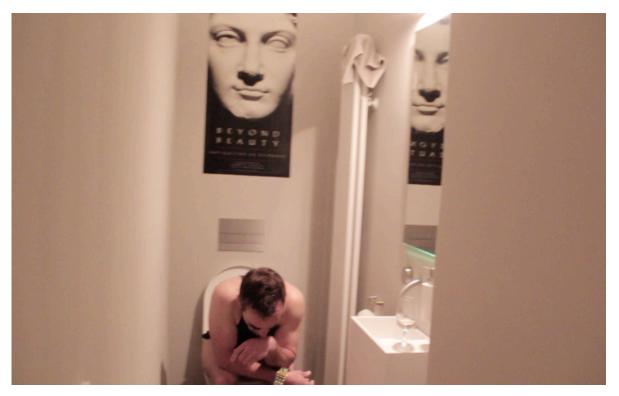# "You created me"

Affective Technologies in Greek Performativity and *Twenty Looks*

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Still frame from *symposion #1, Völklingen 2016* (LA)

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1/ De-philosophizing performance (in order to rediscover its affective-intellectual pleasures)

On discovering *Twenty Looks on Paris is Burning at the Judson Church* at the *CND* in Paris in April 2016 we were enchanted. Within a highly contemporary semantic framework of references, virtuosically drawn from art, fashion and pop culture, a long forgotten questioning took shape. It might be most adequately described as *anthropological*, even if this term has fallen out of fashion as a consequence of its association with a psychology that reduces complexity to the individual Ego and its inner feelings. On the contrary, Trajal Harrell's anthropological questioning develops a performative space in which the affective universes and forces connected to a wider concept of the *psyché*, intertwined with other semantic environments, are interrogated and unfolded.[1] We were fascinated by the urgency and precision with which he posed the seemingly harmless question: *How to be intense with one another?* Enquiring today an experiential space that might be collectively shared means to first of all re-discover and re-appropriate this question for the artistic practice. It requires re-discovery since a seemingly unbridgeable gap separates all the various highly differentiated contemporary artistic practices from questions regarding experiential qualities *of human beings* and spaces to share them.[2]

The discrepancy between *artistic practice* and *collective practice* might be understood as a consequence of the philosophical conceptualization (in the tracks of Kantian aesthetics) of the modern art work as autonomous. Emancipated from a technical understanding of art that places the artwork in the service of intellectual and physical interests, emancipated also from affects and needs, the space of aesthetic pleasure was re-located into the subject's judgment. Consequently, the notion of *Play* was used to designate the purely reflexive

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[1] The *anthropological concept* is further developed below: 2. 1. *Illusory Shores*.

[2] The question at stake might be described in terms of "The Vernissage Problem": *Gathered between the white walls of the art space, we are ignored by the artwork. Autonomous, it is enjoying itself in playing with its sign-mates on a discursive playground. We hear them giggle, chasing each other in always new reflexive loops. If at all in the loyal company of a drink we stand besides one another, jealously thinking about all the adventures that the art might experience in our place. The games which are left to us do very rarely bring us together. The dialectical result of the tendency towards discursive dissolution of themes is the ironic longing for an authentic, intact realness which at the same time is supposed as unattainable.* This movement seems inappropriate to us because of the political urgency of the question at stake. We believe that a negligence of the question of togetherness is to quit the field for identitarian movements.

operation of the subject's cognitive faculties within the aesthetic judgment.[3] The strict separation of the "defective" sensuality of the corporeal side of the human from the rational transcendental subject implied a hierarchy between social conviviality (vulgar playing) and art proper (philosophical play). The latter's dignity consisting in the adaption of a philosophical questioning: art had to be concerned with *sense* or an ontologicalized understanding of the *play* of signs, precedent to any concrete game that is actually played together.[4]

The postmodern attempts to overcome these distinctions rest paradoxically mostly within a philosophical conceptual framework. Two modifications of the philosophical generalization of the game have been prevailing: one *ontological,* the other *socio-economical*. The *ontological version* doesn't restrict the game to the aesthetic judgment but refers to every possible access to reality[5]: All our semantic references to the world are conceived in the form of a game, consisting of semantic differentiations. In consequence, the conception of art related to it, is to mimetically present the respective philosophical ontology: To evoke the game of the world which is always already playing its game with us.[6] In the *socio-economical version*, the game is taking place within a certain field of power relations or a certain communicative system (the art field one semantic playfield among others). We as players might invest our symbolic capital in such a field.[7] Another pattern is departing from the autopoietic reproduction of a system's logic.[8] The related art practice is to indicate one's awareness of the semantic processing at work.

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[3] See: Immanuel, Kant: *Kritik der Urteilskraft,* Berlin und Libau 1790, B252f. „Game" and „Play" are used synonymously here.

[4] For an emblematic articulation of this underestimation of the concrete act of playing together, see: Sonderegger, Ruth: *Für eine Ästhetik des Spiels: Hermeneutik, Dekonstruktion und der Eigensinn der Kunst*, Frankfurt 2000. Her wide concepts of art as a reflexime game ignores all the attempts to rediscover the potential of actual gaming within modern avantgardes, for instance in the heritage of Dada's Anti-Art, Fluxus or Happening.

[5] "Dans ce jeu de la représentation, le point d'origine devient insaisissable. Il y a des choses, des eaux et des images, un renvoi infini des unes aux autres mais plus de source. Il n'y a plus d'origine simple.", Derrida, Jacques: *De la Grammatologie*, Paris 1967, 55; See also: Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt 2006, § 69.

[6] The simplifying typology is meant to render transparent some interdependences of artistic and philosophical practice. Following this idea, a philosophy of history that works with the concept of a successive deviation from truth (think of Martin Heidegger or Guy Debord) would favor spontaneistic artistic strategies in order to evoke the always already absent signifié to show up in a revelation-like eventness.

[7] See Bourdieu, Pierre: *Les règles de L'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris 1992.

[8] See Luhman, Niklas: *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt 1995.

One consequence of this universalization of the game is to underestimate the complexity of the phenomenon of playing and its affective dimensions. Since entertainment and pleasure is regarded as something immediate and given, not worth further consideration, the concrete-virtual shared sensual space is often overlooked along with its own complexity, relations and potentialities. While our autonomized discursive systems produce endlessly new virtualities and differentiations, we are left alone, lacking procedures that aim to establish a commensurability between the growing, de-inhabited archive, and each other.

