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Dramaturgy of Exile: An Autopoietic Exploration

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education College of Social Science University of Glasgow

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DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Elizabeth Eustathia Evelyn SAMARA

Signature

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a practice-led, dramaturgical inquiry into autopoiesis in exile. It provides a methodology for the recreation or the *autopoiesis*, of the (writing) self in exile by presenting the emergence of a new languaging of the exilic condition within the exile but, more importantly, outwith the exile, and within the host.

Through the researching and crafting of three works of theatre and film the thesis examines the poetic self in exile through written language. The subject is vast and much discussed by many, from classical Greek and Roman antiquity to modernity and postmodernity. The innovation this work offers emerges from writing under the condition of existential peril against “authoritarian and fascist threat” (Stanley, 2024). Through dramatisation, it explores what can happen when language is instrumentalised, decontextualised and turned against its former emancipatory function. Within the chronological impetus of less than one hundred years, there is presently a virulent re-emergence of all five conditions of fascism as set out by philosopher Jason Stanley alongside numerous studies by Arendt, Snyder, Klemperer, Bertrand Russell, Ecco and many others. Exposure to this “descent to fascism” (Snyder, 2025) is taking place through traditional but also technological and complex digital means. In that sense, we are all exiles. As the writer in exile, I have thus addressed a gap in the scholarship by foregrounding the method of autopoiesis as an embodied, dramaturgically situated and performative practice of resistance under contemporary conditions of linguistic, ontological and material exclusion.

This work on autopoiesis has been designed as a philosophical pentagon of a Contract of Vulnerability constructed around the wound of exile and its potential for transforming vulnerability into a new language. The first play, *LESBOS*, examines the term Wound. By exposing the wound, the timing of the wound and the invulnerability of the Antigonian drama, it examines constitutive exclusion and dramatizes the conditions of exilic presence and how these may be regenerated and reimagined. The second play, *A Seafarer's Elegy*, is an absurdist piece which examines the condensation of political language. Led by Martin Esslin's 1960 study on the theatre of the absurd, it considers the sloganification of language and the potential for remaking meaning in a time of depletion of traditional codes of signification. The final piece, *A Poetic Constitution for Scotland* revisits Scotland as a repository of trauma and contestation and a scene of political resistance. The thesis further examines the function of literature in exile as a precondition of writing and, lastly,

problematizes translational and extractive poesis in a moment when the exilic writer is mined for cultural and linguistic capital while simultaneously re-languaging, resisting and producing new dramaturgies in exile.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	6
ACT I PRAELUDIUM.....	7
Autopoiesis in exile.....	7
Theoretical Approaches.	8
Autopoiesis as method	19
The Wound.	20
Cixous and Exile: the precondition of writing.....	23
A contract of vulnerability	25
Translational research	26
ACT II.....	32
LESBOS	32
The Contract of Vulnerability	66
Full Disclosure: Contagion.....	70
Timing the Wound	82
Antigone’s Contract of Invulnerability.....	87
Re-volt.....	96
ACT III.....	100
THE SEAFARER’S ELEGY	100
The ABSURD	141
Surreal-ising fascism: Transcendence or Praxis?	162
Das Es und Das Ich: Zero and One	167
ACT IV.....	170
The Foreigner’s Poetic Constitution: Performing Exile in Scotland	170
The Exile is invited	175
First Provocation: CHORUS Cò th’ annain?	176
Second Provocation: Bodies in the Street: Chorus, protest, liberation.....	181
Third Provocation: Performing Resistance, Claiming Land: <i>Oor braes and oor bruachs</i>	190
Final Provocation: Woman, Life, Freedom.....	198
ACT V.....	204
Conclusion	204
Chorus/Chōra.....	205

Autopoiesis in pedagogy.....	206
Language and exile	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY	212

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Metaphor and the oneiric, I owe to both my parents for insisting that the impossible is always possible and the metaphorical is always real.

I have written this thesis for my daughter whose love gives me reason to continue the fight.

ACT I PRAELUDIUM

AUTOPOIESIS IN EXILE

This thesis is about the potential for re-dramaturging and auto-creating the poetic Self in exile through written language. The subject is vast and much discussed by many before me, from Homer to Dangarembga and from Ovid to Joyce and beyond. The innovation in this work is that it proposes a methodology for the writing self in exile, *writing* under the condition of existential peril against “authoritarian and fascist threat” (Stanley, 2024). Within the chronological impetus of less than one hundred years, there is a virulent re-emergence of all five conditions of fascism as set out by philosopher Stanley alongside numerous studies and works of literature by Arendt, Snyder, Ben-Ghiat, Klemperer, Bertrand Russell, Umberto Eco as well as across literature and poetry. As appointed by Stanley, Snyder and Fricker, the conditions of today’s political and media discourse “fits the label of fascism” (Stanley, 2025) or a “descent to fascism” (Snyder, 2025). I shall sum these up as the mythology of national greatness and worship of a lost past, ethnic purity, efforts to abolish education and the arts, constrictive parameters for women’s position in society and an acute discourse of victimhood and grievance. Exposure to them is carried out through unregulated digital and algorithmic channels. They control power, remapping human consciousness, restructuring language and recoding the very terms through which subjects express their humanity, effectively dehumanising and forcing the human subject into externality. In that sense, we are all exiles.

Exile in this work is not limited to territorial forced exclusion, although this forms a large part of it. It also extends to notions of outness and a state of being external. Externality is observed against the languaging of our political and civil rights, forced displacement, juridical consent and, not least, economic exclusion.

I have designed this work on autopoiesis in exile as a pentagon of a Contract of Vulnerability. The angles are firstly, Terms of Contract. Led by the philosophy of Cixous, Derrida, Irigaray and Homi Bhabha, this position examines how the autopoietic Self becomes a conscious exilic subject, emerging from a primordial, pre-linguistic sphere and into intentionality and meaningful political existence. Secondly, I consider the term Wound and, more particularly, the wound of the womb, led by Cixous and Irigaray but also the literary works of francophone Négritude. Thirdly, I examine the term of Full Disclosure and contagion. In legal terms, full disclosure is the legal obligation to reveal all relevant

information in contract, criminal and civil law. I do this through considering the prism of dramatic contagion as exposure. In contractual terms, the exile enters a contract with the host where the wound, the miasma and the stigma are fully disclosed. Camus's *The Plague* (1947) but also *L'Étranger* (1942) and the *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), provide prototypes for allegorising contagion as a metaphor for looming authoritarianism and demonstrate how the seeping wound of contagion is not only metaphorical but also linguistically material, a site of iteration, expiation and return. In this vein, the exilic subject does not just bleed out imagistically to serve a plot. She bleeds meaning by exposing the wound in full disclosure: a theatrical staging of the body that insists on being-towards-the-host in language and in ethical posture.

Fourthly, I problematise extractive poesis. This is the making of the poet/writer in exile as an object of wilful and creative extraction. In extractive poesis the writer grants authorisation to the community or organisation to mine the writer's specialised knowledge and skill in order to generate, firstly, a new poesis or act of writing and, secondly, a product of 'new writing', as it was termed in my case. This 'new writing' effectively merged the in-element and the out-element to the benefit of the host, principally the institutional host. In Cixous's philosophy, this is the 'stigma' which emerges when the writer is 'written on', prevalent in *Stigmata* (Cixous, 2010) and in the *Rire de la Méduse* (Cixous, 1975). Cixous particularly focuses on the writing self being written on by the female line of the community: the maternal ancestors, the mother languages and the archival silences. Lastly, and particularly, in the case of the *Poetic Constitution*, I propose the method of translational research. Through meticulous linguistic, phonic, acoustic and textual analysis of the host vernacular, the exilic writer reanimates the archive and transliterates the ancestral, historical, political and contested languages into a new order. Through my being invited into three significant institutional bodies, the British Council, the Being Human Festival and Broadcasting Scotland, each of whom requested specifically my writing and analytical skills across various disciplines, I conducted a study of comprehension, transliteration and synthesis across the English, Celtic and Scots languages and rearranged the temporalities of trauma and contestation. This provided a way towards the autopoiesis of subjectivity by consenting to the writing of a new, mutually agreed vernacular, foregrounding the wound as the originary point of language and of meaning-making.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES.

Exilic consciousness is an evolving perspective that makes a person in exile and remakes the world around them. This ‘making’ takes place both in word and in action. The term ‘exilic consciousness’ has been used by performance scholar Silvija Ještrović to note how consciousness in the exiled subject expands across the state of forced displacement under the threat of political oppression or war to a sense of marginalisation and self-imposed exile which could be the result of a moral or political choice (Ještrović, 2003). Ještrović’s profound study of performing exile inaugurates the concepts of the exilic imaginary and the exilic collective. Ještrović and Yana Meerzon’s analyses of the exilic imaginary are also illuminated by Kristeva’s psychoanalytic perspectives in *Strangers to Ourselves* and integrate her later work on self-creation and exclusion. Autopoiesis in Kristeva’s *Strangers to Ourselves* is the self-generative process which reveals “the foreigner who lives within us: is the hidden face of our identity” (Kristeva, 1991). Kristeva’s stranger is the dreaded internalised Other, the precursor of Ještrović and Meerzon’s exilic imaginary. This site of symbolic regeneration becomes a process of rupture, where the self performs its own reconstitution, linguistically and ontologically.

The field of exilic performance and performance research has expanded dramatically since the 1980s. This work draws heavily on the oeuvres of African and Black philosophers alongside the work of novelists, essayists, playwrights and artists who have profoundly influenced drama and exilic performance practices in both theatre and pedagogy.

Ethnography and anthropology, combined with political upheavals and their impacts on philosophy and linguistics, have enabled the shift from formalist dramaturgy and performance to a bridging of the spaces between theory and practice (Ještrović, 2023). Silvija Ještrović has explored self-creation in the theatre, written and performed by exiled artists, with particular emphasis on the potential for agentic thinking and, even more strongly, as a form of political resistance. In *Performance, Exile and “America”* (2009) Ještrović sees exile not merely as a state of displacement but as the dynamic ground for agentic self-invention, the “imaginative reconstruction of identity” (Ještrović, S. & Meerzon, Y., 2009). Meerzon reappoints the exile’s quotidian as a dynamic site of creation. The topological blur between the everyday and the fictional is where “the distinction between real/actual and imaginary/perceived chronotope of her new life becomes “the result of an actor’s [an exile’s] seizing control of the quotidian and turning it into theatrical space (Ještrović, S. & Meerzon, Y., 2009). Much of Ještrović’s de-territorialised problematisation of space has led me in the creation of LESBOS as a

mythical site, alongside *The Poetic Constitution*'s appointment of 'Scotland' as a topological reference to any site of contestation and marginalisation.

These moments of quotidian experience are potentialities for actual life, performed exilically, outside the parameter of the calculable and the expected. They have provided the rawness that can contribute to repositioning exile as ethical engagement and the ability to implicate oneself and translate/transliterate directly from a place of real loss. This degree of self-implication requires the formation of both a moral posture and, perhaps also an active ontological and material engagement with the subject-matter. The exilic quotidian is vast but nowhere more potent than in the African experience. African writers' and playwrights' exile, be it linguistic, political, racial or psychological, grants them a privileged position in staging the dissonance between imposed and lived realities.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's work as a playwright and novelist underlines the ethical stance in the theatre and in performance-as democracy (Robson, 1979). Wa Thiong'o's exile is an ethical engagement with the democratic project because it can be intimate and political at the same time. What is implicit in wa Thiong'o's argument is the possibility of performance as a mode of deliberative democracy. In post-independence Kenya, the establishment of the country's National Theatre in 1963 energised the resuscitation of traditional dramatic forms with vigorous critique of oppression and political persecution. It is mostly wa Thiong'o's activism rather than his dramatic innovations that elevated him to a revered figure, especially in works like *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* whose protagonist eulogises the freedom fighter's resilience and the promotion of Kenyan self-determination. In *Birth of a Dream Weaver*, wa Thiong'o narrates how his own "birthing" from herdsboy and child labourer into a writer and political activist, giving himself permission to exist and write within and outwith the British Imperial integument.

Jane Plaistow's artistic experience in Africa chronicles the struggles of both wa Thiong'o and Nigeria's Wole Soyinka. Plaistow's work also ties in with the exilic artist/performer's positioning *inside* the politics of theatre both as subject/author and object, gazed upon and gazing upon their own process of exile (Plaistow, 2016). Activism or any form of personal implication for playwrights has often resulted in severe punishment for their work: some shining examples are Egyptian women's rights activist and playwright Nawal El Saadawi, who has suffered imprisonment and exile for their work, Nigeria's Ken Saro-Wiwa and Uganda's Byron Kawadwa, who have been murdered by the state. Ethiopian playwrights

have spent short periods in prison, while for some Eritrean playwrights during that country's liberation struggle, prison became a matter of routine (Plaistow, 2016).

Wole Soyinka's long association with many British institutions, not least the Royal Court Theatre, and his Nobel Prize for literature in 1986, exposes the ethics of performance or the "dramatising of a certain reality" as a moral encounter (Soyinka, 1976a). In *Myth, Literature and the African World*, Soyinka expands on the topos of ethical consciousness, Yoruba cosmology, historical reckoning and African responsibility enacted in dramatic time. In the *Fourth Stage*, he argues that tragedy must emerge from a deep engagement with communal ethical transformation: "True drama must confront the abyss [...] and pass through the chthonic realm in order to re-emerge as renewal" (Soyinka, 1976a). This is not just a metaphysical claim, it is autopoiesis in performance: representation recreates the community's moral structure through drama. Through his dramaturgy, Soyinka has equally enlightened pedagogy and the potential for regeneration and auto-creativity in education as a moral imperative.

Drama created in exile cuts through the *what* and the *how* of performing otherness and dissent and, at this intersection, is necessitates, the *doing* and the *being* in the production of otherness. This intersubjectivity and inter-corporeality constitutes a preliminary intuition because it entails both the corporeal experience and the mental states of the author/performer and their object of study. It installs the exiled subject as constitutive of the formation of exilic consciousness and performance. This is particularly significant in light of the reworking of Aristotelian ethical philosophy by Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt, resisting abstraction and encouraging the autopoietic recrafting of the self through praxis and active democratic participation. This avenue requires reflexivity: a profound "knowing" and critiquing of the self as both a configuration of ethical identity on the margins but also within a collective, political schema. Arendt radicalises Aristotelian praxis not merely as duty but as the foundation of human freedom and identity in the polis (Arendt, 1998). In the *Human Condition*, she goes further to say that "in acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities" (Arendt, 1998), positing an active and conscious praxis of autopoiesis.

In *Performance and Phenomenology* Stuart Grant observes that Aristotelian *phronēsis* is the proper domain of a specifically performative way of 'knowing'. I expand this argument to encompass the praxiological validity of exilic dramaturgy which, according to Grant,

would issue from the ethical concept of Aristotelian *phronesis*. This is a basis for a way of ‘knowing’ as a means of praxis or resistance. ‘Knowing’ in theatrical performance does not represent propositional truth, nor the *technē* of know-how but “a knowledge which exists only in the performance of the action itself, a temporary, continually decomposing and recomposing response to the circumstance of the moment” (Grant, 2018). The making of exilic dramaturgy begins with emphasis on the originary character of *praxis* as elaborated in Book VI of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* where he distinguishes three modes of activity analogous to three attendant types of knowledge: *praxis* (practice), *poiesis* (creation) and *theoreia* (theory).

For Marx, Praxis is the central concept of his ([1845] 1976) “*Theses on Feuerbach*,”. Here are theses 1, 2 and 8:

I. The chief defect of all previous materialism ... is that things, reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice [Praxis], not subjectively.

II. The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice [Praxis]. ...

VIII. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice [Praxis].

Marx, ([1845] 1976)

What is significant about the claim of *thinking in praxis* is that it opens the way to a transformation into human practice of philosophy’s theory, thereby changing human circumstance. I would like to transpose the theory of the theatre in exile as transformation onto auto-praxis in the moment of dramatic praxis.

The work of joining *phronesis* and co-creation is the work of the community, the work of history and, above all, the responsibility of the writer or the researcher. I would go further: Praxis (πρᾶξις), transliterated from the Greek, is an act or any form of doing, including autopoiesis as self-creation. For Marx praxis is “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change [that] can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionising practice [revolutionäre Praxis] (Marx and Engels, 1998). History is then reflective of conscious action, practical social activity, and the

movement of history in modes of production. Feenberg observes that Marx's philosophy of praxis hinges upon "the idea that history, properly understood, has ontological significance. As a philosopher of praxis, Marx did not choose between an ontological and a historical interpretation of the social categories; he chose both" (Feenberg, 2014). Praxis brings into relief the historical specificity and the structural foundation of the world, our ontological (being) and epistemological (knowing) formations within this world and the conditions in which resistance takes root. Marx's 11th *Thesis on Feuerbach* determines that: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert; es kommt aber darauf an sie zu verändern" (philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is, however, to change it" trans. mine) (Marx, ([1845] 1976).

Following Marx, Paulo Freire's pedagogical project endeavours to transform individuals from being objects of educational processes in what he called the 'banking method' of education (Freire, 1970), to fully agentic subjects able to shape actively their own self-liberation. Freire's observations in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, are fully applicable to the theatrical process as pedagogy in community and educational contexts. Audiences and classrooms are not the mere receptacles of spectacles/knowledges. The writer's duty is parallel to the tragedian's relationship with the Chorus: seek guidance, accept judgement, listen in silence, cry against injustice, lament the dead, perceive the state of the world. It is precisely this fusion of the chorus, the resistance/praxis and the implication of the poetic self that have the potential of activating autopoiesis as a living and ethical dramaturgy where language, knowledge and lament stage a shared space of witnessing. This new grammar of resistance emerges in a time of political peril, both as a reassessment of our ethical and discursive posture but equally as choric and collective responsibility.

Exilic performance investigates how the elements of the individual's discourse bleed into the narrative of the host or adopted culture which will constitute the foundation of her exilic existence. The performative nature of exile lies in the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually generative of boundaries, exposing the limits of the sign of difference, be it class, language or race, and expanding or collapsing the émigré's grid of performativity. For Homi Bhabha, "difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between [...]. It is for the oppressed to locate their agency in a form of the 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory" (Bhabha, 2005). For the purposes of this work, exilic scholarship also enlightens the critique of educational structures (Wynter, 1992) and designs a theatre of the classroom and an inclusive, antiracist pedagogy (King, 1992). Exilic performance also

subsists under the regime of raciolinguistic ideologies through which racialised bodies come to be constructed as engaging in appropriately academic and artistic linguistic practices (Phipps, 2023 and Gramling, 2016). These practices are implicated in the reproduction of racial normativity through the expectation for language-minoritised artists to model their linguistic inflections after the dominant speaking subject. In *Do not Call Us Negros* and in other works, Wynter designs a theatre of the classroom and an inclusive pedagogy not merely transmitting knowledge but performing vulnerability, marginal epistemologies, and rescripting the roles of teacher and taught as co-creators of meaning (Wynter, 1992). This echoes the exilic condition itself: dialogic, and attuned to a choric space of listening, rupture, and re-imagining.

Exilic representation witnesses the way in which the exilic subject's linguistic, cultural, and ideological challenges eventually lead to the forms of one's personal and professional integration, adaptation, and change. In more recent years, the scholarship of Yana Meerzon, Silvija Ještrović, Julija Pešić and Alison Jeffers scaffold modern exilic performance with detailed accounts of exile in the twentieth-first century and, most importantly, with their personal experiences as exiles, researchers and academics. The significance of these studies lies in their chronology as witnessing exile and activism in real time. Meerzon and Ještrović's meta-reflective critique observe the rapidly changing face of migration, globalisation, new wars and climate change alongside the disparate ways of representing them. Scholars of national representations on exile have made vast contributions to the exilic debate. Samuel Ravengai's accounts of the theatre of displacement in South Africa and Zimbabwe, Bisi Adigun's accounts of Nigerian theatre, Daphne P. Lei's diasporic trauma and techno-intercultural innovations in Taiwanese theatre and Robert Borocho and Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun's analysis of Ukraine's military anthropology perspectives in theatre have strengthened theatre's conceptual lexicon with their aesthetics of sincerity. In Spain, Andrés Pérez-Simón illustrates the advent of African immigrant characters in Spanish drama through the 1990s and Jorge Huerta analyses Mexican performance and demonstrates the divisive impact of US immigration policies on Mexican families. The Yugoslavian conflict and its historical outcomes have led to notable analyses of Balkan theatre by scholars such as Milija Gluhovic and, most recently, accounts of the theatre of the Syrian diaspora by Edward Ziter.

Edward Said defines exile as a circumstance "irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that which is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, "like death without death's ultimate mercy, [...] has torn millions of people from the

nourishment of tradition, family, and geography” (Said, 2012). Prophetically, Edward Said predicted exile’s scale and magnitude, writing in 1984: “The difference between earlier exiles and those of our time is, it bears stressing, scale: “our age—with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions to totalitarian rulers—is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration” (Said, 2000). His vast oeuvre recognises exilic culture originating at the edge of the diasporic collective heritage, reinforcing a long-standing tradition of exile as regret, doubt, sorrow, and nostalgia. To Mukherjee, once in exile “the spectrum of choice is gravel narrowed; the alternatives may be no more subtle than death, imprisonment, or a one-way ticket to oblivion” (Dascalu, 2007).

Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of heteroglossia, dialogicity, and chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981) define the multi-vocality and multi-temporality of exile and Jacques Derrida’s *différance* re-emphasises the exilic artist’s creative efforts that distinguish every exilic performative “as a cross- cultural activity, a staging of differences, although the motives for such activity have been different in different historical periods” (Carlson, 2003). Victor Turner’s liminal spaces and imaginary communitas proposes embracing the three fundamental issues an émigré faces – language, identity, and construction of a new narrative (literary, dramatic, theatrical) and practising theatre in exile as an experience of constructing. A performative scene of the exilic wandering embodies the dramaturgy of social and subject-forming dialogue framed within the socio political and linguistic context of the host culture which leads to a series of rituals and iterations which will constitute the final production of the event of exile (Goffman, 1959). To Butler, performativity is a tool for attempting political re-signification as the framework for one’s self- imposed and self-accepted norms of being. It opens “the signifiers of the processes for everyday forms of mimesis and creative imitation to new meanings and new possibilities for political re-signification” (Bodies that Matter, 188). In Salman Rushdie’s words exilic experience extends into the allegorical and the imagistic: “Sometimes, I do see myself as a tree . . . as the ash Yggdrasil, the mythical world- tree of Norse legend. The ash Yggdrasil has three roots” (Rushdie, 1984). Rushdie’s vision of himself as a migrant/fantast who creates in his novels the “imaginary countries” that are to be imposed upon “the ones that exist” (Rushdie, 1984) can also be recognised in Barba’s theatre work.

Exile as banishment and choice, the internal confinement and the external exodus, can be either bitterly rejected or accepted with grace. A self- imposed exile, unlike someone who has been banished from his homeland, is aware of his choice. Although de-territorialised,

such exile finds oneself “to be in the grip of both the old and the new, the before and the after” (Naficy, 1998). Experiencing either restorative or reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2008), self-imposed exiles strive to establish Platonic relationships “with their countries and cultures of origin and with the sight, sound, taste and feel of an originary experience, of an elsewhere at other times” (Naficy, 1998). At the same time, the condition of self-imposed exile frees one from the dualism of here/there ideological and social oppositions. It provides an émigré with the option of choosing between staying and leaving, between going back and making it in the new lands. Thus, a self-imposed exile often seeks a state of displacement in order to mobilise one’s creative potential, and to challenge the “capacity of individuals to stand at times aside from the models, patterns, and paradigms of behaviour and thinking” (Turner, 1974).

According to Yana Meerzon, exilic identity rests with the transformative potential of the exilic voyage and its self-generating power. Meerzon attaches great importance to the intergenerational conditions of exile, which progress from the clash of cultures to hybridity, to an eventual formation of individual discourse where the narrative of the dominant or adopted culture forms the basis of a new exilic identity. Meerzon traces the exilic voyage’s series of progressions through the creative, spiritual, and aesthetic quests of the exilic artist. While I agree that “the practicing of theatre in exile is an experience of constructing Victor Turner’s liminal spaces and imaginary *communitas*” (Meerzon, 2017) as Meerzon puts it, of the diasporic collective heritage. I maintain that Meerzon’s observations stress the self-compositional method of exile for both the artist and the receivers of the art.

Playwright Derek Walcott’s work written in Trinidad and America renders his exile the source for personal freedom and the means of expansion of one’s creativity. Both Brodsky and Walcott, although for different reasons, were forced to leave their homes after reaching artistic adulthood. They were both compelled to engage with the processes of translation, language change, and, to some extent, what David Gramling refers to as ideological monolingualism (Gramling, 2016), which, at least in Brodsky’s case, proved a positive force. Both Brodsky and Walcott inaugurate poetic theatre turned political, with Brodsky’s theatre of poetry (Brodsky, 2013) and Walcott’s work in poetry (Walcott, 1976).

An artist in exile is someone who consciously elects a state of wilful non-belonging to “any place, any time, any love” (Kristeva, 1994), who rarely defines oneself in spatial terms, but sees exile as an existential voyage unfolding in temporal dimensions similar to McNeill’s interpretation of Aristotelian *phronēsis* as the making and acting of one’s exilic

Self. For Kristeva, “the space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping. As to landmarks, there are none” (Kristeva, 1994). For Kristeva, the eventual temporality of exilic experience exceeds its spatial coordinates. Spatial coordinates equally encompass linguistic remit. In the words of Eugenio Barba, the sonorous disharmony of the foreigner is superseded by “what has been my work of more than 20 years with Odin Teatret: [...] to exploit the sonorous richness of languages, which have an emotive force capable of transmitting information above and beyond the semantic, the condition of exile triggers the rejection” (Barba, 1988). To work in one’s non-maternal language requires an exceeding of one’s behavioural, muscular and kinaesthetic *a priori*. But the search itself for a new “seeing” of language of the exilic experience is one of the artist’s primary objectives as:

an intellectual performing outsider-ness [...] exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation

Said, 1993.

Said extends the material to the metaphysical and creates the opportunity for psychic continuity between that which was and that which is to be created and which, as imagined, will be impossible to reach. I argue that therein lies the potential for renewal of the Self, performed and unrepresentable: The temporality of *phronēsis* is the temporality of Being itself: a repetitious coming-forth “anew at every moment”, *autopoiesis* of generative power. As such, it comprises the loci of subject and object. It also gives an epistemological twist to Schechner’s definition of performance as twice-behaved behaviour but with the condition of a finite, unique momentary instance. Conceptualisation of the exilic performative therefore encompasses Butler (1988), Goffman (1956) and Derrida’s (1973) definition of the self as performed in action, but, equally, follows the third rule of Grant’s Heideggerian performative: resistance to representability (Grant, 2019). Exilic dramaturgy, the creation of an exilic cosmos, entails the Austinian collapse of the propositional distance between subject and object.

Similarly, Heidegger appoints speech as “the human being’s distinctive, universal, and fundamental way of comporting itself toward the word and to itself” (Heidegger, 2010). The emphasis is here on the impulse of comportment, the fundamentality of the

performative rather than the rehearsed. I hold that this position ties in with exilic utterance in its uniqueness as a practice of iteration, but also one of resistance against representation. Exilic speech as autopoietic practise is not simply a repetition of loss or a mimetic act of cultural reproduction; it is a performative comportment towards becoming, one that invents a new temporality with each utterance. In this sense that autopoietic chorus is constituted through the tension between fracture and form. It proposes the structure of a collective subjectivity always in the act of writing itself into presence, beyond the constraints of canonic representation, towards a poetics of ethical reconfiguration.

The term autopoiesis, or translated from the Greek, “self-creation” or “auto-praxis”, is a neologism coined in 1972 by Chilean cellular biologists, Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, to describe the aptitude of living cells to reproduce and reorganise themselves. The term was subsequently explored by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann and further developed by the Dutch scholar Jan Overwijk who assigns autopoiesis as a new research paradigm in the Humanities which, traversing both familiar dualisms and intellectual sources, creates an “innovative metaphysics” (Dolphijn & Van der Tuin, 2012), by pushing and amalgamating the boundaries of philosophy and narrative. By transposing this theory onto exilic narrative, I have re-examined the intersections of language, the body and the stigma of exile and can propose autopoiesis as a method of (re)-linguaging exile. This has, in turn, exposed the limits of conventional delineations between the dramatist, the exile and the wound which are political, historical but also intimate. The exilic and diasporic writer cannot *not* be attended by the trauma, cultural memory and aesthetic rupture of exile. It is inevitable that these be synthesised in dramaturgy, philosophical analysis and the wound of the woman's body into an act of resisting, imagining and writing autopoiesis. Autopoiesis in the context of multilingualism, language education and permaculture, is now beginning to emerge as a new methodology in the humanities with significant contributions in the areas of indigenous knowledge, ecological and cultural nuances (Phipps, Sitholé and Yohannes, 2025).

I have categorised the method of autopoiesis into the wound of exile, the contract of vulnerability and translational/extractive research. The Wound of exile is examined through the prism of the live shimmering wound sustained in the process of stigmatisation and the reorganising of both language and being in exile. Following Cixous and Derrida, this is further examined from the prism of exile as the precondition of writing and the connection between deconstruction and meaning-making. The Contract of Vulnerability is therefore drawn up between the exilic writer and the host who could be either a mere interlocutor or the organisational, governmental, artistic or institutional host. The splitting of the writing Self between archive (of ancestry, history and language) and actor (of a new resisting and writing/acting consciousness) yields the product of autopoiesis: the exilic writer in double temporality: this of Memory/Projection, Exclusion/Invention. In the words of Algerian novelist Assia Djebar “I write in French what was not written in Arabic” (Djebar and Benson, 1995).

I have employed the method of extractive poesis to produce the preconditions whereby the exiled writer can and does persist in exile. Extractive poesis creates an avenue for the host community to draw out the creative energy of the exiled writer. While this energy is being consensually depleted, the writer is, in this sense, both simultaneously produced and producing of a new subjectivity, in language and in wider cultural frameworks.

Finally, I have proposed translational research as a means of translating the local and national vernacular into drama and further, as the connective tissue between the writing body of the writer in exile and the migrating of declarative utterance onto the (printed) page of the dramatic text and lived experience.

THE WOUND.

