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Dionysus and Divine Violence: a reading of *The Bacchae*

The subject is lifeless except when it is able to shudder in response to the total spell. And only the subject's shudder can transcend that spell.

- T.W. Adorno¹

When Agave appears towards the end of *The Bacchae* with the head of her son, Pentheus, on a stick – a thyrsus – calling everyone to join the feast, she is enacting a number of taboos for the Greeks and their tragic stage: infanticide, cannibalism, human sacrifice and regicide. And in standing on the stage, convulsing in ecstasy and pleasure – a pleasure that will soon turn into repulsion – she is in many ways also exposing the limits or possibilities of the tragic experience itself. For despite her call, a call aimed as much at the citizens of Thebes as at the audience, the theatrical event does not dissolve or erupt into an orgy of emotion and sensation – a Platonic nightmare or a ‘parody of catharsis’,² as Adorno defines kitsch. Indeed, as this analysis hopes to show, Agave’s flaunting of her prey and her subsequent recognition – *anagnorisis* -of this as the face of her son, acts as a kind of *gestus*, in the Brechtian sense, of the ways in which tragedy could be seen to negotiate notions of affect, spectatorship and catharsis. And in doing so, this play, probably more than any other Greek play, helps to create an aesthetic of cruelty for the stage.

This paper proposes to revisit the play in an attempt to trace a kind of aesthetics of cruelty that I think has been shaped by this play and its reception. For this is the play that has helped create a theatricality of cruelty that in its Christian manifestations, for example, allows us to read the passion of Christ as a tragedy or in its modernist renditions conceptualises Dionysus as negativity, both for modernist theatre and for the philosophers of modernity from Nietzsche onwards.

It is true that many of the themes and tropes that form the reception of *The Bacchae*, were thought through, particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, within the context of the so-called ‘German cast’ of Greek tragedy. This is the philosophical tradition that initiates a split between tragedy as a literary form - a poetics, in the legacy of Aristotle – and tragedy as a philosophical category as something that pertains to life in general; an ‘idea of the tragic’. In the words of Peter Szondi: ‘Since Aristotle we have a poetics of tragedy, only since Schelling a philosophy of the tragic’.³ However, this opposition is problematised by Stephen Halliwell, who claims that the Greeks did indeed have a philosophy of tragedy and that this can be seen not in the great advocate of tragedy and its cathartic / redemptive function, Aristotle, but in the philosopher he was defending tragedy against, Plato. Halliwell writes:

One commonly drawn corollary of the German cast of interest in the tragic is the claim that while ancient Greece created the first and most concentrated tradition of dramatic tragedy, it lacked anything that can be classified as an explicit notion of the tragic. But I contend... that there are important grounds for ascribing to Plato the first conscious delineation of something we can coherently identify as ‘the tragic’.⁴

It is fascinating that the philosopher of anti-theatricality formulates this ‘idea of the tragic’. In many ways, this makes sense, as it is Plato who is interested in the ethical impact of tragedy for the actors, for the audience and for the *polis*. Although Aristotle provides us with a formal, and, as some scholars claim, formalistic definition of tragedy,⁵ it is Plato who is more concerned with the political, ethical and to use his

own term, ‘muddy’ aspects of tragedy.⁶ This analysis hopes to show that it is not solely Platonic philosophy that conceptualises this ‘idea of the tragic’. Through *The Bacchae* the Greek stage itself presents us with both a poetics *and* a philosophy of the tragic; and an aesthetics of cruelty is possibly what helps to bridge these two somewhat disparate views of tragedy and the tragic.

However, it would be unfair to the ‘German cast’ itself not to acknowledge a certain complexity beyond this split. From Hölderlin onwards the return to the Greeks and specifically to tragedy was not a form of nostalgia, but as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe claims, a quest ‘for the grounds of theatricality’.⁷ So this ‘idea of the tragic’ also engages the *praxis* of tragedy (Hölderlin’s *mechane*,⁸ Nietzsche’s revival of ritual and music; the list could theoretically encompass the whole of the modernist experiment in theatre). In turn this ‘idea of the tragic’ is heavily inflected by this revived theatricality.