Phantom, displaced reality haunts us in our longing for the ever unattainable wholeness of a "mythical" past. The consequence is an interminable oscillation between *irony,* and a *Rousseauist* craving for an always already lost *pure origin.*[9] Since every framework and narrative appears as a *mere* construction, we would as a consequence have to abandon them altogether. If we conceive it to be a radically singular phenomenon of post-modern times to have finally understood all that, to have for the first time lost our innocence, then we would indeed have no alternative than to wallow in melancholia. Luckily, if we are approximately right in our philosophical genealogy of the universalization of the game, we might be able to find a means of escape by *posing the problem beyond philosophy.*

We believe that Trajal Harrell's work opens up such an alternative, by turning towards qualities proper to performative, theatrical research. It is a mistake to believe that a refusal of the primacy of an onto-epistemological questioning will automatically lead to resignation, arbitrariness and frustration. Hasn't the philosophical tradition always been in competition with itself, with conflicting practices of truth and reflection, just as in poetry and the theatre?[10] Turning towards those artistic practices in their combination of theory and practice might lead

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[9] The imaginary of an intact Greek past with its art often served as a counterpart to the perceived tendency of modernity towards abstraction. Longing for a revival, the figure of a „new mythology" became prevailing. Richard Wagner's instauration *of Bayreuther Festspiele* is paradigmatic for such a project: Wagner, Richard: *Kunst und Revolution*, Leipzig 1849. The following proposal is somehow indebted to the question of how to become polytheist again, with the important difference, that focusing on the performative dimension of some early Greek practices, the category of *pure origins* is left out. *Is it a signal of a neoliberal individualization of this longing that pure origins ® appeared 2010 as the name of a coffee chain in Berlin Mitte? The culture critique as a stimulus for ever more differentiated consumption?*

[10] Derrida's thesis of an unlimited and endless game of deferrals is not about an adequate interpretation of what has happened in history but has a systematical aim, that is the *thinkability of thinking as processual*. Every historical material is allegorized against the backdrop of such an ontologicalized questioning. From this perspective, the entire theatrical and artistic tradition is no more or less game than any other action would be, if only *properly* understood. We assume that the games in the world are irreducible to a philosophical interpretation of the world.

us to be more careful about too quickly abandoning the difference between play and actual reality. We might instead first of all question and differenciate the gap between the two.

In asking not for the *play of the world*, but rather turning towards the *plays within the world*, we discover through Trajal Harrell's work a dimension of playing that emphatically focuses on the dialectical entanglement of virtual frameworks with the situative reality produced thereby. It is the reflexive consciousness of participating together in a game that first gives us access to an increased affective intensity not to be found elsewhere. Emphasizing in a limited framework *that the game is a game* invites us generously to experiment with the entanglement between the game we play and the game that is played with us.[11]

Having stated that the question of togetherness through performatively playing is at the core of Trajal Harrell's work, we might become interested in the various ways he formulates and answers it. Since we inhabit a variety of highly desynchronized perceptive frameworks, the *here and now* of a shared experience requires its institution. We need *common places*, a collective repertoire of narrative patterns that enables us to synchronize our various interests and to swap the *persona* (mask) we usually wear, with another one offered by the poetic imaginary. Trajal Harrell's strategy can be understood as re-animating the *archive* through the emotional texture of our contemporary environments, what we would like to call *museion*.[12] The rich material of past experiences and possibilities is re-composed in order to constitute a virtual framework that allows a performative space to emerge.

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[11] Ritual and anthropological research on performativity even inclines us to regard reflexive distance not as a correlate of emotional distance but on the contrary, as something that allows first of all an affective investment, the entanglement with a situation. Helpful in this context is Robert Pfallers interpretation of the game as *increasing the psychic intensity*, following John Huizingas notion of the game's "sacred seriousness". Pfaller underlines correctly the game's dialectical dimension, the fact that it is the knowledge of the players *that the games is a game* which allows an intensity to take form that can't be found in everyday reality. We don't follow his suggestion though to understand the game not as a practice but as a "psychic phenomenon" since our question is, through which practices a psychic space can be developed. See: Huizinga, John: *Homo ludens: proeve eener bepalling van het spelelement der cultuur*, Haarlem 1938; Pfaller, Robert: *Die Illusionen der Anderen: Über das Lustprinzip in der Kultur*, Frankfurt 2002 (English: Ibid.: *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions Without Owners*, London/New York 2016).

[12] The *archive* is here employed to designate the sum of material traces of experiences, that are being stored as neutralized and homogeneized objects, dissolved from their passed historical context and lacking a contemporary one. *Museion* serves to designate a way of relating to history which diverges from the *Museum* that has as its condition a progressive conception of history which put the objects chronologically in distance to the present.

2/ Inhabiting Lust Together

The following part aims to develop concrete aspects of Trajal Harrell's artistic techniques, through analyzing performative patterns of the *Greek symposium* and the tragic *choir*. With the Greek polytheistic context as a background, we may be able to suggest the ways in which the aesthetic strategies Trajal Harrell develops can be seen as fruitful perspectives through which to approach phenomena beyond the mentioned dead-ends of contemporary conceptual frameworks. One reason for this is that the practices developed in the early Greek context (7-5 BC) precede the tradition of philosophical ontology and the binary oppositions described above. What we find instead is not the paradisiac origin as presented by a *from myth to logos* narrative. On the contrary, we encounter a complex network of narrative patterns and schemes, presented through poetry, i.e. dance and music, that can be re-written and re-performed according to the specific situation. This implies an essentially *performative, theatrical* conception of theory, of what it is to gain *insights*.

When attending *Antigone Sr.*, we had the impression that there were indeed fundamental parallels between techniques employed in TH's work and patterns in ritual Greek performance we have been concerned with. Parallels pertaining to the structural level of the performative techniques, not to a historicist fetish. In the following, through assembling a catalogue of performative techniques and tracing their patterns, we will rather indirectly try to answer the questions raised above. We hope that the suggested difference between an ontologicalized game and the concrete forms of play with their inherent reflexivity becomes evident as the material is unfolded.

2.1 / SYMPOTIC

Sympotic gatherings, centered around the drinking of wine, were a central institution for the constitution of a social and practical self-comprehension and one of the most significant and differentiated cultural practices in the Mediterranean from 2000 BC until late antiquity.[13] Within a spatially separated setting, a temporarily constituted community made

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The *Museion* as a historical fiction of the Alexandrinian School (3 BC-6 AD) is based on a model of history that would have not so much a temporal, but a spatial conception of history.

[13] For a historical introduction see: Wecowski, Marek: *The Rise of the Greek Aristocratic Banquet*, Oxford 2014.

experiences, of which different qualities and degrees of pleasure were the most specific.[14] The symposium (that is: *drinking together*) has *mixture* in all its dimensions as its fundamental concern, crystallized in the figure of the transitory god Dionysus.[15] Dance, painted drinking vessels, lyric (music+poetry), games, scents, clothes and erotic intercourse constituted a multi-sensorial environment and field of action.

Departing from the cultural practice of collectively drinking wine, auto-referential procedures were developed within vase painting and poetry that led to what we would like to call a *double spatiality*.[16] The objects and poems appearing in the actual event designated patterns of action while at the same time mirroring and echoing them.[17] Through referential (poetological) procedures (*deixis*), aspects of the ongoing action could be delineated, overwritten and integrated into a poetic environment. Body gestures, directions of gaze, the quality of applied objects and substances were re-staged in the artistic (technical) productions, performatively analyzing the situation's possible modifications in its variety. This allowed to single out formal patterns making parts of the experience accessible and communicable. Inversely, the sympotic configurations could also serve in other contexts, political ones for instance, to structure more abstract relations and concepts.[18] This inherent reflexivity, which is in the following approached through four examples, anticipates fundamental aspects of the choir's structure in tragedy.