The wound of exile for the woman exile initiates the process of becoming-Other, through language and non-language and, ultimately, the becoming of the writer of exile *in exile*. It is principally considered through the matrilineal (woman as head/symbolic phallus) line and is crafted by implicating the self into the exilic drama. It is an implied agreement which the exile draws up with the hosting Other, in being summoned by this hosting Other to penetrate the Other's environments, government institutions, universities broadcasting establishments, rituals and festivals and exposing the wound thereby creating a theatre of exile. In what Cixous terms as the "shimmering heart of the French language" in her dialogue with Derrida (Cixous, 2024) lies the wound of forced legitimisation in the host environment: linguistic, ontological and juridical. For the exile, the wound forces the slippage of this very language into philosophy (Derrida et al., 2006) as a generative breach where language fractures and reassembles. For the woman writer in exile the autopoietic act begins when she makes herself archive and actor, producer and bearer of meaning. The wound is significant here as, though painful, it is no longer silenced nor sutured but staged in its brokenness.

The exile's language is 'exilic', in the sense that it is created and reproduced in a different cellular transmutation to the native speaker's. Methodologically, it cannot be quantified and here, I follow Cixous, once again. In her reading of Derridean exilic language, she observes how in exile, language is unmade, unmasked and the human speaker re-linguaged; how the external element awakens the semeion caché (hidden sign), how the idiom is reintegrated, ultimately how with Derrida, in exile, "poetry begins to gallop philosophy" (Derrida et al., 2006). The equestrian metaphor denotes not only the immense creative and regenerative potential of exilic language but also the bascule bridging two

ontologies. In *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1974) Derrida initiates the possibility of the flesh being implicated into writing and, by extension, into philosophy. Irigaray and Cixous have already inaugurated this space but Derrida's efforts formalise the problematic of the body to that of writing. Reading *of Grammatology*, Reynolds, concludes that "the efficacy of the Derridean deconstruction should depend on a complex understanding of both 'writing' and the body, and a detailed appreciation of what the materiality of the written consists in" (Reynolds, 2004). Methodologically, the analogy of writing / body as well as the metaphoricity of language at the intersection of writing and sensory perception becomes the written wound on the exile's stigmatised body, a body of "blood and signs" (Derrida et al., 2006). The exilic dramatist is the philosopher who "writes with all his body, that philosophy that can only be brought into this world in flesh and blood" (Derrida et al., 2006) an extension into the ritual of childbirth, circumcision, scarification and death. *That* language is a *new* language, born of the ashes and the organs of the host and the creativity of the exile. That is the language of exile this work is concerned with.

For Irigaray, the womb signifies the transposition of Plato's cave. In *Speculum of the Other Woman* one seeks enlightenment by returning to the passage and back to the source of darkness from which one began surrounded by fluids, a body within a woman's body (Irigaray, 1974). Philosophy has concerned itself with the womb across many motifs, explications and metaphors. The Platonic *chōra*, is the matrix of primordial beginning (Glissant, 1997) and more specifically, in relation to the maternal wound, (Irigaray, 2013). The *chōra* is that which makes possible all form, yet it is never given form itself. For Irigaray, the philosopher, the *chōra* is the repressed ground of metaphysics, reflecting the unrecognised, unsung woman who makes generation possible yet, is herself unmade in the process. For Irigaray the observer of social systems, the *chōra* is a site of radical Otherness, irreducible to patriphallic language. *Chōra* becomes an important conceptual term for both Plato and, after him, Heidegger. Heidegger's long preoccupation with the Greeks becomes a mainstay in Irigaray's oeuvre and Heidegger himself one of her interlocutors. In Heidegger's *Dasein*, the human is language and it is this language-ing that conditions the human's *Sein* (being), recreating the *Sein* and creating responsibilities and duties. Language is taken up by Irigaray, but under the pre-semiotic fluidity of the womb, the originary dwelling where she detects a *chōric* space, very similar to its Platonic conceptualisation. In the *Timaeus*, Plato defines the *chōra*:

“ἀνόρατον εἶδος τι καὶ ἄμορφον, πανδεχές, μεταλαμβάνον δὲ ἀπορώτατά πη τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ δυσσαλωτότατον” [...] an invisible and amorphous being, capable of receiving everything, hence its being understood by the logos is exceptionally difficult and resistant to conceptualisation.

(translation mine)

Plato and Robert Gregg Bury, 1929

Irigaray accepts chōra's pre-linguistic existence, according to it an elemental, amorphous, nurturing and yet logos-independent quality, thus distancing herself from Heidegger's discursive interpretation. In *Speculum*, she analogises Freud's conflation of the vagina, the dark continent in the psychoanalytic undertones of a woman's reproductive system associated with darkness, which implicates the notion of the *néant* (nothingness). Within this schema, woman as darkness has no past and functions as a place for the origin of man, an envelope for his becoming. I have followed Irigaray's analysis of subjectivity in the signification of water/glass/refraction as the mother (*la mère*), doubled by the sea (*la mer*), both reflections of man's trembling and nostalgia (Irigaray, 2010). This doubling of mother and sea with the abyss has guided the creation of a matriphallic / mythical and allegorical universe in LESBOS.

Hélène Cixous's call to *écriture féminine* responds directly to the symbolic erasure positioning female writing as a form of return to the unrepressed unconscious that speaks in waves in rhythms and in contradictions. In *Le Rire de la Méduse* she reclaims the darkness that psychoanalysis fears writing "I write woman: woman must write herself" (Cixous, 2010). I observe here the wound not as a void but as generative ground the dark that births form from without being seen a resistance to phallic signification through poetic rupture. French Négritude writers right against from oppressors wound but against its containment. In *Return to Mother Africa* and invocation of the sea were not simply nostalgic, but strategic disruptions of dominant temporalities. In Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* the sea is both a base an archive a haunted chōra of Black Atlantic memory where speech is broken and reformed in resistance to dominant temporalities.

In these works the wound of the womb is irreducible to a given/phallic coordinate and provided me with a fertile method for transposing exilic language from wound to word. The birthing of language from the womb denotes an autopoietic act of generating the Self in language and from language of non-belonging to language of home. Methodologically, this is a maieutic of form and content, an extraction of creative matter and a proposal for a restructuring of meaning-making. Socrates's maieutic derives from the eponymous word which signifies midwifery. It is imagistically and intellectually an act of pulling out or extracting new life out of a woman's body. In this sense, the maieutic method can be

interpreted as both extraction and translation, appointing the writer as the midwife of new meaning.

CIXOUS AND EXILE: THE PRECONDITION OF WRITING

Hélène Cixous's exile is the "préalable" of her writing, the precondition of her oeuvre. Cixous is Algerian born and this umbilical cord between the soil that birthed her and the country that received her, France, lives and breathes through her oeuvre. Following this method, Cixous has sought parallels with other exiles, notably, Joyce on whom she based her doctoral thesis in 1972 where she transposes a novelist's auto-biopoetic work into philosophical and theoretical understandings. Here, Cixous uses exile as the primordial junction of "Joyce's every movement" which proves vital to his being able to function as an artist and in enacting the functions of separation and splitting, because, as she explains, in Joyce's economy of lack, "one creates in order to retrieve or to recover what was lost" (Cixous, 1972). At the same time, exile translates the local into the universal, from "the unhappy Dublin consciousness to a universal consciousness" (Cixous, 1972). I observe here not only Cixous's reading of Joyce's starting point for the autopoiesis of the writer in exile but also the translative potential to expand consciousness, isolate the particular and transliterate it into the universal. For Cixous pain is necessary to the artist's intellectual advance. In her work, she is not "the artist who is driven out of society for not being like others" (Cixous, 1972) but rather etched and stigmatised against exile, betrayal, trespass, all contoured by a philosophical apparatus which brings it into manifestation and makes it matter.

Cixous's being on the side of otherness saw her positioning herself with "History's condemned, exiled, colonised, and burned" (Cixous, 2008). As she confesses, she "can never say the word 'patrie', 'fatherland', even if it is provided with an 'anti-' (Cixous, 2008), distancing herself from the corrective of national or ethnic belonging. This is a methodological approach of the exile-as-writer. In Cixous, exile mobilises an entire succession of semantic, poetic, narratological and philosophical associations with loss, foreignness, homelessness, dispossession, death, bereavement, and mourning. These thematic threads run across Cixous's oeuvre, notably, *Stigmata* (2005), *Newly Born Woman* (2008) and *Le Rire de la Méduse*. I have followed Cixous in exilic writing, as both method and inspiration across all three practice pieces in this thesis: in the *Seafarer* I have contemplated its roots and its conditions of possibility, in *LESBOS* I have theorised, politicised, intimated, and universalised it and in *Poetic Constitution*, I have synthesised it

in the Scottish vernacular. Markedly, Cixous often starts her essays by bringing desire to the scene of writing: “Je veux lire (“I want to read”), “Je veux planter des chemins” (“I want to plant some paths”, trans. mine), reiterating desire as the originary fragment of ‘want’ or lack, and inasmuch as lack and recognising this as part of her exilic experience. I would therefore note that Cixous’s writing is *made* methodologically and ontologically from the space of exile.

The fundamental point to retain here is that autopoiesis fissures stylistic conventions for academic form, literature and drama. The text can present across these fields which would inevitably combine internal thought processes with complex sections of philosophical and historical or linguistic content. Cixous’s critic Susan Sellers explains that in practicing such an explication of text:

“We work very close to the text, as close to the body of the text as possible; we work phonically, listening to the text, as well as graphically and typographically [...] We hear each other talking with foreign accents and we listen to the foreign accents in the text. [...]. We aren’t looking for the author as much as what made the author take the particular path they took, write what they wrote. We’re looking for the secret of creation”

Cixous, Cornell and Sellers, 1993

Methodologically, this quote has served me as a template for combining my textual analyses with a transpositional / translational exercise in phonics, graphics, semantics, syntax and acoustics but also in local vernacular. In LESBOS I sought parallels across ancient Greek, Latin, the Corfiot dialect, Arabic and modern, slightly americanised English. In the *Poetic Constitution*, I repeated the exercise in Gàidhlig enquiring into Irish and Celtic dialects and attempting to understand Manx and Pictish connections to Brittonic Celtic. Manx is closely related to Gàidhlig. It is not structurally Brittonic but there are substratal contact influences, which, though complex to process, demonstrated to me the how geography and migration enters language and remakes it. In this exercise, I was not looking for linguistic discoveries. I was rather looking for the secret of language, or Cixous’s secret of creation, which is granted by the exilic host to the exile and through the exile, to the written word and into history.

The text thereby becomes *the witness* to both the implicated Self within the process of life and the creation engendered by the process. Through such intimate enmeshment with the text’s otherness, Cixous incorporates aspects of her own identity formation as a writer, staging the scene of writing as the scene of transgression, privileging mystery and secret over realism, and affirming the need to leave “home” and to transform one’s exile into a

country (Cixous, Cornell and Sellers, 1993). The method offers transformational potential but also translational vigour as the wound of life migrates from its declarative utterance to the page and forces itself into (auto)-poetic and political existence.

A CONTRACT OF VULNERABILITY

In ACT II the Contract of Vulnerability in autopoiesis is dissected into sub-categories. Firstly, Terms of Contract are examined against the philosophy of deconstruction. In bringing the exilic self into being, I look at how deconstruction assists the conscious exilic subject towards an intentional reality. Departing from the structuralist presumption of language as a self-sufficient system, I design the exilic unconscious: a primordial sphere of the exile's arrival into new language and new subjective ontology progressing towards their achieving a turn towards meaning. Meaning's bearer is the subject, a new exilic subject presenting the most comprehensive theory of phenomenological and intentional description. This meaning, which is the universal mediation between 'I' and the world is now an exilic meaning, central to the working of language and being in the world.

Secondly, I examine the method of full disclosure. In legal terms, full disclosure is the legal obligation to reveal all relevant information in contract and criminal law. The contaminant in LESBOS has a dual metaphorical purpose: the fear of iatric disease, but, most importantly, the body holding contamination as an immanent possibility of openings and becomings. LESBOS is the body of the woman/enemy/invader inducing desire/knowledge/libidinal borderlessness. This also bascules into the theme of contagion. Contagion is exposure; it is also full disclosure. In contractual terms, the exile enters into a contract with the host where the wound, the miasma and the stigma are fully disclosed. The wound and the contagion are sources of fear and contamination but they also offer themselves as "the best writing, a lesion, that opens again and again and cleanses transformed into something, like the skin has never lacerated" (Dangarembga, 2023).

Known for his most prevalent literary methodology of Existentialism, Albert Camus in *The Plague* constructs a metaphoric masterpiece on contagion. Camus also developed his own framework centred around the concept of the absurd. For Camus, absurd is the conflict between humanity's desire for meaning and the indifference of an irrational meaningless universe. This is especially visible in *The Plague* (1947) but also *L'Étranger* (1942) and the *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), a philosophical essay. Although thematically, *The Plague*

aligns with the inexplicable outbreak on the island of Lesbos, Camus's writing is a mainstay for my own practice and study. His autopoietic practice, coalescing exile with his very own civic, religious and political exile, witnesses the recurring struggle to find meaning in a chaotic world, yet accepting the lack of inherent purpose and choosing to live with integrity and defiance in the face of meaninglessness. Across his oeuvre, narrative detachment and philosophical exploration are ubiquitous in both their Brechtian tonality of distance but equally in his profound and personal engagement with Existentialism, his lifelong entanglements with Sartre and the lingering and unanswered question of who is responsible for the ills of the world. Methodologically, in Camus, the poetry, the trauma and the stigma form an alliance reanimating the traces. This further elucidates the methodology of the wound in writing trauma. Trauma is the foundational condition for the future of the wound. It is, in itself, the promise of a text (Cixous & Derrida, 2010).

Lastly, I problematise Antigone's dramatic and exilic position and what this generates as the contract of "invulnerability". Sophocles' *Antigone* is a prototype of drama not inscribed in the symbolic order of the State. She poses herself invulnerable against the frontier of law versus kingship, polis versus oikos and public language versus private grief. Antigone's defiance does not merely constitute civil disobedience. Her moral intransigence disavows the wound, progresses past it, and redefines an ethical philosophy of resistance. For Kristeva in *Revolt in the Name of Poetics*, Antigone inhabits a chōric space, a borderland in which mourning refuses to be translated into public discourse (Kristeva, 2000). Antigone generates her own language; she speaks in law and dares to utter the legally unspeakable, she removes pain and languages her own intimate and political exile. She does not deny her psychic vulnerability yet restructures sovereignty independently of the phallic sovereign structures. Her invulnerability proposes a rhetorical condition: she cannot be wounded because she has already been sentenced to death, yet her wounds as woman, citizen, sister and exilic subject within Thebes, grants the exilic writer a languaging of dissent outside of language and, yet, entirely spoken in language.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The final methodology is translational research. Translation has already been mentioned in relation to Cixous and Derrida's work and more specifically in the polyglottal (in)-stability of language's erratic meanderings. This method is complex as it involves linguistics, phonics, semantics, acoustics and an ability to isolate and synthesise these to the service of

dramaturgy. It was used across the work but, methodologically, its importance is evidenced mostly in the *Poetic Constitution*.

Translational research has its origins in bridging medical science and practice. It turns scientific insights into diagnostics, or health strategies and often involves interdisciplinary collaboration between various medical professionals. The last twenty years have witnessed important advances in this field as demonstrated by the work of Christopher Austin in *Translating Translation* (2018), Steve Woolf in *The meaning of translational research and why it matters* (2008) and, in the same year, Barry Coller, physician-scientist at the Rockefeller University makes important contributions on the ethics, complexity, and interdisciplinary nature of translational research in his *Translational research: forging a new cultural identity* (2008).

I discern here the possibility to inaugurate a space for translational research in autopoiesis not least in bridging the gap between the vernacular and the subject but also within the creation of a newly languaged subject and a new compound ontology. I will call on Cixous once more in *Les rêveries de la femme sauvage* to accentuate the guttural, almost physical connection between text and its linguistic evasiveness. “Texts flee the fatal bullet”, she writes, “the sword, the axe which threatens to nail, to immobilise them” (Cixous, 2010), reasserting how the text has the ultimate power of being at once perilous and slippery and proposing exilic language, “a language always speaking several languages at once, and running with a single word in opposite directions”, as a cure and an ally but also, if I am permitted as an innovation, to let “language’s tricks become the allies of the artist who goes into exile” (Cixous, 2010).

Translation serves autopoiesis not merely cross-textually; it also serves it internally. The carnality, the open wound translated into word, initiates also a point of contact between theatre and philosophy. Derrida augments the point that the exilic, in drama, acquires the possibility of the dramatised Self integrating its Other and taking on the form of the thinking Self, the Self of reflection. The exile doesn’t just perceive, see, or hurt. The exile can now begin to think. Both theatre and philosophy, Derrida notes, have an interest in concealing some of their secrets, in creating other spaces of knowledge and meaning beyond what can be seen or contemplated directly (Mesguich, 1991). In autopoiesis, translational research transforms the local vernacular into autopoietic dialogue and does this by being invited to inhabit others’ worlds. I wish to make a further connection here between scar tissue and translational potential. What the writer used when she found

herself in the others' worlds was Socrates' maieutic method. This is a mode of reciprocal intellectual midwifery where the exile is mined for her linguistic, cultural and political insights and she, in turn, produces new dialogic structures and a new vernacular from the old. This act is voluntary, purposeful and fully conscious of the dynamics of power between exile and host. The exile writer is fully aware that the host system holds the gatekeeping power of recognition and legitimacy and the exile must navigate the line between contribution and appropriation between being heard and not being heard. The exile consents to this extraction with full consciousness that her knowledge is accessed and valued. Still, in offering this knowledge the exile enacts a counter-power to shape the terms of the exchange, to make visible the structures that render her invisible, and to reconfigure the terrain of knowledge production itself. Bhabha warns us that the exiled subject remains a "site of mimicry", tolerated insofar as she replicates the dominant codes yet always othered in her excess (Bhabha, 1994). Meanwhile, Spivak's critique of the 'native informant' resonates powerfully where the exile is often listened to, not as a sovereign subject but as a mediating figure, called upon to authenticate the host for the benefit of the structure (Spivak, 1999), a role that risks re-inscribing asymmetries. Nonetheless, the exile who engages in the maieutic method is far from a passive object of extraction. She exposes the ideological scaffolding of the host, and she has the power to transmit knowledge at the border between speaking and being spoken for.

I would argue that the very method in which the exile endures in exile is by extraction. While there exist other categories where extractive work is customary, such as class-related and work-enforced extraction, the exile's powerlessness is their most 'appealing' characteristic: medical doctors working in hospitality for many years before their status is regularised, is perhaps one of the most recognisable examples of such powerlessness. Here the exile's condition is marked by a paradoxical visibility. Their skills are utilised, their insights instrumentalised, and their identity absorbed or diminished until they are either co-opted by the host system or forced to adapt to a lesser, often symbolic role. Yet within this extraction lies a counter potential. The exile, aware of the terms of her symbolic and material dislocation, repurposes the very structures of her exclusion through writing and through re-languaging. She transforms extraction into poesis. This is the birthing of a new linguistic mode which unsettles the legitimacy of the system that seeks to silence her, thereby reinventing the structure of the object/subject configuration. The question becomes 'who is narrating whom' rather than the interrogative 'What's your background?'.

I return to Cixous and Derrida's 2006 dialogue. Derrida appoints as powerlessness with the "exposure to what is irreducibly other [...] whom I cannot even deny" (Derrida et al., 2006). In exile one is exposed and submits to incessant and probing interrogation, statistically more than in any other juridical status. In the case of the exiled writer or researcher, the exile acquiesces to this status willingly in an effort of alliance building or in order to access spaces otherwise inaccessible. Extractive research, in this case, becomes part of the autopoietic process whereby lending oneself voluntarily to interrogation, a dialogue opens with and between oneself and those whom one works in service to. Through this extractive work, I was interpellated to be agile while remaining unswerving to my purpose, which I undertook with integrity in the advancement of the cause, and not necessarily in advancement of myself. While this served the autopoietic function across all research work, it was particularly pertinent in the processes of creating the *Poetic Constitution*.

Ještrović reappoints the exilic host city "not as an object, but as "a paradoxical megalopolis that swallows but also has the potential to sustain strangers (Ještrović & Meerzon, 2009). In regard to the *Poetic Constitution*, the extractive work occurred for me across four different institutions of the "megalopolis": The Scottish Government, Broadcasting Scotland, the Being Human Festival and the British Academy and the Maryhill Integration Network. I was invited to work for all these institutions as the *observing* and *observed* creator of language, experiences, interpretations, political documenting and drama. I observed, contributed to, transformed and twisted the poetic vernacular of the street which the writing Self then transformed into drama. The exile put herself in the writing, in her notional absence and invisibility and the writing, as is right and proper, became way taller and superior to the writer. In her insightful dialogue with Jacques Derrida, Cixous explains how the host tempts the exile to yield to this translation:

CIXOUS: Nonetheless, even if everything I have written is thought through from experiences I have had, I find myself relatively absent from my texts [...] The book comes to me, it has a power superior to myself, my books are stronger than I am, they escaped me. They submit me to translation.

Derrida et al., 2006

Whereas the work followed a certain formal brief, the exile's method and the host's perceiving of it is one of writing/extracting-interviewing/speaking while she is written on/spoken to/interviewed-extracted from. In *L'Écriture et la Différance*, Derrida poignantly asks: "Tu es celui qui écrit et qui est écrit [...]" Quelle différence y a-t-il entre

choisir et être choisi lorsque nous ne pouvons faire autrement que non: soumettre au choix” (You are he who writes and he who is written [...] what difference is there between choosing and being chosen since it is impossible to do otherwise but submit to the choice. transl. mine), (Derrida, 1979).

Across more than 100 televised news broadcasts and interviews, the commissioning of the film *A Poetic Constitution for Scotland* and countless workshops, events, symposia and training organised by esteemed Scottish and British institutions, the exile was instructed to use her very particular linguistic, ontological, comparative and restorative lens to effectuate this work. Methodologically, while this extractive work was taking place, I observed two discernible elements: firstly, the use of the exiled lens and, secondly, its attendant inhabiting of the host’s worlds to absorb, be absorbed and transmute. The transmutation which results within the exile but, more importantly, outwith the exile and within the host, is the product of this process.

In *Stigmata*, Cixous writes that “if only we listen, a language always speaks several languages at once, and runs with a single word in opposite directions [...] Language’s tricks are the allies of the artist who goes into resistance or exile” (Cixous and Derrida, 2010). All language bears scars. Without them, there would be no language as the human is programmed to speak as the One who is not the Other, to express pain before it speaks accord. The exile’s mental parchment is the excavated, ineffaceable stigma and the wound that makes life happen. Once this wound is exposed and the host agrees to grant access to their own wound, I argue that the resulting *Contract of Vulnerability* is an innovation, a radical progression towards a new syntax of encounter and a new grammar of relation. Echoing Glissant, the new language is no longer transactional but a choreography of wounds. The aim is that the wounded writing (auto)-poietic Self and the listening/reading Other draw up a new contract of intelligibility written in language not angry, but scarred and alive.

Autopoiesis as methodology for the languaging of exile initiates a new conversation which repositions exile as a new epistemic state, a condition for the world to be re-narrated, re-understood and repurposed. The exiled writer is the principal legal party to the contract of vulnerability, where vulnerability is re-visioned as strength. By exposing the wound and our common openness to it, autopoiesis has the potential to disclose the structural failings of our institutional settings, be it digital, political, legal or educational. For the exile but, more significantly for the host, this linguistic transmutation allows for a choreography and

a chorality not merely of cultural of linguistic effect, but also a structural shift of disclosure and a re-examination of all social and political architectures.

ACT II

LESBOS

LESBOS

By Effie Samara

Arcola, London June 2018

Tramway, Glasgow, June 2017.



ALBA CHRUTHACHAIL



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**ARTS COUNCIL
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DRAFT IN PROGRESS

THE LULL

Constitution Square, Mytilene, Lesbos. A soft orange strip of light marks the end of a beautiful day. Minister for the Interior, Stefanides is in the middle of a speech at the podium. Newly elected President of the People's Assembly, Maria Papadopoulos, is standing by his side.

A band is playing in celebration of his announcements. Everything is calm.

A soft silence follows.

STEFANIDES Lesbos! Lord Mayor, Madam Secretary, citizens of Lesbos.

Cheers from the crowd

STEFANIDES And Maria Papadopoulos. Head nurse at the Municipal Hospital for 32 years. A model of citizenship.

MARIA Welcome sir.

STEFANIDES Congratulations on your winning the vote, my dearest Maria. President of the People's Assembly!

MARIA Thank you.

STEFANIDES There is no one worthier than you to be the voice of the people.

MARIA We're doing what we can.

MEMBER A Thank you for your presence here today, sir. It is good to know that the centre is not forgetting the provinces.

STEFANIDES Well, Doctor, we *depend* on the provinces: look around you: The Aegean, the endless blue, the mountains over that side, St Raphael's Monument, our visitors who come and honour us every year. You are the backbone of this country. And today I am announcing a 1 million drachmas fund for the support of local tourism and hospitality.

Loud cheers, they congratulate each other. Maria keeps her distance, she is sceptical. A slow crescendo of cheering rises from the crowd: M-a-r-i-a – M-a-r-i-a

STEFANIDES In addition, we propose to empower the Assembly to take more independent decisions – decisions that you, you and you – yes, *you*, will have a direct say in.

MARIA Good, good, thank you.

Cheering

STEFANIDES And as this beautiful day draws to a close, I leave Lesbos with a promise: this land is yours. This sea is yours. And we know you, islanders to be unpredictable- you nearly unseated me at the last election! But- but- hear me, hear me out- we know you to be unpredictable and impulsive but we trust you.

STEFANIDES We trust you to deliver for this country. We trust you to love each other and love our Athens for her benevolence. And we trust you to keep this ancient island clean and pure from any harm and anyone who might think of invading us. Because you- and you, and you are on the frontiers.

He extracts a cheque from his files. He raises the cheque and shows it to the crowd

STEFANIDES Spend it wisely

Loud cheering.

As Stefanides descends the podium, a man approaches and they shake hands. There is some inaudible conversation. Stefanides notices the man's gold bracelet and the man takes it off. They observe it for a moment. The man repositions it on his wrist, they shake hands and they each go their way. The sun falls into the Aegean.

THE MOUNTAIN

Maria walks alongside the foot of Lesbos's Mount Olympus. A soft pink glowing in the horizon.

Maria trips up and lands on her posterior with a loud thud. We realise that another woman accidentally had bumped into her. The woman is embarrassed and attempts to make amends, remove the mud and dust from Maria's skirt.

They speak awkwardly as if singing to each other.

SARAH SORRY! I am so very sorry-

MARIA Don't be.

SARAH I was just walking -

MARIA Into me-

SARAH God, yes, I am so sorry-

MARIA Not a local-

SARAH It's my-

MARIA Is this your first-

SARAH Yes, I mean, my first time -

MARIA Bumping-

SARAH Into someone-

MARIA Yes, that's what I meant.

SARAH Let me (*trying to shake the dust off Maria's skirt*)

MARIA It's fine.

SARAH But you're bleeding.

MARIA I've been bleeding a long time.

SARAH My god. (*Becoming aware of a cut on Maria's arm caused by the "collision"*). I've literally killed you

MARIA (*Spitting on the small wound*) Don't you worry about it.

SARAH I can stop the bleeding.

MARIA So can I.

An unexpected moment

SARAH You're a... a doctor?

MARIA I should have been.

They awkwardly inspect the "wound" as Maria tightens a handkerchief on it. Sarah helps her knot it.

MARIA Thank you

SARAH Je vous en prie.

MARIA OK. You're... French?

SARAH Syrian. We speak French. I mean, we also speak French. And Arabic. And Armenian. You know...

A visible shock in Maria's body language

MARIA You...you're here with the...

Sarah nods

MARIA You stay at the ...camp?

SARAH Well, yes, it's not too bad. I'm lucky to be alive, I suppose.

MARIA They're treating you well?

SARAH They are. Thank you.

They walk alongside one another for a little while

MARIA You an only child?

SARAH How can you tell?

MARIA It takes one to know one.

A moment.

MARIA What do you do?

SARAH Biochemist

MARIA (*Maria is, again, visibly discomfited*) That's...that's great. You know a lot about diseases.

SARAH Well.

MARIA I'm sure you do.

SARAH Specialised in molecular orbital theory.

MARIA Big words.

SARAH With little meaning.

MARIA Were you amazing at chemistry then?

SARAH No, not at all. I preferred ball games.

MARIA Me too. Shooting the ball through people's windows was my favourite.

Sarah shows a photo

SARAH Here's little me.

MARIA Who's the kid with her arms round you?

SARAH Françoise. Now, *she* was amazing at chemistry.

MARIA Yea. Square forehead. I can tell

SARAH She was incredibly popular with the men at the Research Centre. We travelled to the US together. She was a magnet.

MARIA "Was?"

SARAH Killed three weeks ago today. Single shell.

MARIA Right.

SARAH Yes.

A short pause

Somehow, we need to get MEMBER A on the phone.

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) The morgue is overwhelmed.

MARIA Right

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) There's about 112 Syrians all with the same symptoms: black blisters, delirium, seeping wounds and multi-organ failure. And they're just bed-blocking. Are you listening to me?

MARIA Yes.

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) What's the matter?

MARIA What?

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) Why can't you answer me? Did you just meet Jesus?

MARIA Yes. I mean, no, go on.

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) We will have to make an announcement soon. Have you thought about containment?

MARIA Yes.

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) Are we locking down?

MARIA Not yet. I mean. We'll need to know more about it.

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*) You were elected to the Citizen's Assembly and *you* are telling *me* we need to know more about it?

MARIA Quite.

MEMBER A (*Over the phone*). You sound drunk or stoned or both. Anyway. This is a plague. It kills arrivals.

MARIA Right.

MEMBER A Can you hear me?

MARIA Yes

MEMBER A Greeks aren't dying- at least not yet. So, I say this: test the arrivals and those with protein A+ lymphocytes. Segregate the foreigners. Pop an armband on all males and females. It could cut both way but, you know, are you even listening to me?

MARIA Right. I'll have to go

She hangs up.

SARAH Who's this?

Maria's change of attitude is notable

MARIA So...what are you doing here?

SARAH Pardon?

MARIA I said: What are you even doing here?

SARAH I am a scientist, you know-

MARIA You are a parrot for American propaganda.

SARAH We met, what, ten minutes ago?

MARIA Molecular orbital? Excuse me?

SARAH Americans have nothing to do with molecules.

MARIA Sure.