This conflation of the philosophies of tragedy with these performance imperatives, gives tragedy a heightened position in all the discussions about the relationships between politics and aesthetics, that I would claim form part of this ‘German cast’. In all the debates from Nietzsche and Wagner to Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno, tragedy occupies a privileged position. Whether in Brecht’s somewhat schematic anti-Aristotelianism – or more significantly in his revival of Hölderlin’s translation of the *Antigone*⁹ – or in Adorno’s championing of Beckett (and castigating of Brecht), the possibility or impossibility of tragedy is tested through its relationship to the political.

In this sense, the choice of the Adorno quotation and his reflections on the relationships between horror, shudder and catharsis to frame this paper do not appear completely arbitrary. The theatrical tropes experimented with in *The Bacchae* and in

its long reception are consciously concerned with the possibility or not of catharsis, and with the modes of affect and spectatorship that tragedy proposes. The theatrical dimension of this quarrel, both ancient and modern, needs highlighting. From Plato onwards it is the embodied, civic, collective, i.e. specifically theatrical dimension of tragedy that appears troubling, that in many ways initiates the *long durée* of the anti-theatrical tradition. Equally significant, however, is the fact that when the ‘ancient quarrel’, is revived by the moderns, as in the debates between Nietzsche and Wagner, or Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno, again the theatrical occupies a central position. This analysis puts forward the claim that the figure of Dionysus that enacts this fascination with the theatrical within modernity (as philosophical negativity and as embodied cruelty,) at least partly derives from this play and its reception. So, when Adorno claims that without ‘the shudder of catharsis’ there is nothing but reified consciousness, and that the proper response to art is horror, it is impossible not to also hear the reverberations of a Bacchic echo in his phrase.

To return to the image of Agave that frames this paper, the modernists in many ways confront her provocation. The centrality of violence for this play and the ways it perhaps perverts the idea of sacrifice or even catharsis (is this the horror of the shudder or is it kitsch, as Adorno defined the ‘parody of catharsis?’) proves attractive to the modernist theatrical and theoretical avant-garde. This analysis would like to propose a reading of the violence of Dionysus through Walter Benjamin’s notion of Divine Violence as this appears in his essay ‘Critique of Violence’,¹⁰ a violence that appears as a means without an end, not a recuperative / restorative violence, but a catastrophic violence that represents nothing other than ‘the sign of injustice in the world’. The tragic, both as a specific theatrical practice and as a body of philosophy,

might be one way in which this notion of Divine Violence is manifested and embodied as part of a theatrical event.

A summary of the play follows: Dionysus returns to Thebes from exile to prove that he is truly the son of Zeus. His lineage has been contested and he has been denied his rites, rituals and worship. He is here to set the record straight and to punish the Theban family that has dishonoured him and his mother, Semele. Dionysus comes with a chorus of followers, Asiatic slave women, the Bacchae, who call him their liberator. They are joined by the women of Thebes who respond to the call of the Bacchae and follow them and Dionysus in an ecstatic trance to the mountain, Cithaeron, where they perform unspeakable acts. This all takes place while Pentheus, the king of Thebes and Dionysus's maternal cousin – and his rival in this agon - is away. Cadmus and Tiresias, the blind prophet, as older, wiser men know better than to resist Dionysus and they decide to join in the rituals and appear dressed in Dionysiac paraphernalia. Upon seeing them Pentheus is enraged and mocks them. As a man of reason and as a representative of state/secular power Pentheus is desperate to restore law and order in Thebes. Pentheus's first encounter with Dionysus is erotically charged and this doubling of the two central roles continues throughout the play to reach its final apotheosis in the dressing up scene. Dionysus, tapping into Pentheus's secret desire to watch the women on the mountain, convinces him to cross dress and after parading him through the streets of Thebes leads him to the mountain, where the hunter becomes the hunted, he is attacked by the Bacchae and finally torn to pieces by his own mother, who mistakes him for a wild beast. When Agave returns to Thebes with her prey on a thyrsus, she is gradually returned to consciousness with the help of her father. A horrible *anagnorisis* follows, where she eventually recognises the face of her own son. At this point Dionysus appears in his own form, properly *ex machina*,

and hands out his own brand of justice. The family that dishonoured him is completely destroyed and banished from Thebes. Even Cadmus and his wife Harmonia who respected Dionysus's rites are banished. Dionysus certainly gets his revenge, but has justice been served?