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[14] The notion of a collective and individual experience of lust is a key part of the symposium. On the connection between the symposium and „l'ordre du plaisir": Vernant, Jean-Pierre: *L'individu, la mort, l'amour. Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne*, Paris 1989, 219. Many vases which have been exported to Sicily and Italy have been preserved because they were burial objects meant to guarantee the enjoyment of sympotic pleasure in the afterlife, a further indication of the symposium's role in creating pleasure. See Murray, Oswyn: *Early Greece*, Harvard 1993, 208f.

[15] See: Lissarrague, François: *Un flot d'images: une esthétique du banquet grec*, Paris 1987.

[16] This perspective is largely indepted to the work and teaching of Renate Schlesier on the Greek Symposion. Compare: "Kratēr. The Mixing-Vessel as Metaphorical Space in Ancient Greek Tradition", in: Breytenbach, Cilliers; Horn, Fabian (Eds.): *Spatial Metaphors. Ancient Text And Transformations*, Berlin 2016, 69-84.

[17] Compare Hobdens wider discussion of „Metasympotics": Hobden, Fiona: *The Symposion in Ancient Greek Society and Thought*, Cambridge 2014, 22-65. Hobden, Fiona: *The Symposion in Ancient Greek Society and Thought*, Cambridge 2014, 22-65.

[18] From the perspective of ritual theory the administration of experience is a basic function of any ritualistic action which functions through the establishment of a formalised context of operations with different variables. However, we argue that the explicit thematisation and reflection on this function as part of the ritual is part of the symposium. See: Lang, Bernhard: „Ritual", in Cancik, Hubert; Gladigow, Burkhard; Kohl, Karl-Heinz (Hg.): *Handwörterbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*. Band IV, Stuttgart 1989, 442-458.

Framed Openness

The basic structure of the symposium described above as an experimental set-up with a variety of fixed components and codes that open up a semantic space can be retraced with the help of a plate by the Psiax-Painter. It iconically stages the paradox of very stable basic elements that produce a highly situative transgressive experience.[19] The composition works with a combination of horizontal and vertical axes which constitute the basic set up from which the dynamic movement of the dancer develops.

Attic black-figure Plate of the Psiax-Painter (around 520 BC)
Basel, Antikenmuseum, Inv.: Kä 421, internal ID: 56878.

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[19] Athens advanced in the 6th century BC to a center for the mass production of vases in large manufactures that, that were exported into the whole Mediterranean. The painters developed systematically professional iconic programmes that distinguished them from others, partly signaturing their vases. Since the geographical distance was so huge, the painters had to respond to the challenge of combining scenic and compository specificity with a general applicability.

Psiax' plate shows a horizontal line, serving as a spatial marker, on which a strictly vertically drawn woman woman (marked by the *mitra* as a hetaera) plays on a double-aulos, which is horizontally directed towards the head of a dancing man. The man is adorned with an ivy wreath (as an attribute of the god Dionysus) an wears an eastern dress that links him to the Lydean imaginary, associated with splendor, voluptuous luxury and effeminate behavior (*habrosyné*).[20] He is presented as elastically dancing on his tip toes, his torso turned towards the woman, the feet and his bend knees pointing in the opposite direction, whereas his arms have adapted the horizontal-vertical scheme. With the left hand, he balances a *kylix*, a sympotic drinking vessel, horizontally above his head, while the right hand grabs a *barbiton* (string instrument). A *díphros* with predator's feet is placed behind the aulos player, on the left side of the scene. There is an aulos container made of animal skin, with a *pixis*, serving for make-up. The theriomorphic elements signal the domestication of animal qualities, whose potentialities are evoked, though in this transformed way. Through the evocation and blending of these diverse elements, an imaginary space is delineated. The central theme of this strictly formalized basic set-up seems to be the ecstatic experience of transformation that is about to take place: the dancer leaves with his left toe the plate's inner circle—his left foot has left the horizontal line, freely floating in the air. This formal transgression of limits is codified as an ecstatic experience through the position of the head between the aulo's sounds, the wine (in the kylix), the instrument, and through the bending backwards of the body in movement. Important in the present context is that it seems that the staged arrangement of singular material components from a more general repertoire is understood as a condition for, not a contradiction of, a highly specific affective quality.[21] In the context of application, the imaginary that is established serves to alter the space semantically as one vase-painting among others, forming part of a varied repertoire of possible actions and gestures.

Trajal Harrell similarly plays with the *mise-en-abyme* of frameworks in order to transgress them. In the beginning of each part of the PB/JC series, the performance that is about to take place is situated in the context of the overall proposal [*What would have*

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[20] Around the figure of the eastern performer Anacreon who might be depicted on the Vase, a fashion of men dressing up as women, wearing parasols and earrings developed, playfully undermining the normative role models. Compare: Frontisi-Ducroux, Françoise; Lissarrague, François: „From ambiguity to ambivalence: A Dionysiac Excursion Through The „Anakreontic" Vases", in: Halperin, David M.; Winkler, John J.; Zeitlin, Froma I. (Ed.): *Before Sexuality. The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, Princeton, 1990, 211-256.

[21] See also below: *Illusory Shores*.

happened, if…] and presented as a consumer product [S, M, L, XL, Made-to-Measure]. In the beginning of *Antigone Sr.*, Trajal Harrell performing the choreographer 'Trajal Harrell', with an iPad in his hand, designates each component of the performative setting: the concept, scenery, lighting, and costumes are all separately singled out. By rendering present the elements constitutive of the performative infrastructure, their potentialities are evoked and create expectations that don't have to be necessarily fulfilled. The same goes for the props in their relation to performance history. The bar stools in Antigone Jr. ++ and M[imosa], are associated with stools in a strip club or a variété-context. Their over-determination now provides the possibility for an emotionality to take place in the performed songs that would usually be repudiated as a *cliché*.[22] Other trails are laid out only to awake and to render present our attention such as the rack of costumes animated by a ventilator in *Judson is Ringing in Harlem,* which is ponderously placed on the stage only to be taken quietly away after having made its appearance.

