explains consonance and dissonance as an all-pervasive ontological condition, a universal principle, that we know from studying the world: "Consonum sine dissono, dissonum sine consono subsistere nequaquam posse Deus, Natura, Politice, docet." Neither consonance without dissonance nor dissonance without consonance can subsist. This is what God, Nature, and Politics teach us, and so the *Musurgia* will demonstrate.

As Tiziana Pangrazi writes, the dedication synthesizes the entire work. Music is not so much a discipline but the principle common to these three ontological registers—God, Nature, and Politics. God created the world according to number, weight, measure—that is, harmony—and Nature expresses it everywhere. Politics, Kircher goes on, consists in leading the Empire and the people towards happy ends [*felicitatis fines dirigendis*]; it is the maximum order and the basis for all human action. For achieving his goal, the Prince participates of divine power, a harmonic force [*vis harmozousa*[12]]—that Kircher will elsewhere call *amor* or magnetism, according to the context—which binds everything together. Thus, Princes are like God: just as He harmonizes the heaven, so do the kings of the people imitate Him when ruling through admirable decrees. Princes are *Aemuli* and Vicars of God. In this respect the Prince is the center of a political microcosm which reflects the macrocosmos, one which operates according to the laws—as music does—of dissonance and consonance.

(Hildesheim.; New York: G. Olms, 1970). There is an abriged German translation from 1662, also published as facsimile. Athanasius Kircher, *Kircherus Jesuita Germanus Germaniae Redonatus Sive Artis Magnae de Consono & Dißono Ars Minor Das Ist Philosophischer Extract Und Auszug, Aus Deß Welt-Berühmten Teutschen Jesuitens Athanasii*, trans. Andreas Hirsch (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988). According to the scholarship on the *Musurgia* and after Kircher's own practice, the two volumes of the *Musurgia* will be referred to as *Mus*. A and B, respectively.

[12] As Pangrazi explains, this Kircherian word combines *harmonia* and *harmozō*. Before recalling the musical sense, this word expresses, in Homer, for example, the action and criterion for ship-building. Its early Greek sense—from which the musical sense derives—is more that of planning and the correct following of rules for achieving balance and equilibrium. Tiziana Pangrazi, *La Musurgia universalis di Athanasius Kircher: contenuti, fonti, terminologia* (Olschki, 2009), 18. A related term is *harmostes,* joiner of adaptor, which was the Spartan term for a military commander. Elsewhere, Kircher calls God the divine *harmostes.*

The dedication contains all the elements of Kircher's theory of political theology, as analyzed at depth by Felicia Englmann.[13] Focusing on Kircher's 1670 *Principis Christiani Archetypon*—the Jesuit's most elaborate political work—Englmann has noted the rigor of Kircher's political thinking, which integrates the Hermetic Neo-Platonism of Nicolas Cusanus and Marsilio Ficino—where God, although unknowable, is present in everything, *omnia in omnibus*, and binds everything together through *amor*—with the Christian anthropology and politics of Erasmus of Rotterdam, in which the only possible society is a Christian monarchy led by a virtuous prince. Kircher, Englmann argues, presented not only an ideal State or a perfect Prince, but through his incorporation of hermetic philosophy, ancient history, and natural philosophy he presented a way of understanding the place of men in the universe so that they could benefit from Divine Providence. Understanding human society as a microcosmos and an image of God means bringing divine order into the world, uniting men in the most direct way towards the divine spheres.[14]

Kircher, therefore, occupies the place that Benjamin and Schmitt described, of a political theology in a Catholic context that mobilized all the resources of baroque mimesis towards establishing and legitimizing the absolute ruler as an image of God (see Part III). Why then, as Englmann herself asks, did Kircher's political theology have barely any reception or resonance?[15] It is indeed puzzling. Kircher was a dear *protégée* of Emperor Ferdinand III and Archduke Leopold, and a favorite of all the popes who ruled through his life; he was the true center of the *respublica literaria* and, even as his fame began to wane, he continued to be highly admired throughout the eighteenth century.[16] For Englmann, the reason is not that Kircher was outmoded, or that the polymath's heady tracts and allegorical constructions were beyond the reach of his readers, dazzled by a *meraviglia* not unlike the audiences of the *intermedi* (see chapter 7). Rather, she argues, it

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[13] Felicia Englmann, *Sphärenharmonie und Mikrokosmos: das politische Denken des Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2006).

[14] Ibid., 366.

[15] Ibid., 367.

[16] Englmann finds little to no evidence for the reception of the *Principis Christiani Archetypon*, a resounding silence that contrasts with the often clamorous reception his larger works, the *Musurgia* included. For Kircher's epistolary relations, see Fletcher, *A Study*; John Fletcher, *Athanasius Kircher Und Seine Beziehungen Zum Gelehrten Europa Seiner Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988).

is because history took a different course. Far from being outmoded or simply a conservative, Kircher was writing an alternative theory of political theology for the future in a time of crisis and sweeping transformations of the very notions of the cosmos and its epistemology. Where Kircher sought for universal integration under a single, divine principle that encompassed everything from the cosmos to the individual—from his position the best option after the Thirty-Years' War—Cartesian *mathesis* and mechanistic materialism sought for disintegration as a means for expanding instrumental reason.[17] If history took a different course, it was not Kircher's fault.

ONTO-THEO-COSMO-MUSICOLOGY

To recall the terms of Part III, if modernity was a turn towards a perspectival, vision-centered and mechanized universe, Kircher occupied the dorsal space produced by the turn, a position that necessarily gave him a different perspective. But if modernity turned its back on Kircher, he wasn't left behind. This is perhaps better seen through the *Musurgia* than through the more political or Hermetic works (the *Musurgia*, I insist, is both). The *Musurgia* had a global resonance that lasted much longer than any of Kircher's works. It became the main reference book on music for more than a hundred years, until it was replaced by more "modern" musical dictionaries and encyclopedias.[18] Most importantly, as we know from a letter by Kircher, the *Musurgia* was disseminated across the globe faster and with more efficiency than any of his works at the time (and arguably than any single author): of the 1500 copies of the *Musurgia,* 300 were given to Jesuits coming from around the world for the meeting of the Congregation General in 1650. It was thus immediately distributed around the globe: 'et in Africam, Asiam et Americam distracta fuerunt'.[19] This gives the *Musurgia* a unique role which I believe has

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[17] Englmann, *Sphärenharmonie und Mikrokosmos*, 370.

[18] Bianchi, "Prodigious Sounds," 214; John Zachary Mckay, "Universal Music-Making: Athanasius Kircher and Musical Thought in the Seventeenth Century" (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 2012).

[19] Kircher to Joannes Jansson, n.d., Kircher MS 561, fol. 79r., Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome. Quoted in Mckay, "Universal Music-Making," 2. 100 copies were sent to Austria, England, and Spain; 250 remained in Italy, and the publishers kept 700 for sale. Fletcher, *A Study*, 417. A copy in the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, is registered as "Ex-libris: ms. Provincia Novi Regni donum authoris." Even in 1825, Kircher's *tuba stentorophonica* (from the *Phonurgia Nova*) was studied in

not been emphasized by the many recent studies devoted to it, which invariably describe it as a *summa* or an encyclopedia that collects all the musicological knowledge— as an universal knowledge—available to Kircher's time and thus serves to paint an accurate portrait of baroque musical thought, such as the classification of styles or the first *affektenlehre*.[20] Englmann's repositioning of Kircher not as a reactionary but as a visionary, on the other hand, presses us to consider the *Musurgia* in its political and global dimensions, as well as a cosmopolitics.

There is no agreement as to what the main purpose of the *Musurgia* was—a political text, an encyclopedia, or a demonstration of a method of composition based on combinatorics. It hardly matters. For all we know—based on the *Vita*—Kircher wrote almost as a distraction from his main interest, translating the Egyptian hieroglyphs.[21] But we can tell from the work itself what role and function he assigned to it. In the frontispiece of the second volume, Kircher quotes (freely) from chapter VI of the Hermetic *Asclepius*: "Music is nothing other than understanding the order of

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Bogotá in lectures on physics. José Félix de Restrepo, *Lecciones de fisica para los jovenes del Colejio Mayor Seminario de San Bartolome* (Bogota: Impreso por F.M. Stokes, 1825), 78. Kircher's most illustrious readers in the New World were Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, arguably the most important intellectuals from New Spain. Moreover, as Paula Findlen argues, "it is no exaggeration to say that a Mexican nun was one of the best readers Kircher ever had." Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher, 349*. Bianchi recorded mentions of the *Musurgia* in Kircher's correspondence coming from Manila in 1654 (APUG 562 14r); Puebla, Mexico, 1661 (APUG 568 73r.); Lisbon, October, 1656. Bianchi, "Prodigious Sounds," p. 10. For a more general account of Kircher's reception around the globe, see the essays in Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher* section V: The Global Shape of Knowledge.