SARAH Look how beautiful that is:

Sarah writes in the sand

$$F = E_e \left(\frac{Q_1 r_e}{a_e r} \right)^2 \frac{Q_2}{r}$$

SARAH Look, each molecule has a set of molecular orbitals. The molecular orbital wave function ψ_j – this one here- can be written as a simple weighted sum of the n constituent atomic orbitals χ_i , here it is.

MARIA Did you all learn all this in Washington?

SARAH Are you a communist?

MARIA You could call me that.

SARAH God, I admire you.

MARIA For the Communism?

SARAH No. For the faith.

MARIA Listen, Dr whatever your name is: I believe in nothing.

SARAH You believe in fairies.

MARIA Do I?

SARAH You believe in Communism.

Tetchily, Maria looks around her. Sarah observes her.

SARAH What?

MARIA What?

SARAH What is it?

They vamoose at great speed into each other, and their lips meet unwillingly and passionately (I can't write these things, if this is ridiculous, we can do something else with them)

Somehow, we become aware of a young man, Andreas Zemeckis and another CITIZEN of Lesbos humming the National Anthem, timidly, off-key.

Their voices melts into a crescendo.

As they leave us, they join their fists:

ANDREAS and CITIZEN Let's make Lesbos Great Again.

THE MOLECULE

Sarah enters the staff room of Mytilene General Hospital.

Member A is having lunch.

Sarah waits to be invited in, her Physics degree in her hand, ready to be shown as evidence.

MEMBER A Madam?

SARAH Sorry.

MEMBER A Please.

SARAH I'm sorry to interrupt your lunch. I am a scientist.

MEMBER A Wonderful. Please do come in.

SARAH Here.

MEMBER A That is quite alright, please don't show me your degree! Do come in. Would you like some water?

SARAH I am a senior researcher with the University of Damascus' Biochemical Sciences' Institute. Or rather, I was.

MEMBER A Oh... so good to meet you.

He extends his arm. Sarah does not proceed to shake hands; he retracts it.

SARAH I am here because I think I can trust you.

MEMBER A Who are you?

She sits down, reluctantly.

SARAH I am the daughter of Kadam Al-Asari. Professor Kadam Al-Asari. Director of the Scientific Research Centre of Damascus. Fellow of the International Virology Association.

A short silence

SARAH You met in Houston, Texas. Atlantic Alliance get-together. Do you recall?

MEMBER A Oh...yes...of course...

SARAH I am sure you can further recall that my father had worked extensively in Washington and in Houston alongside Betty Hinz and others. He was a great believer in progress; in the voice of the individual; a great supporter of western liberal spirit.

MEMBER A I know your father well. He has voiced some extreme opinions about western involvement in Syria.

SARAH Was he not right?

MEMBER A Madam-

SARAH "Doctor"

MEMBER A Doctor Al-Asari: your father may have been right but he aligns with reactionary forces in favour of Assad.

SARAH It doesn't mean that I do.

MEMBER A It doesn't mean that you don't.

SARAH I am aware there are differences between us.

Sarah offers her hand.

MEMBER A Too many.

SARAH Not that many.

MEMBER A You boycotted Western involvement in Iran and now Syria. You- Madam, have written article after article in the Middle Eastern press urging people *not* to seek our help. *Not* to come to us.

SARAH I was right.

MEMBER A You see? There *are* too many differences between us.

SARAH Forgive me, doctor, but I will never cease to repeat: I deserve better than this. *I* was put in a position of forced displacement because *you* and *yours* gained from it. And for *that* I will never forgive you.

MEMBER A The way I see it, you're on top Doctor.

SARAH Scared is what I am.

MEMBER A You are not acting scared.

SARAH My situation is rather precarious.

MEMBER A I totally understand.

SARAH That is not the reason why I'm here. I'm here because I know I can help you.

MEMBER A How did you find yourself here, Dr Al-Asari?

SARAH I cruised the Aegean.

She lowers her top and shows him a very disturbing wound on her shoulder blade.

SARAH On a five-star luxury dinghy.

MEMBER A Oh that looks nasty.

He approaches and takes a closer look.

MEMBER A We must dress that. Would you like me to...?

She rolls up her left sleeve. He approaches and applies solution to disinfect the wound.

SARAH You do not know it but at heart you're a communist.

MEMBER A At heart, we're all communists but life's too short to do anything about it.

Member A proceeds to dress the wound.

MEMBER A Anyway, what are you doing here? Why aren't you in...I don't know...Berlin or Stockholm?

SARAH Bad luck. Ouch!

MEMBER A Did that hurt? I'm so sorry.

SARAH That did hurt.

MEMBER A Beauty hurts as my dear grandmother used to say.

SARAH There is a virus currently killing about 20 people a day, maybe more. It's killing people daily in the Kalyvos camp. Three that I know of, at least.

MEMBER A Well, that's the good news: I mean, at least we have a number.

SARAH The bad news is that you all seem to agree this is ethnically profiled.

MEMBER A We can only go by the data.

SARAH In molecular terms the real time PCR for detection depends on the HVC genotyping. The immune-chromatography is not showing cytotoxin neutralization in the antigen. There is no typology for ethnic profiling in this. None. They're not dying because they're not Caucasian. This is something else.

MEMBER A Where did you gain this knowledge?

SARAH I'm a very good biochemist.

Member A kneels down to finish bandaging the other side of Sarah's wound. His fastidiousness is notable.

MEMBER A Have you seen something that you ought not to have seen?

SARAH I may have seen a little bit of something.

MEMBER A I see...How did you manage that?

SARAH It's my speciality.

MEMBER A You are talking about classified data only available to some of the Hospital staff's private accounts.

SARAH I am aware of that.

MEMBER A Have you violated the law here?

SARAH The law's purpose is to protect the people, correct?

MEMBER A You could get into a lot of trouble for messing with it.

SARAH You'd know something about that, wouldn't you, Doctor...? The Atlantic Alliance are well known for harvesting data off millions of people against every law that was ever made and making use of it for their own good purposes.

MEMBER A Well, some of us are born lesser than others. It's social selection, nothing we can do about it.

SARAH Absolutely. My father was very acquainted with all of it, you know.

Sarah inspects her freshly dressed wound.

SARAH This is top class wound dressing, thank you!

MEMBER A You have access to hospital staff's email accounts, Sarah?

SARAH No, not really.

MEMBER A You've come to me with some pretty mind-boggling information. You must explain yourself.

SARAH "Must"?

MEMBER A Well, “ought to”. OK, fine: I would be *grateful* if you could tell me a bit more.

SARAH Alright, I will: People are not dying because they are not Caucasians. The disease is *not* ethnically profiled according to my initial calculations. If you *help* me see more of it, I can solve the mystery for you.

MEMBER A How have you come to this conclusion?

SARAH I just have.

MEMBER A So how about some tangible info on yourself? Where are you located at the moment, Doctor Al-Asari?

SARAH Me? The...the camp.

MEMBER A Which one?

SARAH Kalyvos.

MEMBER A Right.

SARAH Right.

MEMBER A Perhaps we ought to move you.

SARAH No, no.

MEMBER A To a more comfortable place. You *are* a scientist after all. And an unpredictable one at that!

SARAH No, thank you. I am perfectly comfortable at Kalyvos.

MEMBER A You have use of a computer?

SARAH Me? Yes, I do. The UN...the Education programme provide laptops for some of us. I was able to look into the molecular synthesis.

MEMBER A On a simple laptop?

SARAH Yes.

Member A blocks her way as she rises from her chair.

MEMBER A You know that you’re playing with fire.

SARAH I have to play with something to win, don’t you think?

MEMBER A You’re Syrian. You say you are in a camp. Your status is not even formalised here. And yet you have no hesitation sticking your finger in Greek pies. I would be careful if I was you.

A beat

SARAH There is no facilitator. But *you* and I share a common belief...in the New World Order. I could be useful to you. Very useful.

MEMBER A Or very meddlesome.

She turns her back, stops for a second and turns to face him again.

SARAH Good to meet you.

MEMBER A Wait!

SARAH Good to meet you. Goodbye

THE LEFT

Constitution Square.

A CITIZEN Who do I get?

MARIA Everyone.

A CITIZEN “Everyone”.

MARIA Get them building. Weaving. Talking. Put the Nation bang in the middle of things.

A CITIZEN Right.

MARIA Right what?

A CITIZEN Nothing.

MARIA You said right.

A CITIZEN I did.

MARIA What’s the problem?

A CITIZEN You issued an order. To blood test indiscriminately.

MARIA I did.

A CITIZEN You never run it by the Assembly.

MARIA The Assembly is one day old.

A CITIZEN We met at 7 in the morning.

MARIA I was elected in charge of a disaster emergency committee to deliver disaster emergency solutions.

A CITIZEN Maria, I respect your position. I understand your plight. I know your history. Our history. I know you tried to represent the people eleven times and failed eleven times. And *now is*

the time. And I know your beliefs, your socialism. I know your purity. But you need to stop and think.

MARIA The people of Lesbos support this action.

A CITIZEN Actually...I commissioned a bit of a...you know... a bit of a poll.

MARIA I received ninety two percent of the vote. How's that for a poll?

A CITIZEN You're in deep murky waters here.

MARIA I know how to swim.

A CITIZEN You are backing the government.

MARIA I am the opposite to the government. I am *not* backing the government. I'm stating how we have fallen victim to these times.

A CITIZEN Crying victimhood is what got the Nazis their triumphs in referendums. It's how Adolf found himself in bed with Goebbels.

MARIA The people are embracing the medical approach. It's a clear indication of what's safe to let in and that's not.

A CITIZEN You sound like that vicar's daughter in England. Teresa May isn't it?

MARIA I am just acting responsibly. We have to separate what is ours and what is not...you know...ours...what's in a way....foreign from us.

A CITIZEN This is a fundamental change of policy. You stand for certain principles. And refusing to listen to us.

MARIA *You* personally, not "us", man. That's *you* talking.

A CITIZEN You are opening the question of nationalism. Socialism out that to bed eighty years ago. You won't be welcome to stir it again.

MARIA It's unpatriotic to talk the nation down.

A CITIZEN Don't drink this poison, Maria. It's a sweet one. Don't be tempted.

MARIA It's a medical fact.

A CITIZEN You just said we don't know what the contagion is yet. How is it a medical fact?

MARIA I've seen the haematology. I've had them in Intensive Care.

A CITIZEN There will be questions one day, Maria.

MARIA Let there be questions. I'm clean.

A CITIZEN They will ask who you met; who you spoke to.

MARIA Who I met? How far have I moved in 4 or 5 decades?

A CITIZEN 450 yards.

MARIA Precisely. From Kalloni to Sigri. Say a mile and a bit. That's me. No movement.

A CITIZEN Let's leave it. You're in an argument with your God, I'm not getting involved.

A beat

A CITIZEN I'll go see who I can get for you.

MARIA I'm going to need *everyone*. *Everyone*.

A CITIZEN Right.

MARIA This is about us.

A CITIZEN And who are "we"?

MARIA Just...just get on with it. Let's get weaving.

The Citizen makes to leave.

A CITIZEN Call me if you need any help.

MARIA I give help. I don't need it.

A CITIZEN Not yet.

MARIA

Oh God, please understand me.

Help me.

How do you rise without injustice?

How do you fight without hate?

THE WALL

Physical sequence

Rabble in Constitution Square. Citizens counting people

MARIA (*voice blaring out of megaphones. There is reverb here in the sound effect, a bit like when you hear 70's news footage*) It is our duty to protect this island with every means possible. It is our duty to ensure the purity of our ideals; to protect our people and our land from the plague. From any intruder however mighty they think themselves.

We will eradicate this disease. The people's will, will prevail.

CITIZENS One, two, three, four, five, six, seven ...

The islanders at work. The Member dances. They are building a wall. Some citizens join them, others break away. As they do they create a round formation. MARIA holds meetings around the inner circle, her Deputy and Treasurer always by her side. People join her, some break away after a brief moment. The formation changes shape from round to square and lastly they all join with drumming sounds.

Citizens place armbands on some 'foreigners', they lay them down on stretchers and take them into isolation. Others wait in line to be counted and labelled. The drumming throbs gradually edging up in comforting, rhythmic pulses. Time passes. Days and nights. Gradually a slowing. A calm.

THE BODY

The port of Mytilene on Lesbos

MARIA Who is this?

MEMBER A Look.

MARIA Who is it?

MEMBER A Syrian.

MARIA How do you know he's Syrian?

MEMBER A Not one of ours.

MARIA Pull him out.

A citizen pulls out the bag believed to be containing the body. He unzips it

MEMBER A He's covered in black blisters.

Maria kneels down by the corpse. She spots something.

MEMBER A DON'T TOUCH IT!

MARIA He's wearing an ID bracelet.

MEMBER A Andreas, dip and get that for me.

Zemekis rips the bracelet off the corpse and hands it to Member.

MARIA What's his name?

Member retrieves the bracelet. He looks at it.

There is some commotion, the citizens are keen to identify the man. Member hands the bracelet back to Zemekis who stuffs it into his pocket.

MEMBER A Maria get away from him!

MARIA I'll get a heartbeat.

Citizens disagree whether the victim is on Lesbos' soil or in the sea.

Citizen walks inquisitively amongst us

A CITIZEN (to us) The cadaver had a terrifying appearance. As if he was trying to communicate something from the beyond. Was he one of ours? Was he not one of ours? We'd have to wait a long wait to find out.

MARIA Pull him.

A CITIZEN He's one of them, Maria.

A CITIZEN That's just open flesh, he's been in the sea a while.

MARIA I don't care what he's got, he needs to be taken into a facility.

MEMBER A It's a body. In the open sea.

MARIA What you done with his bracelet?

Citizens congregate around the body.

MEMBER There was *no* bracelet.

MARIA He had a gold bracelet on. I saw it.

MEMBER Maria, you're hallucinating. Disperse, all you of you idiots. You're suffocating her. Maria, please calm down.

MARIA This patient is mine.

MEMBER A This "patient" is dead. Athens said to handle this discreetly. What the fuck are you trying to do?

MARIA This is not an Athenian matter.

MEMBER A Everything is an Athenian matter when you got no food, no guns and no police.

MARIA I take no orders from Athens.

MEMBER A He's *in* the sea.

MARIA I'm ordering them to take in this victim.

MEMBER A Ordering who? The rabble in the square? The "activists" in crisp white suits? Who are you ordering? The mob. You're giving them rights.

The crowd approaches. Timidly first, gradually crescendoing.

Body in the sea Body in the sea...

Maria looks up.

Member A beckons Citizen Andreas Zemekis. He hands him his Private's uniform. Andreas puts on the jacket.

MARIA Christ... I see dots. Random dots, unconnected.

MEMBER A Have you got a headache?

MARIA I thought there was a pattern to the Universe. Look up there, doctor, they're all random. They're bloodstained.

Helicopters overhead.

MEMBER A Back off! We got reinforcements. Let this be handled by those mightier than us.

Maria, blinded by the helicopter lights, approaches a citizen who appears to be urinating over the corpse.

MARIA What are you doing?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Pissing on this fucker.

MARIA Pissing on a dead body! **ARREST THIS MAN**

ZEMEKIS quickly retracts his position and does up his trousers.

MARIA Who are you?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Your friend. Your brother. Your right-hand man.

MARIA I don't know you,

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Don't you Maria?

MARIA (still blinded by the lights) Are you a man of Lesbos?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Yes.

MARIA Who are you? Declare yourself.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Your most loyal supporter, Madam President. Remember you not my name?

Andreas lifts his sleeve and shows her his tattoo of the Greek flag on his wrist.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS You know the truth about this fucker and his lot? He's not got the x-factor. He's not soulful. He's not deserving. He's fucking thick. He's a fucking cunt. He deserves what he gets. He probably lives in a mud hut. He's violent. He commits incest with his own kids. He dances to Korean disco. Look at him: he has zero inquisitiveness. He has zero tolerance for people like me. He's wearing sandals with socks!

MARIA Arrest this man! Run after him! Don't let him get away.

Some attempt to capture him, it's too late. Maria is on the ground, too weak to follow.

Maria exits.

Citizen ZEMEKIS is beckoned back by MEMBER A

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Sir?

MEMBER A My child...I was worried about you. Have you been attending Youth Sessions?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Of course I have. But they won't leave us alone. We try to walk from A to B, these leeches are always there.

MEMBER A How do you mean?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I was registered to volunteer with the local nursery.

MEMBER A What did they say?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS They said 'no', I've got to have had intercultural training.

MEMBER A But I gave you a reference letter.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I know sir.

MEMBER A Did you hand it to the Director, like I told you to?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Of course I did. One of them beardies was waiving his fist at me. I feel threatened sir. I count for nothing.

Another citizen emerges behind Andreas, then another and another.

A CITIZEN (to us) Three days later an Afghani youth is arrested for causing the death of a nineteen-year-old Greek girl while riding a stolen motorbike.

A CITIZEN (to us) One week after this incident during a demonstration in support of migrant rights, a farmer from Kos is assassinated by what was quoted in the News as "a group of Somali men".

A CITIZEN (to us) A marking of the Greek flag was later discovered on the farmer's left arm thought to be the result of barbaric branding inflicted by electrically-heated metal plates directly onto skin.

MEMBER A Here, son.

He hands him a pouch.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS What's this?

MEMBER A Open it and remember: You're a man now. You're not a kid.

Andreas does. Out slides a Smith and Wesson 15mm revolver

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Sir...

MEMBER A This isn't about you. It's about those you love and want to protect.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I couldn't accept this honour sir...

MEMBER A You've earned it. And it is to protect what you hold most sacred: country. Family. Honour. But you know...Only in an emergency. *Only* in an emergency.

THE LOVER

Hill House

Sarah lights a candle and kneels down to pray, next to a photograph of her father, Professor Kadam Al-Asari.

Maria waits by the door.

SARAH Come in, come in.

MARIA I was going out-

SARAH No, please do come in. It's alright. We come from matter. We dissolve into matter. No big deal.

MARIA No love, huh?

SARAH No love.

Sarah wipes her eyes.

SARAH You don't have a mascara that I could borrow?

MARIA I do not *do* mascara, Dr Al-Asari!

SARAH Of course, sorry! I forget.

Sarah takes Kadam's picture and takes her time reminiscing.

SARAH He was killed exactly a year ago. This is when I took the big decision to leave. Damascus was meaningless without him.

There is an agitated silence in the room.

MARIA If I say something, do you promise not to take it the wrong way?

SARAH What?

MARIA I think we got to stop now.

SARAH What?

MARIA This... "whatever" it is that we may be getting into. We need to stop it.

SARAH You want to... stop?

MARIA Sarah...

SARAH Don't "Sarah" me, it's patronising.

MARIA You would have died on that bed, inside that camp. You were sleeping next to a plagued man, covered in seeping blisters.

SARAH I would have died at Kalyvos, yes. You smuggled me out of a death hole, thank you. You brought me into your home, thanks again. Doesn't stop me from being one of the top ten biochemists in the world. It doesn't stop me from developing feelings along the way, some of them quite intense, thanks again! You don't own me, you can't stop me from being fucking human.

MARIA I can stop myself.

SARAH Stop yourself from being seen in the company of a what?

MARIA Being seen in company full stop. Listen, I was born with a hammer and a rose in my cradle.

SARAH The sickle was too much for you?

MARIA The sickle was too heavy. I became a communist, a harmless one at that.

SARAH Hardly your communism getting in the way of us -

MARIA STOP, just STOP, OK? I am in charge of the dirtiest shit known to mankind. A plague that's killing some and not others. I'm sworn to secrecy. And I'm married.

An abrupt short silence

MARIA I'm married to Lesbos.

SARAH What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

MARIA That I'm being deceitful.

SARAH Yes Maria. You *are* being deceitful. But it's not because you're married to Lesbos or any other shit ideal you've chosen to cajole yourself with. It's because you think I'm not good enough. Not "socialist" enough. Not fucking white enough to be trusted with your deepest secrets!

MARIA This conversation ends here.

SARAH It's because you've chosen to cut yourself off from humanity because you think you're above it: Too good, too pure to mix with the rest of us. I wonder, my darling, I *do* wonder...When you're sat there... reading those death certificates...trying to work out *why* some fuckers are dying while others aren't...busting an artery trying to marry your leftie purity to this new world that your

mind is too fucking teeny to comprehend... believing in shit that you will never, *ever*, be able to make happen...what... what does it feel like?

A beat

SARAH Does it feel like a massive wank? “Mental masturbation?” Would you say this is an accurate description? Why won’t you answer me?

MARIA Because I don’t want to.

SARAH No you *do* want to. Because now you’re trapped - lo and behold- *imprisoned* by a human. Imprisoned so wonderfully that you don’t want the sentence to end.

MARIA Shut up.

SARAH And you’re totally shit scared that you may even begin to like it!

MARIA I like nothing above my duty.

SARAH Is that why you’ve changed your password? On your hospital account? Is that why I can’t now see those haematology reports of the dead which – by the way- I was this close to working out the major protein in the virus- is that why you’ve locked me out? Because you can’t bear the thought of something happening to you which you will not be able to control? Something like...humanity?

MARIA ENOUGH!

SARAH “Enough”? “Enough”? Enough of what? Enough of you putting your newly found power on the line for a...

A beat

MARIA For a what?

SARAH For a woman

MARIA You don’t know what it means to fail. And fail and fail again. You don’t know what it means to be a disappointment. As a life sentence.

SARAH No I don’t. And I sympathise. But for all your socialism, Maria, for all your beliefs in the purity of the universal brotherhood of workers, you are still a failure. Failing to see the “universal” in your blind quest for the pure.

MARIA I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that.

SARAH Well, I said it, loud and clear.

MARIA You’re talking out of fear.

SARAH You’d have fear if all that you are, all that you own is trapped in a helpless body that’s not human anymore. What am I? An asylum seeker. What is that even? A photo for the world’s pimps to cast their sorrowful gaze on me! Fuck them. And fuck you. For all the love that I have for you, you’re one big sorry excuse of yesterday’s socialism.

MARIA Perhaps.

SARAH Most certainly.

MARIA Sarah, I have broken the most elementary rule of my profession. Secrecy. I am a nurse and I *do* believe I did the world some good by breaking it. But I have overstepped the mark. Because I let this...“this” thing between us go too far. The more I give you....the more you will want.

SARAH I never wanted more. I never asked for more.

MARIA You didn’t have to ask.

SARAH Surely...you don’t mean...my asylum application.

MARIA I mean everything. Anything and everything.

SARAH If I had known this would have come between us, I would never have mentioned it.

MARIA You did though.

SARAH It’s just that my situation needs to ...I don’t know...be normalised.

MARIA Everyone’s situation needs to be normalised.

SARAH Am I “everyone” to you? Is that what I am to you?

MARIA I’m the President of the People’s Assembly. You’re on Lesbos; I’m your President too. Here to protect you in total transparency. Not to supply you with special residency rights.

MARIA From now on, this is all I can be.

Moving with astonishing speed, Sarah catapults herself round the table where she deals Maria a staggering, open-handed blow to her left cheek.

SARAH Just making sure it’s the left side.

Maria slowly, painfully feels her cheek which is streaming with blood.

Sarah reaches into her bag and pulls out a £50 note and slaps it onto Maria’s left cheek where it adheres.

SARAH That’s for bed. And breakfast. And whatever else might have happened in between.

Sarah bursts out of the room leaving Maria to peel the £50 note from her bloodied cheek

THE MOTION

Citizens congregate at the Municipal Offices, Mytilene, Lesbos.

A CITIZEN Before us is a motion, my Lesbian brothers and sisters.

A CITIZEN I'm so sorry I'm late. Took an hour to get through the checkpoint.

A CITIZEN What checkpoint?

A CITIZEN The one just down the road outside the butcher's.

A CITIZEN They put up a checkpoint outside the butcher's?

A CITIZEN It's on the app. Have you not got the app?

He proudly demonstrates his app to the Citizens.

A CITIZEN What country are we living in?

A CITIZEN It's not a bad idea.

A CITIZEN We're safer that way.

A CITIZEN You aren't. Not after the curfew anyway.

A CITIZEN You don't like the curfew? Rather have the Camels jump on you and stab you between the eyes when you're out and about after 7pm?

A CITIZEN BROTHERS! Stop this infighting. Lesbos is not our island anymore.

A CITIZEN It is *our* island. Only better. More secure.

A CITIZEN The motion! Let's not lose sight of what we're here for. We are here to purify our island. *This* is what Maria was elected to do. *This* is what's going to get us rid of this contagion. Question is: is she doing it?

A CITIZEN She is. Kind of.

A CITIZEN I don't know.

A CITIZEN I don't know either.

A CITIZEN Maria is *not* doing it, no.

A CITIZEN Maria is the last man of socialism still standing on this island, don't you dare doubt her.

A CITIZEN I will doubt her is she ain't Maria of Lesbos first and then Maria of the world and his fucking mother.

A CITIZEN Are they still dying, that's the question.

A CITIZEN Precisely.

A CITIZEN They are.

A CITIZEN And they're still getting through, now *that* is the question.

A CITIZEN They are.

A CITIZEN And what is Maria doing about it?

A CITIZEN Harboursing the Syrian.

A CITIZEN I know she is.

A CITIZEN What did you just say?

A CITIZEN She has a Syrian woman hiding in there. They share a table. They share a bed. What other proof do you need?

A CITIZEN Maria can be with whoever she pleases in her own house.

A CITIZEN Have you seen the Syrian?

A CITIZEN What business is it of ours?

A CITIZEN It's *our* land.

A CITIZEN So it is our business.

A CITIZEN The Syrian is covered in blisters.

A CITIZEN Are you sure about this?

A CITIZEN Well not totally covered. She's carrying it though, no doubt.

A CITIZEN I've seen her. I didn't see no blisters. She is very beautiful.

A CITIZEN And very sick. She can barely walk.

A CITIZEN What are you on about? She's dynamite.

A CITIZEN Her tits are dynamite.

A CITIZEN You seen her tits?

A CITIZEN I have. What do you think I spent 200 euros on binoculars for?

A CITIZEN Oi! Listen to me! This is about the woman and whether she's Greek enough for us. Clean enough to be here.

A CITIZEN She isn't.

A CITIZEN Those who aren't Greeks have outlived themselves for a long time. They do not have the right to exist in the modern life of nations. They have survived. It's a mistake by world history.

A CITIZEN There'll be consequences.

A CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Brothers!

A CITIZEN Shut up kid!

A CITIZEN Yea, just zip it, boy.

A CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I am not a kid. Hear me!

A CITIZEN What?

A CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Three thousand years of history and nobody knows what the fuck we're doing here anymore. Who are we? Do you know? Do *you* know? No, you don't. We have a motion before us. I propose that the Syrian be summoned and subjected to a proper examination. If found infected, I propose consequences.

A CITIZEN Whatever the Law dictates.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS There is no law for skins like hers, brother. We make the law.

A CITIZEN I agree

A CITIZEN I agree

A CITIZEN I agree.

A CITIZEN I dissent

CITIZEN It's just one of him. He doesn't count.

A CITIZEN I propose that all the ethnically unfit be subject to stricter laws and examinations than normal folk.

A CITIZEN Yes

A CITIZEN How do you who's ethnically unfit?

A CITIZEN You look at them.

A CITIZEN You just go up to folk and tell them they're illegals because they *look* odd?

A CITIZEN Aye, what's wrong with that?

A CITIZEN He's right.

A CITIZEN Still don't know what we're doing with the Syrian.

A CITIZEN She's getting away with murder.

A CITIZEN Yes

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I vote in favour.

A CITIZEN You don't have a vote, Andreas.

A CITIZEN You're seventeen.

Andreas rises from his seat and proceeds to inflict a considerable blow on the dissenting citizen

A CITIZEN I'll kill this fascist prick.

A CITIZEN Let go, man.

A CITIZEN Let go of him, he can't vote.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS You won't let me vote. Don't be surprised if I turn up on your doorstep and plant a bullet between your molars.

He turns to leave.

A CITIZEN Go boy.

A CITIZEN Let him go

Andreas exits

A CITIZEN What was all that talk about a bullet?

A CITIZEN It's a load of nonsense. He's just a kid.

A CITIZEN His idea wasn't though. It was fucking brilliant.

THE ANTIBIOTIC

The Municipal Offices in Mytilene, Lesbos

MEMBER A Oh...

A pause

MEMBER A What a surprise...I thought you might be dead.

SARAH No, I'm not. Not yet anyway.

Sarah produces a thick file and begins to separate the reports contained within it

SARAH May I steal five minutes of your time?

MEMBER A Close the door.

SARAH Here. This is interesting. Please do take a look.

MEMBER A What does this all mean?

SARAH This calculation here is on the phosphor-protein. Here is a separate analysis of the differential motif in the amino-acid.

MEMBER A Is this across ethnic types?

SARAH Listen. Ethnically profiled blood disorder is a reality. Think of genetic blood coagulation disorder: you find it in your lot; the Mediterraneans and you find it in Ashkenazi Jews but next to zero in other Caucasians. But *this* one, is *not* like that.

MEMBER A What do you mean? Are you sure there's no ethnic profiling?

SARAH Nothing in the protein to indicate that only Middle Eastern x-genes are susceptible to this plague.

MEMBER A Are you absolutely sure it could be present in other ethnic types?

SARAH Not absolutely. I didn't have enough information to calculate the matrix. I need all the data.

MEMBER A I see. How have you come by these conclusions?

SARAH It was not easy...I have access to my...my laptop and...

MEMBER A You did all this at the camp?

SARAH Yes. I did/.

Member A rises from his seat and takes some time to work out the next thing he is going to say.

SARAH Personally, I can guarantee-

MEMBER A Personally, you're just ambitious.

A beat

MEMBER A So...Here's a pen. And here is your chance. You sign up to our project.

Sarah hesitates. He calculates the moment of his next announcement.

Sarah tries to hand him the thick file. His hand does not extend to receive it.

Sarah attempts to reassemble her file and replace the documents in her briefcase.

MEMBER A You let go of these. Let go of these for a minute...

SARAH They're mine.

MEMBER A I'm afraid as long as you're in this building everything is *mine*. You sign here. And then we'll discuss your medical findings.

Sarah realises that she will not get her files back.

SARAH What am I supposed to sign up to, Doctor?

MEMBER A What the fuck else is there, for Christ's sake? A logical step to guarantee your safety. The constitution of Greek Purity.

SARAH It doesn't include me.

MEMBER A It includes everyone.

SARAH I'm Syrian.

MEMBER A Does that mean that you're not a pure Syrian?

SARAH Absolutely not.

MEMBER A A believer in your own potential.

SARAH This isn't about potential. It's an ethno-state totalitarianism.