Interruptions are another means of keeping up the oscillation between different layers of play. The tyrannic power of the performer derives from the spectator's desire to be taken by him to performative virtualities. In *Antigone Jr. ++* the interruption of the performance because of a supposedly forgotten costume throws back in an almost unbearable manner to the material base of the show. What before was the unquestioned reality has now become the unbearable virtuality of a not-yet-transformed bare presence. Our desire is increased for the transformation to take place again. Being seduced by TH, we lose control over the different levels of virtuality and their texture. After the voguing of the tragedy's persona in *Antigone Sr.,* Trajal Harrell changes the music on the laptop, takes up the microphone in the role of 'Trajal Harrell', the choreographer ("I guess it's time to make things clear…."), but continues as Antigone ("I buried the brother, I did the deed and I had to pay the price"). To desynchronize the moment of demonstratively turning on a sample on the laptop and to start dancing only afterwards, poetologically accompanies the process of transformation into affective posture. The accentuation of its construction as a quasi-experimental set-up allows the facticity of the movements when dancing to transcend this framework and become even stronger and more surprising.

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[22] The idea of the cliché, *topos,* seems central to us to comprehend the discursive spatiality that constitues a shared imaginary.

Distributing masks

A main feature of the Greek symposium was the implementation of temporary categories and differentiations. The material of a shared mythical network, known personae such as gods, heros or humans, was re-distributed among the assisting guests. A fragment of the lyrical poet Anacreon (mid 6th century BC) might serve as a point of departure:

> Anakreon, fr. 51 (PMG)[23]
> φέρ' ὕδωρ φέρ' οἶνον ὦ παῖ φέρε <δ'> ἀνθεμόεντας ἡμὶν
> στεφάνους ἔνεικον, ὡς δὴ πρὸς Ἔρωτα πυκταλίζω.
> Bring water, boy, bring wine, bring garlands of flowers to us:
> fetch them, so that I may box against Love/Eros.

Water, Wine, and flower wreaths that mark the sympotic context are demanded for an "Us" from someone addressed as "παῖς" (boy, girl, servant). The central word of the fragment is the imperative "bring" ("φέρω") that is repeated four times, exhorting with an untempered impatiency, even increased by the grammatical form of the last repetition („ἔνεικον") and the temporal particle "now". As the finality of the demands, a boxing match is named, by an "I", separated from the group, against Eros.

The modality of transition from arrangement of the material components to the expected boxing match with the god of love, Eros, is unspecified. Is an epiphany of the god to be expected in the symposium that became an arena merely by arranging substances and objects? Is a chosen symposiast addressed, who is going to take on the poetic mask of Eros as soon as they start drinking? Or are the consequences of the consumption of wine and water presented as an increased erotic desire of the lyric "I" through the metaphor of a boxing game?

It is not only the lack of context for the fragment that opens up this polyvalent space of interpretation, as similarly functioning transmitted poems show.[24] Highly situative instructions with deictic particles such as "here", "now", "we", are an often found *topos* in the sympotic lyric. Since the poems were not only performed by travelling composers, but also by the participants, it would be misleading to perceive them as an exact duplication or a later mimesis of the actual situation. Rather, codes are implanted, that institute a range of imaginary and concrete possibilities of action. These can take on different meanings

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[23] The Greek texts are taken from the Online-Version of the TLG. The translation stems from the authors, if not indicated differently.

[24] E.g.: Alkaios, fr. 346 (LPP).

according to the context of application. In the present fragment, the poetic *I* monopolizes his access to Eros, challenges him as a partner in a playful-violent game and plays up his individual obsession. In this respect it is a quite individualized and specified voice. At the same time, the missing specification of the "I", the explicit reference to an "Us", and the quasi-voyeuristic structure allows for an identification. The one performing transforms the space by means of the situation created in the poem for the entire group in an erotic arena.

In *Antigone Sr.*, Trajal Harrell and Thibault Lac perform a spiritual-guide Yogi-Duo who practise their conversion into the mythical *signifiants* of contemporary Western culture (We are: Chanel, Dior, Tour Eiffel, Deleuze and Guattari, Godard, The XX, life and death, être et ne pas-etre […]) through the quasi-magical technique of naming. The contrasting source environments of the names (fashion, philosophy, art, existential experiences, tourism etc.) are leveled out, being part of a universalized spiritual exercise. A particular tragic question makes its way through the identity claims: Can the irreducible singularity of a person and his faith be entirely dissolved in the endless virtualities of mimicry?[25] When Trajal Harrell and Thibault Lac perform each other through alternately changing the language of the conjuration's first part from French to English (*We are…*; *Nous sommes...*), the absolute metaphoricity of the chains of reference is somehow returned to an explicit, reversible metaphoricity.[26]

Not only adapting, but assigning roles to others is a particularly powerful technique. As with the Alcaeus fragments for instance, structures from military exhortatory poetry used in war were adapted for sympotic purposes, which reappeared in the voguing context as *throwing shade*. When Trajal Harrell performs the mother of the house, commenting on the others' performances during the voguing part of *Antigone Sr.*, this playful domination increases the impact of what is done and at the same time subverts social categories of distinction. The performative effect of this technique is to provoke a certain reaction in the other person. Stylized insults, in the Voguing sense of "Reading", was a genre developed especially in the context of the Roman symposium.[27] An interest that could be called anthropological is always in the center of these actions: How to make visible the potentialities of a person hidden under his mask (mask means person)? The notion of truth as *a-letheia* is to

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[25] Compare below: *Emotion : Trajic Game*.

[26] See also below: The metaphoricity.

[27] See especially the poems of the roman poet Catull as well as those of the Neoterics.

be understood in this sense: Making something that is usually covered visible through a third medium.[28]

Illusory Shores

We encountered as a central feature of the symposium the possibility to produce, within the architecture of a stable and repeatable basic form, a variety of experiential environments. The drinking vessels and poems served as an intermediary space which linked the concrete situation to the virtual environments they created, re-functionalizing the single elements within the introduced overall scope. Within that framework, the composers began to further develop and reflect on their technique's transformative power with increasing self-confidence and freedom. The present fragment of Pindar (ca. 520-446 BC) is an example of such a poetological accompaniment of the poetic production. The poetic techniques are reflected within the sympotic scenery and its actions.

> Pindar, fr. 124 ab[29]
> Ὦ Θρασύβουλ', ἐρατᾶν ὄχημ' ἀοιδᾶν *(1)*
> τοῦτό <τοι> πέμπω μεταδόρπιον· ἐν ξυνῷ κεν εἴη
> συμπόταισίν τε γλυκερὸν καὶ Διωνύσοιο καρπῷ
> (Βʹ) καὶ κυλίκεσσιν Ἀθαναίαισι κέντρον·
> ἀνίκ' ἀνθρώπων καματώδεες οἴχονται μέριμναι *(5)*
> στηθέων ἔξω· πελάγει δ' ἐν πολυχρύσοιο πλούτου
> (Γʹ) πάντες ἴσα νέομεν ψευδῆ πρὸς ἀκτάν·
> ὃς μὲν ἀχρήμων, ἀφνεὸς τότε, τοὶ δ' αὖ πλουτέοντες
> *** *(8)*
> (Δʹ)<->ἀέξονται φρένας ἀμπελίνοις τόξοις δαμέντες
>
> Oh Thrasyboulos, I am sending you this chariot of lovely
>   songs
> For after dinner. Amid the company may it be a sweet
>   goad
> for your drinking companions, for the fruit of Dionysus,
>
> and for the Atheninan drinking cups,
> when men's wearisome cares vanish
> from their breasts, and on a sea of golden wealth
> we all alike sail to an illusory shore;
> then the pauper is rich, while the wealthy ...
> ... increase in their minds, overcome by the arrows of the
>   vine.