It is this aspect of the play that opens it to somewhat 'nihilist' interpretations. And, indeed, the figure of Dionysus has been read as one of terror.¹¹ The introduction of Benjamin's notion of 'Divine Violence' could perhaps inflect this idea while also doing some justice to its theatrical manifestations. For Dionysus is certainly not a liberal; he does not seek equal representation and tolerance. His justice appears relentless and uneven. This is not the justice of *The Oresteia*, nor is it that of *Antigone* - plays whose discourses of vengeance, justice and law are also gendered. This is not a matter of setting something right, of addressing cheques and balances. How is the sacrifice of Pentheus and of the city of Thebes redeemed? How is its violence counterbalanced? Interestingly, as Derek Hughes claims in his *Culture and Sacrifice*, one of the crucial subordinate themes in the philosophical and anthropological readings of sacrifice is 'the relationships between sacrifice and systems of calculation or measurement.' He writes:

[...] it becomes possible to see profound psychological or symbolic affinities between the quid pro quo of sacrificial transaction and the equivalences of established in systems of measurement, or in mathematical calculation, or in the determination of exchange value in the marketplace.

.....

The use of counting in Greek tragedy is therefore analysed not because it is, in itself, sacrificial, but because it presents a constellation of ideas – the

relationship between man's capacity for numerical order and moral chaos – which was later to explain his capacity for human sacrifice.¹²

So, the violence and the sacrifice of *The Bacchae* is literally fruitless; it does not address an imbalance; it does not propose another system of measurement in its place. It is partly the function of the Greek term for fate, *moira*, which also etymologically means share, lot, percentage (and is linked to *meros*, part, and *meirestha*, to receive one's share). So what is the 'merit' of this sacrifice, or who merits from this Dionysiac violence? The answer would have to be no one and nothing in the immediate present or in the strictly instrumental sense. This is violence in the Benjaminian sense as a 'means without an end', absolutely non-instrumental. It strikes, supposedly 'out of blue' and appears to be without rhyme or reason. Benjamin writes in his 'Critique of Violence':

Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythical violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood... Mythical violence uses bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it.¹³

As Žižek underlines in his comments on this passage, Divine Violence is not restorative, it is not law breaking followed by law making. It is simply 'the sign of the injustice of the world, of the world being ethically out of joint'.¹⁴ It is the violence

that although systemically deriving from broader injustice ‘appears’ arbitrary, wild and anarchic, i.e. the opposite of sovereign or liberal law. It is the violence that supposedly is based on pure trauma, on resentment (and not on politics proper). Sometimes we associate it with sudden violent outbursts of crowds (*plythos* is the term used in the play and not *demos*) that offend our liberal or even our democratic sensibilities (let alone our property, our individual ‘freedom’, our ‘right’ to travel to work with the minimum of disruption, etc). Žižek mentions the examples of crowds of people in Rio de Janeiro who ‘descended from the favelas into the rich part of the city and started looting and burning supermarkets. This was divine violence... They were like biblical locusts, the divine punishment for men’s sinful ways.’ The recent riots in Athens itself (the city that in its ancient form prompted Euripides into exile) clearly show us that the middle classes too are capable of such violence (again in response to a settling of accounts, addressing a debt of sorts). It is not for nothing that the term for fate in classical Greek, *moira*, as mentioned above is linked with notions of measurement and, in the end, accounting itself, being accountable for one’s actions. And to quote Žižek again: ‘Those annihilated by divine violence are fully and completely guilty: they are not sacrificed, since they are not worthy of being sacrificed to and accepted by God – they are annihilated without being made a sacrifice’. ¹⁵ This is, more or less what happens at the end of this play.