MEMBER A It's one way to look at it.

SARAH One **cannot sign up to this**.

MEMBER A **What choice does one have? I believe in birth right. I believe in your worth as a Syrian woman. And that is what I'm trying to defend.**

SARAH I should probably just go ahead and sign-

MEMBER A Sarah... what's the time that made the most sense to you?

SARAH I can't remember. Probably...sitting on my dad's knee...under the fig tree...listening to him reading me stories...about some old warriors who killed the dragon or something...

MEMBER A Times of patriotism.

MEMBER A Make yourself the experiment. Be the proud Syrian you were born to be.

SARAH OK...

MEMBER A Are you ready for deep-skin cleansing?

SARAH I don't know...I don't know...

He offers her the pen a second time. She does not raise her eyes to look at him. He puts it back down on the table.

Sarah realises she is being threatened with detention.

MEMBER A I'll let you think about it. I'll get Lukas to bring you a lemonade.

Member A opens the file, stamps it, closes it and places it in his briefcase. He smiles at Sarah and exits

THE SOLDIER

Maria stands on a podium, Stefanides at her side. Member A stands right behind Maria.

Citizens stand to attention.

MARIA Your Holiness, Comrades, citizens of Lesbos. Mr Secretary of State for the Interior. Today, we welcome you back on Lesbos, Mr Secretary of State in great anticipation of what Athens may have to offer to support us further as we battle this plague.

MEMBER A May I? Sir?

STEFANIDES Doctor? What is the matter?

Member A steps forth

MEMBER A I'm afraid some disturbing evidence has come to light.

An agitated murmur begins amongst the crowd.

STEFANIDES Were you scheduled to speak or...?

MEMBER A I wasn't. But I'm afraid under my Hippocratic Oath, I'm compelled to.

He produces a document. He passes it to Stefanides. Stefanides reads it and beckons for water. Water and a damp cloth is produced for him.

MEMBER A With your permission, sir, Your Holiness, thank you. Over the last week the death rate related to the unidentifiable virus also known as the plague has changed face. While it is beginning to leave more and more of its victims alive, it now affects their mental states. Afghanis and Syrians have been intercepted committing acts of barbarism. Sheer brutality. Gang rapes committed by men in a state of schizoid frenzy. Beheadings.

Silence

STEFANIDES (*Privately to Maria*) Were you not aware of any of this?

MEMBER A Consequently this has necessitated some further investigation of the haematology reports of the victims who tragically perished over the last few weeks. I am compelled to report we have found some breaches in the information supplied to the Government. The virus does not appear to be what it thought it was.

A gasp cuts through the crowd.

MEMBER A Some death certificates have been concealed from official evidence.

MARIA Who did this?

STEFANIDES Maria, please be quiet.

MARIA This is murder! Who tampered with evidence?

MEMBER A Whoever wanted to stain some but not others.

MARIA Where is your evidence?

STEFANIDES Let is now get too involved with specifics at this time.

MARIA No, *let* us get involved! Where are the death certificates you're talking about Doctor?

MEMBER A Do the citizens want to hear haematology?

A CITIZEN What are you doing to protect us?

MARIA Show us your evidence.

MEMBER A Women and men of Lesbos. This is a true and utter test of our civilisation and our world as we know it will have to change.

CITIZENS How?

The crowd can't decide; some dissent some agree

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS We want protection! We want Athens!

A CITIZEN We want Athens!

A CITIZEN We want our lives back.

A CITIZEN We want to take back control.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS We want what we were promised.

A CITIZEN We want to know what changes.

A CITIZEN We don't mind the changes. We want our island back.

STEFANIDES The people are speaking.

A soundscape of disparate noises and mechanical interference: helicopters, sirens.

STEFANIDES The doctor is right. There will have to be changes. So you as Lesbians and the whole of Greece can reclaim her purity and her honour once again.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS YES

MARIA Yes. The changes. Tell us the changes.

STEFANIDES We, the government must now proceed to restrict freedom of movement.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Heil!

MEMBER A Who is this youth?

A CITIZEN This Assembly will not consent to our having our freedom restricted.

Zemekis despite his loud protestations, is pulled by guards

STEFANIDES You shall have to. It's to ensure our future as a Nation

Citizens are quiet

MEMBER A We shall request guarantees of course. That *our* freedoms are not restricted. Only those of the deranged and the diseased.

Citizens cheer.

A CITIZEN End freedom of movement!

Cheering

MEMBER A We want Athens.

A CITIZEN We want closed borders.

A CITIZEN Are you fucking mad?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Kill this worm! Who's mad, you fat fuck? Us or the deranged?

MARIA I have no knowledge of any barbaric killings. I don't know of beheadings. We want some answers.

STEFANIDES You're hardly in a position to want anything, Maria. Please do be quiet.

MEMBER A We need your help, Minister.

STEFANIDES This latest development is quite astonishing. In my judgement it means that there was not sufficient transparency in the conduct of certain officials.

MARIA Name them.

STEFANIDES You must open up the island to forces of global progress. Allow these medical facts to be scrutinised. We need full transparency. We need to know who everyone is. Who their parents are. Who their ancestors are. When did they get here? Are they sufficiently Greek to be amongst us?

MARIA We are citizens of the world.

STEFANIDES Then you'll need to prove it. And if anyone of you is harbouring criminals in your midst then you need to be afraid. Because we will be in your houses. In your bank accounts. In your beds. We will stop at nothing when it comes to the safety and the love of our citizens. Fear not, people of Lesbos! The moment of truth is upon us.

Zemekis escapes back into the crowd

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Bring on New Greece! We need the private armies, we need the almighty Government. To help us clear out the bodies off the street.

MARIA Who is this? What bodies are you on about?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS There's a body stuck on the beach, mile and a half off Mytilene.

MARIA Show your face!

STEFANIDES Let the man speak. What abominable thing is this?

A CITIZEN We want that rotten thing off our beach, Maria! They're welcome to shift it

The staircase seems to be invaded by a formidable rabble. Trumpeting, cheering and singing are heard.

Noises, cheering, pandemonium.

STEFANIDES Who knows about this?

Cheering. M-A-R-I-A M-A-R-I-A

STEFANIDES Do I hear of bodies lying unburied? You want us out? You want Athens out?

A CITIZEN The hospital gates are open. The Camels and the Coons are leaking out.

A CITIZEN Who's going to keep them off our streets now?

A CITIZEN We don't mind them on our streets.

A CITIZEN You don't mind the mongrels and the mixers? There could be all sorts, there could be Yids hitting our churches soon!

A CITIZEN Aye, he's right. To crucify us!

Disagreement breaks out among the citizens

A CITIZEN Enemies of the people.

A CITIZEN Athens out!

A CITIZEN Washington out!

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Athens is our saviour! Our values are Athenian. Our blood and our ancestry Athenian, too!

The National Anthem in an off key tone
As Citizen begins to speak, the National Anthem suppresses their voice

STEFANIDES Islanders of Lesbos.

He opens the briefcase and produces a large cheque.

STEFANIDES Athens is ready to stand by you.

He holds this aloft to the view of the crowd.

CITIZENS Take it!

CITIZENS Burn it!

STEFANIDES Here is a cheque for Lesbos. Ten million. To spent on finding greatness. It's your call.

A CITIZEN This man is here to insult us.

STEFANIDES The insult is your refusing to see dark from light, citizen.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Three hundred and sixty one Camels I counted. All in intensive care last week, out today. Ready to kill.

A CITIZEN We need protection.

MARIA We know our land, we'll find those who tried to mess we us and we'll punish them.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS We know family. We know land. We know church. We don't know you anymore. By St George, we'll punish you!

Citizen produces a Smith and Wesson revolver and points it to the sky

A CITIZEN A GUN. HE HAS A GUN.

MARIA Put this down,

STEFANIDES We shall reward you. Put that down.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Will you, Minister?

MARIA At peace, boy.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I AM NOT A BOY. I'm a soldier.

MEMBER A Look what you've done.

MARIA What are you fighting for, man?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Belonging. My motherland. My right to be in this place and my right to own it.

Citizen spins round, he produces a firearm.

MARIA You armed, brother?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Who the hell are you, Maria Papadopoulos?

MARIA I am the woman who gave you the vote.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I didn't vote.

MEMBER A You're too young to vote.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS But not too young to arm, isn't that right Doctor?

MARIA What does that mean?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS *He* gave me the rifle.

MARIA Him?

Confusion.

MARIA Lesbians, this man is about to kill. Stop him!

STEFANIDES Oh god, oh god! What have we become!

MARIA You'll have a lot of explaining to do, Doctor.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS *strokes the revolver* He gave me this beauty, here
He fires one

MEMBER A *Arrest the boy.*

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I am not a boy.

He fires another one

MARIA Put down the gun, man. We hear you, you're not alone.

STEFANIDES Seal the area.

MARIA This man is my responsibility.

STEFANIDES You have compromised yourself, Maria.

MARIA Don't do this Andreas. Please, don't do this.

STEFANIDES Let the citizen go with his conscience. Don't patronise him!

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I see dots; look up there in the sky, dots drawn in blood

MARIA This isn't blood.

A CITIZEN He's a terrorist.

MARIA No one will touch you. Put down the gun

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Him- he said to come here-

MARIA Speak to me, brother.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS We was told to pick the body up from the beach. There's blacks and Muslims down there, the whole place stinks off their scents. I want my country back. I want my sand back. How it was. Clean. White sand. I can't even get close to it for the evil smells of Anatolia. I'll use this gun like he said to-

MEMBER A Who told you?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I want to speak to someone...someone who'll listen.

MARIA Speak to me. Lower the weapon.

STEFANIDES Who the hell is this bandicoot anyway?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Don't move or I will shoot-

STEFANIDES You could be executed on the spot, you know?

MARIA It's not his responsibility, he's a kid.

A CITIZEN Why was he taken?

STEFANIDES Who is in charge here?

A CITIZEN Maria.

A CITIZEN Maria.

A CITIZEN I am the Deputy of the People's Assembly. Perhaps I could take over while Maria...until Maria is able to discharge her duty.

MARIA The plague is ended, man of Lesbos. Put that down.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS IT ISN'T!

STEFANIDES Take him out-

A gunshot. Private Zemekis aims to the sky and delivers one bullet. They all take cover, except Maria.

MARIA What is your name, man?

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Private Andreas Zemekis

MARIA You're underage.

PRIVATE ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I'm a man. I'm a soldier. And I love this land.

Private Andreas Zemekis lodges the gun in his mouth and fires a shot. He falls on the spot.

STEFANIDES I hereby declare a State of Emergency on the island of Lesbos.

MARIA This is unconstitutional.

STEFANIDES What choice do I have?

MEMBER A You let them shoot a man of Lesbos?

MARIA I am elected authority.

MARIA Athenian guards, lower your guns.

STEFANIDES Athenian guards will only take orders from me, Maria

Private Zemekis draws his last breath.

MEMBER A He's gone.

MARIA You made a man into a killer, well done, you.

STEFANIDES I am totally shocked. Shocked, dismayed and appalled. So is every leader of every country watching this.

A CITIZEN Weak and unstable rule brought this about, Mr Secretary.

MARIA Go on, feast on a kid's blood, doctor. Where's the cameras?

A CITIZEN You almost got the Secretary of State for the Interior killed, Maria.

A CITIZEN We are at your service, Secretary of State.

STEFANIDES You don't have the support of the international community.

MEMBER A We do.

STEFANIDES I am afraid, we have to impose direct rule by Athens.

A MEMBER This wouldn't work, Secretary of State. You have incited murder on my island.

STEFANIDES You will find that I contained the murders. There could have been more. (*To the people*). People of Lesbos, I need to make you aware that you may have to concede some ground...in order to ensure cooperation, esteem and respect from us in Athens and across the international community.

CITIZENS NO!

STEFANIDES Order! Please! Hear me out! I am talking about progress. There is a lot that I can do for Lesbos. But you cannot sit here and be the world's theme park. Lesbos must open herself to the forces of the market, the forces of international credibility; the forces of good, powerful corporations that will help bring an end to this devastation. You are the world's beggars right now. But I am your friend.

MARIA We are the world's beggars, not its whores.

Her voice drowns amidst the chaos.

The Citizens disperse.

MARIA People of Lesbos...

Two guards move closer and stand either side of her as Stefanides and Member A proceed to exit.

Maria stands on her own.

THE LEFT AGAIN

Hill House

The People's Assembly has been summoned by Maria. People stream in gradually filling up the room.

A CITIZEN Brought your whistle along, man?

A CITIZEN What's supposed to be happening here this evening?

MARIA OK, Silence.

A CITIZEN Why have you brought us here?

MARIA Because your Government are about to proceed with what amounts – in my understanding, I don't know about you, brothers- to a military coup.

A CITIZEN Aye, a coup.

A CITIZEN Let's tone down the language a bit.

MARIA There's no toning down. They're talking direct orders from the Executive,

A CITIZEN No proper parliamentary procedures.

A CITIZEN There's procedures.

A CITIZEN What's the procedures?

A CITIZEN We vote.

A CITIZEN Half of us vote.

A CITIZEN You're not Executive Committee, why would you vote?

A CITIZEN I'm Lesbian. And a member of the Assembly.

A CITIZEN The Assembly counts for shit.

A very loud dissent.

MARIA You will not insult the People of Lesbos, citizen. Sit down.

He doesn't.

MARIA I said: sit down.

He doesn't. Timidly, he is joined by another and another. A few of them are now standing up.

MARIA What's the meaning of this exactly? I am elected. You elected me as your President. You have insulted the sanctity of this body. I ask you- one last time- to sit down.

They won't.

A CITIZEN You are the one insulting the universal brotherhood of workers.

MARIA I asked you to come here for a reason.

A stir, almost like an imperceptible shudder permeates the Citizens, as if there is some justification in the accusations flying around about Maria.

A CITIZEN You concealed things from us.

A CITIZEN Things about this plague.

MARIA I have concealed nothing.

A CITIZEN Death certificates and blood results that's been tampered with. Where are they?

MARIA I told you this before Zemekis ate that bullet that things were data was being tampered with. You turned your backs on me.

MARIA Deputy President of the Assembly. Get up

Reluctantly, he rises from his seat

MARIA I summoned you here last Sunday. Straight after the killing of Andreas Zemekis in Constitution Square. Papers came to my attention that needed urgent review. I am *talking to you*. I summoned you. You never came.

A beat

MARIA You said your wife was in labour.

A CITIZEN She was.

MARIA Your wife was delivered a week ago. Of a boy.

Silence

MARIA My Treasurer of the People's Assembly.

A CITIZEN Yes, Maria.

MARIA I summoned you too.

A beat

MARIA You never came.

Silence

A CITIZEN I was down the corn field. I never got the message.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS (*to us*) One by one, twelve men. Her closest; nearest and dearest; those who had stood with me under her window as the plague broke out and beckoned her to lead them; they all stayed silent. Staring at their feet. At least I have an excuse. I'm dead.

MARIA I asked you to deliver the death certificates. Sixteen crates, stored in the basement of the Mayor's Mansion. Where are they?

A CITIZEN We can't deliver them.

MARIA Can't or won't?

A CITIZEN We can't get in.

MARIA Who's stopping you?

A CITIZEN The police.

MARIA The police have to comply with the warrant. I am innocent. I was shown corrupted data. I believed it. You'll get me the crates else,-

A CITIZEN The police will not let anyone near those crates.

MARIA I have a warrant.

A CITIZEN You would have *had* a warrant. Application was adjourned.

MARIA WHY? Death certificates of plague victims are public information.

A CITIZEN The certificates are classified as X.

MARIA X is Ministry of Defence classification. There is no way they're under X.

A CITIZEN They are. They're being flown out as we speak.

MARIA And what does that tell you?

Silence

A CITIZEN You got some involvement in all this. You was right up there with them.

MARIA I am innocent. You asked me to lead you and I did.

A beat

MARIA Will you act now?

Silence

MARIA Will you go and demand the crates be returned to the people of Lesbos?

Silence

MARIA What are you doing here then?

A CITIZEN You summoned us.

MARIA I didn't know I was summoning corpses. SPEAK. YOU. YOU? Have you nothing to say? Look me in the eye and speak.

The look down

MARIA What are you?

Silence

MARIA What ARE you?

A CITIZEN A man.

MARIA You are not a man. Neither are you. You're dogs. Looking at your feet. Raise your eyes and speak to me.

A CITIZEN We...

A CITIZEN We have accepted the proposals of Global Greece.

MARIA What?

A CITIZEN We have protection.

MARIA Who's protecting you?

A CITIZEN Global powers.

A CITIZEN Scientists.

A CITIZEN Entrepreneurs.

A CITIZEN Facebook

A CITIZEN Naval forces.

A CITIZEN The great and the good.

MARIA Who's good?

A CITIZEN The great are always good.

MARIA You're an islander. You should be ashamed of yourself.

A CITIZEN I'd say you need to tell yourself that. Purity lies within. You've fucked it over.

MARIA Have I? How?

A CITIZEN Look in your bed. You'll find the answer.

MARIA What's in my bed?

A CITIZEN Contagion and disease are in your bed. And they're dancing the dance of hell. And you're lying there. Watching. And enjoying it.

A CITIZEN But what you're not seeing is your own skin.

MARIA Free men don't let other men seize their island and write their words for them. Look out there: three hulls. Unnamed; whose are they?

A CITIZEN Covered in black blisters. Uncover yourself. See it. Cleanse it. But you can't.

MARIA Whose business is it then? Read-can you dogs read? GO ON. What's written on that thing out there? "Report to the Registrar. No crossing of red ribbon permitted"

Silence

A CITIZEN You're deflecting from what's really your crime Maria.

MARIA Tell me my crime, man of Lesbos

Silence

A CITIZEN You've smuggled in the Syrian.

MARIA What's wrong with the Syrian?

A CITIZEN What's wrong with Greek workers?

MARIA Workers are men and women born unto the grace god. They're not of one race or any one flag.

A CITIZEN Now, you're insulting the sanctity of our Nation.

A CITIZEN A boy swallowed a bullet in full view of the world's media because he was desperate with the situation. With respect, Maria, this is terror. Someone's got to pay for it.

MARIA Punishment is what you're after, right?

A CITIZEN Punishment is rightly called for.

A CITIZEN Everyone wants to see justice carried out.

MARIA Against who?

A CITIZEN Whoever's brought the plague on us.

MARIA And who are "you"?

CITIZENS The many. We are the many.

MARIA And it's fitting that the many slaughter the few?

General murmur of assent

A CITIZEN You see, Maria...

MARIA Speak.

A CITIZEN The many are pure.

MARIA Louder

A CITIZEN The many are pure.

A CITIZEN We are pure.

A CITIZEN You...

A CITIZEN You're choosing otherwise.

Maria surveys them closely; their faces, their hands, their eyes as they stare at their feet.

MARIA So you've made your minds up.

Silence

MARIA Comrade. My Deputy President of the People's Assembly?

The Citizen bows his head and exits.

MARIA Treasurer?

The Citizen bows his head and exits.

A CITIZEN You're not one of us anymore.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS

(to us) Just a quickie on my whereabouts. They had buried me in an unmarked grave, north side of the island. Threat of civil strife and such like, they couldn't risk me becoming a martyr. They'd used me,

under the Lesbian

couldn't even bear the idea of my cold flesh lying

soil. I'm not worried about my exact

location. It's not like it's draughty or anything. In death, I can see the few.

Tragedy is, I can also see the many.

For what they really are.

The Treasurer and the Deputy step forward.

CITIZENS Maria, you are accused of conspiring against the State and concealing information which could or would actively prevent acts of terrorism and a breach of national security. You are further accused of diverting the course of justice by aiding and abetting, counselling and procuring the activities of illegal persons in the State of Greece.

MARIA Are you all fucking mad?

CITIZENS Open the door.

MARIA You're *inside*.

CITIZENS The bedroom door.

MARIA Leave my house now, the lot of you.

CITIZENS Open the door.

MARIA You open it if you can.

They can and they do.

A screaming Sarah is dragged out

CITIZENS Your name

SARAH Doctor Sarah Al-Asari.

CITIZEN Are you a Greek national?

SARAH I am not.

A CITIZEN Have you been blood tested?

SARAH I do not need to be.

A CITIZEN Whoah! That's rich coming from a Camel. Lift up her shirt.

They do. They conclude that Sarah has not been arm-banded or blood tested.

A CITIZEN You are a possible carrier of a deadly virus. You are a threat to national health.

SARAH I protest my rights under the United Nations of the former Commission on Human Rights resolution 24/7

CITIZENS Handcuff her.

A CITIZEN I'd let that one go; she's trouble let her walk.

CITIZENS No way is this one walking. A deviant *and* a mongrel.

CITIZENS I agree. Take her down.

Sarah is dragged out of Hill House.

THE PROBLEM

STEFANIDES We got a problem, doctor.

MEMBER A You bet we have. Athens is finished.

STEFANIDES Athens is never finished.

MEMBER A You've failed us.

STEFANIDES No, you have failed us. No one is dying from this. We had banked on this being the greatest crisis in history. The killer disease; we *needed* this crisis;

MEMBER A Nature fucked us royally, Minister, I'm so sorry. The disease has sadly stopped killing them and it's becoming impossible to keep them in their cages for one more day.

STEFANIDES Join us then.

MEMBER A Join *YOU*? Join power and admit to it? No, but no thanks.

STEFANIDES Then you may as well forget all about your personal ambitions.

MEMBER A I have no personal ambitions, Mr Secretary, thank you.

STEFANIDES You were our man for twenty years.

MEMBER A And now we got kids swallowing bullets in the middle of Constitution Square

STEFANIDES *You* and every idiot like you who's ever allowed scum like Maria Papadopoulos to take over the island, *you* got that kid's blood on your hands. Not because you armed him. Because you took his power away and gave it to those without a birthright to be in this country. Shame on you.

Member A reads, he is incredulous.

MEMBER A What can we do? If we open our mouth and say it like it is, everyone's going to say that we're -

STEFANIDES Fascists.

MEMBER A Fascists.

STEFANIDES Get a scientist to legitimise us then.

MEMBER A No scientist will side with this, it reeks of ethnic cleansing.

STEFANIDES I'll give you a clue. A white man shouting against blacks won't work. A black man ranting against his own, now *that's* a method.

A CITIZEN (to us) Into the morning hours they pushed on.

I counted the ashtrays on the Minister's desk: nineteen, all full. Stubble was beginning to grow on the doctor's immaculately clean face.

And, I, the citizen, began, slowly, bit by bit, to realise how *we, the people*, are bought and sold always on the best of intentions; how *we, the people*, are shifted like chess pieces; how *we, the people*, feed dreams and hopes of choreographing our own lives;

Heavens, no.

We're just led.

Pissed on.

Blissed out.

Walking into the abyss; unaware that our heads already have a price on them even before we are born

THE RIGHT

The citizens have formed a human chain outside the Municipal Offices, Mytilene, on Lesbos. Imperceptibly, One Citizen abandons his place in the chain and enters the building.

A CITIZEN Good morning Dr Al-Asari

SARAH Good morning.

A CITIZEN Please. Sit down. Make yourself comfortable.

Sarah sits down.

A CITIZEN How are you?

SARAH Very well, thank you.

A CITIZEN So? You asked to see me?

SARAH I am detained here. And I think I am due an explanation.

A CITIZEN What would you like to know?

SARAH Why am I being kept here against my will?

A CITIZEN Well, not entirely against your will.

SARAH I was handcuffed and put here by some of your fellow citizens.

A CITIZEN You see? Not against your will. Some will claim *you* came here. To the island of Lesbos This is a municipal building. *You* are not a citizen of Lesbos.

SARAH I am a citizen of the world.

A CITIZEN Not all the world is the same, Doctor. You, of all people should know that. Bits of the world are brighter, cleaner than others.

SARAH You have no right to keep me in here.

A CITIZEN The Municipal offices?

SARAH The prison within the municipal offices.

A CITIZEN I'm sorry, I shall have to disagree. Prison is a horrible place. Look at the view here. Look out. You can see the harbour. You can order pizza. Not exactly a prison, is it, Dr Al-Asari?

SARAH I am here against my will.

A CITIZEN You are here because this is an opportunity to rebuild your life.

SARAH Excuse me?

A CITIZEN A new beginning. You are here because you *needed* a quiet, peaceful place to reflect. Away from the...what shall I call it...hustle and bustle of Maria's...Maria's Hill House... you *must* agree with me. You have done a lot of reflecting.

SARAH I have indeed.

A CITIZEN You see? You *do* agree with me.

SARAH Let me out of this place.

A CITIZEN Dr Al-Asari, one of our scientists have looked into some interesting facts about you.

SARAH What facts?

A CITIZEN Your genetic make-up.

SARAH Excuse me?

A CITIZEN You are Middle Eastern. There is a mitochondrial diversity present in your genes which differentiates you from others...say...Europeans.

SARAH Doctors are actually working on this...?

A CITIZEN Not just doctors. Archaeologists. Linguists, biologists. There is a lot to be learned from the theory of human DNA affiliation.

SARAH And they have concluded what?

A CITIZEN That certain affiliations are more...refined than others. You belong to the lower category. You are prone to certain afflictions. Diseases.

SARAH I have no disease.

A CITIZEN We don't know about that. Statistics say otherwise.

SARAH What do you require of me?

A CITIZEN Some degree of cooperation. We are the hosts after all.

SARAH What exactly?

A CITIZEN We would like you to verify for us that there is a whole cluster of endemic diseases linked to race. The world would be better off with more clearly defined borders. And more difficult ways for people to cross them.

SARAH And how would that help you?

A CITIZEN By guaranteeing my wholeness. My purity.

Sarah lifts up her sleeve. She removes the dressing of her wound. Written on her skin is a staggering amount of densely cramped calculations.

SARAH Can you read biochemistry?

A CITIZEN I'm a citizen remember? I read everything. Well, a bit of everything.

Sarah offers her upper arm.

SARAH Here. Can you see the plague? Here. The genome is encapsidated by the nucleocapsid protein.

A CITIZEN What does that mean?

SARAH It's measles.

A CITIZEN It's measles?

SARAH Yes.

The Citizen rises from their seat and offers a broad smile.

A CITIZEN I knew.

A beat

SARAH You *knew*?

A CITIZEN My mother died from it.

Silence

SARAH Are you...sure?

A CITIZEN Yes. I am sure. The doctor came to see her. He quoted embolism as the cause on the death certificate. He recommended immediate burial and his team ensured she lay in a double locked coffin.

SARAH So why have you kept quiet?

A CITIZEN Because that's what the masses do when they've been fed the bogeyman of infection. They keep shtum.

SARAH Can we work together...? We are on the same boat after all.

A CITIZEN We're not *all* on the same boat.

SARAH Can you not tell your fellow Lesbians? You could-

A CITIZEN Sarah, Sarah! My fellow Lesbians *know*. At least most of them do. Others have lost relatives to this over the past few weeks but no one will admit. Because no one wants to be the first one to look stupid. But you see...there is one point here. We need you.

SARAH You *do*?

A CITIZEN You could work together. If you let the world know that we're open; tolerant. That you like being *integrated* with us.

SARAH "*Integrated*"

A CITIZEN Integrated.

SARAH Why would I want to be "integrated"?

A CITIZEN Because we're *good*.

SARAH Are you asking me to transform into something I'm not? Change my deepest beliefs? My core? And what? Get rid of myself and be reborn as a what? A Christian?

A CITIZEN Religion is not the new black, I'm afraid. I am asking you to denounce the things that you espoused and find new allegiances. Put your name to Western democracy. Truly make yourself one of us.

SARAH I am Sarah Al-Asari, I am not a puppet.

A CITIZEN We do not need puppets. We need women of significance. Because without you, we can perform all the apologies in the world; we can kneel down and ask for the world's forgiveness but none of it will matter. The plague will stick to us like glue. *You* are the only one who can wipe it off our history.

SARAH How?

A CITIZEN You're due to speak at the Academia in Athens on Sunday.

SARAH Slightly difficult given the logistics.

A CITIZEN That can be taken care of.

SARAH So what would you like to see me do?

A CITIZEN Be one of us. A lot of us like your face, Dr Al-Asari. And you will grow to like ours.

SARAH A brown face to legitimise your New World Order?

The Citizen takes an envelope out of his pocket. Ceremoniously, movingly, he hands it to Sarah.

A CITIZEN A brown face to call our own.

Sarah takes the envelope. She hesitates to open it.

A CITIZEN Please.

He supplies a paper cutter. Sarah hesitantly opens the envelope.

Out slides a Greek passport

SARAH I am not a citizen of Greece.

A CITIZEN We'd be honoured if you considered becoming one.

Sarah surveys the passport.

SARAH What did you have to do to get this?

A CITIZEN No sacrifice is big enough if you truly believe in what you do. Wouldn't you agree with me doctor?

SARAH Perhaps.

A CITIZEN Sunday?

He turns to leave but changes his mind. He turns to face her.

A CITIZEN Woman from Damascus: Are you Greek now or are you foreign?

SARAH I am a scientist. A good one.

A CITIZEN OK. Until Sunday. Let's hope to see you in Athens.

THE BEACH

Citizens on the beach in Mytilene.

A CITIZEN I can't see.

A CITIZEN Light the torch.

Citizen lights up the torch.

They rummage through as a Security man, YBS-88 approaches

YBS-88 You are not allowed near the shore, gentlemen.

A CITIZEN What?

YBS-88 Three metres from the shore; no civilians allowed.

He shoves an order under their nose.

A CITIZEN Who are you boy?

Security produces an I-pad

YBS-88 Can you place your palm here please?

A CITIZEN What's this clown on about?

A CITIZEN Where are you from, sunshine? You don't sound like a local man.

YBS-99 Your fingerprints please.

YBS-88 produces a gun

A CITIZEN Whoah! Easy, boy! We're Lesbians! We're *from* here.

YBS-88 I need your ID. Make a line. Place your thumb here. On the screen. And you

A CITIZEN I'll shoot this fucker down dead before he blinks.

YBS-88 Latsis. Panayiotou. Vassilopoulos. Alright. I can see you are Greek.

A CITIZEN Let's take this motherfucker up the arse.

A CITIZEN Leave it, man. Leave it.

YBS-88 I would advise against using obscene language, it can go on your credit record. You won't be able to borrow or take out a mortgage for a period of up to thirty six months if you threaten buggery or assault.

A CITIZEN What about if I wacked you then? Does *that* go my credit record?

YBS-88 We're in the vicinity to protect you. I'm YBS-88, just disembarked from this-

A CITIZEN This is my island. I'll come and take a piss in the sea if I so wish, do you understand me, sunshine?