The address establishes the formal frame of the Encomium and evokes a geographical width, before the poem itself becomes the subject of the plot. As a dessert („μεταδόρπιον", 2) it is placed at the beginning of a sympotic meeting („ἐν ξυνῷ", 2), which it anticipates and

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[28] This theme appears in the sympotic context mainly in connection with wine, of which the gnome *In Vino Veritas* has survived.

[29] The translation is from William H. Race: ibd.; Pindar: *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes*, Harvard 1997.

becomes part of through a clearly prescribed effect; as a sweet spurn („γλυκερὸν", 3; „κέντρον", 4) it („εἴη", 2) is meant to intensify the effects of wine and the kylikes (drinking vessels).

The next lines leave the specific context of the symposium at Thrasyboulos and thematise the dichotomous effects of the wine-poem as a metaphorical row on the wide sea accompanied by a luxurious materiality („πολυχρύσοιο πλούτου", 6). The narrator has bridged the spatial distance, the deictic adverbs („ἀνίκ'", 5; „τότε", 8) evoke a presence, which includes the first-person narrator as part of those rowing from their sorrowful thoughts to move on to greener banks. The nautical metaphors open a field of associations borrowed from the epos (Ulysse's dangers, adventures, efforts and dares) and continue the semantic of the spurn introduced earlier. The aim of the voyage are banks described as phantasmal ("ψευδῆ", 7). The real social relationships are turned upside-down; struck by the (potentially life-threatening) arrows of wine the illusion of a magnificent reality dominates, whose effects are characterised as violently overwhelming („δαμέντες", 9).

The deception is revealed in the moment of its staging and decidedly affirmed. The poetical space of the poem transforms the concrete-virtual space of the symposium into a dramatic utopic journey while stressing the latter's violent consequences that distort reality. The rapid changes of place, the stress on the adventurous-violent dimension as well as the dramatic scenery of the dangerous row develop the idea of the poem as a sweet spurn introduced in the beginning which animates and pushes the listener. As a result, an internal reality is produced that does not need to hold up to the yardstick of outward relations.

A returning strategy in the *Twenty Looks*-series is singing on a playback (karaoke), re-functionalizing the dramatic material of a song according to a specific situation. Borrowing from the reservoir of contemporary pop songs, the material is found which the fragmented dramatic patterns can inhabit. The function is not only to borrow and actualize someone else's emotionality, to take on the mask of the singer. When once integrated in the collaged texture of the series, the material itself undergoes a transition. It plays karaoke, as it is endlessly re-contextualized, taking on different meanings and styles. As Pindar in his fragment, Trajal Harrell is the one that controls the layers and transitions that he serves us in a bitter-sweet envelopment, using his power as a performer to take us to *illusory shores*. While marking them as constructed, the intensive desire to join his boat might first of all be admitted.

We might at this point, having gotten to know some of the sympotic performative patterns, precise the notion of the *anthropological concern* that we ascribed earlier to Trajal Harrel's work. The participants of his performances, parallel to those of the symposium, are

able to reflect their environment. The spatial components and the communicative situation surrounding them are made transparent, by singling them out through deictic performative strategies. In this way the experiential quality of complex spatial proceedings can simultaneously be created and analysed in its composure. We propose to call the insights gained through such a process *anthropological* since all the intellectual operations are referred to the subjects creating them: the ones participating in the play.

Dancing Philosophy

Xenophon's and Plato's symposia dating to the early fourth century BC are the first purely literary symposia known to us. Within the emerging practice of philosophy, the social experience of collective drinking loses its position as a realm of experience that merits reflexion in itself. From the perspective of philosophical questioning, the interpersonal, situational practice is secondary when opposed to the experience of thinking. Nonetheless, the concrete-virtual sympotic space is not abandoned altogether, but re-functionalized in the service of a philosophical program which results in a transformation of the status of its *spatiality*.[30] It might be understood as an inversion of the above developed double spatiality: the virtual relations and concepts of philosophy are mediated through the space of the symposium. Since absolute ideas such as truth or happiness are meant to be independent of situational moments, the mise-en-scene of the symposion in philosophical literature serves to provide evidence for this claim, often using the actual sympotic context as a contrastive example to be reformed. This is linked to the aim to direct the staging of opulent pleasures (*habrosyné*) into more ethically admissible, temporally stable and logical coherent realms: not pleasures in plural, but the one, eternal happiness.

Xenophon uses the form of the symposium as an ideal type from which he exemplifies the adequate behaviour according to an abstract concept of justice. For our purposes it is of particular interest, that in the last party [VII-IX] the political-economic thoughts are discussed and re-evaluated through the medium of dance.

As a reaction to the spectacular and virtuous performance of two young dancers under the guidance of a "Syracuse man" (Compare the Psiax plate) Xenophon lets Socrates ask to produce a counter proposal for the dance. According to him the just passed presentation,

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[30] Compare: Teçusan, Manuela: „*Logos Sympotikos*: Patterns of the Irrational in Philosophical Drinking: Plato Outside the *Symposium*", in: Murray, Oswin (Hg.): *SYMPOTICA. A Symposium on the Symposion*, Oxford 1990, 238-260.

while spectacular and dangerous, does not increase pleasure („εὐφϱαινοίμεθα", VII 2; „ἡδονὴν", VII 3).

> Now turning somersaults into knives strikes me as a dangerous exhibition, and utterly out of place at a banquet. Writing and reading aloud on a whirling potter's wheel may be something of a feat too, yet I can't conceive what pleasure even that could afford. Nor is it any more diverting to watch the young and beautiful twisting their bodies about and imitating hoops than in repose.[31]

The asking of philosophical questions is instead suggested as much better suited to inspire pleasure and marvel [VII, 2-5]:

> In fact you can marvel at what's right in front of you now,—for instance, why the lamp gives light by having a bright flame while its bronze reflector, likewise bright, doesn't produce light but instead reflects other things that appear in it. Or how it is that olive oil, though wet, makes the flame higher, while water, because it is wet, puts the fire out.

As an alternative to the elaborate but inefficient virtuosity he demands an allegorising choreographic process which equates dance to writing [VII, 5]:

> But if the young people were to have a pipe accompaniment and dance figures depicting („γϱάφονται") the Graces, the Seasons, and the Nymphs, I believe that they would have a far easier time of it and that the banquet would be far more delightful."

Corresponding to this functionalisation of dance in the services of a rationalized *economy of pleasure*, the pragmatist Xenophon proposes a dance that allegedly conforms to the natural requirements of the two young dancers and whose effects are described as especially authentic. [IX, 4-6].