[20] Appreciation of the *Musurgia* in the twentieth century has grown since Fletcher first described the work in his 1966 thesis (published as *Fletcher, A Study.*, its examination still follows the guidelines set by Ulf Scharlau, *Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680) Als Musikschriftsteller Ein Beitrag Zur Musikanschauung Des Barock* (Marburg: Görich & Weiershäuser, 1969). See Melanie Wald, *Welterkenntnis Aus Musik: Athanasius Kirchers "Musurgia Universalis" Und Die Universalwissenschaft Im 17. Jahrhundert* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006); Pangrazi, *La Musurgia universalis di Athanasius Kircher*; Bianchi, "Prodigious Sounds," 3; Mckay, "Universal Music-Making."

[21] "Since I was, however, filling the chair of mathematics in Rome, I felt it also incumbent upon me to publish some samples from the area of my specialist expertise, all the more so since my opponents were casting doubt on my experience in this field. During the period in which I held my chair I wrote then three works: the *Magnes sive de arte magnetic*a, the *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* and the *Musurgia universalis*. On their appearance these works were greeted—praise be to God—with no light applause. But this same applause provided also the stimulus for more importunate attacks against me. It was said that I was now exclusively occupied with mathematical studies since I had come up against irreconcilable difficulties with my hieroglyphic researches. I was further said to have despaired of the possibility of deciphering the hieroglyphs and to have given up all hope of writing a book on the subject." Fletcher, *A Study*, 492.

everything."[22] Following this thought, Book 10 is not so much the cosmos represented as music but music presented as a mode of understanding of the cosmos: *philosophia musica*. It is assumed that Kircher borrowed the title *Universalis* (among other things) from Marin Mersenne's own treatise, *Harmonie Universelle*.[23] It is indeed a fitting title, not only because of the musical dimension of the universe that Kircher sets out to demonstrate, but also, or moreover, because of how the *Musurgia* uniquely exemplifies the role of encyclopedic treatises in what can arguably be the globalization of knowledge in the early modern period. Traveling around the globe, the *Musurgia* was itself a performance of its own claims. The *Musurgia*, after all, was not a pedagogical or hermeneutical treatise like those of his predecessors—Gaffurio, Zarlino, Mersenne, et al.—but a *mousiké ergon*, a musical deed or even an opera, an action and an actualization, to recall the terms of Part III: a setting in action of music in the universe, as the universe. As an *Ars Magna*, a science of the universe, it is not just a "universal music-making," not simply a work *about* the production of music in the world, but itself a musical work, an *ergon*: a productive and accomplishing activity. Not so much a summa of all knowledge on music but its praxis, a production of universal knowledge through knowledge. The double genitive of *universalis* makes it clear: it is the *mousikē ergon* of the universe, of all the forms of music contained in it, but also the *mousikē* that belongs to the universe, the *ergon*, the actuality or effectivity of the universe as music. And what enables this *ergon*, of course, is mimesis—an excessive assemblage (not a synthesis at all) of all the ancient and modern musical mimetologies.

When composing it, Kircher collected information from all the corners of the world through the epistolary network of the Jesuits, and crafted it into a complete system that aimed to integrate the most ancient knowledge of the Egyptians with the most recent reports from the Jesuit missionaries. By being shipped across the globe, the *Musurgia*

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[22] Musica nihil aliud est, quam omnium ordinem scire. *Mus.* B. 2.
[23] Bianchi, "Prodigious Sounds," 73; Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher*, 23.

would reencounter itself in the world and verify its universality. It would become the *ergon*, the actuality that it claimed for itself.

Thus, the universality of this knowledge/praxis is not only limited to the scope of the work, to its character of *summa*, or to its factual distribution around the globe. Starting from the Hermetic dictum of the second frontispiece (quoted above), the *Musugia* theorizes universality as such and presents music—understood in a thoroughly mimetic way—as the best means to know it. The *Musurgia* collected a form of knowledge that presented itself as universal—Hermetism and Neo-Platonism in the figures of Ficino and Cusano—described it as music and through music—as an art of consonances and dissonances—to then recirculate this musical universe around the globe, in the hands of travelers and especially Jesuit missioners.

However, the universe of Cusano is not the same as the globe that the *Musurgia* would then circumnavigate: this is what makes the *Musurgia* an exemplary work. At the same time it theorizes and participates in a transition from one cosmology to another, a process Peter Sloterdijk describes as the passage from the first to the second globalization. In fact, we have to conceive ancient Greek cosmology as a spherology, a philosophy of the world and of God as all-encompassing globes. Sloterdijk names this the "cosmic-uranian globalization." The Renaissance marks the climax and decline of this spheric metaphysics. The navigations of the Portuguese, the 'revolutions' of Copernicus and Kepler, signal the passage to the terrestrial globalization, "realized practically through Christian-capitalist seafaring and politically implanted through the colonialism of the Old European nation-states," two major chapters of what our own times experiences as an "electronic" globalization.[24] For Sloterdijk, what distinguishes these three chapters are their symbolic and technical media:

> It makes an epochal difference whether one measures an idealized orb with lines
> and cuts, sails around a real orb with ships, or lets airplanes and radio signals
> circulate around the atmospheric casting of a planet. It makes an ontological
> difference whether one envisages the one cosmos, which fully encloses the world

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[24] Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization* (Polity, 2013), 9.

of essences, or the one earth, which serves as the bearer of various world-formations.[25]

What is crucial about the *Musurgia*, I argue, is that it falls precisely in the passage from one sphere to the other and partakes of the two epochal symbolic and technological media separating the ancient cosmos from the modern world. Moreover, just as Kircher's politics are not simply a reactionary absolutism or an empty utopianism, the *Musurgia* does not just measure an idealized world through a musical metaphor. It examines all forms of music-making available for a figure sitting at the very center of that globe, and aims to prove the universal validity of that musical conception of the cosmos, while employing the most advanced symbolic technologies—emblems, allegories, tables—and material ones—the press, epistolary networks, global missionaries—to distribute that knowledge around the world.

This is even clearer we take the political motivation of the dedicatory to Archduke Leopold William. The dedicatory presents itself as a celebration of the end of the Thirty Years' War, an event that arguably gave Europeans their first real sense of the global dimensions of the world, of the consequences produced by the interconnections of Europe's Imperial enterprises: events in the Caribbean and Brazil would deprive Spain of the power to control the Low Countries or helping Austria fend off the invasion of Gustavus, while events in Italy and Turkey would bring Spain and France into a war they could not maintain.[26] Most evident for Kircher, perhaps, was the religious fault line over which the conflict was fought, in which the Cusanian universe, where God is a circle whose circumference is everywhere, sharply contrasted with the barren world that the Protestants—to his Jesuit eyes—wanted to impose. As Englmann would argue, aiming to maintain the spheric metaphysics of the cosmic-uraninan globalization was an obvious political move. In this sense, then, in addition to encyclopedia and *ars politica*, the *Musurgia Universalis* is a war machine, to use Deleuze and Guattari's terms: a nomad

[25] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, 10.
[26] Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, 92; For a more sober statement of the point, see Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, *War in an Age of Revolution, 1775-1815* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

assemblage that circulates outside or alongside the State and produces transformations of the *nomos* through affect.[27]

There was something very concrete in Kircher's approach, nonetheless, which formed part of new modes of spatial organization. In Sloterdijk's narrative, the task of designing "the new image of the world" in modernity could not belong to metaphysicians after the sharp opposition between human mortality and cosmic perfection became unbearable. Rather, it fell to the geographers and seafarers:

> It was their mission to present the last orb in pictorial form. Of all large round bodies, only shell-less humanity's own planet would henceforth have any meaning. The world-navigators, cartographers, conquistadors, world traders, even the Christian missionaries and their following of aid workers who exported goodwill and tourists who spent money on experiences at remote locations—they all behaved as if they had understood that, after the destruction of heaven, it was the earth itself that had to take over its function as the last vault. This physically real earth, as an irregularly layered, chaotically folded, storm eroded body, now had to be circumnavigated and quantified. Thus the new image of the earth, the terrestrial globe, rose to become the central icon of the modern world picture.[28]

Kircher occupies several of these places. He traveled as much as he could—more as a tourist than as a cartographer or missionary—and sought to reconcile this "chaotically folded, storm eroded body" in his *Mundus subterraneus* (1665) with the spheric metaphysics of Cusanus. Similarly, he mobilized the Tychonian system to mediate between philosophy, the church, and experimental science in making sense of cosmological models after the "destruction of the heaven" in a cosmic-dream allegory, the *Iter extaticum* (1656). But before penning these works, Kircher addressed them *more musico*—in a musical mode or manner—mobilizing, or rather actualizing a centuries-old tradition of the harmony of the spheres, with modern astronomical observation, hermetic mythology, Cusanian spherology, and musical examples and experiments to produce an

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[27] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[28] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital,* 212.

onto-theo-cosmo-musicology, a theory of being and the universe as a musical divine creation. Everything that the humanists had accomplished by turning towards the past, Kircher integrated into a futuristic, allegoric cosmic opera to be distributed around the globe.