YBS-88 I am sorry if you have not been informed of the changes. Loitering anywhere within this area carries a maximum penalty of 10,000 Euros and up to 5 years' imprisonment. I need to make you aware of this.

A CITIZEN Let's go.

YBS-88 I'll issue you with a warning just now but please make sure we don't see you again around here.

A CITIZEN Look, this is official

A CITIZEN Fuck me. It's got my address and date of birth on it!

A CITIZEN And mine.

YBS-88 Atlantic Alliance security. Algorithmic precision. They're really good. No one will dare mess with Lesbos again.

Member A emerges

MEMBER A It's quite alright YBS88, let them go.

YBS-88 I'm sorry, sir, you're not on my list.

MEMBER A I'm Member A. The Doctor. *I* am in charge here. Check with the Ministry of the Interior.

YBS-88 The Ministry of the Interior are not in charge either. We are the Atlantic Alliance. *We* are in charge.

A CITIZEN Hear that, lover boy?

MEMBER A There must be a mistake.

The Citizens crowd the doctor.

A CITIZEN Who governs this island Doctor?

MEMBER A I told you: governments are redundant. It's all virtual these days.

A CITIZEN You didn't say you was getting rid of the State of Lesbos.

MEMBER A I wasn't entirely aware either-

The Citizen produces a thick rope. He approaches Member A and proceeds to intercept his hands and force them together

A CITIZEN You're under arrest Doctor.

MEMBER A You...?

A CITIZEN Me.

MEMBER A You're *arresting* me?

A CITIZEN I think so.

MEMBER A YBS! YBS! Do something. These men are violating my person!

A CITIZEN YBS! Why don't you try?

YBS-88 I'm afraid, I can't interfere sir. It's a domestic argument.

MEMBER A WHAT!

YBS-88 It's between you and your people. I'm guarding resources: ports, energy supplies and such like. Good luck with this one, they seem determined.

YBS-88 exits

A CITIZEN I need your hands. Together preferably.

MEMBER A My brother...*you too?*

A CITIZEN Me, too.

MEMBER A This is a mistake I did this for you. For the people. The people always adapt...

A CITIZEN (amongst us) Except sometimes we don't.

THE FLAG

Physical sequence.

Citizens carrying cauldrons are busy putting themselves into neat formations, dissolving and rearranging formations. They carry red, white or blue flags and rearrange themselves into new formations as they exchange flags and repeat a dance ritual.

The Greek flag is taken down and re-designed with the Atlantic Alliance logo as its frame. "Follow us on Facebook and Twitter" is written big all around it.

THE ARREST

SARAH (to us) Of course, there is a valid question. The entire premise of the New World Order which – as I understand it- is really: *The common interest before self*. I’m a Westerner now. Or at least, if you like, I perform Western-ness. Don’t expect to understand what that means, it’s as idiotic as any performance. But there is one flaw with it: Western-ness has pushed man in a direction which almost entirely ignored his surroundings. My view is that man as an organism, in fact, has no objective reality. He has no meaning, unless seen in relationship to his culture, the political and economic structure of the society he lives in; man needs to be seen in some sort of context. What was that? You think I’m not authority enough? OK, I will quote you the American philosopher Catherine McKinnon. McKinnon claims that *we* make ourselves as much as our surroundings constitute *us*. So, you cannot deny there is an awareness that *what is around us* is also on us and *in* us in big and fundamental ways. And it’s not like the problem is not talked about. Collective, individual, private interests, public good, it’s all we ever talk about but we’re too timid to act on it. So today, I’m asking you: Can we not move in a new direction? Can we out the common interest before self? Can we see infection as part of our organism? Or are we always forced to see it as an intruder?

Sarah takes an ivy branch. To us:

SARAH On the day of the Annunciation of the Virgin, I didn’t have to go into my Atlantic Alliance office ... I went into Constitution Hill, right in the middle of Athens. The air was warm. Clammy you’d say. For a split second, I thought I was in Damascus ...This operation tonight...it weighed on me ...But you must not think that I had not thought about this long and hard. That I had not exhausted my soul and my brain weighing the arguments. I let this happen *against* my will but in full awareness of the consequences that if I had stepped in to obstruct it, I would be interfering with the wheel of history.

She searches for her phone in her pocket. She turns on the microphone. A recording is heard.

VOICE “Maria, you are under arrest. Aiding and abetting an act of terrorism and failing to act to avert an act of terrorism on reasonable evidence. Would you follow us, please?”

Sarah turns off the recorder on the phone

SARAH Man has no meaning unless seen in a meaningful relationship with his surroundings; his social ontology, as philosophers call it.

She couldn’t;
Or she wouldn’t;
Doesn’t stop one from loving her very much;
Very, very much.

THE TRIAL

The Assembly of the People, Mytilene, Lesbos

A CITIZEN Doctor, I am the Prosecuting Counsel for the Assembly of the People of Lesbos. You’ve described your actions today as epic. Do you really believe that?

MEMBER A I said my actions were epic and I believe they were in the context of making my island part of the world; an important part of the world.

A CITIZEN Installing a system of private surveillance?

MEMBER A Private surveillance guarantees perfect protection for my island’s people. I sincerely believe this.

A CITIZEN Three men in possession of branding plates and irons were arrested in the basement of your house and testified against you.

MEMBER A I do not recognise these men, they are not from Lesbos.

A CITIZEN They are from Crete.

MEMBER A I don’t know any Cretans.

A CITIZEN They testified that you assisted them to pose as Somalis and further assisted them with learning the basics of the Somali dialect.

MEMBER A I do not recall doing so.

A CITIZEN Were there personal gains for you as a member of the medical establishment?

MEMBER A None.

A CITIZEN In August you announced a call out for twelve trainee doctors to help us in the issue of the plague. In your job description you stated “progressive eugenics” as the basis for all advancement in society.

MEMBER A I was right to.

A CITIZEN Six weeks ago you directed sixteen medical trainees to commence a programme of sterilisation of African and Middle Eastern patients who enter the facility regardless of the nature of their gynaecological complaint.

MEMBER A Sterilisation is a method for curtailing sexual disease and birth defects. I will not apologise.

A CITIZEN You are known as a man of the Left- at least that is how you style yourself.

MEMBER A The Left will die without a new model. *That's* that model.

A CITIZEN The model is based on ethno-state ideals?

MEMBER A It gets you votes and it is workable.

A CITIZEN Hardly a reason to commit ethnic cleansing.

MEMBER A It's the will of the People. Can you argue with that?

MEMBER A You must excuse me, I have important business to attend.

A CITIZEN Why are you resigning from NHS Lesbos?

MEMBER A Market forces. I'm in demand in Dubai. Six times the salary; plague free and tax-free.

TV/RADIO PRESENTER Member A of the Medical Council was today acquitted of two counts of criminal conspiracy, criminal extortion and intent to pervert the course of justice. It is believed, following the crisis, the new government in Athens is committed to pressing ahead with market reforms that conform with a freer, less state-led combination of new technology and a dynamic, entrepreneurial private health sector. "All this will be done in a conciliatory spirit, with our citizens' concerns at the forefront of our policies and in consultation with relevant bodies." stressed the Minister of Health. Member A is thought to be taking a six-month research leave ahead of his new appointment as Chief Medical Consultant at Dubai's King Abdullah cardiothoracic unit.

THE NICK

Municipal prison, Mytilene, Lesbos

Sarah is visiting Maria. They are having a secret conversation under the watchful eye of a guard.

SARAH I want any evidence you might find here of unnecessary cruelty ... sadistic behaviour.

MARIA Who sent you?

SARAH The government.

MARIA Whose government is that?

SARAH They are *genuinely* looking for evidence. What do you think, Maria? Can you cooperate?

MARIA Cooperate with a totalitarian state?

SARAH Every state is totalitarian. Every state will take advantage of every single one of us but every single one of us can do something to stop them.

MARIA I tried. I failed.

SARAH You haven't.

MARIA I wouldn't exactly term indefinite detention as the road to success, would *you*?

SARAH I'll get you out of here.

MARIA No, you won't.

SARAH *You* got me out of a death camp. *I* will get you out of this prison.

MARIA I'm too proud to accept favours, Dr Al-Asari. I'm staying.

SARAH I'm not blaming you. You're everyone of us. You're tired. You're disheartened; you're betrayed. But you're nowhere near giving up. And you're right to be angry.

MARIA Who said I was angry?

SARAH No, you must be.

MARIA Who the hell said I was angry?

SARAH You must be.

MARIA Did I ever say -?

SARAH Angry with me about what I let happen.

MARIA When did you hear me say I was angry?

SARAH I could not stop them.

MARIA I wouldn't ask you to.

SARAH *I wanted* to stop them.

MARIA You shouldn't have. The State need to do their business. And we need to resist them. That's what Resistance is.

SARAH Maria, can you look at me for a second?

MARIA No.

SARAH Please.

MARIA What would be the purpose of looking at you?

SARAH Humanity. Show me a bit of humanity.

MARIA I have a duty to fulfil. I don't have time for domestics.

SARAH Is that how you see me? As a domestic concern?

MARIA I see big things, Dr Al-Asari. My brain is too small to fit it all in. The "sentiments" you're talking about and the bits of humanity you're so craving. Those ain't my remit.

SARAH Are you frightened?

MARIA Of what?

SARAH Losing control? Liking me more than you like your politics?

MARIA Of course I am.

A beat

MARIA And *you* deserve better.

A beat

MARIA You deserve humanity.

Sarah leans in

SARAH I love you.

MARIA Go about your merry way, Sarah.

SARAH Maria, this is an odd one. My culture...your history...our coming together under the Aegean sun...it's all very odd. I never thought I'd say these words, not to anyone, least of all to a woman. But this is bigger than me. *This* is political. And it's true. I love you.

Maria rises and beckons the guard.

SARAH Maria- sit down. Officer, I'm so sorry!

MARIA No, let's stand up. Officer. *I* am not sorry. *You* repeat what you said.

SARAH Officer, please

Sarah passes her hand through the bars to touch Marias's. Maria gently removes it and stands back.

MARIA Officer. The lady is leaving.

THE STATE

STEFANIDES (*To us*) Well, I'm delighted to be back at the Ministry of the Interior. Coalition miracle that was, but there you have it.

A CITIZEN The best man for the job, congratulations sir!

A CITIZEN Anything to add, sir?

STEFANIDES The world is under attack. Here on Lesbos, on any frontier between East and West, we're under attack too.

The citizens resume their positions of reclining on all fours and begin to circle around Stefanides

STEFANIDES We have a lot of work to do. Building things.

The Citizens pick up building blocks and begin to build.

STEFANIDES Clearing out the debris.

The citizens clear out rubbish

STEFANIDES You're all very welcome to be part of our big family. A new family of nations the way some of the greatest minds of our times have designed them. Let's start building the future. Together.

The citizens perform their ritual again and again and again.

THE CHORUS

To the total discretion of the Director, the following is a humming, Bacchic song...

A CITIZEN Lesbos

A CITIZEN Our Lesbos

A CITIZEN That un-dressed

A CITIZEN Un-blessed

A CITIZEN Undulating

A CITIZEN Swelling

A CITIZEN Billowing

A CITIZEN Sea
 A CITIZEN Untouched
 A CITIZEN By fear.
 A CITIZEN And incontinence.
 A CITIZEN This island we loved
 A CITIZEN Stiffened
 A CITIZEN And fallen.
 A CITIZEN Split in warring tribes.
 A CITIZEN Left and Right no peace.
 A CITIZEN No sleep.
 A CITIZEN No power
 A CITIZEN No pleasure
 A CITIZEN A sea
 A CITIZEN Of strangers
 A CITIZEN Sinners
 A CITIZEN Brothers
 A CITIZEN Sisters
 A CITIZEN A crowd.
 A CITIZEN History will tell it.
 A CITIZEN History will know nothing of it.
 A CITIZEN Nothing of the visitor.
 A CITIZEN The foreign-born
 A CITIZEN In myrrh and frankincense,
 A CITIZEN Can you smell it?
 A CITIZEN We're invited.
 A CITIZEN To assemble.
 A CITIZEN Assemble?
 A CITIZEN Can we do that?
 A CITIZEN Is that legit?
 A CITIZEN We'll have to try
The two sides of the phalanx approach and join hand
 A CITIZEN See the sea?
 A CITIZEN See the end of Lesbos on the shore?
 A CITIZEN Can't go to the end.
 A CITIZEN You can.
 A CITIZEN Take my hand
 A CITIZEN But what if?
 A CITIZEN What if?
 A CITIZEN Let go of my hand
 A CITIZEN No.
 A CITIZEN Let go.
 A CITIZEN Walk. Walk to the ship
 A CITIZEN I'm not ready.
 A CITIZEN An islander? And you're not ready?
 A CITIZEN I stink of sea salt.
 A CITIZEN What if I trip and fall?
 A CITIZEN Stand up.
 A CITIZEN Up.
 A CITIZEN Walk on.
 A CITIZEN On the water?
 A CITIZEN Fuck that.
 A CITIZEN I'm walking.
A citizen amongst us
 A CITIZEN With steady foot falls, on the wooden planks, she made her way out of Lesbos and into the sea.
 A CITIZEN The Sea
 A CITIZEN The Sea
 A CITIZEN The Sea

THE SCIENTIST

The Academia, Athens.

SARAH A couple of days ago I was visited in my place of detention by a citizen.

There is a measure of incredulity amongst the audience for this detail.

SARAH And offered this.

She demonstrates the passport

SARAH I was offered it, I suspect, on the assumption that I would act in ways that do not entirely conform with my morals. That I would denounce certain things and embrace others on the basis of ethnic allegiance. I declared to your fellow citizen that I am a scientist first and foremost. A Syrian scientist born to a Christian mother; eater of Eastern food; speaker of Arabic; passionate disciple of western mathematics and lover of American feminism. *That* is who I am. So I cannot fulfil the brief. I have decided not to retain the passport.

She raises her hand and beckons the secretary who duly takes it from her

SARAH Thank you for the honour though. Perhaps in time I may fall in love with a Greek and become naturalised through marriage...

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I have a question for you, Dr Al-Asari

SARAH Yes. What is your name?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS My name is Andreas. I'm a citizen of Lesbos.

SARAH Do I know you from somewhere?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I doubt it, Doctor.

SARAH Did we not meet on Lesbos?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Perhaps.

SARAH Go ahead Andreas.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I was present at the autopsy of the unidentified man recovered on Kalloni Beach one and a quarter miles off the port of Mytilene.

SARAH You were? Are you a doctor?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I was a ...trainee...

SARAH I don't remember you. Anyway.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS You were present too.

SARAH Indeed.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS The man was not a Syrian.

Total pandemonium

SARAH What is the man's nationality to do with today's conversation?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS The man was Greek. He was struck by the virus and died of heart failure a few hours later. His being supposedly Syrian made the crisis talk marketable. It evidenced the crime of the massive exodus that was being committed by Easterners and Africans on our Continent. You corroborated this. Why?

SARAH I was discharging my duty under the direct orders of the Chief Medical Officer for the Eastern Aegean.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS The Government had declared him a Syrian.

SARAH You cannot be sure of the man's ethnicity.

Andreas produces a gold ID bracelet.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Here, Doctor.

SARAH Oh...

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS (*He reads*) "Elias Mavrakis. 7 May 1962. From mum with love"

He hands it to Sarah

SARAH Who retrieved this?

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I did. From his body as he was being pulled out of the harbour in Mytilene. I saw it. I read it. The doctors and the others took it from me

SARAH I cannot read Greek. I would not have been able to read this, at any rate.

She attempts to hand it back.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS I would like you to keep it.

SARAH But-

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS Please.

Sarah accepts it gracefully and places it round her wrist.

A sense of optimism, laughter and innuendo permeate the hall as we leave Sarah to continue her address. Andreas joins us in the auditorium and proceeds to walk amongst us.

CITIZEN ANDREAS ZEMEKIS (*comes to us*) I left her to finish her presentation in the New World Order that she had so vehemently sought and found. I belonged to a different time. An infected time; a time where the stupidity called borders was the opium we fed off. I was the miserable fool who has nothing at all and decides to become a patriot. In patriotism I reimbursed myself for my own inferiority. My pain. But not anymore.

In death, I'm lighter.

I can see the monster like it is. And that clarity feels quite wonderful. As I turned my face from her, I felt this terrible urge to ask her about Maria. But I resisted it. Maria had refused to step into the New World. The hammer and the sickle had become too heavy to carry but she kept her vow and carried them to the bitter end.

Sarah was the future.

I turned and took a last look at her.

Bright, brilliant, beaming.

Like an uninterrupted ray of sunshine.

EXODUS

The Citizen is amongst us.

A CITIZEN I told you, didn't I?
It was all because of me.
And now you're thinking:
There's too many of you.
How do we know where you begin and where you end?
You don't.
I'm the one.
I'm the few.
I'm the many.
I'm unpredictable.
Temperamental.
Stinking of sea salt.
I'm an islander.
From the foremost corner of Europe.
From Lesbos.

THE END

ACT II

THE CONTRACT OF VULNERABILITY

Theatre as a dialogical exercise provides the conditions for bringing poiesis -unconceived and unthought- into the terrain of the political and the corporeal. As mentioned in the Praeludium, LESBOS attempts to dramaturge exilic struggle into significance, to make it socially available and politically imaginable. It brings before the world the *θεαθῆναι* (theatheĩnai: “seeing”) of resisting bodies emerging on shifting political ground. At this juncture, deconstruction becomes inevitable. The constitutively excluded figure draws up the Contract of Vulnerability by becoming the condition of possibility that defines the body that excludes it. As a labour of textuality, deconstruction is acutely attentive to representation, to the thematising of a *seeing*, an interruption, to *différance*, to violence, to testimony and, not least, to the political. By inserting temporality into the structuralist sign, deconstruction has granted us the gift of disjunctive time, of disorderly reading and, ultimately, the licence to consider the interruption, the pathogen, the pathogen’s antidote and our understanding of text and time.

In Deconstruction the moment of interruption validates the very condition of the possibility of writing and reading text and testimony. This is of particular significance in theatrical representation which I use here as a temporal reflective of history, with all the attendant configurations of fantasy and the violent exercise of power and structures of desire. Inasmuch as Deconstruction grants Derrida’s ‘democracy to come’, it also signals to Mbembe’s words: ‘death or defeat leads to a new appearance, is perceived as confirmation and relaunch of an ongoing promise, a not-yet, a what is coming, which always separates hope from utopia’ (Mbembe, 2001).

In this Act, LESBOS shows the stigma, the contagion and the timing of the wound. Here, the autopoietic self initiates the “Contract of Vulnerability”. This begins with languaging the Wound of exile. In this effort, Derrida’s series of lectures in 1971-72 at the Sorbonne alongside Cixous’s reading of the Wound, have guided my path. I shall begin by daring to make a hypothesis of the existence of the exilic unconscious. I define this as a provisional state of affairs, prior to the exile’s coming into the full meaning of his exilic state. The exile is still subject to his protolinguistic/maternal linguistic impulses and impatient for the possibility of a meaningful present. This exilic unconscious behaves similarly to the Freudian unconscious: it is prior to the self-sufficient, self-constituting exiled Self. As the

exile prepares for a fuller, more significant presence, the phenomenological self develops, organising for a dialectics from the unconscious to consciousness, from non-signification to signification, from the secrecy of exile to the expressiveness evident in Ricoeur's reflection of a "drive toward language" (Ricoeur, 1977).

In the LESBOS play text the characters precipitate themselves from a state of the metaphorical unconscious towards consciousness. The Chorus of Lesbian citizens pass from their tranquil island existence to a high state of alert where they are exiles on their own island. Similarly to Camus's culminating narrative in the *Plague*, Lesbos moves into consciousness: "Within weeks, the deaths multiplied, and fear gripped the citizens of Oran. At first, they resisted the idea [...] But when the authorities sealed the city gates and declared a state of emergency, the truth descended upon them: they were trapped, and the plague had begun its reign" (Camus, 1947). As the wind of the plague on the island begins to rise, the contract of vulnerability begins its ascent towards language. It wishes to be expressed. Voiceless or silenced at a given moment, the exilic unconscious is congruous with intentional phenomenality, toward which it precipitates itself. In Hegelian phenomenology, every dialectic resides in a progressive synthetic movement whereby each form is accorded its meaning by the subsequent form. Similarly, in the Contract of Vulnerability dialectic begins when consciousness, having integrated its Other- the non-Lesbian citizen, the plagued or the unspoken- takes on the form of the thinking Self. This is the Self of reflection rather than the Self of first order perception. The exile doesn't just perceive, see, or hurt. The exile can now begin to think.

Through the metaphor of contagion, LESBOS dramatises humanity's transforming and traversing "time, the bonds of subjection, the ways domination is validated, the collapse of historic "possibles" or their extensions, the symbolic constitution of the world, constraint and terror as limits of what is human, and relations to transcendence and finitude" (Mbembe, 2001). This will serve to elucidate the limitations of Deconstruction in the complexity of forms as they mould, construct and de-construct the modern subject and, as a corollary, how these forces re-construct history and temporality *after* Deconstruction's foundational work. Deconstruction arms us with a speculum to see time and interstice in both text and imagination. It forces a rethinking of temporality and gives us history not as a mechanical succession of ages but as something kairotic; something which encompasses event beyond its prescribed chronology. The present offers itself as a concatenation of traumatised and archived temporalities. Because of the entanglement of these temporalities, Mbembe's Africa is evolving in various and intersecting directions but, in

turn, the new languaging of Africa intersects into the old European vernacular creating a new, mutually comprehensible vernacular from the ashes.

Deconstruction is, fundamentally, resistance to theory. It emanates from a critique of structure or, better said, a critique of structurality. Its revolutionary potential which, to this day, is still a guiding force, is that it provides a critique of the idea of anything that has a centre; a critique of anything which functions as an enabling causal principle. On a metaphysical level, a centre is a gravitational force which promises to lead to a transcendental signified. A centre, then, would serve to explain the nature of the structure of the political and juridical functions of discourse but, more interestingly, also to elucidate something which allows for limited free play within the structure while accepting its boundary nature. In rescuing Deconstruction for the *à-venir*, a reassessment of its material and epistemological understandings is imperative “beyond the *ressentiment* of victimhood” (Mbembe, 2001), and towards a pressing moment of textual revolution. It is important to note that acknowledging the existence of a centre does not detract from the exilic/ex-ternal epistemic gravity but rather advances the argument from victimhood towards an instance of intentionality and rigorous examination of exile’s textual and material parameters.

Deconstruction’s genealogy places itself within the Francophone militant tradition with close ties to Algeria. At the helm, Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Jean-François Lyotard and Pierre Bourdieu. The towering work of Abdelkébir Khatibi, Franz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre is also placed within this genealogy furthering phenomenological intentionality, existentialist philosophy and poetic, quasi-autobiographical text in Marxian (Sartre, 2004), psychoanalytical, (Cixous, [1975] 1986 and 2004) as well as in combinations of psychoanalytical and political exploration (Fanon, 1986). According to Syrotinski, important theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, V. Y. Mudimbe and Achille Mbembe sought to follow deconstructive practice or theory in their own explorations, often by combining this to other philosophical concepts. In this vein *Lesbos* seeks to synthesise the historical and material interpretations with Deconstruction’s textual inflection in an endeavour to enlighten the aporia of exile. I should briefly insist further on this paradoxical moment of aporia where the excluded figure/exile is excluded by and yet necessary to the system. This is Derrida’s *quasi transcendental*. In *Glas*, in *Différance* and all the way across to *Aporias* in 1993 the quasi-transcendental addresses the contaminated space between any closed or regulated system and its contestation: the (anti)-system that is disorderly and the resisting. It acts as the condition of possibility as well as impossibility of a system, of language, or of the body politic itself. It is what Bennington’s reading names

as “roughly: what makes it possible for a letter to arrive at its destination necessarily includes the possibility that it might go astray” (Bennington, 2002). This is the dramaturgical topos of LESBOS where a contract is written by the constitutively *excluded* in language only available to the constitutively *included* because this is the only language available to all concerned. The protagonists and the Chorus, as human bodies, at different junctures, perform a contestation which in Butler’s reading of the *Antigone* “takes the verbal form of a reassertion of sovereignty, refusing to dissociate the deed from her person” (Butler, 2012)

LESBOS was imagined and written at the wake of the Syrian exodus via the Eastern Mediterranean in 2015, with hundreds of thousands of war exiles attempting to access Greece and move further into the west. The writer’s imaginary represents here the woman refugee, fighting the impossible fight of the waves, both maritime and institutional, fighting ‘necropower’, as Mbembe terms it. In his words, this term defines:

[...] the ways in which, in our contemporary world, sovereign power imagines itself and is deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of deathscapes, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subject to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead.

Mbembe, 2001

LESBOS’s central focus is a bifurcated storyline, splitting between the personal story of two women, a Syrian scientist, Dr Sarah Al-Asari and a Greek nurse, Maria Papadopoulos, and the political, synchronic dynamics of the Chorus who sway and attempt to control the political process. The work of Phipps (2013), MacDonald and O’Regan (2013), Holmes (2014) and Holliday and MacDonald (2020) provides a variety of dramaturgical tools towards intercultural pedagogy and facilitates social solidity and peace across cultural divides. This pre-empts the engagement of a variety of intersections, from the psychoanalytic approaches of surveying the symbolic and the semiotic, to the socio-symbolic contract to the body: in other words, the imbrication between the public sphere and the intimate domain.

In LESBOS an encounter takes place amidst war, market forces and the evangelism of self-proclaimed truths and ideals. It attempts to assess new dematerialised mechanisms of domination. Predation, proliferation of surveillance, the abuse of technological ingenuity, the draining or regression of our critical faculties, the drying up of the imaginaries or as

Mbembe terms it, “brutalism” (Confavreux, 2022). Faced with all this and the immediate danger of death in Damascus, the protagonist, Dr Al-Asari’s first reflex is to flee. She finds herself in a camp on the island of Lesbos as an unexplained contagion breaks out, killing people in their thousands and proliferating uncontrollably. On a parallel level, the play considers brutality as an after-effect of market fundamentalism. Mbembe explains. What Carl Schmitt called ‘seizing land’ is today succeeded by the building of fortifications [...] those who have nothing and who are, for that very reason, considered as *being* nothing. (Confavreux, 2022). At issue in this passage is, in the final analysis, the impossibility of an assured joining or continuity. The discontinuity of *différance* disrupts the dialectical transition from potentiality to actuality and renders problematic the conceptualisation of the temporal process as a forward and continuous movement.

LESBOS, the theatre play, attempts to re-dramaturg modernity’s classic political question built around the entitlement to appropriation, the right to amass data and objectify it into a marketable method of control: ultimately, the right to conquest. In drama, and in life, can the Other cross an enemy line and where might this lead them, as grievable and resisting subjects?

Can love ever be born in blood?

FULL DISCLOSURE: CONTAGION

The body of the Other, the very distinction between subject-object primarily constituted through the encounter with another body and the possibility of contagion, has immense power. In dramaturgy where an aesthetics of contamination is imaginary, it has the potential of forcing open an ontological relation to the Other. The presence of contamination in LESBOS has a dual metaphorical purpose: the fear of iatric disease, but, most importantly, the body holding contamination as an immanent possibility of openings and becomings. The body of the woman/enemy/invasion inducing desire/knowledge/libidinal borderlessness. Contagion is exposure; it is also full disclosure. In contractual terms, the exile enters into a contract informed by Cixous’s call to “write the body” (Cixous, 1998), to transgress boundaries by the act of inscription itself (Cixous, 1975). The contaminated body, the woman’s body, the exiled body becomes the site of leakage or Kristeva’s “libidinal rupture” (Kristeva, 1984), that which must exclude/expel itself in order to preserve itself yet always returns to destabilise order. In this dramaturgy contagion becomes poiesis or, in other words, infection in language. The exiled body, in its

refusal or inability to be assimilated becomes a vector of epistemic disturbance. This contamination is full disclosure; a staging of the (writing/writer's) body that provides new access to modes of speech and political imagination.

THE LOVER

Hill House

Sarah lights a candle and kneels down to pray, next to a photograph of her father,

Professor Kadam Al-Asari.

Maria waits by the door.

SARAH Come in, come in.

MARIA I was going out-

SARAH No, please do come in. It's alright. We come from matter. We dissolve into matter. No big deal.

MARIA No love, huh?

SARAH No love.

Sarah wipes her eyes.

SARAH You don't have a mascara that I could borrow?

LESBOS

The simplicity in the quotidian utterings in this scene is deliberate. It is designed to mirror the metaphysics in Genesis 3:19 "For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return" and metaphorise the plainness of the human encounter as a possibility of knowing and knowledge. For the female, knowledge is historically and politically dangerous. At the head of the patriphallic order is the omniscient man/god loyally served by his fertile helper who transforms his seed into his "image, after his likeness", to paraphrase Genesis 1:26-27. Material dominion then is in order "over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Genesis 1:26-27) ensuring knowledge, power and authority. Al-Asari and Papadopoulos propose to reverse this order to a perilous matriphallic model where they can *desire*, and, they can *know*, despite of and, often, against the state. The contaminant in LESBOS is therefore in the pathogen of disease but also in the threat presented to the patriphallic order by two most unlikely candidates: two women sufficiently knowledgeable to portend disorder and chaos.

In Aristotle's *Poetics*, tragedy has been theorised as a form of contamination or miasma, balanced through catharsis (Dromazos, 1982). In the ancient world, the idea of contamination is related to the collapse of a social and cultural order, where certain categories that should not meet, have infected each other. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the plague comes to Thebes to punish Oedipus who should never have married his own mother. With contamination, chaos follows, and a ritual purification is demanded to compensate for the social breakdown. Through blood, death and a rethinking of power,

catharsis then comes, to restore balance and order. In tragedy's staging of an original contamination, the ritual expulsion of that which is foreign becomes the bond of the social and cultural community.

Contamination is also the breaking down between the inside and the outside, or the paradox that makes a just decision possible being precisely the condition that simultaneously makes a just decision impossible, since “justice requires the suspension of law” (Derrida, 2005). The strongest dramaturgical iteration of this anomaly is uttered by Creon in *Antigone* verse 485 “Ἡ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἀνὴρ, αὐτὴ δὲ ἀνὴρ” (“now, I am no man, but she is the man” trans. mine) (Sophocles and Griffith, 2003). A dramaturgical aesthetics of contamination which enlightens the juridical, the transcendental, the interstice between justice and law and, ultimately, the translation from linguistic intelligibility to political legibility. This contaminated space makes progress possible since it enables an autopoiesis of justice itself by disturbing a settled epistemology and enabling a new ethical grammar. Where the law falters, the poetic intervenes, auto-generating in and by itself.