The qualification of this violence as ‘Divine’ is, of course, significant, as for Benjamin the theological dimension (without which he claims revolution can never succeed) is crucial, as indeed it is for Greek tragedy in general and this tragedy in particular. Indeed, the relationship to the divine is one aspect of the play that makes it especially cruel. ‘It is not fitting that Gods should be like mortals in their rage’, contests Cadmus towards the end of the play. Yet, this God simply mirrors and

delivers the rage with which he was confronted ('Yes, for I, a God, was treated with outrage by you').¹⁶ However, because he is not a mere mortal his punishment does not need to fit the crime; it can be excessive, utterly cruel. Traditionally, this rendition of the divine by Euripides has been read as a critique of the Gods, as a sign of Euripides' atheism. However, more recently classical scholars agree that far from being somewhat anachronistically an atheist, Euripides is deeply concerned with the function of the divine, and especially its structural link to the workings of tragedy. In her forthcoming study *Tragically Speaking: On the Uses and Abuses of Poststructuralism for Life*, Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, contends that *The Bacchae* 'could be the founding play rehearsing "the separation of church and state"'.¹⁷ It could also be the founding play that rehearses the separation of the divine from the tragic (one of the reasons it has been interpreted as also staging the death of tragedy). In an insightful reading of the play that sees it as a series of parrhesiastic debates / clashes, where 'truth-telling is also open not simply to being abused (as it is by Pentheus), but also to becoming the very agent of catastrophe (as Dionysus makes it be),¹⁸ she contends that Euripides stages the perils and possibilities of leading a 'committed life', a 'parrhesiastic life', and asks the demanding question: 'And is parrhesia's underside this terrible reality – that if one can die for what one believes, so one can kill for (not) believing?'.¹⁹ If this forms part of the ethics of tragedy, this ethics will always have a contingent relationship to the divine (the theological in Benjamin's sense), even when, or especially when it is being critical of it.

If Dionysus embodies this type of Divine Violence, he also embodies the idea of theatre itself. His violence comes with a theatrical aesthetics, and that is one of cruelty. The connections between tragic form and the theatres of cruelty have been examined from modernism onwards, particularly through the work of Antonin Artaud,

but also Bertolt Brecht (although these two high priests of modernist theatricality are usually read in opposition). If the reception of this play by the philosophies of modernity from Nietzsche onwards allows us to read the figure of Dionysus as pure negativity, then its reception in performance has helped to create an aesthetic of cruelty for the stage. And this theatrical dimension is crucial, as the notions of cruelty are enacted through the embodied, civic and collective aspect of the tragic event. Žižek reads Benjamin's Divine Violence as belonging to the order of the event rather than to the order of being:

What this entails is that, to put it in Badiou's terms, mythic violence belongs to the order of Being, while divine violence belongs to the order of Event: there are no 'objective' criteria enabling us to identify an act of violence as divine; the same act that, to an external observer, is merely an outburst of violence can be divine for those engaged in it – there is no big Other guaranteeing its divine nature, the risk of reading and assuming it as divine is fully the subject's own.²⁰

And this contingent, ephemeral and embodied aspect of the Event is also the domain of the theatrical event. So Dionysus in one performance could be read as a terrorist and in another as a liberator – ideally in performances of the same production. The term Dionysus uses to describe Pentheus once he has dressed up as a woman, stressing the doubling and mirroring of their roles, is *deinos* (three times in two lines, 971-2), a term he used earlier to describe himself (in the superlative *deinotatos*, 861). This is a notorious term that has inspired much philosophical reflection.²¹ It can mean wondrous but also strange, able, astute but also horrific. Interestingly, it appears in the famous 'Ode to man' of the *Antigone*, and has been translated by Heidegger as

umheimliche. The play could be seen as enacting the *deinon* quality of tragic spectatorship itself, oscillating between humanist identification, *catharsis* as relief, purgation in the Aristotelian sense, and *catharsis* as a shudder, as estrangement in the Brechtian sense.