Again, this onto-theo-cosmo-musicology is not an abstract treatise. Its incorporation of history, philosophy, description of musical practices ancient and contemporary, with musical examples culled from all around the world, along with its allegorical apparatus and the new composing methodology it advances, makes it a particularly effective type of what Sloterdijk calls a "canopy," a portable symbolization of the sky, a means by which Europe made itself present across the ocean and beyond its own geographical limits. They produce a spatial poetics that contribute to the "epochal task of making the outside livable for the voyagers and invaders or feigning its integration and domination."[29] Sloterdijk mentions five types: nautical mythology; the Christian religion; loyalty to the princes of one's mother country; the scientific documentation of the external space, and linguistic translation.[30] In its theoretical aim and material construction, the *Musurgia* belongs, uniquely, in all these types. Carried across the globe, the *Musurgia* brought with it a musical image of the universe. Science, European history and mythology were uniquely unified through the principle of *consoni dissoni*, whose political aim, as we have seen, was explicit from the beginning. Music, then, was a system of translation that allowed Kircher to synthesize the self-excluding spheres of politics, religion, and science, and to distribute this synthesis as a unified whole across the globe. Most importantly, insofar as such a universe could only be comprehended from within Christian ontotheology—the Cusanian principle of *omnia in omnibus*—the determination of the universe as musical also meant that music became a constitutive part of the world-ecumenical, colonial enterprise of the church—especially in its Jesuit form.

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[29] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, 121.
[30] Ibid.

For Sloterdijk, this is the general, double function of the clerics on board: to provide seafarers with spiritual and metaphysical comfort—an insurance system—in case they perished in the outside, but also to ensure that such an outside could be effectively incorporated in its own cosmos.[31] Furthermore, the loyalty to one's princes meant that every emanation had to return to its origin. Every effigy and dedication to a European prince—such as Leopold William—not only brings his image into the New World, but also ensures that it returns to its origin. Characteristically, Kircher employs the trope of Memnon's statue in the dedication to the Archduke.[32] The sovereign is like the rays of light by which the author and hence the book are moved to sing ["ad cantum sum excitatus"]. This means, then, that the entire cosmos sings to the sovereign, from anywhere in the world. More pointedly, Sloterdijk credits the Jesuits with having developed the first global communications network: an Internet of fervent obedience formed by distant devotees of the center. This was the model for the worldwide operations of today's telecommunications companies; the long-distance call was prefigured by the long-distance prayer of the pope. The Jesuits were the prototypical news group, communicating via their organization specific network.[33]

Kircher benefited from this network in spectacular ways. The most elaborate and infamous of his attempts to produce an encyclopedia based on reports from the Jesuits was the *China ilustrata* (1667), which, as J. Michelle Molina shows, Kircher compiled using the latest reports from the missionaries, to document their findings and to broadcast them across the globe to entice more missionaries to join the worldwide enterprise.[34] But, as various musicologists have noted, he also employed this strategy with the famous "singing sloth."[35]

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[31] Ibid., 128.

[32] Ego verò qui Aegyptii instar Memnonis non semel radiis munificae Serenitatis TUAE ad cantum sum excitatus; nae ipso saxeo Memnonio durior essem, nisi beneficentiae TUA sanè regiae perpetuà grati animi fide utcumque resonarem. (*MUS* A, dedication). See chapter 5 for Calcagno's suggestion that Monteverdi's dedication to Prince Francesco Gonzaga employs the same trope.

[33] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, 129.

[34] Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher*, 21.

[35] Bianchi, "Prodigious Sounds," 183ff; Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding, *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3ff.

Finally, there was the role of translation in distributing Christianity around the globe when faced with the discovery of an unmanageable diversity of languages. The bible was translated into 1800 languages in what Sloterdijk calls "the continuation of the Pentecost miracle by Gutenbergian means. This project is inseparable from the search for a universal language. Here, once again, Kircher's experiments on musical cryptography and combinatorics illuminate an aspect of the Jesuit baroque that went unexplored in Benjamin's work. It is not so much the idea of an universal language, but the "The Reduction of All Languages to One" and the "The Extension of One Language to All" that Kircher advances on his *Polygraphia nova et universalis* of 1660 (also dedicated to Leopold William), a work that expands on several combinatoric, crypto-and stenographic techniques first developed in the *Musurgia*. But besides this restricted language of combinatorics, Kircher developed an even more universal and all-encompassing one: the mimetology of analogy and allegory, whose importance goes unremarked in Sloterdijk's analysis.

The Jesuits employed allegory for multiple purposes.[36] As Benjamin argued, it was the Jesuits who perfected the genre of the mystery play that allowed for the reconciliation of pagan mythology and Christian theology.[37] They also developed what we could call a principle of diplomatic mimeticism which, from Ignatius's advice to be "all things to all people," *omnia omnibus*, permitted and encouraged the missionaries to adapt to the different customs of the cultures they visited, performing a type of

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[36] For example, the latin odes performed in conferral of degrees in the Collegium Romanum, as Saverio Franchi shows, which accomplished "l'unione ideale delle arti (lettere, musica, disegno) e della scienza filosofica o teologica, nel momento in cui il grado dottorale o magistrale conferito al laureando lo aggregava alla 'respublica litterarum' del mondo catolico. in Markus Engelhardt and Michael Heinemann, eds., *Ars magna musices: Athanasius Kircher und die Universalität der Musik : Vorträge des deutsch-italienischen Symposiums aus Anlass des 400. Geburtstages von Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) : Musikgeschichtliche Abteilung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom, in Zusammenarbeit mit der Hochschule für Musik "Carl Maria von Weber" in Dresden : Rom, Deutsches Historisches Institut, 16.-18. Oktober 2002* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2007), 282.

[37] See excursus in this dissertation and further the essays by O'Malley and Körndle in John W O'Malley, ed., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

"accommodation" or "cultural translation" in Peter Burke's words.[38] Kircher, a missionary working from within the library, also made use of this faculty, which he elaborated through the theory of allegory borrowed from Hermeticism and the doctrine of the *prisca theologia*, of the sacred, esoteric doctrine concealed in hieroglyphs.[39] To this powerful amalgam Kircher added modern science, in a strategy that allowed him both to avoid being seen as a heretic after the recent condemnation of Galilei, and would further the Jesuit cause against the Protestant one, insofar as his multiple works bore the approval of the censors.[40]

Furthermore, Carlos Ziller Camenietzki has emphasized the specificity of allegory and metaphor in Kircher's hybrid writings, noting that although contemporary scientists like Galileo and Descartes used the same devices, they did so in ways that were constitutively different. "Cartesians made use of these cultural resources, but the expression 'harmony of the world' only had the function of embellishing their discourse and of suggesting precise numerical relationships between the things in the world," whereas for Kircher it was "a specific way of conceiving the organization of the created world."[41] This difference, as I show below, consists precisely in what Kircher understands as the *Mousikē ergon* in and of the universe.

ALLEGORY AND CREATION IN THE *MUSURGIA UNIVERSALIS*

We can see the role that Kircher assigned to allegory by following Melanie Wald in her reading of the visual elements of the *Musurgia*, specifically of the allegory of the birth of the world, *harmonia nascentis mundi,* which opens the tenth and last book of the *Musurgia Universalis* [Figure 15].

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[38] Peter Burke, "The Jesuits and the Art of Translation in Early Modern Europe" in ibid. [what ibid? in this chapter?]

[39] Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher*, 303ff.

[40] As Ingrid Rowland notes, sometimes he barely managed to do it. Two censors criticized him for his "pallid" rejection of the Copernican system in the *Iter Extaticum*, writing that "he is evidently prevaricating on the matter…and he is not doing so from the heart, but in order not to say anything openly contrary to the decrees and institutions of the Holy Roman Church." Ingrid Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey: Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000), 19; See also Daniel Stolzenberg "Utility, Education, and Superstition: Jesuit Censorship and Athanasius Kircher's Oedipus Aegyptiacus" in O'Malley, *The Jesuits*, 336ff.