The aesthetics of contamination assists further. It is the phenomenon through which I am moved or touched, by my fellow being with the consequences of the “touch” could be perilous to the existing order. The touch appears with intensity and feverishness where the separating limit between inside and outside runs most thinly. These liminal phenomena can be read as manifest expressions of the fact that the Other encountered in a work of art may have an infectious function. In Freud’s first model of the psyche, *‘Entwurf einer Psychologie’* ([1895], 2018), the ego is understood not as kernel, but as a protective shield, encircling the organism as a husk against the excitations from the inside and the outside (Freud, [1895] 2018). The Freudian imagery could serve as an early template in transforming the metaphorical sense of contamination. It could also help to rescue the opposite inside/outside from negative associations issued by ideologies of purity.

Dramaturgically, the feminine in LESBOS is the threat. First, as both women’s characters present a staunch refusal either to be threatened, reformed, or absorbed by any pre-emptive social and psychological processes. They do not care if they are “liked”; in fact, they actively seek unlike-lability and anti-heroism. There is an acknowledgement that political resistance involves putting the material body in action to influence the course of political events (De Lucca, 1999 and Peterson, 2001). Wounded bodies, tortured bodies, defiant bodies, out-of-place bodies, shape writing history not by being likeable, as the Argentine women’s resistance demonstrates in their physical/transcendental practice of *‘poner el*

cuerpo'. 'Poner el cuerpo' means 'to put the body', which does not quite translate from Argentine/Spanish to English. It overlaps somewhat with 'to put the body on the line' and to 'give the body', but it transcends both notions. In respect to political agency, it is a summons to talk, think, desire (desire) and be whole, present and involved in political action. The phrase now forms part of the officially recognised vocabulary of Argentine resistance. Secondly, both women in LESBOS are acutely aware of what Mbembe terms "the vulgar aesthetics", in which the dominated are relied upon to sustain a fantasy and perpetuation of their own victimhood (Mbembe, 1991). I refer here to the epistemically paralysing syndrome of victimisation, or the inability of the dominated to express themselves in terms other than as traumatised, wounded subjects. To surmount the impasse, I created two women's characters who act and think contrapuntally, in intellectual curiosity and in resistance to expectation.

Central to the Contract of Vulnerability is the wound. The wound of the body in word becomes fertilised, pollinates and germinates, not denying the pain but affirming the generation of new words: In my interpretation, those are the exilic words born in the cut of the wound, and more specifically, the birth wound. The reconciliation of the wound of Catholicism and Abrahamic circumcision is laid out bare by Derrida in *Circumfessions*, a lexical merging of the terms circumcision and confession which Derrida began to practice after his marriage to Marguerite Aucouturier in 1957 and his conversion to Catholicism. (Derrida and Bennington, 2009). The autopoietic Self emerges in the wound, on the stigma which is carried by the body and metaphorised into the "life of the word" in Derrida's own words while discussing *Circumfessions* with Cixous. In Derrida as in Cixous, as in Tsitsi Dangaremba, as even in *Antigone*, the sound becomes the site of inscription of the confessing/circumcised self by turning the wound outwards: a full disclosure of the wound, as both ethical and aesthetic contract of vulnerability.

In LESBOS's plotline, the corporeal rejection marks the locus of the wound seeping between inner and outer world. Maria and Sarah are expected to perform this corporeal rejection – reject each other's physical bodies- so that they may be able to perform statehood. But they do not. They try to overcome the signification instituted by symbolic practice; they strive for a subjecthood not determined by the foreclosure demanded by society. They breach the limit between inner and outer, the remainder that must be cut off in order for the Self to be kept 'pure'; the 'persecutory other' becomes the lover. By not resisting the Other, they resist the separation. The Wound unites the self and the Other in time and in being.

Opposite these symbolic forces, the women's characters begin to unveil themselves. The Syrian scientist clearly defines the stable ground; she defines order and structure. She is the perfect metaphysics but for her exilic reality; a reality which negates the centre by operating outside of it. In this, she has no agency: she is pre-empted to fail on account of exile and womanhood. At this stage, it would be legitimate to ask whether the subject performing the expulsion is understood as formed within the phallic order which would render the exercise somewhat fruitless. A subject anchored to the phallic superego would not be in a position to enact a revolution against that very order. I would argue that the subject in LESBOS can be interpreted as tracing back to a pre-logocentric order, a heterogeneous construction that is already contaminated. My construction of Al-Asari was heavily influenced by Kristeva's reading of Plato's *χώρα* (chōra): a model of the political where the modern differentiation of public and intimate have not yet been formed. The chōra is not cast under the symbolic law, but it still subsists under a regulating process. What the chōra produces, however, is not a subject of the law, but a subject in process/on trial [sujet en procès]:

Our discourse - all discourse - moves with and against the chōra in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it. Although the chora can be designated and regulated, it can never be definitively posited: as a result one can situate the chōra and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it axiomatic form

Kristeva, 1974

The chōric blueprint for the characters of both Papadopoulos and Al-Asari is not an ontology reducible to signification, not governed by law but shown in rhythm and engendering of representation that cannot itself be represented. It is the space preceding the actual space of representation, before the regulating functions of language content enter consciousness. The rhythm of the women's association is a 'non-word' used here to reconceptualise the relation between self and the Other in intercultural communication and in conditions of conflict, in war and in exile. It traverses representation and language and attempts to invest in pleasure. I cannot fathom this practice could be a political practice but as a theatrical praxis it implies a primitive underside of culture that is repressed and hidden but also privileged in attaining a mythical status. The closely knit system of the patriarchy operates within the triad of statehood, religion and the phallic social sphere. The crumbling of this triad leads to pathologies linked to psychotic forms of narcissism and perverse identity such as fascism and racism. In the words of Isabel Allende:

Hay una guerra no declarada contra el género femenino. Vivimos en un patriarcado. Este patriarcado está ahí desde hace milenios. ¿Qué es el patriarcado? Todos los sistemas de opresión, económicos, culturales, religiosos, sociales, domésticos le dan dominio al varón. (There is an undeclared war against the female gender. We live in a patriarchy. This patriarchy has been here for millennia. What is patriarchy? All systems of oppression—economic, cultural, religious, social, and domestic—which grant dominance to men.) Translation mine

Isabel Allende, 2020 (in Langobardi, 2020)

Against this backdrop of virulent patriarchy where misogyny grounds masculinity (Berger, 2025), the character of Sarah Al-Asari, provides the reflection- or the other side of -Antigone, in that she evolves into an institutional player. She carries the honorific “doctor” and is an eminent epidemiologist from Damascus, whose profound knowledge of the virus beginning to spread amongst the population of the island, is a threat to those in power. In the normal order of things, she would not be socially or politically wounded but in exile, she is. Maria Papadopoulos, whose politics betray her despite a life-long dedication to the romantic communist cause, is also a senior nurse working in the Greek health service. Her wound is old, open and seeping. Much like Antigone, her words can only belong to the order of men-kings, but these are the only words she can utter. In that appropriated universe, the two women fall in love, unwittingly and unwillingly, amidst the chaos of choric clamour, civic unrest and a growing insurrection on Lesbos. Although the story is imagined and conceived as taking place on Lesbos as many of the tragedies and loss of human life happened in the waters surrounding Lesbos, the play’s LESBOS is an allegorical topos; an encryption intended to unearth subconscious biases, fears and recessed landscapes. Evocations of water impel us to reconsider the limits of sensory knowledge and experience in so doing. They shift attention from the representation of census within the play to sensory experiences occasioned by the play as a performative event. The metaphoric power of water relies on the assumed security between historian and historical agent to share our experience across time, to build a bridge between past and present. In LESBOS the waters of the Aegean are an agreement between the victims and the perpetrators to meet in an autonomous space for the re-enactment of the past. The water is equally pervasive as a critical metaphor between the figure of experience and the figure of performance between the lived and the performed.

LESBOS is told between a Prologue and an Epilogue across twenty-two Scenes.

They are:

Prologue

The Lull,

The Mountain

The Molecule,

The Left,

The Wall,

The Body,

The Lover,

The Motion,

The Antibiotic,

The Soldier,

The Left Again,

The Problem

The Right,

The Beach,

The Flag,

The Arrest,

The Trial,

The Nick,

The State,

The Chorus,

The Scientist,

Epilogue

Structurally, the nineteen scenes constitute an artistic response to the new material and political conditions of global exilic movement. This imposes an architecture of polyglossia on the theatrical schema by forcing the traditional political poles of Left and Right into a poetic synergy with the sea and her unpredictability. To paraphrase Hans-Thies Lehmann polyglossia on several levels, shows playful gaps, abruptions and unsolved conflicts, even clumsiness and loss of control' (Lehmann, 2006). This new polyglossia is marked by artistic reasoning, yet it also suspends the work of reception by immersing spectators into the state of not-knowing. And yet, epistemic deprivation was not the intention behind LESBOS, but in the second decade of the twenty first century there emerges a clear need to

listen to both the individual utterance and the choric lament of the collective voice. Polyglossia suggests more nuanced modes of perception, as our interpretation of multilingual performances often rests with our corporeal imagination.

LESBOS being written and LESBOS being read nine years on from its inception are two very different things. Writing LESBOS required the freeing of instinct and the permission that a writer grants herself to let event and play bleed onto the page. In LESBOS, the intuition of the writer was to confront both the carnality of the two protagonists; contoured by the politics of the historical Left and Right, as political exigencies against the mirror of an infection. I could never have been prepared for the historical outcome of Covid-19 which became LESBOS's dark prophecy contained in this metaphor.

Water carries traces of times and truths of worlds that no longer exist. It also carries the potential that these times and truths can be incorporated into our future. By extension, the two women in the play, irreverent and anti-conformist, not only persist in a temporal lacuna; they also move the text, both symbolic and realistic, into a new cultural setting. I remain sensitive to the poetic and the reflexive/post-poetic- nuances alluded to here, in full awareness that exilic metaphor serves two purposes: the expulsion from our own body and the expulsion from the body politic. Exile's expulsive structure is first felt and lived via our sensory media of perception. Exile is the literal expulsion of the foreign body from what is perceived to be the host or pure body or the receiver. It is subsequently actioned in politics through the juridical and institutional exclusion of the citizen and the denial of civic rights. Exile in 2015, the years of LESBOS's first drafting, became Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology of carnal being. Merleau-Ponty creates a radical construal of the flesh of the world as a network of exchanges between the sensing and the sensed. I do not propose that such transitivity preclude rational critique or even a Baconian ideal for converting perceptions into facts. However, the structure of today's exile, reflected through our New Wars and global Britain's bellicosity against her European neighbours, places the sovereign rationality of Descartes in an analogy to carnality. The dramaturgy in LESBOS offer an expanded sense of *skin* to capture the world's critical purchase as well as its esoteric fragments: "some little pieces of pine pitch for fastening feathers to trees to show the way, and some flattened underbrush to

guide the way back to el mundo subterraneo, the underground world, our psychic home” (Estés, 2003). The carnality, the open wound translated into word, initiates also a point of contact between theatre and philosophy. Derrida augments the point that the exilic, in drama, acquires the possibility of the dramatised Self integrating its Other and taking on the form of the thinking self, the self of reflection. The exile doesn’t just perceive, see, or hurt. The exile can now begin to think. Both theatre and philosophy, Derrida notes, have an interest in concealing some of their secrets, in creating other spaces of knowledge and meaning beyond what can be seen or contemplated directly.

My wish here is *not* to be considerably more specific about my own lived experience as Athenian-born but raised in the little village of Caversham in England; nor is it to analyse how that penetrates so much of what is encompassed in the five years of this thesis. It cannot, however, be overlooked that while exposing the wound, the text also exposes delineations between the dramatist, the exile and that very wound, both historical and intimate. Cixous’s study of Joyce in *Ulysses* evidences the methodological "an age of exhausted whoredom groping for its god" (Joyce, 1922), reflects a moment of existential exhaustion. Joyce captures a world craving meaning while drained of its own cynicism. It is inevitable, however, that the vast significations of the Greek philosopher’s cave narrative, obscured during the Enlightenment, reconstituted in 1832, the evolution of the modern State and what still persists as the Mediterranean frontier between East and West, cannot be gotten rid of as the constituents of imaginative, imagistic, ideological and religious projection. The Mediterranean also remains the site of an ongoing conflict for control with New Wars continuing to rage across the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa and Gaza. In my own experience, Greece’s sea in East (the Aegean) and West (the Ionian and the Adriatic) is understood intuitively as the triangular of elegy, possibility and exile. The output of Athenian intellectual activity in the 5th Century gave us the blueprint of modern democracy, dialectics, tragedy and performance. The Eastern Mediterranean is still the crossing of the threshold, the sea stained with blood, the site of interreligious contestation and immense natural beauty. At the core, then, there is an irreconcilable, antinomian conflict embedded in the land, its history and its multifaceted present (Waterfield, King & Andrew, 2019). The *aporia* emerges of the unresolved question within the antinomy of beauty/blood and democracy/war in the absolute proximity which, in Derrida’s thinking makes the impossible be “the aporetic supplement of the possible [...] the enigmatic figure of this monstrous coupling” (Derrida, 2000). The metaphorical effectiveness of accepting the possibility of impossibility is *aporia*, which imposes

discursive humility and the acknowledgement of the secret language that becomes the public and hidden liturgies of the self and the Other. Deconstruction can now be brought into effectiveness by offering a method to mobilise the secret and the aporia in strategic and political interventions on a foundational level.

What is new about our multifaceted present is neither war nor the vulgarity of the ruling classes; both are historically persistent. What is new is the typology of the wars that are pursued at any given moment and consequently the question that arises as to how “bodies on the street” can resist them. While the tragedies were unfolding in the Mediterranean and across the Adriatic in late 2015, there was a familiar sense of politics repeating itself. But there is a twist. For the first time in human history, so much is owned by so few. The historical product of total and absolute privatisation witnesses the power of the State (the benevolent State or the authoritarian State) so willingly outsourced to a market cult the outcome of which is the oxidation and decomposition of civic responsibility on the part of the State. Consequently, the old wars’ objective to sustain and safeguard national consciousness was achieved by their being organised and sponsored by official State means and armies. New Wars are privately administered and fought in order to consolidate an extra-national consciousness with emphasis on private assets managed and circulated outside of national boundaries and designed to reproduce power and access further resources. In his 2025 article *Fascism, American Style: Toward a Sociology of the Fascist Moment*, Wisconsin University professor Ronald Berger, expands on the fascist dimensions of this administrative and military roadmap. Framed as a comprehensive restructuring of the federal government in the USA, a radical neoliberal economic vision emerges, advocating sweeping deregulation, the privatisation of core public services and a regressive tax regime favouring corporations and high-income earners, the erosion of democratic institutions and a contempt of social protections (Berger, 2025).

According to Mary Kaldor, New Wars are political wars not national wars. Their aim is political mobilisation on the basis of capital. This resonates with Mbembe’s concerns around the formation of new heavily guarded ideas of a fetishized, consumable self, obsessively “bound to its dreams and ambitions” (Confavreux, 2022). The military strategy for achieving this aim is population displacement and destabilisation with a view to fomenting hatred and fear. Nevertheless, this deleterious form of politics cannot be disentangled from its economic basis. The dénouement in LESBOS offers a dramaturgical twist to various political/military factions plundering the assets of the land and its people as well as the remnants of the state. War, thus, provides a legitimization for various criminal

forms of private aggrandizement while at the same time these are necessary sources of revenue in order to sustain the war. As the conflict in Gaza continues to teach us warring parties need permanent conflict both to reproduce their positions of power and for access to resources. The result is a permanent state of non-distinguishability between peace and war where certain zones on our planet seem to be in a permanent state of unrest. With power and assets firmly distancing themselves from the national arenas, the distinction between private and public/civic obligation, State duty and welfare becomes increasingly blurry. It is in this context of a withering formal political economy that the story of LESBOS was conceived; inside a new continuum, starting with the combination of criminality and racism and reaching its most acute manifestation in the areas where the scale of violence is greatest, and imagination and hope are least possible.

Contagion serves equally as a reminder of the metaphoric miasma which binds us regardless of class or pedigree. Contagion equally casts light on the identitarian struggles of our times, which Mbembe claims “are the new opium of the people, among elites as well as the masses” (Confavreu, 2022). Here, the refugee/doctor Al-Asari reminds the man in authority of her academic title in a commendable desire to take back one’s own self.

MEMBER A I know your father well. He has voiced some extreme opinions about western involvement in Syria.

SARAH Was he not right?

MEMBER A Madam-

SARAH “Doctor”

Lesbos The Molecule

The taking back of what is legitimately owed has, over the last twenty years, become a fetishised self, a consumable self, totally bound to its dreams, its feelings, its emotions, its body, against the backdrop of a mass narcissism relayed by digital technology. This figure of the self is a dispositif in the project of infinite market expansion, in our era dominated by the “reflex of quantity – one in which selling images by way of images seems to have become the ultimate meaning of life” Mbembe concludes (Confavreux, 2022). Contagion today is omnipresent in the news, in public health discourses, on the streets and in our domestic conversations. More broadly, in public and cultural discourse, catchphrases such as ‘social contagion’, (Martínez, Jiménez-Molina and Gerber, 2023) ‘emotional contagion’ (Herrando and Constantinides, 2021), ‘mental contagion’ (Horesh, Hasson-Ohayon and Harwood-Gross, 2021), ‘financial contagion’ (Franklin & Gale, 2000), and even ‘cultural contagion’ (Gelfand et al., 2012) have become

prevalent, if not commonplace. As early as the fifth century BC in Euripides's *Bacchae*, Dionysus represents contagion, mimesis and metamorphosis, such that the dramatic character of Dionysus has the power to change the look, attitude, and behaviour of those who come under his influence – and, of course, he can also transform himself. Mimetic contagion and metaphorization are, in this sense, processes of meaning-making. In the platonic tradition, mimesis is never an imitation of reality but a deleterious, seductive pharmakon that leads to forgetfulness, loss of understanding and indiscriminate profusion of discourse. Metaphorically, contagion and infection are commanding tools for denoting a combination of social attributes and emotional attitudes which lead to a decision to “settle on a particular scenario as their dominant (or even exclusive) perspective on reality” (Musolff, 2016) even as the trigger to moral intuitions.

Contagion is a limit case for metaphorical language, and for this reason it is intriguing. As I have pointed out, analysing the emergence and spread of cultural forms of contagion cannot simply be a matter of drawing a line between ‘literal’ and ‘figurative’ uses of the term, and, as a concept, contagion proves impossible to quarantine in this way. Literary scholar Donald Beecher has compellingly argued that “the alignment between contagious diseases and transmissive emotions has been so close in Western culture as to blur the line between material cause and figurative application” (Beecher, 2005). This confusion of discourses, Beecher continues, leaves the concept of contagion “ambiguously oscillating between material and metaphorical analysis, creating an epistemological anxiety around our own sense of the word “contagion” (Beecher, 2005).

Tracing the history of the contagion metaphor thus presents a challenge to the very idea of metaphor. As Paul Ricoeur puts it in his *Rule of Metaphor*, ‘everyone agrees in saying that figurative language exists only if one can contrast it with another language that is not figurative’ (Ricoeur, 1986 [1975]). What is considered as the literal, medical definition of contagion emerged after the development of microbial theory which might jeopardise its metaphorical currency. The history and the etymology of contagion unsettles clear distinctions between the physical, the medical, the cultural and the affective. Moreover, it unsettles clear distinctions between the literal and the metaphorical, for contagion's metaphoricity taints even its most literal definitions. I am here attentive to the ‘epistemological anxiety’ that inheres the concept of contagion and is engendered in its use. In LESBOS,

metaphor was not only an analogon of figurative language but also the epitome of the problem of language itself and the ways it has evolved since the beginnings of the decade of 2010, with the exponential rise of neo-conservative and neo-fascist ideologies worldwide.

What LESBOS endeavours to address through contagion is our era's new-found, powerful propensity toward politico-corporate endogamy, which is perhaps a necessity that political dramaturgy must now address in content and in form. The new landscapes of corporate excommunication and freeport/free city schemata force a reassessment of territorial segmentation and fragmentation, perhaps the greatest since feudal times. Historically, there has never been a time when the object and the subject have been so sharply separated. It would have been hard for deconstruction to imagine a time when everything, including consciousness, would be reduced to matter. It would be even harder for deconstruction to fathom an epoch where the dialectics of materialism would prove insufficient to solving this reduction. In its inability to inform the juridical, Dramaturgy can, at least, offer succour by generating the affective, the rhythmic and the choral.

TIMING THE WOUND

Early on in *Black Skin Black Masks*, Fanon (Fanon, 1970) establishes the pathological nature of the colonial situation articulated in two distinct but intertwined desires: "The black man wants to be white. The white man is desperately trying to achieve the rank of man" (Fanon, 1970). Interestingly, for Fanon, "only a psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem can reveal the affective disorders responsible for this network of complexes" (Fanon, 1970). Fanon mimics Freud's famous "What does a woman want?" (Freud, 1952) "what does the black man want?". Fanon responds that "The black man wants to be white" and explains this not as a transhistorical desire but rather as the product of a configuration of material and political power.

In LESBOS, the Chorus mimics this oppositional structure by swaying between exaggerated love for one's country to hatred for the same. An exalted reverence of one's origins can manifest itself as a discourse of love and the need for independence from oppression, or, in a different interpretation, as hatred and exclusion of the other. Nationalism of purity relies on the formation of fetishized and mythologised identities

which are promised immeasurable strength through a direct identification with a potent symbolic order such as the nation. Hatred or love of the nation are afflictions resulting in similar symptoms.

The controlling of narrative is constitutive of the formation of national consciousness and the division of hierarchies in human society (Kramer, 1997). The fear directed against the exile is this very inability to control the cyclical, mythological, monumental and ahistorical frames. Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes were amongst the first to present the scaffolding of synchronicity as an anthropological study of reconstituting the syntax of human behaviour, as a retracing of the course of choices facing the human character. Barthes discusses Levi-Strauss' and Jakobson's paradigmatic operations extended along the lines of narrative as well as Todorov's attempts to "determine the rules by which narrative combines, varies and transforms a certain number of basic predicates" (Barthes, 1964).

The question of the ontological commitments of our language has been an active concern in the Anglo-American traditions of the philosophy of language under the stewardship of Strawson, Quine and Davidson and more recently, Jason Stanley, Sandra Harding, Evelyn Fox-Keller and Susan Bordo. In *Margins*, Derrida attempts a unification of the problem of linguistic constructivism's phenomenological undecidability by inserting temporality – dare I say historicity- into the sign (Derrida, 1982). The outcome is that synchronicity, abstraction and officialdom find themselves under siege from the material world's carnality, its realness and its pain. The element of diachronicity is paramount in the construction of the language of the exiled subject. Official discourse endlessly and tirelessly and incessantly attempts to amputate temporality from the exilic sign. Every state-sanctioned utterance -or signifier- of exile is given as a synchronic, ahistorical, flattened and ossified statement designed to omit time. The reason for this is that time is to be controlled and along with time, the ordering and manipulation of historical time and, in turn, the ordering of production and its outputs. De-historicising or flattening time thereby acquires the effect of universalising a principle as it detaches it from critically charged stances and events.

There are multiple references to disparate historical events in Greek history across the *Lesbos* play-text but they are deliberately not designed to represent a coherent dramaturgical backdrop. The exile herself has been removed from history and therefore is floating in an eternal void. The question arises therefore as to how exilic representation is affected by these temporalities and more specifically in postmodern discourse. In *Women's Time* Julia Kristeva argues that women have a complicated relationship to time (Kristeva, 1996). Kristeva finds that female subjectivity would seem to be tied in both to cyclical time [repetition] and to monumental time [eternity], enabling the kairotic, purposeful dialectic of women's exile. Regardless of the precision within the chronological, synchronicity, or a certain immobilisation of time, renders the text governable and well-behaved according to the controlling mechanisms of state dissection and articulation. Barthes notes that the notion of the synchronic “accredits a certain immobilisation of time”. Beyond affirming the Platonic comfort in unchangeability, he describes it as the “controlled succession of a certain number of mental operations whose goal is the reconstruction of an object” (Barthes & Howard. 2009). The Levi-Straussian precept of “myth as the suppression of time”, I am guessing, then rests on the binary logic of myth as reducible to the logic of timelessness. In the words of Edward Said discussing the media-controlled universe of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations:

whose true import was never really about how to manage reading lists and codify course requirements but about how the real experience of large groups of people might be grasped, clarified, reinterpreted, and rediscovered in the great works of literature and philosophy.

(Said, 2000)

Said's analogy is pertinent in the context of manipulating crowds using the techniques of literature and emotion to impose conformity, and ultimately, control both time and narrative. Beyond the controlling of narrative complex characteristics render these temporal modalities problematic in the representation and production of modern and postmodern selves. As death spreads across LESBOS' imagined island, the play between chorus and protagonists posits a model of intersubjectivity and inter-corporeality that does not evolve either into identity or into a stable opposition of subject to object. There emerged a dramaturgical urgency to bridge the gap between the diachronic tangible surfaces of the world – the sea, the rock and the land- and their invisible immaterial underpinnings. The politics of Left and Right mirroring on human bodies point to

the opposition between sign and hidden cause point to the catalyst. Dr Al-Asari is the catalyst in LESBOS who enacts a profound recasting of knowledge: No longer understood as the accumulation of meaning that arises naturally from primary perception, the knowledge of the oppressed is reconstituted through metaphor as the controlled production of experience, drawing in past and future.

SCENE: THE BODY

The port of Mytilene on Lesbos

MARIA Who is this?

MEMBER A Look.

MARIA Who is it?

MEMBER A Syrian.

MARIA How do you know he's Syrian?

MEMBER A Not one of ours.

MARIA Pull him out.

A citizen pulls out the bag believed to be containing the body. He unzips it

MEMBER A He's covered in black blisters.

Maria kneels down by the corpse. She spots something.

MEMBER A DON'T TOUCH IT!

MARIA He's wearing an ID bracelet.

MEMBER A Andreas, dip and get that for me.

Zemekis rips the bracelet off the corpse and hands it to Member.

MARIA What's his name?

Member retrieves the bracelet. He looks at it.

There is some commotion, the citizens are keen to identify the man. Member hands the bracelet back to Zemekis who stuffs it into his pocket.

MEMBER A Maria get away from him!

MARIA I'll get a heartbeat.

Citizens disagree whether the victim is on Lesbos' soil or in the sea.

Citizen walks inquisitively amongst us

A CITIZEN (to us) The cadaver had a terrifying appearance. As if he was trying to communicate something from the beyond. Was he one of ours? Was he not one of ours? We'd have to wait a long wait to find out.

MARIA Pull him.

A CITIZEN He's one of them, Maria.

A CITIZEN That's just open flesh, he's been in the sea a while.

MARIA I don't care what he's got, he needs to be taken into a facility.

MEMBER A It's a body. In the open sea.

MARIA What you done with his bracelet?

Citizens congregate around the body.

MEMBER There was *no* bracelet.

MARIA He had a gold bracelet on. I saw it.

MEMBER Maria, you're hallucinating. Disperse, all you of you idiots. You're suffocating her. Maria, please calm down.

MARIA This patient is mine.

MEMBER A This "patient" is dead. Athens said to handle this discreetly. What are you trying to do?

MARIA This is not an Athenian matter.

Death's metaphor is fertile here. It offers pedagogical value as a transformative, enriched, displaced, intra-existential force according critical and creative power to metaphor, a power that has tangible and practical effects. Foucault, for instance, saw metaphor as a powerful critical technique or tool (Foucault, 1982). Paul de Man explored its 'proliferating and disruptive power' (Derrida, 2012); and Ricœur argued that metaphor has a 'metamorphic' power to transform language and reality (Ricœur, 1973). But death's metaphor as non-presence also follows a cross-correlate, circular, splitting/re-joining narrative matrix. I will agree with Derrida that wherever there is signification even the purity of self-presence is threatened to the extent that presence, in its temporal aspect, is infected by its relationship to the past and the future. But presence is the primary phenomenon of language. The dead don't speak, that's why they can be useful in political discourse. Presence is made possible by the relationship that the utterance in question bears to the various differential series to which it belongs and to their respective intentions. Presence is the inflected accusative of a linguistic subject's desire. Making 'present' draws in pasts and futures. Performing present threatens order and invokes the wrath of history. That is why neofascist discourse mobilises all it can to paralyse it.

Deconstruction here lends support to the exilic Self birthing itself out of non-time and non-being, retroactively, in a schema of death. In his essay, *Declarations of Independence*, Derrida lauds America's Declaration of Independence for its "fabulous retroactivity" by which the United States and its people brought themselves into being through the signing of the Declaration of Independence (Derrida et al., 2006). The Declaration of Independence declares that "these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States"¹. Derrida writes,

But these people don't exist [...] BEFORE this declaration, not AS SUCH. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of the signature. The signature invents the signer [...] I have the right to sign, in truth I will already have had it since I was able to give it to myself.

This can be a proclamation of a birth. The Self signs a contract with the world where the signature is anterior to the coming into being of the signatory. The signature declares the birth of the signee, retroactively. As Derrida's essay is themed "Constitutions", it can be

¹ For the full text, see National Archives (2018). *America's Founding Documents*. [online] National Archives. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs>.

safely deduced that every constitution brings into being the very thing that it relies upon to ascertain its authority to act.

I argue that the traversing of this retroactivity, this very moment into Deconstruction's discontinuity in *différance* initiates an irruption to the dialectical temporal process. Dialectics is no longer separate from intentionality; temporality becomes intentional; the exile becomes a subject in consciousness, in forward movement, toward a posited *telos*. The exile, becomes temporal, becomes consciousness that speaks its desire.

ANTIGONE'S CONTRACT OF INVULNERABILITY

Das Ziel der weiblichen Erziehung muß immer die kommende Mutter sein (The aim of female education must invariably be the future mother)

Adolf Hitler, 1925

I am going to do it, whether the women like it or not.