> Now Dionysus arose and gave his hand to Ariadne to rise also, and then there were the movements of lovers kissing and caressing each other to watch. The onlookers saw a Dionysus *truly* handsome, an Ariadne *truly* fair, *not presenting a burlesque* but offering *genuine* (ἀ λ η θ ι ν ῶ) kisses with their lips; and all watched with heightened excitement.
>
> For they overheard Dionysus asking her if she loved him and heard her vowing that she did, so earnestly that not only Dionysus <. . .> but all the bystanders as well would have jointly sworn that the boy and the girl were surely in love with each other. Theirs was the appearance not of performers who had been taught their moves but of people now permitted to satisfy their long-cherished desires.

Corresponding to Xenophon's model of non-physical homosexual friendship,

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Dionysus and Ariadne are the model of a heterosexual relationship which is able to integrate the enjoyment of erotic pleasure into the conjugal realm thus guaranteeing political and temporal stability. According to this economy of pleasure sexual acts are postponed to the time after the symposium, either to the matrimonial bed or sublimated into the context of political activity.

By linking the abstract concepts of the useful, the natural, the true, to the notion of pleasure and beauty, forms of luxurious burlesque or disguise that were fundamental to the symposium are, conversely, not to be regarded as beautiful or entertaining. Following on from this the domesticated wedding dance is understood as a preliminary stage of the entire sublimation of dance in a life, fashioned according to philosophical standards. In the service of those standards, the symposium is meant to provide political stability- only then it can be beautiful, a beauty legitimized through it's utility, beyond the *pleasures of technicity*.

2.2 / TRAJIC

The double spatiality traced in the Greek symposion is mirrored in the double aspect of the tragedy both as a *genre* and as a *concrete practice*: Being historically located, it might be interrogated in terms of its specific social and aesthetic modalities, its functions within a certain historic moment. Adopting our more historical-analytical approach we applied to the symposium, we are here following a tradition of reception that is interested in *the tragic* as a somehow universalizing category.[32] Focusing on the *tragic genre* nonetheless, by turning towards it's first appearance (around 5 BC), we aim to develop an angle to approach the TRAJIC in Trajal Harrell's work.

Emotion: Tragic Game

The intimacy between Trajal Harrell's practice and the tragic project might be found in a shared attempt to answer to the question: *How to be intense with each other*? After the epic

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[32] See: Billings, Joshua: *Geneaology of the Tragic,* Princeton 2015. Turning tragedy as genre into something essential is insofar a choice on our part as it becomes an artistically fertile horizon, a formal tool. From this point of view, there is a potential fact in our aesthetic horizon: expectation and realisation of a tragedy following different poetic attempts. A Shakespearian tragedy, a Racine play, an opera of Britten or Monteverdi as well as certain cinematographic attempts, either explicitly or implicitly belong to the tragic genre by meeting both its final goal and its key poetic forms, sometimes spontaneously. Other works will implement some tragic features without reaching the genre.

poem, whose plot, characters, and facts were assumed to be well-known, a material texture to be constantly rewoven, the tragedy might be understood as a process of elaborating the matter at hand, distancing it in order to exploit and develop its emotive resonance. Tragedy, as an artistic genre, glorifies the tyranny of emotion.

Emotion is a tragic thing, it has the taste of fate: it touches us, from outside, constraining, unavoidable, unmanageable. In a programmatic definition, tragedy is the confrontation of an individual with his fate. Not fate as a religious idea, but as a fundamental existential intuition, which could be translated into psychological terms as an intimate and tenacious feeling of a tendency steering me somewhere in spite of my clear ability to choose.[33] The intuition of fate, as something we cannot dominate, causes emotion: as long as we are unable to answer a certain question, it affects us; if we are lost, unable to dominate the question, psychologically it stirs up emotion. It is an emotional question, like the question "Why me ?", which is indeed the burden and scourge of the tragic persona. Why am *I*, Antigone, the one concerned, the one gripped by the unavoidable feeling, the pressing need to fight for justice? Why me—to the death—and why not my sister Ismene?

"Hello, I'm Trajal Harrell", that's how all the pieces from the *Twenty Looks*-series begin. As a performer he directly questions the possibility of temporarily assuming the identity of a certain character and provides his suffering with a voice. Not so much as an actor, whose identity would be protected in the execution of the play, whom we could assist, as strangers to the exercise, an audience in the proper sense of the word. His gesture is that of a performer, creating a suffering human being in front of our eyes. The bringing-into-existence of the suffering subjects implies the dissolution of the perfomer's identity and his elevation to the level of tragic practice: *"Who am I? I am Trajal. I am Trahal. I am Trâdjel. I am Traedjal. I am Traedjel. I am Trayal now. I am Antigone"*. Not male, not female, neither Trajal, nor Antigone, the tragic persona is a densified extract of human experiences.[34] *"We are always proving who we are, always reaching for the rising star…".[35]* Indeed, any attempt to answer the question "Why me?" naturally tends to deal—perhaps as a feint—with identity issues ("Could I be someone else?") and genealogy ("Where do I come from ?"). « *You know, the person who chooses your name doesn't always have good intentions. That's what*

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[33]   These psychological terms that are our own refer to an inner life that doesn't amount to the Greek notion of ψυχή, as a psycho-physical force, not only inhabited by the individual. But can we offer something better?

[34]   We find the strategic use of Neutral Gender categories already in Sappho, See: Schlesier, Renate: « Atthis, Gyrinno, And Other Hetairai : Female Personal Names in Sappho's Poetry », *Philologus* (157), 199-222.

[35]   Irene Cara's song from *Fame* "Out Here on my own", performed in *Antigone Jr.++*

happened to me. Because when I first started in transvestites forms, in Guisseny, in West of France, next to where my parents were living (…), I thought first I would perform as François, which is my birth name, but it was ridiculous. So I changed it to Franz, but it sounded weird. So every weekend I wanted to change it: Francine, Lucienne, Lucie, Maeva, Ulrika, many names… But for some reasons, it always sound ridiculous. »[36]. Enough to despair in fact.

Lyricism is Trajal Harrell's performative strategy to face the emotional consequences of this question. Lyricism: That is to say some kind of stylized overstatement in an attempt to formulate tragic feeling, giving it a resonance. Is the emotional trauma to be understood as preceding its performative formulation, as an ex-pression of an emotional subject's feeling, or is it rather first of all constituted through the staged reality? Does *expression* clear me out or fill me up?[37] By making the lyric voice stand out alone, sounding raw and lacking a proper drama, tragedy is reached at its core, using all the resources of singing, dancing, discourse, together with any other means necessary.