[41] Carlos Ziller Camenietzki, "Baroque Science between the Old and the New World; Father Kircher and His Colleague Valentin Stansel (1621–1705)" in Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher*, 324.

All the other plates in the book are straight-forward illustrations of Kircher's arguments, machines, and examples, from the dissection of the ear to the famous automata. They fulfill the double function of being illustrations and examples: paradigms, in short. On the other hand, this image and the frontispieces of the two tomes are not illustrations of Kircher's arguments but are themselves arguments, summing up the different themes of the book in an allegorical unity, that is, expressing the unity of the book itself. Yet, unlike the frontispieces, the *Iconismus* of the *harmonia nascentis mundi* does have a text that elaborates on its meaning: a two-page "prelude" which narrates the creation allegory, and ten chapters entitled *Registrum*—like those of the organ—devoted to an exploration of the chain of beings connecting everything in the universe, from the four elements to God.[42]

Kircher describes how first God created the organ, complete with pipes, registers manual, then produced matter, *hyle*, out of formless chaos through the word, then shaped it to create the four elements and gave them musical qualities, and so on. Kircher's baroque prose flows freely as the prelude he is describing, unconcerned about theological conundrums or harmonic specifications, such as how is it that the organ precedes matter, or why are the black keys arranged in six groups of three. Kircher paints in broad strokes an allegory about the world being created as a musical work. Of obvious Platonic inspiration already commonplace in the seventeenth century, the closing book of the *Musurgia* seems to be most likely the result of one of Kircher's ecstatic music listening nights in baroque Rome, just like the later *Iter Exstaticum*.

This sensorial transduction is what makes this image a true allegory, a symbol, in Kircher's words. "A symbol is a notation signifying some arcane mystery…it leads our soul by a certain similarity to the intelligence of something very different form the things

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[42] The explanation of the *Iconismus* mentions six registers—one for each day of the creation—but Book X is divided into ten parts which do not entirely correspond to this previous division. Furthermore, Book X begins with a division in Pars I, Caput I, yet there are no more divisions of this type. This, along with differences in the chapter's title in the index, might suggest that "the organization of Book X was changed late in the process of composition," as McKay remarks. Mckay, "Universal Music-Making," 140ff.

of sense-perception."[43] It is through some kind of notation, music, visual representations of music, that we can understand the cosmos, which even if musical has nothing to do with these visual representations. The meaning of the allegory and its claim on the musical nature of the cosmos, is in no way expressed by the allegory itself; its materiality overdetermines the transcendent meaning it aimed to portray, while its totality remains only partially illuminated. The tension latent in allegory between mimesis and materiality, its intimation of a totality through fragmented and incomplete aspects of the whole gathered through the unbound power of similarity, is here in full force and presents us with crucial questions about Kircher's work, the role of music in his system as well as the notion of baroque mimesis in itself and how we can begin to read it.

Kircher's allegory does not just portray the cosmos as he saw it. Entitled *Analogicus*, the final book of the *Musurgia* constitutes a baroque allegorical machine that, as the divine organ that plays itself, allegorizes itself, *en abyme*. It allegorizes Kircher's own modes of seeing and hearing while using music as an epistemological and philosophical tool for the understanding of the cosmos. In this operation, grounded on a syncretic framework of Hermeticism, Neo-Platonism, and Catholicism, the allegorical method becomes visible as the medium in which mimesis works to produce the distinctions between disciplines, between science and religion, between nature and culture, that for us seem so evident.

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[43] *Oedipus Aegyptiacus II*, p. 6, quoted in Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: A Sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1993), 21. The most tragic meaning of this definition which dates back to Ficino, however, is that this was Kircher's approach to deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs, his life-long project and biggest intellectual mistake. [← editors don't like claims like this, sweeping but not documented]
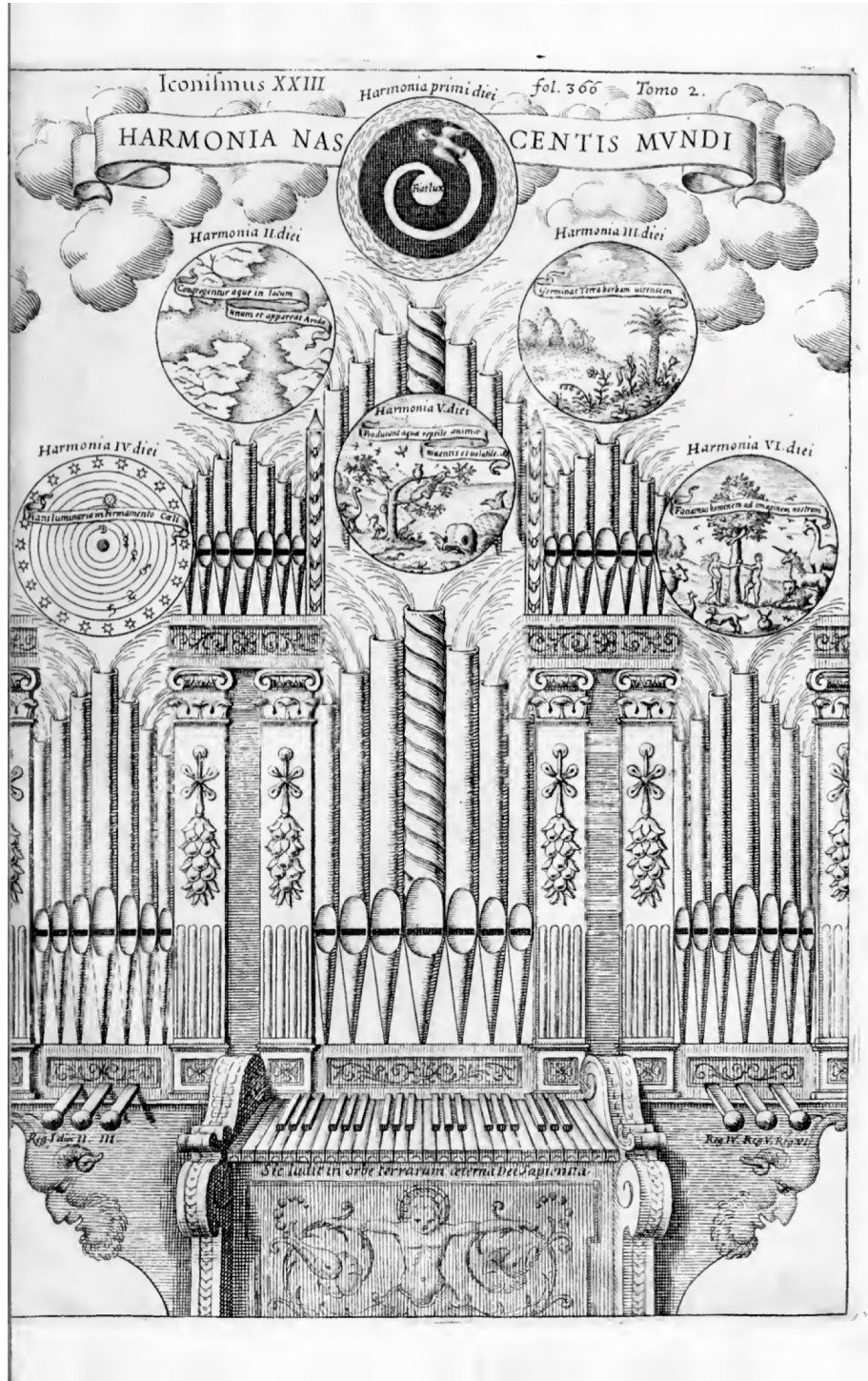
Figure 15: Harmony of the Birth of the World. Mus. B 367

In other words, what in Kircher seems to be a mixed form of representation of the

world—allegory—is in truth a form of mimetic production of these differences. The idea of the musical universe, of the macrocosm and microcosm, of consonance and dissonance as the harmonic forces that hold everything together are but the end results of a more general process that becomes visible as these ideas accumulate in Kircher's baroque encyclopedia. Kircher's concern with the materiality of sound interrupts—like allegory—the quiet, deep mimetic drift of the Renaissance episteme. What becomes evident is that music is less a means of understanding the cosmos than the production of the idea of the cosmos itself, through the mimetic strategy of postulating music as its copy *and* simultaneously as its model. In Kircher, the difference between *musica mundana*, *humana* and *instrumentalis* is eliminated as its analogical principle folds back onto itself.