The play in many ways has helped to codify and conventionalise a set of theatrical tropes that we today can identify as an aesthetic of cruelty (hybridity, a confusion of binaries, cannibalism, meta-theatricality, ecstasy, sacrifice, dismemberment etc). This is not an unmediated rite or ritual nor is it simply a philosophical essay. This is the Greek play that more than any other is directly concerned with the power of theatre itself, with notions of affect and spectatorship. For, as mentioned in the opening paragraph it does not dissolve into an orgy of emotion and sensation. In enacting the story of the return of Dionysus, it is also delineating in a clearly meta-theatrical manner the potential but also the danger that the tragic experience entails. This is the only extant play where Dionysus is the protagonist. Even though he was the God of theatre he was seldom visible on the Greek stage (perhaps the idea of embodying such a God triggered all the Platonic fears about contagion). It is fascinating to note that this tragedy enacting the birth of tragedy through Dionysiac ritual has come to stand in for the death of the genre itself.

This very theatricality of the play also morphs into its philosophy, into its 'truth claim' as it were. And it is here where Greek tragedy itself is seen to be wearing a German mask. It has been claimed that Euripides is the first modern playwright; his championing of the underdog, his use of language, his meta-theatricality, together with the specific historical context of this particular play, a play of exile, have all made Euripides appealing to a modern sensibility and have contributed towards the

many revivals of *The Bacchae* towards the end of the twentieth century. However, the mark of modernity as it has been typified by the German cast of Greek tragedy (both in its idealist and its materialist manifestations – both Wagner and Brecht), is the ability to reflect, or the urge towards reflection. *The Bacchae* possibly offers us an example of how that reflection becomes a shudder. Through the embodied, sensual and civic experience of the tragic event and through an aesthetic of cruelty, *The Bacchae* theatricalises spectatorship and affect itself. The possibilities of the tragic experience (the dream of democracy, sexual revolution, the utopia of anarchy) but also the dangers (mob rule, chaos, absolute power, primitivism) are enacted and there possibly also lies its ‘truth claim’. For in a sense, this is the ultimate Platonic tragedy, enacting the Platonic dilemma regarding the power of the poetic / tragic; and we could read it in conjunction with the parable of the cave.

Classicists have pointed out that Plato writes like a tragic philosopher (in the way that Nietzsche ‘philosophises like a poet’). Indeed, legend has it that the young Plato wrote tragedies and later burnt them when he joined the academy. This love /hate relationship with the tragic transpires in the rhetorical use of the dramatic dialogue, the creation of characters, and the sheer extent of his concern with and delineation of the *agon* between tragedy and philosophy (some may claim that Plato set the terms for that debate). More so than Aristotle, who in his defence of tragedy, focuses exclusively on its formal qualities, Plato is concerned with its philosophical efficacy. And his objection to tragedy is on the grounds of its *ethics*, of its ability to influence and shape both the actors and the audience. It is this aspect of Plato that at once initiates the great anti-theatrical tradition and, according to Stephen Halliwell, creates the ‘idea of the tragic’, at once Greek and German, both ancient and modern.

In this context, *The Bacchae* could be read as rehearsing that same *agon* between tragedy and philosophy, but through the discourses of theatre rather than philosophy. Those same discourses of the theatre are shown to be not simply formal matters, but endemic (in the *demos*) to both the aesthetics and ethics of tragedy. It is no surprise then that in all the modernist debates about the ideology of form and the efficacy of engaged or autonomous art the spectre of tragedy figures. What *The Bacchae* also shows us is that this philosophical tragedy (after all Aristotle deemed Euripides to be the most philosophical of all tragedians), is linked to an aesthetics of performance, one that can carry and help manifest notions of Divine Violence (in a genealogy of theatre that sees it as structurally linked to religion), primarily through a discourse of cruelty that permeates both the actors and the spectators. This is not catharsis as cleansing, justice or even retaliation; this is catharsis as the *shudder*.

One of the premises that scholars cite in hailing Euripides as a modern playwright is the fact that this play was a work of exile. It was written in the court of Macedon where Euripides went in self-imposed exile. It was not commissioned as part of a dramatic festival and it was not written with the support of the whole machinery of Athenian democracy (a somewhat mythic combination that throughout the history of theatre has been read as the organic moment of the co-existence of theatre and democracy – part and parcel of the Classical moment). Indeed, it could be said that the play substitutes this ‘organic moment’ with the theatrical machine itself: Dionysus provides his own prologue, sets up the play and appears *ex machina* at the end to dish out his justice. It is as if the whole play is *ex machina* and Dionysus its master of ceremonies.