The exhibition of the tragic emotion through the demonstrative gesture of lyricism is employed in an almost obscenely and cruel manner by Trajal Harrell, making use of a possibility proper to the *performative* process at work, not the *dramatic* work. The performer suffers in front of us, not because of a dramatic cause (e.g. a calamity striking a character) but rather *here and now* in his effort of reaching and sharing tragic emotion. In the *M2M* size from *Twenty Looks*, Trajal Harrell is compelled to keep singing and dancing under another's injunction, while he again and again returns to slump and weep in his chair: *"Don't stop!"*, and in it's sublimed version: *"Work"*. This tragic affectivity must not be confused with ponderous gravity on a stylistic level. Paradoxically, it is precisely here where humor can occur.

Togetherness: Extension Game

Extension towards a collective level of emotion needs a performative framework. In the case of the Greek symposium, the specific performative strategy consists in mirroring the collective action of drinking wine through present tangible objects that are being used in the same time. In the case of the greek tragedy, the specific performative component is the chorus

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[36] Performer François Chaignaud, in *(M)imosa*.

[37] This question becomes delicate since expression (ex-pressio) as an aesthetic figure is highly indepted to 18th century german pietistic theology and its conception of an *inner* subject. Herder.

(χορός). A principle consequence of the approach taken here to tragedy, focusing on its procedures of (re-)presentation, is to underline the crucial role of the tragic chorus. The functional center of tragedy is not the representation of action *(δρᾶμα)*, but the chorus.[38] *What can be started with the chorus?* is dramatically an almost irresolvable question. In his own way, Trajal Harrell displays a theatrical framework, that is genuinely tragic not primarily in its explicit references to Antigone but by staging chorus alone, as the place of a performative extension of the drama**.** The material of the drama is turned from the re-presentation of an action towards the performative present. Drama achieves a status of reality it did not have before: it loses its fictional status (being true but not real) in favor of an actual status (real but maybe not true).

Let us naively consider a precise example: in *Antigone Jr.++*, the first performer (Trajal Harrell) says *"I'm Antigone"* and the second (Thibault Lac) *"I'm Ismene"*. At a given point, the latter recites a part of Sophocle's text (Act I, Sc. 1, Antigone, Ismene) through the book's mediation (having Sophocles' text in his hands) and then stops in order to state some kind of a lyrical confidence, through a direct speech to the public. Appearing on the threshold, at the miraculous moment as he gets ready to leave or has just left the drama, as if with his mask in his hand.

With respect to tragedy's performative and non-fictitious situation, it should not be forgotten that it is a collective ceremony of a myth's re-actualisation. Myth is not exactly fictitious[39]. The characters of Oedipus, Creon, and Antigone allegedly really existed, in the period of the city's founding. Since the city conceives itself as a family, a tribe, one can

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[38] From one fine nuance to another, these latest key inputs have resulted in completely revolutionising the established points of view, reversing the traditional Aristotelian definition of tragedy (*"Thus, tragedy is the imitation of an action (δρᾶμα) (…). Imitation by acting characters, and not by means of a story"*, *Poetics*, 1449 b) towards a choral definition of it. Aristotle recognises the chorus' key part in the genre's genealogy and creation, but mainly from a historical perspective. The more he inserts the represented action within the overarching form, with a teleological aim (*"after several modifications, it stabilised itself after reaching its own nature"*, *Poetics*, 1449 a), the more he naturally draws the chorus towards this definition, stresses its dramatic role and defines it as a character in itself (*"Moreover, the chorus is to be considered as one of the actors, to be part of the whole ensemble and join in the plot, not as in Euripides but rather like in Sophocles"*, *Poetics* 1456 a). It is important to understand that reducing the chorus in dramatic terms is a choice of Aristotle's (*"not as in Euripides but rather like in Sophocles"*) and that a complete understanding of the chorus' status in tragedy requires a consideration of the opposite hypothesis.

[39] See Burkert, Walter: *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, Harvard 1985, (originally appeared in german, now in a revised and extended version: ebd.: *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart 2011 .)

consider in jest that when the city of Athens gathered to witness the tragedy of Oedipus, it created a similar situation to that of a family gathered to perform once more some anecdotes from their grandfather's life story. It is not a spectacle but in fact an actual and cult-related event (as it is by nature public)[40]. Of course, the myth's development is fictitious (it's plot could change) but, almost contradictorily, its status is not. The gesture of performative presentation is only made possible by the fact that the adapted material has a non-fictious, but an assumed historical status. It constitutes a space of possibilities that have been real as possibilities. In the present of the performative event, their potentiality is re-actualized and re-affirmed. That means conceiving the past as a space of virtualities that are at our disposal.

> "All the series shares the same proposition: what would happen in 1963 if someone
> from the voguing dance tradition in Harlem would had come down to Judson Church
> to perform, alongside the postmoderns. This is not trying to be a historical recreation
> of that question. This is an imaginative possibility we share together. Something that
> can not have been seen in Harlem, something that can not have been seen in the
> Judson Church. Something that con only be seen today, in the room with us, together,
> here and now[41]".

Moreover, as already established in the enquiry into the symposium above (See: framed openness), this rhetoric rests upon a repertoire of gestures, commonplaces, and affective codifications. The dramatic material can be actualised and shared by its transformation into *topoi*, that install a temporarily shared *koiné aesthesis* (a common repertoire of gesture). Primarily spatial, the chorus' interventions bring us from one narrative to the other in an un-fictitious and un-dramatic manner.[42]

Since dramatic time is constrained by the succession of action, the extension of the dramatic towards the performative implies a resistance to dramatic temporality. Creating a time not yet dominated and filled by the action, a dramatically empty time. The occurrence of music in Greek tragedy as well as in Trajal Harrell's practice is the means par excellence to establish another temporality, a rhythmical one.

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[40]   The choreutes are young men chosen by a public magistrate among the finest families of Athens.

[41]   Trajal Harrell's live introduction to many shows from the series *Twenty Looks-Series*.

[42]   We refer to the study by Gagné and Govers Hopman of the second stasimon from Euripides' *Elektra*: "*In fewer than fifty lines, the chorus is able to bring the audience from the mountains of Argos to the agora. From the recesses of the household to the movement of the stars, and the four corners of the world.*" Renaud Gagné and Marianne Govers Hopman: "*The chorus in the middle*", in: *Choral Meditations in Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge 2013, 8.

Trajal's ball: ritual game

Twenty Looks is an organic ensemble[43] that spreads and develops from the inside, by means of reminiscences and connections, pointing out the effort of the ongoing movement.[44] From one show to another and within each show, each moment is at once located here and now with the greatest strength, and is the reactivation of a gesture, the echo of an endless song or dance. The show is never properly ended, as its concern is endless.[45] Trajal Harrell's work's chorality has a ritual dimension. It consists in the substitution of a point not to be ultimately grasped through the repetition of gestures that aim at approaching it, including the reflexive repetition of the execution of gestures itself. The luxuriance of the so instituted never ending metaphors is ritualistic. Research is taking place in this intertextual and metaphorical practice, performing ever refined references.