Kircher's universe is mimetically created and mimetically structured by the ruling concept of the Renaissance episteme: analogy. Analogy works both as an ontological claim and as a method to disclose the analogically structured universe. Nature is an ordered cosmos, a *mundum harmonicum,* and science and art coincide in demonstrating and reproducing the necessary aspect of their ordering. This claim is expressed clearly by Nicholas Cusanus's metaphysics. For Cusanus, the order of the universe is created after the image of God's wisdom which guarantees the pacific persistence of the "beautiful machine" of the world.[44] Divine order is proportion and harmony, but its importance for Cusanus does not lie in beauty itself. It is not an aesthetic appeal but the condition of possibility of knowledge of the world. It produces the two overlapping but distinct aspects of analogy, as an ontological claim about the nature of the world, and an epistemological ground for a method for knowledge. It also grounds the whole tradition of natural magic from Ficino to Campanella, for whom the analogies are not only means of understanding the universe but also for benefiting from its hidden powers. Cusanus postulates an absolute incommensurability between the empirical and the ideal, radicalizing the Platonic *chorismos* but affirming the possibility of empirical knowledge, the *docta ignorantia,* which sees the ordered nature of experience and follows it asymptotically, moving from the conditioned to the unconditioned without ever reaching

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[44] *Est igitur ordo universi prima et praecisior imago aeternae et incorruptibilis sapientiae, per quam tota mundi machina pulcherrime et pacifice persistit* (ven. sap. c. 32 n. 95) quoted in Leinkauf, 173.

full knowledge of God.[45] However, this means that it is impossible to immediately see the similarity between the sensible and the intelligible. The difference between the copy and the archetype remains absolute. But the world nevertheless participates of divine order and their relation is still mimetically grounded. To properly know the copy means to understand it as copy, and not as a means to an understanding of the model. *Docta ignorantia*, learned ignorance, consists in understanding this dialectic relation.

Kircher picks up from this in a particularly baroque manner. The allegory from Genesis is but a prelude to a book-long, numerologically organized explication of the Hermetic dictum of music as a means to know the cosmos based on the philosophical ground of Cusanus's metaphysics. Kircher begins by recalling the notion of the ordered cosmos, which astounded the ancients and led them to postulate demons, world-souls, agent intellects, and all sorts of gross errors. Despite that, he seems to say, they were correct in seeing the universe as something resembling a living being. Nature, Kircher writes is in fact God's work, who rejoices in hiding himself from the world, thus reaffirming Cusanus's principle of incommensurability between the intelligible and the sensible. But, Kircher goes on, God does not hide without leaving his signature in the laws of the ordered universe, the cosmic machine, so that man can recognize the inexhaustible power of its author, and "by recognizing admire, and admiring investigate, and investigating love Him and in love and worship finally forever possess Him."[46] Kircher then justifies the allegory of God as organ builder as follows: God made the world according to number, weight, and measure; and music itself is nothing other than of number, weight, and measure, as he had demonstrated in the preceding 1000 pages of the *Musurgia*.

Moreover, in Plato's testimony, the world is an all-bounding harmony, *harmonia panta katexousa*. Nature is truly God's artwork, a harmonic force that binds

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[45] Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 21.

[46] "…homo mundi filius, vel huius machine kosmon id est ornatum rerumque omnium inuiolabili quadam lege connexarum ordinem contemplans, inexhauste potentiae Authorem cognosceret, cognoscendo admiraretur, admirando desidedaret, desderando diligeret, diligendo eum colendoque aeternum tandem possideret." Mus B 365.

everything. Since the world is a perfect likeness of God, it necessarily follows that the cosmos, that is, the harmonic world, is grounded on analogy and similarity to His Archetypical harmony, so in God's nature and art He looked back to musical proportions in all worldly operations.[47]

In this convoluted fragment Kircher claims the world is organized mimetically in two levels. Important consequences can be drawn from this articulation. First, the world is a *perfecta Dei similitudo*, the perfect image of God. This dramatic baroque expression is at first sight only a paraphrase of Cusanus, for whom the order of the world was an image of divine wisdom. Cusanus stipulated divine order as the model, but for Kircher the entire creation is an image of God. A perfect image, moreover, without any debasement or limitation to restrict human knowledge of God. Second, he affirms that the cosmos is itself organized according to proportions that are musical, harmonic. God uses a musical model to organize the world. This model is preserved in worldly music, as well as in everything else. Kircher labors with describing as precisely as possible all the forms of music making and in gathering those examples from experience to then inquire into the nature of the cosmos. This is evident in his application of harmony, which emphasizes the ontological opposition of consonance and dissonance—*consonis dissonis*—over the pure nature of number. This logic of opposition is adapted expressly by Kircher as an analogy to that between light and shadow that organizes his 1646 *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae*. Sound imitates light, but only because both partake of the ontological opposition that grounds Kircher´s concept of harmony.

It is this move that shows how Kircher hypostasizes analogy as an ontological reality which becomes identical with its epistemological function, which Cusanus carefully distinguished. By calling the cosmos a *perfecta Dei similitudo*, Kircher grants analogical knowledge an ontological power. It hypostasizes what for Cusanus was a method into a claim about the real nature of the cosmos and of the God that it perfectly resembles. Furthermore, without the Platonic restriction about true knowledge of the

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[47] "Mundus autem Platone teste sit harmonia panta katexousa. Natura verò ars Dei, vis harmozousa omnium adaptatrix; Mundus quoque perfecta Dei similitudo, necessariò sequitur, ad harmoniae illius Archetypicae similitudinem & analogiam, kósmon, id est mundum harmonicum esse conditum, naturamque Dei artem, in omnibus mundanis operationibus ad musicas respexisse proportiones." Mus B 366.

sensible, Kircher's more modern side steps forth. Safely grounded on analogy, it is now possible to take mere experience as a true account of the world. In fact, it is Kircher's distinctive trait that he will use experiments, observations, and data from his modern contemporaries as much as he uses his classical sources, and even against them. This does not mean, however, that he uses them as a modern; his notion of number is still on the other side of the abyss from Kepler's and Mersenne's mathematics and methods. Arguing against Kepler, Kircher declares that his concept of number is "*numero numerans*," meaningful in itself because it expresses proportions and harmonies *a priori*, not an empirical *numero numeratus* applied to measurement and quantifiable entities. And so, while quoting at large from Kepler's measurements of planetary motion, for example, Kircher dismisses those numbers that, while accurate in measurement, fail to conform to Pythagorean proportions and instead retains Kepler's own "idealized" adjustments.[48]

Kircher's account of planetary song is decidedly non-modern. After discussing the nature of Platonic solids and their relation to the four elements as the first register of the world-organ, Kircher moves on to discuss the music of celestial bodies, a business which, in his opinion, tempted many and yet had not been accomplished correctly—every prior attempt having been insolently deaf to the harmonic symphony.[49] Kircher has two main objections to the way the question of planetary song had been approached so far. Since Pythagoras, everyone agrees that the universe is organized musically and that instrumental music imitates their harmonies. Now, everyone claims to hear a wonderful harmony yet, as Agustin says in *De Civitate Dei*, God put dissonance in the world to make the worldly symphony more agreeable; the beauty of the universe is accomplished through the opposition of things.[50] This is, by the way, the site of Kircher's theodicy: arguing for a harmonic force that binds the universe together would be naive without

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[48] McKay, 152. Kircher, however, also suspects capuchin astronomer Antonio Maria Rheita for doing the same with his own calculations. cf. Bianchi, 162.

[49] "Rem sanè perarduam aggredior, dum Musicum illum coelestium corporum concentum inuestigare conor; negotiom uti a multis tentatum, ita a nemine hucusque recte peractum, omnibus ad tam insolentis harmonie symphonismus obsurdescentibus." Mus. 376 B 373.

[50] Agustin, *De Civ.* XI, 18.

being able to account for the dissonances of the universe. In fact, as he writes in the dedication of the *Musurgia* to the Archduke of Austria, consonance cannot exist without dissonance, nor dissonance without consonance. To Kircher's ear, those accounts that fail to portray the rich harmonies of the universe, the chiaroscuro of consonance and dissonance, are of no use.