Donald Trump, 2025²

The structure of LESBOS is designed to reflect the dissonance engendered by estrangement, by dispersion, by the years of unsung womanhood. Act II is there to show the precarious sense of expression by which what 'normal' citizens find easy and natural to do requires, in exile, an almost excessive deliberation, effort, ferocious outflow of intellectual energy and "restoration, reiteration, and affirmation that are undercut by doubt and irony" (Said, 2012). The critical task for the exile is to remain both sceptical and loyal to their externality while avoiding the quietism of non-involvement. In exile, in full awareness of your externality, you self-exclude, just to stay safe. There is a contrapuntal version of this in Sarah Al-Asari in LESBOS. She is keen to get involved. She is ambitious and not afraid to show it. Her loyalty to her scientific vocation is designed to disquiet the reader/audience. Her confident sexuality in taking the initiative in her rapport with Nurse Maria Papadopoulos is further designed to speak what to many may be the unspeakable. A

² Direct quote from the Guardian in Mahdawi, A. (2024). *When Trump says he's going to 'protect' women, we know he means 'control'*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/02/when-trump-says-hes-going-to-protect-women-we-know-he-means-control> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2024].

Muslim woman *not* doing and *not* speaking what the world expects of her. The perlocutory weight of her touch, her flailing of the arm in anger, her threatening of her scientific colleagues and her ultimate decision not to align with her lover Maria imposes a crossing from literature to power.

The figure of Antigone marks constitutive exclusion. She is inside the quasi-transcendental, Bennington's "roughly" there, representing the frontier between life and death, contesting authority and power and unafraid to die. She somehow continues to exceed these representations and to be taken up in new ways, in new readings and performances: in Ireland, in Nazi-occupied Paris, in apartheid South Africa. In *Antigone's Claim* Judith Butler examines the constitution of political bodies, constitutively excluded and relegated to an ostensibly apolitical or pre-political space (the oikos, the intimate, pre-history, the wilderness) that is generated through the constitution of a properly political space. This apolitical and, arguable, a-historical relegation is designed on condition of the exclusion to which Antigone is subjected. Her contestation of this space poses a perennial problem of the woman who refuses to be encased in a predesigned space and this problem must be managed. In her defence of her contempt of Creon's edict, Antigone mounts a passionate intimate and public contestation of King Creon's curb on the terms of political life. By defending her right to bury her brother Polyneices, Antigone makes a political claim in a language that is defined through her exclusion from it. Within this language, her only prospect is to make herself understood through her appropriation of that same language.

At this point it will be hard to avoid Brecht in building the characters of Sarah and Maria. By historicising the narrative, Brecht enacts an awareness in the audience to become conscious of certain habitual perceptions which have been established by the historical tradition and therefore partially determine the present. "Historicising" may involve re-examining a concrete historical situation and its customary interpretation or examining what new insights emerge, if indeed hidden aspects are thrown into relief. It also opens human history to the peril of constant change.

Reconceptualising women's place in history has been a fertile ground for feminist struggle. I am reminded of Caryl Churchill's play *Vinegar Tom* which incorporates a Marxian/materialist feminist analysis to attack the problem of the relationship between gender and class. In historicising the narrative, sexuality is positioned within the history of witches and witchcraft, problematising the traditional interpretation of that history and

pointing to the vestigial remainder of such thinking in contemporary life. Written for the Monstrous Regiment, a theatre company formed in 1975 and committed to feminism and socialism, *Vinegar Tom* was commissioned as part of the company's effort to "reclaim the history play from women's point of view." The central action of the play involves the censuring of women of little financial means by the farmer Jack and his wife Margery, a couple who are at high risk because of their attempts at economic expansion. The couple have sublet two new fields and the wife, Margery, cannot bear the pressure of feeling incompetent and undeserving; the husband, Jack needs a target for his sexual and financial frustration. Not wanting to believe that God judges them "bad," they begin to interpret their misfortunes as acts of witchcraft committed by their poor neighbours, Joan and her daughter Alice. As in *LESBOS* where the State is portrayed by the figure of Stephanides, in *Vinegar Tom* the Church provides the institutional mechanism for burning such witches; Sarah and Maria are the figurative "witches" traditional prime targets: unmarried women, economically marginal and perceived as sexually deviant from the puritanical code.

Loyal to the feminist tradition, I keep the community and its socio-economic-gendered systems at the centre of the play. I also make use of Brecht's episodic play structure in which each scene is isolated and has a crucial turning point. Brecht directs that "the episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgment [...] the parts of the story each have their own structure, as a play within a play" (Brecht, 1964). Not wishing to state the obvious, *LESBOS* specifies in concrete form the relationship between patriarchy and class society: they mutually support each other. Most oppressed are those who attempt or are forced to live either outside the economic system, in this case Al-Asari as the refugee/unemployable scientist, or the sexual system, like Nurse Papadopoulos. There was a long struggle involved in my composition of Sarah's character. Any writer who has dabbled in dramatic structure will understand the guilt between opening to experiences of the Other, "outside" the taxonomies manufactured by "insiders" and making that intimate experience accessible to their reader/audience. In both instances, the story finally succeeds in recovering a history hitherto either misrepresented or rendered invisible. Stereotypes of the Other have always been connected to political actualities of one sort or another, just as the truth of lived experience has often been totally sublimated in official narratives, institutions, and ideologies. But in having attempted—and perhaps even successfully accomplished—this recovery, there is the crucial next phase: connecting these more politically vigilant forms of interpretation to an ongoing political and social praxis. Which takes us beyond materialist interpretation and into ethico-politics.

It may seem like a paradox to establish alterity as an “interruption” at the heart of exilic relations. Woman/Other/Exile/Other reiterates a millennia-long paradigm of exteriority but it equally serves as a commanding safeguard of alterity. Moreover, the kind of relationality at stake is one that “interrupts” or challenges the unitary character of the subject, its self-sameness and its univocity. In other words, something happens to the subject that amputates it from the centre of the world; a demand from elsewhere lays claim to me, the exiled, and presses itself upon me - or even divides me from within, and only through this fissuring of who I am, do I present myself before the exilic condition. This alterity although not fully contained within language, does rather allow language to predicate its epistemic and validating parameters.

The question of how, whether and in what way to give an account of oneself and relate to the Other becomes a central component of exilic reflection; in Butler’s words, “reflection does not return the subject to him or herself, but is to be understood as an ec-static relationality, a way of being comported beyond oneself, a way of “being dispossessed from sovereignty and nation in response to the claims made by those one does not fully know and did not fully choose” (Butler, 2012). Butler, Gayatri-Spivak and Said concur that the exilic condition actuates an ethical relation that permits the imagining of social bonds and political obligations that propel us beyond narrow nationalism.

I wish to place the language of exile precisely on the reformation of this important conception of alterity as the summoning of the Other. Over the course of creating LESBOS in the years 2015-2018, the collated conversations and interaction with women, principally Syrian exiles to Glasgow, amounted to a summons of the Other, if I were to invoke Levinasian terms. The summons arrived through a commonly coded system of understanding. I do not speak Syrian but would encourage the women to converse in it and teach me what they could. It follows that, if that demand to act was upon me, soliciting a response or, indeed, calling forth my sense of responsibility, it had to be “received” through an-Other. As an ethical summons, the demand could not be classed as pre-ontological and thus prior to any and all language. It does indeed present itself *in* language and its entering into a field of interpretive process animates particular ethical resources to become applicable and universalizable. And *in* language the women and I spoke, as this was the only means available to us to gain insight into the secrets and the mysteries across official enemy lines. Invoking exile, *speaking* exile, actually *means* something. This is the perlocutionary condition of exilic language. Only by being displaced and transposed from

one spatiotemporal configuration to another does a subjecthood make some kind of contact with alterity, that field of the “not-me”, thereby trespassing on de-authorised sites and inaugurating a rhetoric order.

What I take from Levinas is the claim that this contact with alterity animates the ethical scene. It was the relation to the Syrian other which obligated me and actualised the space for truth. In this way, language as logos became the condition of possibility of what was and is outside the subject and the scene where one language met another forcing the happening of an event. According to Butler’s reading of Levinas, the demand or summons by the Other comes from elsewhere, which signals the beginning of and the obligation to answer an ethical mandate. But LESBOS goes further. It offers a Sapphoean antidote against the clean/unclean metonymies of empire and phallogocentric political dramaturgy.

In *Subjectivity, Performance, Cosmopolitanism*, Yana Meerzon, perhaps unwittingly, proceeds to construct a Hegelian universe with a third element. Talking about second generation exiles, Meerzon concedes that social conditions create a punishing or distant gaze which is, in fact, the gaze of the exilic subject’s own self, which takes on the role of another. ‘You,’ who demands the ‘I’ account for their life journey. This is an innovation on the study of second-generation exiles who, principally due to a switch in maternal/first language, develop a more heightened perception of the host environment. In that regard, the primary gaze is that of the exilic subject and the secondary gaze is that of a new society gazing on the exilic subject; a society which will determine their eligibility for further inclusion. The third gaze, according to Meerzon, is the gaze of the performing subject towards themselves, “now conditioned by the two primary gazes” (Meerzon, 2021). This third gaze projects the performer’s self-doubt and the doubts cast by their audiences. The exile’s quest for a new self is a typical example of the consequences of the third gaze.

This quest is a journey of negotiation because, For Nietzsche writes, courage and self-reflection are “a consequence of fear and terror” (Nietzsche, 1886). The ‘I’ can acquire a new narrative only because there is the ‘You’ that asks questions. A refusal to provide such an account, the act of silence, becomes a form of resistance. In the theatre of exilic solo performances, the account of ‘I’ as self takes place: the performance recognises Self as relational subject, where the ‘I’ is constructed as not necessary within the ‘I/You’ paradigm, but at the “moments of unknowingness about oneself [which] tend to emerge in the context of relations to others.” The complete account of the self is never possible, unless it takes place in the presence of the sought for and acknowledged addressee; hence,

it is always performative. In theatre, this philosophical postulate turns into a dramaturgical challenge, forcing an exilic performer to create new conditions of speaking, necessarily linked to the materiality of the exilic body. This body appears on stage as an empty sign, with the signified and the signifier being equal to each other: the exilic actor's stage presence is revealed through their body, performative techniques, and the gaze of the audience or our own "twice-restored behaviour" (Schechner, 1985).

Meerzon's view on the global Other is articulated in her question as to "how can strangers—constructed as members of imagined national communities—be turned into neighbours?"; she asserts that for now 'we' cannot remain safely locked within the binaries of methodological nationalism. In this sociological scenario, the 'we' appears vulnerable, divided, and as much at risk as the 'other'. Beck's proposal leads the way to Homi Bhabha's suggestion that today's world resembles the world of proto-nationalist discourses of the late eighteenth century. To an extent, I agree with Meerzon but I propose a more pressing enquiry into the linguistic conditions for the construction of the exilic subject. In *LESBOS*, whose thematic spine is a contagion (written four years prior to the COVID pandemic) a metaphysical thought, which begins by searching for origins or foundations and proceeds to a reconstruction in order, infallibly finds that things have not happened as they ought: for there to be the need to begin everything again on a secure basis. The quiet island of Lesbos in the Eastern Aegean is imagined as having been plagued by a mystery virus. The metaphysics of presence thinks in two -logical and often historical- moments: presence first, of the world to a gaze, of a consciousness to its own inspection, of a meaning to a mind, of life to itself, of a breast to a mouth; absence next—the world veiled, consciousness astray, nonsense, death, debauchery, language, weaning. Maria Papadopoulos, the Greek nurse and Sara Al-Asari, the Syrian doctor think the second moment as derived with respect to the first. They return, if only in thought, the complex to the simple, the secondary to the primary, the contingent to the necessary. This is the very order of reason and meaning, of the logos, and one does not escape it.

Logos is, undoubtedly, absent in the sadistic objectification of women's bodies in exile. Latin American women's resistance constitutes a powerful arsenal in the formation of resistance itself but also in our understanding of the body as a prolongation, an extension of the woman's body politic. The loss of material possessions, the loss of bodily autonomy, the expectation of humiliation and rape against the woman's body are the shameful hallmarks of history, regardless of who is the victor. In exile, displaced from the home and stripped of one's possessions, the body comes to be the sole entity that belongs entirely to

the self: '[s]u pluma es concisa, documental, y espontánea; claramente su escritura es el único espacio propio en un lugar ajeno, es la expresión de su estado físico y mental, una prolongación de su propio cuerpo'"Her pen is concise, factual, and spontaneous; clearly, her writing is the only space which belongs to her in a foreign place, it is the expression of her physical and mental state, an extension of her very body"(trans. mine). (Martínez, 2007) As Martinez remarks here, in exile, the imaginative/creative space is the expression of one's own body (propio cuerpo) as all other ownership is habitually removed. In the creation of national sovereignty, the woman renounces the only thing that should wholly belong to her: her body becomes a public site of collective testimony. When her body, and by extension the bodies of the other women she represents, are threatened, it is presented as a violation of the exile's national space.

Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* compelling problematises the woman's body as the publicly owned locus which must be supervised, silenced, controlled, excluded from canonical spaces and adjudicated upon. Autopoiesis in such exilic and foreclosed spaces provides a theoretical bridge between the erasure - symbolic and actual- of women's bodies and the ontological and political conditions of displacement. Women subjected to forced gynaecological examinations and other invasive processes are well documented female-authored works written in exile. Spanish and Latin American literature provides harrowing accounts of forced medical procedures, and dehumanization in women's camps, prisons, and refuges in exilic narratives.

Neus Català's *De la resistencia y la deportación* follows a Catalan survivor's account of Ravensbrück, a Nazi women's concentration camp, recounting not only forced labour but also gynecological examinations, medical experiments, and sexual abuse endured by women. She draws direct parallels between the violation of women's bodies and the violation of national and political autonomy in fascist contexts. Naharro-Calderón's work draws direct parallels between women's bodies in exile as extensions of political territories, violated, regulated and medicalised by fascist regimes. female body in exile 'se convierte en la extensión del espacio nacional violado (becomes an extension of the violated national space) (Naharro-Calderón 1998). He has been instrumental in reorganising the diaries of both Neus Català's writings and Tomasa Cuevas's *Cárcel de Mujeres*. These methods of control affirm that while the body may be 'legally' abused, similarly to a national territory annexed by violence, the autopoietic function transforms this body into the writer's body politic. It is collective significance of the body of the author coming to represent the social body of the nation in exile. For Martínez "El cuerpo de la autora, el

cuerpo de lo narrado, y el cuerpo social se confunden, se mezclan, se superponen, se limitan y espacian dentro de Éxodo en una dinámica que sólo puede crearse en el destierro, cuando uno es su único lugar” "The author's body, the narrated body, and the social body become confused, intermixed, superimposed, delimited, and spaced within the exodus, in a dynamic that can only emerge in exile, when one is their only place." (trans. mine). (Martínez, 2007) Here, Martínez demonstrates the *mezcla* (mixture) between the body of the woman-author, the body of the narrated matter and the social body, and how, all three find a space of "exodus" in a dynamic which can "solely be created in exile". What is therefore imperative is to move this woman's body which, in its pathology, rises from victimhood and becomes the body politic, into a space and a method of resistance. I note a reproduction of Cixous's double autopoietic function as a writer-in-exile and exile-as-writer where exile provides both the unique wound and the unique occasion for this function to mobilise.

Shifting the emphasis from revolution to pathology, these works offer a cultural criticism where the subject becomes a symptom of a given society and its history. Overall, there is no conformist, well-adapted subject to contrast with the pathological mode. The subject *is* this very symptom of the unconscious, breaking with the symbolic. In so far as there is subject, it can only exist as symptom, or not at all. Poetry and psychoanalysis represent not the unconscious symbolism of cultural repression, but the breaking point between a given order and its negative pole. Always suffering the risk of contamination, a cultural community will produce obsessions and fears, and, as a reaction, create its own methods of excommunication. Historically, however, no society has fully prevented the appearance of sites where political and cultural conflicts are enacted and embodied. Culture is both integral to the social sphere and acting as its critical conscience. Art and literature are produced as a constant challenge to society's norms and limits, and the truth of the subject is to be found in the discourses of society's weak points (or its pathologies) rather than the ideological illusions it promotes. Culture, for Kristeva as for Freud, is primarily a product of unconscious fantasy formations and drives. Art incarnates the very forces that will disrupt and challenge a society, the unconscious and more in its revelatory status. The pathologies of modernity emerge as resistance against dominating discourses, promoting and participating in a continuous process of change.

LESBOS is woman's word translated as lived resistance in exile. In LESBOS, it is blood that resists. Blood tries to halt Eros in its tracks as Eros lusts after a leap across enemy lines. And it fails. In typical dramatic form, Eros wins. At the heart of it is theoretical

knowledge construed as found, collected and performed out of a cabinet of curiosities and exilic knowledge as constructed, enfolded. Inside the perceptual body visited directly upon the organs of sense and perception. When fear is transformed by desire, “at the final hour, resistance is spared contamination- although to say it is a close thing is an understatement” (Rose, 2007). I follow Bhabha and Kristeva in suggesting that the lost objects of our desire occupy the singular space of the Other. The Other cannot be dissociated from the criticising self/subject which is the foundational point of all knowledge. The subject must be in place for all knowledge to exist. Knowledge requires a constant reformulation of the subject as it occurs and expands. This self-revising, self-interrogating mode of opening up knowledge, also opens up avenues to the “Other” and, as such, is posited alongside deconstructive approaches, serving to consolidate the evidence necessary for the production of a political dramaturgy of resistance. While I understand the anxieties of Marxian scholars, it is inevitable that the deconstructed subject within the symbolic order remains central to this enquiry.

Jameson refutes both the Freudian and the Lacanian “isolated subject of monadic autonomy” in his long treatise in the *Political Unconscious* in which he only accepts the “collective and the associative” (Jameson, 1981). A full response to Jameson is not within the remit of this work but I humbly dissent from his position as I hold that there is no knowledge of the Other independently of the knowledge of the subject, the *language*d subject. The *language*d and *language*ing subject condemns us all to the vagaries of materiality and to the dialectics of master signifiers (Smith & Ferstman, 1996). Against Jameson’s general dyspepsia with the pre-historical, un-aculturated subject, I shall briefly retort that the pre-subjective, pre-Oedipal/pre-linguistic is not a temporal or romantic bourgeois dimension but the irruption of timelessness in subjectivity. The notion of there being a pre-subjective sphere inflected in subjectivity, beyond history and discourse, which presupposes the temporal and politically challenging aspect of the subject but concedes that historicity forecloses full subjecthood in conscious time. There is an urgency to overcome this finite disposition of subjectivity by inserting revolt as absolute negativity, revealed not through insight but in the form of conflict and contradiction.

In Hegel, the negativity of being generates the dialectic. In Sartre, negativity shows itself as freedom. Freud, in *Die Verneinung*, links the function of negativity to naming and thinking. The being of Heidegger’s Dasein is shown through anxiety that is in itself experience of such a negativity. Kristeva’s reading of Heidegger’s Dasein understands the self in relation to that which is foreign to it. The subject of unconsciousness, like Dasein, is Other also to itself.

For Heidegger, the examination of Being throws Dasein outside of itself, towards structures that are both escaping and defining it. Such a transcendental intuition of the Other, argues Kristeva, will manifest as revolt. This thorough understanding of the Other within the Self provides inflective ammunition to exist and persist outside the polis, real or imagined. In exilic dramaturgy the forcing of the self towards the Other within the self will propel the self towards an alterity which will question, interrogate, think and auto-poeticise. This deliberative and actionable conflict is the beginning of all politics. In exile, the exiled makes it his own.

RE-VOLT

Revolt is the irreconcilable conflict between the subject-in-process and the normative order. It is demonstrable in the ongoing process of questioning and thinking in art and philosophy and more pronounced in exile. The realm of interrogation in philosophy, psychoanalysis and literature is in fact a more potent political field than actual political negotiation in itself: Kristeva finds this in the continual and uninterrupted intimacy of the critical subject. She explains that “it is not exclusively in the world of action that this revolt is realised but in that of psychical life and its social manifestations, in writing and in thought (Kristeva, 2002).

What concerns LESBOS here is the idea of re-volt, both as resistance but also as re-volvere (*Latin: to roll back*) and more particularly in the question of whether exilic narrative/representation can propel this transformation for the exiled writer. This is the revolution that begins with the unconscious subject and transforms them into intentional discursive agents of change. I therefore submit that revolutionary change never begins within the lone subject, but in a present, already temporalised and therefore historicised, that finds its figuration in such unique psychic allegory. In Jameson's ontologisation of the present, modernism is never a sign of subjective metamorphosis but of the subject interpellated by the world, a world that can never be interpreted outside of the capitalist system and the technocratic orders that are being imposed on it. While I recognise Marxian philosophy's endeavour to eliminate the subject, the dialectics of thought itself prevents us from executing this elimination fully and although it may be to variable extents, the subject's physical and reflective continuum remains. Death is not foreclosed, it is not impossible to represent; it is attached to the intimate object and, thereby, incorporated in ourselves. Over and above our fear of ontological or social castration, a more potent fear

takes its place; that is the fear of losing the Other/Self dramaturged in the dead contaminating the living, the inside contaminating the outside, the Other contaminating the self through love. The wound of exile is what Adorno appoints as the physical, bodily suffering. This, for Adorno, is the moment of thinking, the moment of meaning and the source of dialectics. It is the moment when first order perception, pain and suffering become the very movement of thought, of revolutionary thought. Physical suffering's ability to mark thought forces on us what Adorno terms "a new categorical imperative: that nothing like it ever happen again" (Thyen, 2006). The experience of suffering summons us to respond with thinking that attends to the material basis of exile.

Like Arendt, Kristeva organises the political around a notion of temporality that emphasises the corporeal aspect of political action. In Arendt, the frailty of human affairs comes out of the principle of natality, every human action lacking boundaries that would make it finite in space and time. Arguing that such frailty marks not only actions but also the institutions that are the product of human relations, such as the law, Arendt asserts that modern political institutions are but illusory protections against a frailty of which the ancients had a more lucid understanding: 'while the various limitations and boundaries in every body politic may offer some protection against the inherent boundlessness of action, they are altogether helpless to offset its second outstanding character: its inherent unpredictability' (Arendt 1998). LESBOS concludes in a discursive isomorphism of deconstruction and its future, in the *meta*-reflexive function of a present situation and the awareness that, in trying to resolve it, human space and time are finite. Deconstruction cannot be escaped. It is not theory, it is resistance to theory. To borrow Paul de Man's expression "it is irresistible in that it conditions and constitutes the terms in which theory is approached" (de Man, 2006). The provocation that deconstruction poses is of thinking, at one and the same time, in terms of an economy of sameness and of difference.

ACT II has attempted to crack open text, time and materiality for us. It has striven to illustrate the paradox of aporia: the self-interrogating, self-regulating and self-revising impossibility of possibility (Derrida, 2000). Deconstruction in LESBOS is the remnants of experience which is the dust "running up against the limits of what can *never* be present, passing to the limits of the unrepresentable and unrepresentable" (Derrida & Caputo, 2020). Aporia is the incalculability of every juridico-political battle which aims to extricate the inside from the outside. Exile as both paralysis and impasse, is to be traversed and self-creation becomes possible not thanks to exile, but in spite of it.

In real terms, there has been, and still remains, a lacuna between the practices of law and the idea of justice which is particularly pertinent in exilic text and in exile's reality. It would be naïve to extend deconstructive arguments to criticise law and society as unjust as such a move would pre-empt the existence of values that transcend normative law and convention and presume these as superior to any existing juridical order. It is by no means incontestable that because all texts are deconstructible this would provide sufficient grounds for rejecting them. Nor would it be prudent view to contend that deconstruction reverses a hierarchy between conceptual opposites, so that the subordinate term is now more substantial than the superordinate term. This would lead to an opposite falsification and simplification of the analytical process (Balkin, 1994). What deconstruction does offer us in exilic and juridico-political analysis is the conceptual ability to see and act on simultaneous relationships of difference and equivalency. The basic deconstructive point is that deconstructive argument becomes the attentive and equidistant analysis of the grounds of equivalency and difference between conceptual oppositions in variable historical and practical contexts of judgment. Deconstruction does not assert moral superiority nor should it seek to efface conceptual oppositions. Rather, it attempts to decipher how these are related to the contexts that give them force and meaning.

The inherent flaw of such deconstructive analysis is that it is informed by the moral rectitude and commitments of the deconstructor. In exilic contexts, these are heavily influenced by the deconstructor's positioning as either being 'inside' or 'outside' of the host's juridical and administrative space which would, in turn, inform the deconstructor's cultural and political commitments. However, I argue that deconstruction of legal argument because of a perceived – or justified – inequivalence between law and justice: in fact, according to Derrida, there is a moral obligation to seek a justice *à venir* (to come) as yet unrealised in law and unfulfilled within a constitutionally organised political system.

LESBOS affords us some enlightenment on how the human value of justice remains “transcendent value lodged in the human heart, an incurable longing that demands articulation in human culture but is never satisfied by its products” (Balkin, 1994). Deconstruction is not justice and it can never be policy. It is, however, a method of scaffolding political discourse and interrogating law which is there to remind us that the pursuit of justice is never-ending: unpredictable, temperamental with no determinate *archē* (beginning) or *telos* (end).

Just like the sea.

The Citizen is amongst us.

A CITIZEN I told you, didn't I?
It was all because of me.
And now you're thinking:
There's too many of you.
How do we know where you begin and where you end?
You don't.
I'm the one.
I'm the few.
I'm the many.
I'm unpredictable.
Temperamental.
Stinking of sea salt.
I'm an islander.
From the foremost corner of Europe.
From Lesbos.

I circle back to the paleonym quasi-transcendental which Derrida develops in his analysis of Hegel during the Sorbonne 1971–72 lecture series and further in *Glas*, in 1974. The quasi-transcendental brings into focus an array of issues: the relation, and contamination, between the empirical and the transcendental, the question of the unconditional and the conditioned, the question of the “inside” and the “outside,” the question of the border, the question of logical priority, causality, or anteriority, the question of what is properly philosophical, and of propriety itself. This space which Bennington qualifies as “roughly”, the not-so-clear space between exclusion and inclusion. What is poignantly significant here is that rather than absolute exclusion, constitutive exclusion describes the phenomenon of *internal* exclusion, or those exclusions that occur *within* a philosophical system or a political body. Constitutive exclusions occur when a system of thought or a political body aborts itself by excluding some difference which is intolerable to it. By exposing the Wound, the timing of the wound and the invulnerability of the Antigonian drama, this excluded difference creates for itself an exilic space, I have dared to call it ‘the space of the excluded’, which then inserts itself within the system that has excluded it and continues to do its constituting work from within it. It is worth continuing to draw up the Contract of Vulnerability as its conditions are always imperfect and always evolving. The question as to what amounts to *political action* and who counts as politically present will persist. It is, however, worth implicating the self in the question, if only for the sake of imagining a future beyond constitutive exclusion, when the contract may, finally, be ready to be signed.

ACT III

“The Plague marks, without any discussion possible, the movement from an attitude of solitary revolt to the recognition of a community in which one must share in the struggles.”

Camus, *Théâtre*, letter to Roland Barthes.

THE SEAFARER’S ELEGY

SEAFARING I

Zero and One sit one in front of the other, facing straight ahead.

They’re rowing on dry land.

They are quite simple.

ZERO Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream

Merrily-merrily, merrily, merrily

Life is but a dream

Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream

Merrily-merrily, merrily, merrily

Life is but a dream

ONE stops rowing

ONE I’m tired.

ZERO You’re fine.

ONE I got arthritis.

ZERO You’re a warrior, man. You not got arthritis, just keep on rowing.

ONE reflects

ONE Together again at last!

ZERO I’m glad we ended up in the same dinghy.

ONE looks about him. He cannot quite make sense of the statement. He acquiesces nonetheless

ZERO Let us embrace.

ONE and ZERO attempt an awkward embrace; they end up bumping their heads and abandon the attempt.

ZERO Did you attend any parties?

ONE Parties?

ZERO Si señor: Parties. Birthday parties. Leaving dos. Wakes. Parties

ONE Nah.

ZERO You’re sure?

ONE What does it matter if I attended parties?

ZERO It matters. It’s about integrity. We wasn’t attending parties. We was fighting the Trojans. And the Germans. And the Black Death.

ONE Right

ZERO Right. So.

ONE So?

ZERO Did you?

ONE No.

ZERO You swear?

ONE On my ma’s life.

ZERO Is she alive?

ONE Nah

ZERO So do know this is double perjury?

ONE OK.

ZERO You’re sure?

ONE Positive.

ZERO No parties.
ONE No parties
Some contemplation
ZERO Ah, I thought you was gone forever.
ONE Where was I to go?
ZERO I don't know. Perhaps out to Anatolia?
ONE Bah, that's too far out. Besides, I'm in on the "secret".
ZERO You *are*?
ONE I know about (*he checks to make sure they're alone*) the "Deal".
ZERO Ooohhh.
ONE Oh yea, I do.
ZERO You know too much.
ONE Well, I know what I know. We're in this together.
ZERO I could always get rid of you.
ZERO nods at the "sea"
ONE Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. I'm not going there. That's *deep*.
ZERO I'm not saying I would. I'm saying it's a temptation.
ONE We won the war together, remember?
ZERO The "war"?
ONE Yes, the war.
ZERO I don't remember that bit.
ONE Troy? Remember that bit?
ZERO I do remember Troy, *durrh!*
ONE So we're brothers. We love each other.
ZERO How come I didn't see you last night?
ONE I was in the hull.
ZERO Where?
ONE Inside the internal component. In *there!*
ZERO There's no "hull", we are in a very simple structure.
ONE What's this then?
ONE runs his arm up an invisible line of rope
ZERO That's a...it's a sail.
ONE A *sail*? We got sails?
ZERO We got sails because we got to have rope.
ONE Have we got to have rope?
ZERO Always. Rope is essential. It manoeuvres the sails. It lets us determine the direction of travel.
ONE considers this.
ONE But we're rowing.
ZERO Because the wind is down.
ONE Aaahhh
ZERO nods. He rows with renewed energy.
ZERO All these years...
ONE You and me...
ZERO Yea, it's been a long time.
ONE Let us embrace again.
ZERO Let us *so* NOT embrace again!
ONE begins with difficulty. ZERO is now rowing keenly and energetically.
ONE Do you think there's a divine message in that?
ZERO What?
ONE The ropes.
ZERO Which ones?
ONE Them ones. Them that runs up to the mast.
ZERO studies the ropes from his seated position. They do not exist. There is no boat and no sails.
ZERO I'm not seeing a message.
ONE Sure?
ZERO Positive.
ONE No news from the aftermath in Troy or anything?