The play was produced posthumously by Euripides' son in Athens at a time when Plato would have been about 19 years old (405 BCE). Continuing the many myths that surround the reception of this play, it might be interesting to speculate what would have happened had the young Plato (the Plato of the tragedies) witnessed this performance; might this horrific image of Dionysus have triggered some shudder in him; one that surfaced about 25 years later when in his repudiation of tragedy in *The Republic* he creates the notorious image of the rhapsode; one that will fold over into the image of the actor:

If a man who was capable by his cunning of assuming every kind of shape and imitating all things should arrive in our city, bringing with himself the poems which he wished to exhibit, we should fall down and worship him as a holy and wondrous and delightful creature, but should say to him that there is not man of that kind among us in our city, nor is it lawful for such a man to rise among us, and we should send him away to another city, after pouring myrrh down over his head and crowning him with fillets of wool.²²

In a passage that has inspired much critical reflection,²³ Plato, significantly, does not repudiate this stranger and his art; he does not call for his banishment. Rather, like Cadmus and Tiresias, he makes a plea for worship and appeasement. Note the use of the epithets, each coming with its own heavy philosophical resonance (*deinos* appears again). Furthermore, Plato is interested in the impact this visitor will have on the city for he presents a challenge to the order of things ('nor is it lawful for such a man to rise among us'). Still there is no call for violence or sacrifice (for that is the domain of the tragic). Plato calls for a type of exorcism that would usher this shape-shifting stranger to another city. One wonders what this city would be that would welcome

such a creature. Thebes might present us with a case of a city that didn't welcome the stranger or 'covered him with myrrh'. *The Bacchae* also shows us that the other 'city' that can welcome this 'cunning' creature is the stage.

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¹ T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt, ed. Gretal Adorno and Rolf Tiedeman (London and New York, 1984). P.455.

² *Ibid.*, p. 339.

³ Peter Szondi, *Versuch über Tragische* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1961), 151. Quoted and analysed in Simon Goldhill, 'Generalising About Tragedy', in Rita Felski, ed., *Rethinking Tragedy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 45-65, p. 52

⁴ See Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 99.

⁵ See Edith Hall, 'Is There a *polis* in Aristotle's *Poetics*?', in M. S. Silk, ed., *Tragedy and the Tragic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 295-309.

⁶ For an analysis of Aristotle's term *catharsis* and its relation to what Nussbaum calls the '*katharsis*... word-family', where it is described as 'clearing up' and 'clarification'... 'as the removal of some obstacle (dirt or blot, or obscurity, or admixture)... 'as clearing up of the vision of the soul of [bodily] obstacles', see Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 389-393.

⁷ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Hölderlin's Theatre', in Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 118-19.

⁸ See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 101.

⁹ For an analysis of the relationships between tragic and epic theatre see, Olga Taxidou, 'Machines and Models for Modern Tragedy: Brecht / Berlau, *Antigone-Model 1948*', in Rita Felski, ed., *Rethinking Tragedy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 241-262.

¹⁰ see 'Critique of Violence', in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (London and NY; Random House US, 1995), pp. 277-299.

¹¹ See Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003),

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- ¹² See Derek Hughes, *Culture and Sacrifice: Ritual Death in Literature and Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 3-7.
- ¹³ See Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, p. 297.
- ¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2008), p. 169.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- ¹⁶ Euripides, *Bacchae and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2000), Trans. and ed., James Morwood, Intro., Edith Hall, p. 82, 1345-1350.
- ¹⁷ See Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, *Tragically Speaking: On the Uses and Abuses of Poststructuralism for Life*, forthcoming from University of Nebraska Press.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 266.
- ²⁰ See Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*, p. 169.
- ²¹ For a concise analysis of the genealogy of this term see, Stathis Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). P. 26-30.
- ²² Plato, *Republic*, III.398a 1-8, from *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Trans. Paul Shorey.
- ²³ For a recent commentary see Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content*. Trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).