Furthermore, recent astronomers have shown that the planets do not follow rational courses. However, it is also true that since God is a perfectly ordered cause then no disorderly effects can follow from Him. It seems, therefore, that "the ancient disposition of the celestial harmony has been blown away. Neither the firmness of the heavens nor the order of the spheres remains today as it seemed to the ancients."[51] Kircher thus declares previous accounts of the heavenly order as frivolous and unreliable, dismissing with one modern blow the whole tradition of *Timaeus* commentaries. Contemporary attempts are no better, especially Kepler's vain and obscure calculations which glorify in mysticism and arcane harmonies. Yet Kepler's defense against Fludd had been that he argued as a mathematician, whereas Fludd argued as a hermetic.[52] The distance is again here measured by the role of analogy and its function in the system. Kircher speaks like Cusanus in forbidding any attempt to affirm that the measurements of the planet's orbits can be taken to be musical in themselves or to represent true knowledge. Analogy is not the bridging of the sensible and the intelligible, it is a form of mediation that keeps the two worlds separate yet even more entwined, grounding and bounding human reason to its limits. The true harmony of the spheres, Kircher writes, is not for human ears, it is reserved solely for the supra-mundane Organist. But in this way, Kircher also makes the point that the harmony of the spheres is neither a poetic commonplace, nor a just a problem of harmonics; it is an experience that combines admiration with knowledge, it travels and binds everything. To presume it exists only or primordially as number, or that it can be perceived only as a particular kind of music, is to misunderstand the ontological nature of the forces that compose the universe.

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[51] "Quod enim antiqui sensibilem harmoniam ex corporum coelestium harmoniam dispositam collisione exortam crediderint, hisce novissimis temporibus passim exploditur. cum nec coelorum soliditas, nec ordo spheararum iuxta veterum dispositionem subsistat." *Mus*. B 376.
[52] Yates, 444.

[The] harmony of the spheres consists not in their periodic motions, nor in that

perceptible collision of heavenly bodies, but in nothing other than their wonderful

arrangement & in a certain ineffable proportion conspiring in union… Indeed, this

harmony consists. . . also in the most precise analogy of quantity or magnitude

appropriate to each in order that it might achieve its proper end.

Having dealt with the musical structure of the heavens it is now a matter of explaining the

musical structure of the earth. Attending to these will show the real effects of Kircher's

mimetic war machine. Observation gives way to manipulation in *Registrum* III, which

deals with the relation of the planets with the earth, the order of things in the chain of

being and the affective forces that bind it. The *Harmonia Mundi Sympathica* is a diagram

in which everything from God to colors is organized according to ten sets of nine strings,

laying out the consonances and dissonances of nature in the span of a tenth [Figure 16].

The purpose of this universal scheme is not for mere contemplation but for giving the

natural magician a map of the harmonic relations between all things in the world. The

effect is amplified with the next *Registrum*, dealing with the doctrine of the macrocosm

and the microcosm, which places man at the center of the harmonic arrangement of the

universe, neatly expressing man's affective connection to the cosmos. Natural magic

consists in understanding these relations and manipulating them by exciting the

sympathetic resonances between them. In Aby Warburg's words, natural magic is applied

cosmology [Figure 17].[53]

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[53] This representation of the microcosm and macrocosm, as so often happens with Kircher, is by no means his original creation, and it is reprinted in several of its works. Having its origin in the Kabbalistic notion of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man, it travelled through gnosticism and hermeticism to the Renaissance through Cornelius Aggripa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* and has an evident counterpart in Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man," a version of which also appears in the *Musurgia.* For a thorough analysis of the relation between the Kabbala (in Scholem's interpretation) and the idea of the macro- and microcosmos, see Englmann, *Sphärenharmonie und Mikrokosmos*, 311ff.

Harmonia Mundi Sympathica, 10 Enneachordis totius naturæ Symphoniam exhibens.

Enneachor.Lon I	Enneach. II	Enneach. III	Enneach. IV	Enneach. V	Enneach. VI	Enneach. VII	Enneach. VIII	Enneach. IX	Enneach. X
Mundus Archetyp. DEVS	Mundus Sidereus Cœl.Emp.	Mundus Mineralis	Lapides	Plantæ	Arbores	Aquatilia	Volucria	Quadrupedia	Colores varij
Seraphim	Firmamentum	Salia,ftellæ Minerales.	Aftrites	Herbæ & Flor.ftell.	Frutices Bacciferæ	Pifces ftel-lares	Gallina Pharaonis	Pardus	Diuerfi Colores
Cherubim	♄ Nete	Plumbum	Topazius	Hellebo-rus	Cypreffus	Tynnus	Bubo	Afinus, Vrfus	Fufcus
Troni	♃ Paranete	Æs	Amethi-ftus	Betonica	Citrus	Acipenfer	Aquila	Elephas	Rofeus
Domina-tiones	♂ Paramef.	Ferrum	Adamas	Abfynthiũ	Quercus	Pfyphias	Falco Accipiter	Lupus	Flammeus
Virtutes	☼ Mefe	Aurum	Pyropus	Heliotropium	Lotus, Laurus	Delphinus	Gallus	Leo	Aureus
Poteftates	♀ Lichanos	Stannum	Beryllus	Satyrium	Myrtus	Truta	Cygnus Columba	Ceruus	Viridis
Principatus	☿ Parhypa.	Argentum Viuum	Achates Iafpis	Pæonia	Malufpu-nica	Caftor	Pfittacus	Canis	Cæruleus
Archangeli	☽ Hypate	Argentum	Selenites Cryftallus	Lunaria	Colutea	Oftrea	Anates Anferes	Ælurus	Candidus
Angeli	Ter.c ũEle. Proslamb.	Sulphur	Magnes	Gramina	Frutices	Anguilla	Struthio camelus	Infecta	Niger

Figure 16: Enneachord of Nature. Mus. B 393

For us, these arrangements of the universe may seem arbitrary and ludicrous. Yet its effects are beyond magical: by their mere formulation, instrumental music ceases to be a degraded imitation of cosmic harmony to become a means to partake of it and manipulate it. Here mimesis passes into participation, or *methexi*s, in the Neo-Platonic sense. In magical terms, sympathy becomes contagion. Crucially, the distinction that analogy had maintained between an epistemological medium and an ontological ground is here conflated, and the musical copy becomes the paradigm for the order of the universe. Contemplation and knowledge pass magically into action, while magical activity demonstrates the validity of the scheme. We get a dialectical picture of the enlightened aspect of the magician who aims to understand the world, and the magical aspect of the Enlightenment that does not consider a form of knowledge valid if it doesn't have a practical and universal application.

402   *Artis Magnæ Consoni & Dissoni*

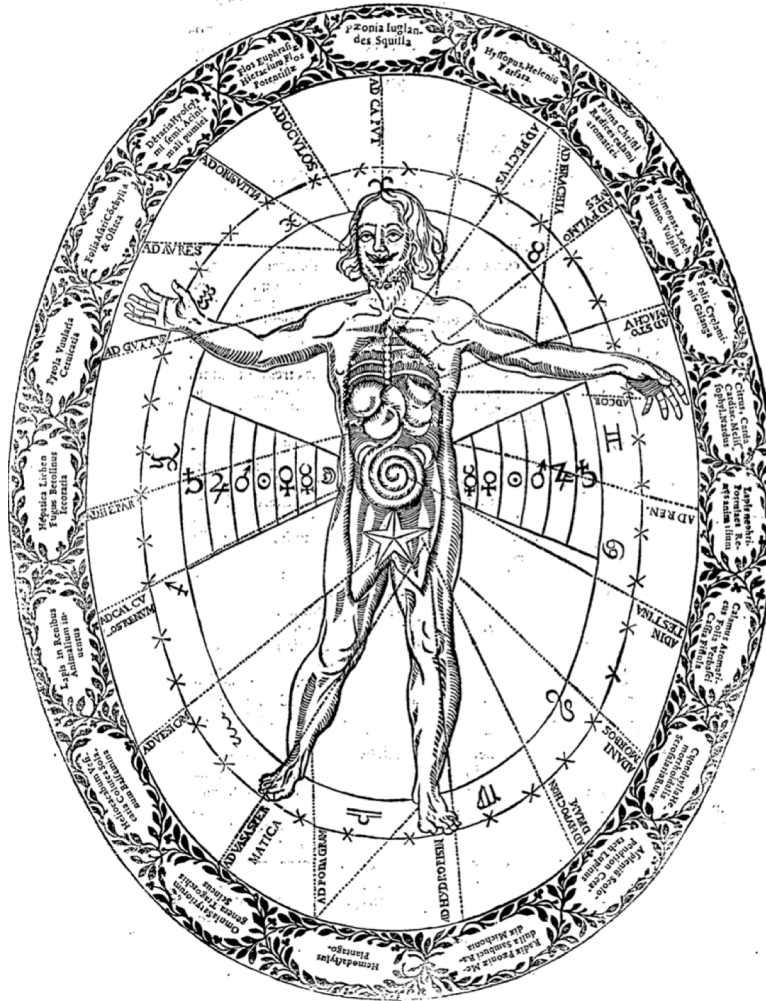**Typus Sympathicus Microcosmi cum Migacosmo.**