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[43] First of all, let's remain cautious, as regards connections in Trajal Harrell's work, about what is too visible. We like to think indeed that the explicit seriality from the series *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church* falls under an almost ironical justification. In reality, despite the fact that each show from the series share the same programmatic assumption (« *What would have happened in 1963 etc.*) they do not seem to exist in complementarity with each other in a relationship of necessity, which would imply that idea of a superior order, a kind of great Work and an organising principle between them. There is perhaps in Trajal Harrell, in repeatedly asserting an order (each play being inserted within the series, and the assertion of it being inserted orally in each play) actually a certain humour that condemns the pathetic nature of such an order. The relationship between each moment resides rather at another level, namely that of a great disorder, more deeply, since Trajal Harrel's method is inter-textual, rather than serial.

[44] The time-related formulation of a series is as follows: shape (S) by 2009, shapes (XS) and (M) by 2011 and then (M)imosa, by 2012 Antigone Jr. and Antigone Sr.(L) and by 2013 the full series with Antigone Jr.++ and (M2M) Made to Measure, with an (XL) form added in Paris in 2016 (in the form of this publication). One can't help having in mind Proust's formulation of *La Recherche*, an idiomatic model for such development from the inside, by way of both echo and extension. It also represents the transition of his work from dance towards theatre.

[45] Proust again: « *Je pourrais, bien que l'erreur soit plus grave, continuer, comme on fait, à mettre des traits dans le visage d'une passante, alors qu'à la place du nez, des joues et du menton, il ne devrait y avoir qu'un espace vide sur lequel jouerait tout au plus le reflet de nos désirs»*.

"Although it would be a more serious mistake, I could keep putting features on a passerby's face, as people do, whereas actually, instead of a nose, cheeks and a chin, there should be nothing but an empty space played upon, at most, by the reflection of our desires" (Proust, A la recherche du temps perdu, *Le temps retrouvé*, last chapter)

It is first and foremost an ordinary intertextuality, from one show to another, which suggests not only that this show extends into others but also that it is not itself fixed[46]. It is then a game of intratextuality or connection within one single show: when different performers from *(M)imosa* explicate the title using different narratives, "Mimosa" each time figuring as the performer's name, this contradictory and complementary plurality creates a network of meaning that is both vague and complete. In this case, connections between the narratives make it absolutely impossible to determine the meaning and open every connection of signification from the singular to the universal: Mimosa is not an individual, Mimosa is an ensemble.

This intertextual procedure accesses tragedy in its very raison d'être. Beyond their important divergences, choruses of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides are all deeply connected to one another, like the prolonged writing of a single remark, an ongoing, developing meditation on the question of man. Despite the important difference in voice from one play to the other, and within any single play, the echo of previous moaning is still heard and words to come are already sensed. Each chorus is still here and now for a new song but it raises its arms in both directions and embraces the entire diversity of locations and times, as long as a human being is present. One could imagine, as a fanciful invention a unique work made up of the entirety of these choruses, forming a never completed poem on man: *"Among all those marvels of the world, the great marvel is man"[47]*.

Obsession : the play of desire

"In the long run, I took pleasure from this Eureka that dragged me off myself […]. I started preferring manufactured stories to improvised ones; the strict succession of words grew perceptible to me: they came back, always the same ones and in the same order, I expected them. In Anne-Marie's tales, the characters lived haphazardly, as she did herself: they gained fates. I was at Holy Mass: I witnessed the endless return of names and occurrences.[48]"

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[46] The epilogue of *Antigone Jr.++* provides us with a series of songs that are introduced and sung by both performers. "*This is a song from* Mimosa, *the medium size in the series*. *It is a song I used to sing in* Mimosa, *but now I changed and it's nice to go back to it*". Then*: "This song is from* Antigone Sr.,*the large size"*. And lastly: *"This song is from* Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem. *I was in love with the guy*. *It was a terrible relationship, and it didn't work out, but I kept the song."*

[47] Sophocles, *Antigone*, v. 333.

[48] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots*, first part, « Lire » („*A la longue je pris plaisir à ce déclic qui m'arrachait de moi-même (…) Aux récits improvisés, je vins à préférer les récits préfabriqués; je devins sensible à la succession*

At this stage we should not hesitate to listen to our pleasure. As with a mass, one has to be there, one must see in its almost ritual dimension Trajal Harrell's gesture in order to enjoy this fact of witnessing something-that's-happening. We enjoy this gesture. We enjoy this gesture's repetition. The pleasure we feel, which is characteristic of the ritual, is that of the gesture's repetition. We can't help but think that Greek theatre, tragedy from a ritual perspective, by actualising shared myths at a given date, stimulated this childish pleasure, an addictive pleasure. We can't help thinking of the pleasure at work within the symposium, a ritual enjoyment of shared experience of existing together.

It is not only the ritual addiction to pleasure that reminds us of Sade, as he says, *«desire is the space between what we are and what we are not"*. Desire is cruel, tragic, creative and indomitable: it calls out by any means possible to what we are not. This inbetween area is the room given to us for experimentation, so much so that we might consider this definition of desire as a definition of theatre. In this sense, Trajal Harrell's work is theatrical, since the opened space is a space of desire, a space where a possibility becomes real with great strength, an option missing from the (other) reality of daily life, namely that of sharing together and for good something-that's-happening and the corresponding emotions.

The interruption of the show in *Antigone Jr.++* because of a supposedly forgotten costume (see above: *framed openness*) shows Trajal Harrell's theatrical mastery of our desire's patterns. As the incident occurs, the only alternative to our being totally lost with ourselves consists in being absolutely together, in admitting our submission, our entire loss of autonomy and, eventually, our desire for this to keep going. This playing with and controlling of the frame creates a strong seduction on the performer's part and on everybody else's the desire to share the gesture, to be part of it, in togetherness.

In the end, there is no show but rather a gesture and an artist (or several), a set of gestures that stem from the same artistic desire. There is Trajal Harrell, or rather Trajal Harrell and his own, in a relationship of addiction to the audience. The artist in all his beauty, his loftiness, his tyranny, his narcissism, ritually renews the gesture of invitation addressed to the audience: questioning together the possibility of sharing an emotion.

"*Here and now, you created me. All of you. All of New York, all of Paris, all of Tokyo, you created me*[49]"

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rigoureuse des mots: à chaque lecture ils revenaient, toujours les mêmes et dans le même ordre, je les attendais. Dans les contes d'Anne-Marie, les personnages vivaient au petit bonheur, comme elle faisait elle-même: ils acquirent des destins. J'étais à la Messe: j'assistais à l'éternel retour des noms et des événements.")

[49]   Trajal Harrell performing in *Antigone Jr.++*.

The precedent ideas have been developed through a collaboration by Lennart Boyd Schürmann and Augustin Le Coutour (LA) on an ongoing series of performances, departing from academic research on the Greek symposium. Augustin Le Coutour (*1982) is a composer, theatre director and performer who is living in Paris. Lennart Boyd Schürmann (*1994), based in Berlin, is developing his philosophical research between the fields of academic philology, theatre and contemporary art.