Figure 17: Microcosmic Man. Mus. B 402

To conclude, and to return to what I argued from the outset was a determinant aspect of the *Musurgia Universalis*, let us examine the passages in which Kircher sketches the theory of political ontotheology *more musico*. If the human microcosm is a copy of the cosmic macrocosm, *Registrum* VII uses this microcosm to model the political world. Man can be seen as a harmonious republic, and so it can be used as a model to think, as *musica politica*, about politics itself. Thus, just as all the members of the human body are

directed and preserved by one soul, which ensures their movements are concordant, and just as in music all the different voices and different sounds are arranged towards one single harmony, so must the plurality in the Republic must be unified towards one single harmony, or *concordia*. And further, just as there is only one mind that rules upon the body, and just as there is one God whose providence keeps everything in harmony, then there cannot be more than one supreme power in the Republic. In Aristocracy and Democracy, the ruling power is itself a multitude. Only in monarchy is the plurality commanded by the one: "*In Monarchià, verò penes unum rerum omnium potestas est.*" [Mus B. 433]. Furthermore, order is necessary in everything, and everything is organized in diverse degrees and different orders, where the lesser ones show reverence to the higher ones, while the higher ones are devoted to the love of the lesser ones.[54] Here again, musical experience demonstrates it: beautiful melody is born out of the low, middle, and high sounds. Similarly, in the Republic society is divided between those who rule and those who obey; between the rich and poor; nobility and plebes; doctors and artists, and so on.[55] A Republic cannot subsist if everyone is equal. It is evident that its harmonic equality arises from the different forms in which divine providence made men—some reach the summit of knowledge, while others are submerged in the abyss of ignorance, and so forth. God did not make everyone in the same conditions, and it is only the impious who dare to object to what is evidently the work of His divine providence.[56] The symphony of the political world consists in that, out of the diversity of temperaments and professions in which everyone has been thrown by fortune, conspire altogether towards a single, good, indivisible unit, just as the different members of the body works towards a

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[54] "Ordo itaque in omnibus necessarius est…Ab hoc, inquit, dispensationis divinae promisso, gradus diversus & ordines constituit esse distinctos, ut dum reverentiam minores potentioribus exhiberent, & potentes minoribus dilecitonem impenderent." Mus. B. 433

[55] sicuti enim ut supra quoque dictum est ex diversi toni fidibus ad symetriam intensis, sonus dulcissimus, imò gravibus, mediis &acutis coniunctis, melodia nascitur suavissima: ita Societas in Republica imperantium & obedientium; divitum, pauperum; Nobilium, plebeiorum; Doctorum Artificum, & id genus diversorum graduum, personarum, statuum efficitur pulcher quidam concentus, concordia laudabilis, felix & penè divina. Mus. B. 433

[56] Ita Respublica consistere minimè posset, si omnes essent aequales; apparet harmonica haec aequalitas ex ipsis diversis statibus, quibus divina providentia homines constituit, dum alium summum sapientiae apicem attingere; alium in ingnorantiae abysso submersum vix à bestiis distare…cur itaque bonitas DEI non omnes aequalis conditionis fecit? Hanc iniquam mortalium sortem nobis obiiciunt ii, qui omnem providentiamp impiè negantes, omnia casu evenire arbitrantur. Mus. B. 433.

single end.[57] Similarly, just as the soul is "tota in toto, & tota in quadlibet parte" (all in the whole and in any part), so does Religion—and Kircher makes it clear that he speaks only of the orthodox, Catholic religion—preserves the harmony of the Republic, as everyone believes and observes its articles, from the vices that attack it like bodily disease.[58]

Now, since nature's gifts are variously assigned, it is necessary to examine the proportion in which these gifts are best distributed. That is, which is the most appropriate form of government. Again, it is by looking at the work of God, the archetype whose image the world is, which of these proportions is best—in other words, it is music which provides the means for evaluating and justifying a particular form of government.[59] Kircher describes quickly the Pythagorean proportions: arithmetic (where each term varies from the preceding by a constant value), geometric (where each term varies from the preceding by a constant ratio), and the harmonic (where the harmonic means exceeds and is exceeded by the same fraction of the extremes), and refers the reader to book 3 of the *Musurgia* for more on the means.[60] Democracy corresponds to the arithmetic proportion, aristocracy to the geometric, and monarchy to the harmonic proportion. Thus, in democracy there is the same number of rich and poor; everyone shares the same burdens and advantages; but since everyone aspires to the same right [*ius*], it will be given either to the noble or the ignoble, to the rich or to the poor. Thus, it has to be

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[57] Si enim, omnes Doctores, Sapientes, Principes, divites, mundim perire necesse foret: in hac igitur diversitate ingeniorum, professionum, in hoc diverso fortunae iactu, politici mundi symphonismus primario consistit, & sicut in humani corporis structura, diversa membra diversis officis destinata in bonum unum, bonam conservationem individui conspirant: ita & diversa politici mundi membra in Reipublicae salutem consevationemque conspirare debent. Mus. B. 433.

[58] Et sicuti corpus harmonicum mox destruitur, vbi vehemens humorum discrasia suas habenas, laxauerit; ità Republica vbi iniuria regum, morumque pessimorum consuetudo insurrexeritl Contrà vti corpus per animam perficitur, ità Respublica per Religionem (loquor autem hic de vera illa & solum Sautifica Religione orthodoxà, Catholicà) Nam vti anima est tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte, it¡a ad harmoniam Reipublicae conseruandam, Religio vna, vni omnibus fidei articuli, quos credant, tenendi & obseruandi sunt. Mus. B. 434.

[59] Englmann, *Sphärenharmonie und Mikrokosmos*, 354.

[60] Kircher's explanation is remarkably obscure. He introduces two subdivisions for the Arithmetic and Geometric proportions, conjunct and disjunct, but does not employ them further on); I borrow the explanation of the different means from Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 21.

apportioned among many by lot. This is a blind luck ["quia sors caeca est"]: it does not distinguish between the noble and the ignoble, the wise and the stupid, and so forth. Since everyone believes to be equal to the others, then any place over the others, and whatever anyone can acquire, depends on luck.[61] In aristocracy, the excess is given to the larger number, so all burdens, awards, offices and duties will be given to the best [*Optimatus*], and the rest will be distributed among the people. But then either the different parts are distributed arithmetically, or else they will tend to privilege the best, and if the Prince always comes from the best, then the city will not be a Republic but a kingdom.[62] The most appropriate form of government, Kircher reasons, is monarchy, where the sovereign rules not with blind impetus, i.e. luck, but by distributing everything among the best and the people according to their virtue and merits—this is justice. The best political organization, he concludes, follows from the Pythagorean *tetractys* and from the division of the parts of the soul: 1 is the intellect [*mens sive intellectus architectonicus*], or God, represented by his Vicar on earth; 2 is reason [*ratiocinativa facultas*] or Religion, which preserves harmony in the political world; 3 is the faculty of passions, the Platonic *thumos* [*irascibilis*] or the military forces, which guide the dissidents towards harmony like musical syncopations; and 4 is the appetitive part [*concupiscibilis*], standing in for the people.[63] After discussing the vicissitudes of fortune [*Fortuna*] by which this order might be threatened—consonance turns into dissonance—and showing how the Prince must seek to find the mean between extreme affections to avoid breaking the harmonic order,

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[61] Sic in Republica populus vult aequalia esse omnia onera & commoda, & honores & Magistratus, nec vult tolerarere respectum ullum personarum. Ut cum vult omnibus esse ius venandi, sive nobiles sint, sive ignobiles, sive divites sive pauperes. Quodsi quae reset, que non patitur divisionem inter multos; eam populus vult sortiri; quia sors caeca est, nobilem ab ignobili, divitem a paupere, benemeritum ab immerito, virtuti deditum a vitioso, ingeniosum a stupido minime internoscens, tum etiam aliquis se putat aequari coeteris, si cum iis super talibus, sive iam bona, sive mala sorte adipiscatur, sortitur; ubi sortis loco etiam alia possunt esse acquirendi media. Mus B. 435.

[62] Contra sicut in geometrica proportione excessus numerorum assimilantur numeris ispis, ut magnus numerus mangum habeat excessum; Sic in Optimatum Republica distinguuntur perosnae, distinguuntur onera, praemia, magistratus, munia, & praestatnissima reservantur Optimatibus, reliqua relinquuntur populo; ubi necese est seorsim inter singulas factiones admitti etiam Arithmeticam proportionem, de iis enim quae sunt populi, sortientur omnes, qui sunt in populo: de iis, quae sunt Optimatum, omnes Optimates; nisi enim hoc fiat, peretui erunt in populo gradus Optimatum usque ad ultimam populi faecem; perpetui quoque inter Optimates usque ad Reipublicae Principem, qua ratione non Respublica, sed regium quoddam Civitatis genus erit. Mus B. 436.

[63] Mus B 438-9

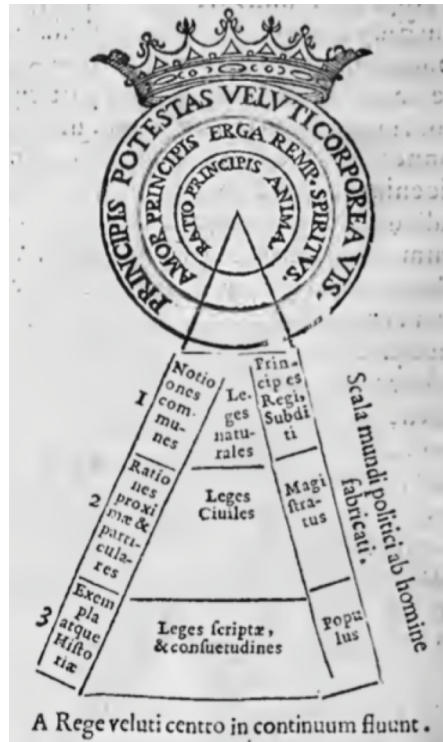Kircher closes with a graphic representation of the structure of his *cosmomusicopolitics* [Fig. 16].

Figure 18: Kircher's Cosmopolitics. Mus. B 440.

This scheme differs in various aspects from the description given above, starting for the ordering in groups of three, as opposed to the four of the *tetractys*. The State is now divided into *Anima*, *Spiritus*, and *Corpus*, and this hierarchy organizes the sources of knowledge: from common notions to history; from natural right to habit; and form the Prince to the people. *Ethos* becoming *nomos*. The concentric circles imply that, as the God of Cusanus, everything is everywhere and in each part. Everything is held together by harmonic force [*vis harmozousa*] or *amor* This final allegory, (which will not make it through to Kircher's future political writings), presents the distillation of Kircher's political thought, its quintessence, as Engelmann remarks.[64]

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[64] Englmann, *Sphärenharmonie und Mikrokosmos*, 364.

The Jesuits were often accused of being Machiavellian due to the strategic associations they sought the powerful figures in their societies. Starting from the Ignatian principle of "accomodation," the Jesuits tended to exploit the same disjunction between being and appearing, or between ethics and politics, that Machiavelli first theorized, specifically by their advocacy for using amphibology in the practice of casuistry, sometimes recommending secrecy, *simulatio*, and *dissimulatio* as effective political strategies, as in the case of Piedmontese Jesuit Giovanni Botero. As Maria Iglesias-Rondina puts it, it was a matter of using dissimulation, partially hiding a truth, in order to preserve and reinforce power.[65] These accusations led them to produce a series of works in which they sought to distance themselves from Machiavelli, works of political theory on reason of State, explicitly mirroring and inverting Machiavelli's concepts, as Iglesias-Rondina writes.[66] Similarly, as Englmann shows throughout her study of Kircher's political works, his political theology aims to be a point-by-point refutation of Machiavelli, insisting in the inseparability of ethics and politics, the need for a truly wise Prince, and especially the need for an "organic interconnection" in the entire community, as opposed to Machiavelli's state in which the entire state is organized around the sovereignty of the Prince.[67]

By employing the hyperbological mimetology of his allegorical practices to model the structure of the State upon the human body, Kircher's attempt to overcome

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[65] Clara Iglesias-Rondina, *Machiavelli and the Jesuits: An Introduction* (CreateSpace, 2014). The most famous of these attacks was a *libellum* entitled Monita privata Societatis, which started circulating in Kraków around 1614, which claimed to contain the true instructions of the Society of Jesus, a behavior protocol for the Jesuits that "invited the members of the Society to extend their political and economic power by means of a slow but steady infiltration of society at all levels." As Sabina Pavone writes, it was soon recognized as a forgery, but it nevertheless shows the common perception that the enemies of the Jesuits had during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.O'Malley, *The Jesuits*, 50.

[66] Iglesias-Rondina, *Machiavelli and the Jesuits*, loc. 268. The most famous of these works, as analyzed by Iglesias-Rondina, are Giovanni Botero, *Della ragione di stato, libri dieci Con tre libri delle cause della grandezza delle città. Del Sig. Giovanni Botero Benese. Di nuouo in questa impressione, mutati alcuni luoghi dall'istesso autore, & accresciuti di diuersi discorsi ...* (Venetia: Appresso i Gioliti, 1598), http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/34047600.html; Pedro de Ribadeneira and Pantaleon Aznar, *Tratado de la religion y virtudes que debe tener el Principe Christiano, para gobernar y conservar sus Estados, ...* (En Madrid: : En la Oficina de Pantaleon Aznar, 1788); Francisco de Quevedo, *Politica de Dios: govierno de Christo : tirania de Satanas* (Navarra: C. de Labàyen, 1631); See also Donald W. Bleznick, "Spanish Reaction to Machiavelli in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19, no. 4 (1958): 542–50, doi:10.2307/2707922.

[67] Englmann, *Sphärenharmonie und Mikrokosmos*, 301ff.

Machiavelli ends up producing a spectacularly baroque version of Machiavellian mimetopolitics. Just as Jesuit political theory ended up reaffirming reason of state as the central political problem of their time, imitating and inverting Machiavelli while employing his own techniques and formulations—in both cases it is after all a matter of preserving the state and maintaining power—, so does Kircher's work produce a theory which aims to unify ethics and politics by mobilizing the performative assemblage of *mousikē* in its most hyperbolic formulation.

In chapter 6 I suggested that Machiavelli had been crucial in defining the mimetology of the humanist turn towards the past, where it was not only a matter of reconstructing a lost past, but more importantly of establishing future sites for the arrival of something that does not return as a copy, but rather as an unrepresentable space determined by incompletion. In Kircher's work, this mimetology reaches its extreme form: the *Musurgia Universalis*, the *mousikē ergon* of the universe is such a return. All of musical knowledge is in-corporated—made into a body by taking the human body as its model, and thus conversely politicizing the human body, making it the paradigm of the political. What the nineteenth century will understand as the "King's two bodies," is here a multiplicity of bodies, a microcosmos of bodies upon bodies. God, the Prince, and the State coincide in a multiplicity that is one: *tota in totius*. Unlike the Cartesian one, this body is everywhere affected and affective: it is first and foremost the object of magical transformations which seek above all to maintain its health and harmony through or, as music. From this it follows that all the "strictly musicological" elements of the *Musurgia* (the classifications of styles and affections, the organology, the experiments and theory about the physics of sound, the compositional machine) are also made part of this nosotheopolitical assemblage while determining it. They are mobilized for the production of a total political theater of the universe and the elaboration of techniques, practices, and technologies for its government and healthy maintenance: it is a form of musicological *governmentality* (sensu Foucault). Circulating around the globe, this is the paradigmatic theory of baroque sovereignty and political theology. Not so much an aesthetization of politics but a spec(tacu/tra)lization of affective mimetopolitics, which accomplished what

the *intermedi* and early opera had already begun to do: the actualization of the political mimetology of ancient Greek *mousikē* in the modern world. Employing allegory and all other mimetological strategies, Kircher's political theology is, as a text, also a performance, in the senses elaborated in chapter 5: most crucially, it has incompletion as its condition of possibility and impossibility. Kircher's politics did not have any lasting resonance or influence that we can ascertain. And it does not so much represent or reflect the *Weltanschauung* of his time, or obey to either of the two epistemes that overlapped as folds in the baroque. Rather, it actualizes and expresses potentialities in humanist thought that only coincide in his work. By being neither a purely allegorical work of art nor a purely scientific or philosophical theory, by incompleting the restricted mimetologies of these presumably independent spheres, the *Musurgia* produces a mimetic cosmopolitics that keeps returning without ever being the same—in Wagner's *Gesamtkuntswerk*, in postmodern theories of the spectacle, and in neoliberal forms of governmentality. From this perspective, Kircher is not so much a reactionary thinker as much as a "proactionary" one: his mimetology aims neither for the resurrection of an ancient past nor for the installation of an absolute beginning, but for the actualization of the productive force of mimesis in its most extreme, baroque mode.

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