ZERO Written on the ropes? No.
ONE We're big now, apparently.
ZERO You saw this written on the ropes just now?
ONE Nothing to do with the ropes. We're just war heroes.
ZERO So we are.
ONE But we got to get to the "deal".
ZERO It's camouflaged.
ONE The deal is?
ZERO Aye, camouflaged. As a Big Ship.
ONE You're joking me?
ZERO It's true. It's bobbing on the water.
ONE The deal is?
ZERO The Ship that *contains* the Deal. There's unspoken treasures in her. There's esteemed guests and ministers and great professors and gods and kings.
ONE Are *they* the ones that's going to give us a deal?
ZERO For definite.
ONE Why are we rowing again?
ZERO You're just a fool aren't you? We are moving towards a deal. A big, big hull that's going to change our lives. Keep on rowing.
ONE Can't row no more.
ZERO No point losing heart now. There's big things coming our way. Empire Two and all that.
ONE What's Empire Two?
ZERO It's what comes after Empire One.
ONE What's happened to Empire One?
ZERO That's all finished now.
ONE How is it finished?
ZERO It is. Empire One was all about them barbarians knowing their place.
ONE They know their place now?
ZERO They *have* no place now. We took it, remember?
ONE I do remember, *durrh!*
ZERO Pass us that tomato.
ONE Eh?
ZERO There. The tomato.
ONE Can't see a tomato, man.
ZERO You stupid or what? Can you not see that pile of fruit and veg, over there?
ONE Where?
ZERO There.
ONE No.
ZERO Here
Picks up an imaginary tomato.
ONE Ah, that...
ONE looks to the audience for support. He winks
ZERO That's delish.
ONE I thought there was shortages of these.
ZERO There was. Not anymore. There's plenty now. Row, row. Keep on rowing
ONE I thought you was busy eating.
ZERO I am. *You're* rowing.
ONE Are you telling me we're to keep on rowing until we see this magic "ship" then?
ZERO Yes.
ONE puts down the imaginary oars.
ONE Well I'm going on strike.
ZERO You can't go on strike. It's just you and me here.
ONE I can. I go on strike, you keep on rowing.
ZERO This thing will capsize with just me rowing.
ONE Look, I can't lift my arm no more. I'm wounded.
ZERO You just remembered that?
ONE It's just started oozing out blood.
ZERO Oh, this is most unsightly.

ONE It is. Look away now. And let me get a nap.
He lies down to sleep

ZERO Hey! Get up! What's this wound then?

ONE I think there's a bit of metal stuck to my side.

ZERO Where?

ONE Just here. On my ribcage. Bits of Trojan spear.

ZERO Let's see...ohhh, that's not great, is it?

ONE Pull it out.

ZERO I can't.

ONE Well then, let it be.

ZERO Just sit up and row.

ONE Why don't you help me?

ZERO tries to dislodge the bit of metal with all his might.

ZERO Nothing to be done.

ONE Try again.

ZERO with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off a bit of flesh. He peers inside the wound, finds nothing feels about inside it, turns, shakes ONE, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing.

ONE Well?

ZERO Nothing.

ONE Show me.

ZERO It's just a bit of your flesh.

ONE Put it back in.

ZERO I can't put a bit of meat back into your body man, I just pulled it out.

ONE I can't row your boat then without that bit of meat that covers my spleen.

ZERO There's man all over for you, blaming on his meat the faults of his laziness.

ONE Why are we rowing anyway?

ZERO To get to the Ship. To get inside her. Get our hands on them papers and sign the deal. The sunny uplands. The beautiful tomorrows!

ONE Why won't the Ship come to us?

ZERO We got to be on the right coordinates.

ONE Who did you say was on it?

ZERO Important folk. And most important of all, there's the Emperor. Speed up

ONE Can't speed up with the way this metal's stuck to my spleen.

Some serious contemplation.

ZERO Suppose we used "belief".

ONE What?

ZERO Mental powers. Belief is amazing.

ONE OK, I'm believing.

A wait

ZERO Nothing's happening.

ONE Welcome to reality.

ZERO Believe harder.

A longer wait.

ONE Nothing.

ZERO Suppose we repented.

ONE Repented what?

ZERO Don't go into detail.

ONE I need to know what I'm repenting.

ZERO You've killed men.

ONE So?

ZERO You need to repent.

ONE They were Trojans. Forriners.

ZERO I know. But still. What about taking their land and that?

ONE I took nothing.

ZERO We took it all.

ONE Who's "we"?

ZERO Us, that won the war.

ONE I don't have no land pinned on me, man. We was told to fight, I fought.
ZERO But we're winners.
ONE So we are.
ZERO We're not losers.
ONE Absolutely not.
ZERO Let's do an act of goodness, anyways.
ONE Like what?
Reflection.
ZERO Read the Bible?
ONE That's after now.
ZERO Is it?
ONE Yes, it is. Now is the Greeks.
ZERO We're Greeks.
Some thought.
ONE So we are.
ZERO After the Greeks comes Moses. Then the Romans. And then the Jewish boy, the Christ.
ONE What about Homer?
ZERO Homer's busy writing about us.
ONE You never!
ZERO He is. We just breached the walls of Troy, remember?
ONE Oh yeaaa... From inside the big Trojan horse and all that.
ZERO You're cleverer than I thought.
ONE So I am.
ZERO What about the Acropolis? Is that built yet?
ONE Soon. We're just sailing back from Troy the now, so it won't be long.
ZERO And what about Big Ben? Is that built?
ONE That's stuck. On time Zero.
ZERO And you're actually telling me that the Christ will be a Jew?
ONE You bet he will be.
ZERO Not a Greek?
ONE Nah.
ZERO Wow.
ONE I know.
ZERO Jewish boy with a big winky.
ONE How do you know about his winky?
ZERO I imagine it.
ONE Don't be imagining stuff like that. We're in the middle of the ocean.
ZERO So what if we are?
ONE He could sink us.
ZERO He won't do that.
ONE He'll play it all clever. He'll be walking on water and all that. Approach us. Do all the funny things with His arms flailing and that and then, He'll sink us.
ZERO The Christ?
ONE Yea.
ZERO You reckon we're going to miss all that action?
ONE I think we will.
ZERO You should have been a poet.
ONE I was. Before we set sail for Troy.
ZERO And look at you now.
ONE Rowing.
ZERO A sailor.
ONE I've sailed before.
ZERO To where? The local "Delphic oracle"?
ONE To the Dead Sea.
ZERO No that was just Corfu
ONE But it was beautiful.
ZERO How's your spleen?
ONE Swelling.

ZERO It's alright.
ONE it hurts.
ZERO I'll tell you a story to pass the time.
ONE I want one about Zeus.
ZERO Zeus once bonked a Cretan princess.
ONE I want a sexy one.
ZERO This one *is* sexy. Listen up: There was once a Phoenician princess. Her name was Europa. Men from Crete snatched her from Phoenicia and brought her to Greece.
ONE Why?
ZERO To avenge the snatching of another princess.
ONE It's getting complicated.
ZERO World politics *is* complicated. You're just not very bright.
ONE It's not about the bonking.
ZERO What is it about then?
ONE It's about...it's about...I don't know...fossil fuels and energy...
ZERO So it is about the bonking.
ONE Is it?
ZERO It's about who's going to bonk whom the hardest and who's getting bonked to make sure another gets their free lunch.
ONE Like Prometheus?
ZERO Prometheus got bonked big time. He got his liver nibbled on.
ONE Do you mean they won't give him a blue passport?
ZERO They won't. He's won't make the threshold.
ONE Why not?
ZERO Prometheus gave fire to mankind.
ONE That's a good thing.
ZERO Shhhh.
ONE Why?
ZERO He is a poor man. He gave stuff away and then got done for it.
ONE Why?
ZERO Because he was a *traitor*.
ONE He wasn't.
ZERO He was.
ONE He saved mankind. He gave us fire.
ZERO He got crucified for it.
ONE Why?
ZERO Because he saved mankind, stupid!
ONE But isn't that a good thing?
ZERO It is. But not for the gods.
ONE And what about us? Could we, the people not defend him?
ZERO How do you defend a man the gods don't like?
ONE We protest. Milkshake a few of them.
ZERO Well, we can't. Because the gods said he's a bad man.
ONE Who believes them?
ZERO Everybody.
ONE But that's crap.
ZERO It's the only version.
ONE Can we not make up other versions?
ZERO People are ignorant. Stop questioning it.
ZERO *rises, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes into distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into distance.*
ZERO Let's go.
ONE We can't.
ZERO Why not?
ONE You said we was to wait for the "Ship".
ZERO You're sure it was here?
ONE What?
ZERO That we were to wait.

ONE Can you see this?
ONE *points to the floor*
ZERO What is it?
ONE I don't know. A shark
ZERO Where are the fins?
ONE It must be dead.
ZERO This looks to me more like Cyrene.
ONE Cyrene is in Africa.
ZERO Alright professor!
ONE What's that meant to mean? That we've come to the wrong place?
ZERO That big Ship with the big glitzy mermaid on the bow and the princes and ministers aboard, she should be here. Any minute.
ONE The oracle didn't say it'd come for sure.
ZERO And if it doesn't come?
ONE We'll be here tomorrow.
ZERO And then the day after tomorrow.
ONE Possibly.
ZERO Until she comes.
ONE It's all about belief.
ZERO So it is.
ONE It's the oracle too.
ZERO It is, absolutely.
ONE Who was at Delphi when you was there?
ZERO A bird; in a topless outfit. Sniffing magic mushrooms.
ONE Just mushrooms?
ZERO Maybe the odd bit of poppy seed as well.
ONE Don't like poppy seed. Gives me migraines.
ZERO There was the Seer present too.
ONE You saw the Seer?
ZERO I did too.
ONE Was he tall?
ZERO Nah. Just an ordinary geezer. He said to sail to this bit. Surrounded by these particular mountains. And to be patient until we saw the big hull approach. And inside her, deep, deep inside her bowels was a deal to be found. We pull it out, we sign it.
A long, long wait
ONE But, we sailed here yesterday.
ZERO What happened yesterday?
ONE We was here.
ZERO So that means we've only been here for a small increment of time.
ONE Zero.
ZERO What?
ONE I meant *zero* time.
ZERO I thought you mean me.
ONE I meant the calculus: "Zero"
ZERO Do you mean to say I'm small and insignificant?
ONE All I meant to say was that in calculus, it is often useful to think of zero as an infinitesimally small number.
ZERO So we've been here for next to no time?
ONE We're sailing. *All* the time. How can we stay in one spot for more than infinitesimally little time?
ZERO Next thing you're going to tell me is that we're moving backwards.
ONE Could be.
ZERO You're merciless.
ONE I have problems with zero. The abstract things it is about; absence of things, the nothingness of it.
ZERO Listen to me: In maths, zero is nothing.
ONE Integral calculus involves taking the sum of infinitesimally wide strips as their width approaches zero.

ZERO What is that supposed to mean?
ONE The more the merrier.
ZERO Does that mean majority rule?
ONE That means we're in the middle of the ocean if enough of us says we're in the middle of the ocean.
ZERO But it's only the two of us.
ONE There's "them", too
ZERO But they're yet to arrive.
ONE They should be here any minute
ZERO What did you we do yesterday?
ONE We sailed.
ZERO You're sure it was this dusk?
ONE What?
ZERO That we were to wait for them.
ONE They said fifteenth day after sunset and on the eleventh hour of Halloween.
ZERO What's Halloween?
ONE Pagan stuff.
ZERO You're getting all mixed up again. This stuff is not to be for thousands of years yet
ONE It's my spleen. It's making me all dizzy.
ZERO What'll we do?
ONE We must keep going. If they came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure they won't come again today.
ONE Let's stop talking for a minute,
ZERO All right. ONE! ONE! ONE!
ONE wakes with a start.
ONE (*restored to the horror of his situation*). I was asleep! (*Despairingly*) Why will you never let me sleep?
ZERO I felt lonely.
ONE I had a dream.
ZERO Spare me.
ONE I dreamt that-
ZERO Spare me please!
ONE I dreamt that—
ZERO DON'T TELL ME!
ONE I dreamt that we sink before we see the Promised-
ZERO Enough!
ONE Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?
ZERO You know I can't bear that.
A long silence.
ONE Give me your hand.
ONE lays his hand on ZERO's shoulder.
ONE Embrace me.
ZERO We've been through this, no more embraces, we're not women.
ONE Don't be stubborn. You got to show solidarity some way!
They embrace reluctantly.
ZERO recoils
ZERO You stink of garlic!
A thumping sound
ZERO Wind's going up.
ONE Row faster.
ZERO Batten down the hatches.
ONE It's hardly a trireme.
ZERO What is it then, that we're sailing?
ONE It's just a blooming dinghy with no extras.
ZERO Have we sails?
ONE We've been through this: 'Course we got sails.
ZERO Is that a sail?
ONE That's your shoelace.

ZERO You sure we got sails?

ONE How are we moving if we've not got sails?

They pull. The imaginary rope snaps and ends up in their hands

ZERO Oh, here it is.

ONE Thick rope.

ZERO Super-thick.

ONE I'm bored

A moment.

ZERO Same.

A moment

An epiphany!

ONE Let's dive in the sea!

ZERO What?

ONE Dive in the sea.

ZERO I can't swim

ONE That's the point

ZERO You can't swim. You asphyxiate.

ONE What on earth for?

ONE To get an erection.

ZERO I don't need an erection, thanks.

ONE It's not a bad thing to get.

ZERO A bit unnecessary under the present circumstances wouldn't you agree?

ONE Still, quite a positive thing.

ZERO Not freezing in them waters.

ONE I think it is.

ZERO But then we'll be dead.

ONE That's alright.

ZERO It isn't.

ONE We've survived the Blitz, we can survive this.

ZERO Go ahead.

ONE You first.

ZERO You first.

ONE Why me?

ZERO Why me?

ONE You were first out of the Horse.

ZERO What horse?

ONE The Trojan horse, remember?

ZERO I don't understand.

ONE Use your mighty Greek brain, will you?

Zero uses his brain.

ZERO I remain in the dark.

ONE You're faster, I'm slower. You're keen to get an erection, I'm keener. You go first, I follow suit. Got it?

ZERO So what do we do?

ONE Let's get an extension.

ZERO A penis extension?

ONE A *time* extension.

ZERO But will the Council grant it?

ONE We're Greeks. We're special. Anything will be granted us.

ZERO Even a penis extension?

ONE I do not need a penis extension. Neither do you. We have all the penis length that we need. We just need time. More time.

ZERO So what do we do?

ONE Let's do nothing. It's safer.

ONE Let's wait and see.

ZERO See what they say.

ONE When they get here.

Zero considers this.

ZERO Who?
ONE "Them"
ZERO Ah!
ONE Our "guests". The passengers that's on the big Hull.
ZERO Good idea.
ONE Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand.
ZERO On the other hand it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes.
ONE Not while "they" are on their way to us.
ZERO What exactly did we ask them for?
ONE They'll offer something.
ZERO And what do we do?
ONE We'll think on it.
ZERO They're all important?
ONE Mightily.
ZERO We'll make merry with such important guests?
ONE Aye.
ZERO With the bishops.
ONE And the boiler-makers.
ZERO And the myth-makers.
ONE The violinists.
ZERO The harpsichordists.
ONE With the presidents.
ZERO The constables.
ONE The penholders.
ZERO The wheeler-dealers
ONE The no-dealers.
ZERO The parliamentarians
ONE The Presbyterians
ZERO And the proletarians.
ONE There'll be a lot of bodies to consult.
ZERO Before taking a decision.
ONE It's a good thing.
ZERO A normal thing.
ONE I think it is.
ZERO I think it too.
ONE And we?
ZERO I beg your pardon?
ONE I said: And "we"?
ZERO I don't understand
ONE Where do we come in?
ZERO "Come in"?
ONE No rush. Just think on it.
ZERO *does.*
ZERO We're expecting A LOT of people. You're asking me where we come in?
ONE Kind of.
ZERO There'll be mathematicians here on board this thing: Scientists. The Pythagoreans. The Sophists. Landed gentry. Grouse shooters. Jeff Bezos.
ONE Oh.
ZERO Precisely.
ONE You'd make me laugh if it wasn't prohibited.
ZERO Why would you laugh?
ONE Well...
ZERO I'm kind of getting cold feet about this.
ONE me too.
Some contemplation
ZERO Let's move away from this.
ONE Can't
ZERO Why not?

ONE We're tied.
ZERO Tied to what?
ONE To the mast.
ZERO Can't hear you. The wind!
ONE A-R-E W-E T-I-E-D?
ZERO Tied?
ONE Ti-ed? To this mast, up there?
ZERO By whom?
ONE By "them". "Them"...?
ZERO What an absurd idea! You're being totally absurd. Of course we're not tied.
ONE Oh
ONE is disappointed.
ZERO What's the matter with you?
ONE I thought we was tied.
ZERO Are you not relieved?
ONE I quite liked the idea.
ZERO Of being bloody chained? You liked it?
ONE I'd got used to it.
ZERO To the chains?
ONE You get used to anything as you go along.
ZERO Question of temperament.
ONE Of disposition.
ZERO Nothing you can do about it.
ONE No use struggling.
ZERO One is what one is.
ONE No use wriggling.
ZERO Essences don't change.
ONE Existence before essence.
ZERO You mean it may be possible that...
They both think together
ONE and ZERO We may have been fooled...
They move towards us
ZERO and ONE That it was all a big fraud...that even Zeus himself has a small wink...
They are having an epiphany but...
Enter the Seer.
ZERO and ONE are in utter amazement.
ZERO Oooohhh
ONE Oooohhh
THE SEER Hi
ONE I told you we'd get done for this.
ZERO Shut up, his eyes are closed
ONE Hey, Mister!
THE ZERO Who?
ONE Er...
ZERO Hello...
THE SEER I am the Seer.
ONE Hello good sir.
ZERO Where are you from?
THE SEER I am not from these parts.
ONE Alrighty...
ZERO Are you not a parliamentarian?
THE SEER No
ONE A proletarian?
THE SEER No.
ONE A revolutionary?
THE SEER No.
ONE A functionary?
THE SEER I'm not a functionary.

ONE A reactionary?
THE SEER You could say that.
ZERO We're not from these parts, either, Sir.
THE SEER You are human beings, none the less. (*His eyes are closed*) As far as one can See. Of the same species as myself. Made in God's image!
ZERO Well you see—
THE SEER Who are “they”? You took me for one of “them”.
ZERO Oh no, Sir, not for an instant, Sir.
THE SEER Who are “they”?
ZERO They're kind of...acquaintances, you see...
ONE Nothing of the kind, we hardly know them.
ZERO True . . . we don't know them very well . . . but all the same . . .
ONE Personally, I wouldn't even know them if I saw them.
THE SEER You took me for them.
ZERO (*recoiling*). That's to say . . . you understand . . . the dusk . . . the strain . . . waiting . . . I confess . . . I imagined . . . for a second . . .
THE SEER Waiting? So, you were waiting for them?
ZERO Well you see—
THE SEER Here? On my sea?
ONE We didn't mean any harm.
ZERO We meant well.
ONE The sea is free to all.
ZERO That's how we approached it.
THE SEER You approached it wrong. This bit is mine.
ONE Apologies, good sir.
THE SEER It's a disgrace. But there you are. Nothing we can do about it.
The SEER leans on his walking stick.
ZERO What ails him?
ONE He's a seer. You get what you pay for.
ZERO Why doesn't he open his eyes?
ONE How do I know? (*They close in on him.*) Careful
ZERO Say something to him.
ONE Zero, Look!
ZERO What?
ONE His neck!
ZERO (*looking at the neck*). I see nothing.
ONE Here.
ZERO Oh my stars!
ONE An open spleen.
ONE It's the dagger.
ZERO It's the spear.
ONE It's heat.
ZERO It's the chafing.
They resume their inspection, dwell on the face.
ONE He's not bad looking.
ZERO Sense of style.
ONE A gay?
ZERO Would you say so?
ONE Look at the slobber dribbling out his mouth.
ZERO He's panting.
ONE Look at that vein. There's no blood in it.
ZERO Perhaps he's Romanian.
ONE And his eyes!
ZERO What about them?
ONE Just closed.
ZERO Looks like his last gasp to me.
The SEER stands tall and sprightly again.
THE SEER Hi.

They both jump in terror

ONE Mister...

ZERO Sir...Seer?

THE SEER We're drifting.

ONE We was sailing up till a moment ago when you popped out the woodwork.

THE SEER Ropes!

ONE I told you we was tied.

ZERO He means "pull the ropes"

THE SEER He's right. Pull hard

ONE We're tied.

ZERO We aren't.

THE SEER Harder.

ONE But-

THE SEER Sit up.

ONE sits up reluctantly.

THE SEER Now go.

ONE Go where?

THE SEER To there and back

ONE I can't.

THE SEER You can.

ONE I'd rather not.

THE SEER You can row.

ONE That's different.

THE SEER How so?

ONE It's what I'm used to.

THE SEER Bu you're a warrior. You have fought in Troy.

ONE I have rights.

ZERO We have rights.

THE SEER You can fight again.

ONE He's a misanthropist.

ZERO He is?

ONE He said: Fight. I don't want to fight. I just want to complain.

ZERO So do I.

THE SEER But you're rowing already.

ONE We're rowing because we was told to row.

ZERO We do as we're told.

THE SEER You're Greeks.

ONE We're waiting on the Big Ship

ONE Aye, big ship

ZERO Bringing us the Deal. The best deal you could ever get your hands on.

THE SEER And you know what the ship's made out of?

ONE You know?

ZERO He knows?

THE SEER Sugar.

ONE Sugar?

ZERO You heard him.

ONE and ZERO OMFG

THE SEER And she'll will be full of passengers.

ONE There'll be passengers on her?

THE SEER Thousands. You'll have to entertain them. On your dinghy.

ZERO And the sugar hull can hold all that in?

THE SEER You bet.

ONE You bet.

THE SEER Listen boys, you haven't got long. You need to decide whether you'll be taking those guests, they're mighty important and it will change your life. But if you don't want them, it's OK, the next dinghy will have them-

ZERO Why doesn't he open his eyes?

ONE I think he's listening.

ZERO But what about the eyes?
ONE You can ask him now. He's on the alert.
ZERO Ask him what?
ONE Why he doesn't open his eyes
ZERO Let's not worry about it.
ONE What's he doing?
ZERO He's looking out to sea.
ONE With his eyes closed?
ZERO He's a Seer, he can see, you know!
ONE What's he seeing?
ZERO Can you see anything?
ONE I can see the Irish Sea.
THE SEER The Ship. Here she comes! Look at her: All big, white and sugary. Her belly full of guests, dressed in gold and fur.
The SEER moves ceremoniously towards the large vessel. He opens his arms
ONE Where is she?
ZERO I think...I'm seeing something...
ONE I'm not.
THE SEER HERE THEY ARE! The esteemed passengers.
Pointing
THE SEER Here are the bankers.
Pointing.
THE SEER And the great professors of mathematics.
ZERO and ONE are totally astounded.
THE SEER And here is the Captain stepping onto this humble dinghy-
ZERO With the bishops.
ONE And the boiler-makers.
ZERO And the myth-makers.
THE SEER The violinists.
ZERO The harpsichordists.
ONE With the presidents.
THE SEER The residents.
ONE The penholders.
ZERO The wheeler-dealers
THE SEER The no-dealers.
ZERO The parliamentarians
ONE The Presbyterians
ZERO And the proletarians.
ONE What's this?
ZERO That's the Tory Party.
ONE What's a Tory Party?
ZERO That's the bit after the now bit.
ONE Oh, let's not worry about that.
ZERO Don't go there.
ONE I don't care, I'm not frightened.
ZERO Because the Tory Party want to take the wheel off us.
ONE To do what with?
ZERO To take themselves round the world.
ONE Why does anyone want to take themselves round the world?
ZERO We did. We went to Troy.
ONE Troy is just across the water.
ZERO What water?
THE SEER This water here,
He pretends to dip his finger in the water
ZERO Ah, that's not real water, you see. That's *special* water!
ZERO Why won't you open your eyes?
ONE He's right, wee man. Open your eyes!
THE SEER Shhh, I hear something...

ZERO Ship's movement?
ONE Sugar melts?
ZERO Prick up your ears!
ONE I hear nothing.
THE SEER I hear something
ZERO The Tories!
ONE No, it's my heartbeat
THE SEER Here, here, Madam President
ZERO Can you see anything?
ONE Perhaps...a bit of her thigh...
ZERO Pinch it.
ONE You can't pinch it if she don't want you to.
ZERO You won't know until you've tried
ONE pinches the air
ZERO See? She like it. She's not saying no!
THE SEER Monsieur Le Commissaire
ZERO Sshhh, he talking to the Commissaire!
ONE Oh, right...
THE SEER The moment will come soon when the big chests are opened.
ZERO The sooner,
ONE I'm scared.
ZERO Of what?
ONE They're never going to leave us alone
ZERO Are you raving mad? We waited for this for weeks, years. The big ship! The sugary treats: the huge big lips, the hyperbolic vaginas, the welcoming breasts, the nurturing arms. These passengers upon her are going to save us!
ONE I can't see them very well.
ZERO That's because your eyes are faulty.
ONE Can you touch any of them?
ZERO Don't be so impatient. Good things take time.
ONE How much time?
ZERO It doesn't matter.
ONE Like, approximately?
ZERO I don't know: thirty, forty winters?
ONE Thirty winters? I'll be dead in three or four, man. Where's all this goodness that's supposed to be coming to us?
ZERO Look! He can see them. He's greeting them.
THE SEER Monsieur the Lord of the Privy Council. Where is Monsieur?
ZERO What's the privy?
ONE I think it's a place of urination.
THE SEER The simple people can't see much but they can learn from their blindness. Let us relieve their suffering, my lords and ladies
ZERO Of the privy.
ONE Shut up, you can't be in this conversation.
THE SEER You'll see for yourselves, this deal is perfect.
ZERO He's going to give us a deal.
ONE I'm not seeing anything.
ONE We can't.
ZERO Let me negotiate with these esteemed guests.
ONE He won't even turn to face you.
ZERO I need to take the microphone a minute s'il vous plaît
ONE What was that?
ZERO Bit of French. Chuck in there to impress them
ONE France isn't born yet, you idiot. They're just about to start domesticating sheep south of Dover, we're Trojan War times, remember
THE SEER He remembers, he remembers.
ZERO How do you know that I remember?
THE SEER I know you doubt me.

ONE I told you not to pull this shit on this old fella, he's a Seer.
THE SEER The guests will save the world for you.
ZERO Can we have some stew please?
ONE Or just chips. We'll eat chips.
THE SEER These esteemed guests do not eat chips.
ZERO Let's have the stew then. If it's easier.
THE SEER You must show yourselves to be united.
ZERO I don't want to be united with him. He's a leaver.
ONE I'm not a leaver, I just can't row. My spleen's oozing out.
ZERO Pull that cloth over your rib, idiot.
THE SEER Unite.
ONE We can't.
ZERO He's kinda right.
ONE I'm hurting and he's just into this whole trade deal business.
ZERO But we both want the stew.
ONE We do. We're united on that front.
THE SEER I need to see you dance together right now.
They all hold hands and begin a dance.
THE SEER Ayy, ayy, ayy, ayy
ONE Ooh, ooh, ooh, ohh
ZERO Ayy, ayy, ayy, ayy (ooh)
 Ooh, ooh, ooh, ohh (ooh)
 Ayy, ayy
 Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh
 Needless to say, I keep her in check
 She was all bad-bad, nevertheless
THE SEER Yea
ZERO Callin' it quits now, baby, I'm a wreck.
ONE Wreck-
ZERO Crash at my place, baby, you're a wreck
ONE Wreck
ZERO Needless to say, I'm keeping her in check
 She was all bad-bad, nevertheless
 Callin' it quits now, baby, I'm a wreck
 Crash at my place, baby, you're a wreck
 Thinkin' in a bad way, losin' your grip
ONE Grip-
ZERO Screamin' at my face, baby, don't trip
THE SEER Trip-
ZERO Someone took a big L, don't know how that felt
 Lookin' at you sideways, party on tilt
 Ooh-ooh, some things you just can't refuse
THE SEER Refuse-
ZERO She wanna ride me like a cruise.
ONE Cruise-
ZERO And I'm not tryna lose
 Then you're left in the dust
 Unless I stuck by ya
 You're a sunflower
 I think...
ONE Why are we doing this?
THE SEER To entertain the guests.
ONE Why?
THE SEER So they will be good with you.
ONE We need food
ZERO We need cake
ONE Shut up, sugar's not invented yet.
ZERO We'll sugar it with figs, you moron.

ONE OK: we need cake.
ZERO We need land
ONE We need broadband.
ZERO We need corn
ONE We need wheat
ZERO We need flour
ONE We need Netflix,
ZERO We need homes for unwanted children.
ONE That was a long phrase.
THE SEER It's not going to be as you imagine it
ZERO But we was told this was going to be easiest deal in history. We sailed across the ocean for it.
THE SEER I'm afraid you have upset the guests. Madame la Présidente! Monsieur! My Lord
The SEER runs after the guests.
ZERO We fucked up?
ONE Seems that way.
ZERO Are they leaving?
THE SEER Madam President!
ZERO You said this was our chance.
THE SEER Monsieur Le Commissaire!
ZERO Stop him!
ONE I can't see them no more.
ZERO Could you see them before?
ONE I was believing I could.
ZERO That's fine. Believing is seeing. So you could see them. So they were here
ONE Hey! Esteemed professors and doctors!
ZERO Shit! This one's legged it.
ONE I told you not to frighten them with your big beard.
ZERO I didn't.
ONE We fucked up.
ZERO They're gone.
ONE It's HIS fault.
THE SEER I wouldn't worry too much.
ONE You wouldn't? They're *gone*.
THE SEER They don't count anyway. It's the Emperor that counts.
ONE The who?
THE SEER The Emperor. It's the big tall guy with the white beard.
ONE I'm tired.
ZERO So am I. Can't breathe.
ZERO lies down
THE SEER (*Waving*). Adieu! Adieu!
ZERO falls asleep. He is snoring.
The SEER sits next to ONE.
THE SEER Is he always like this?
ONE Always.
THE SEER A bit of a stirrer.
ONE A bit of a stirrer, yea.
THE SEER Keeps proposing ideas.
ONE Yea.
THE SEER To the guests.
ONE I know.
THE SEER Talking back.
ONE I know
THE SEER To honoured members of the Council.
ONE I know.
THE SEER A home for hungry children!
ONE That's not a bad thing. I mean we're Greeks. A big empire, you know...Got a lot of drachmas and that...

THE SEER THAT- is practically rewarding women for lechery.

ONE How?

THE SEER You shouldn't pop them out if you can't feed them.

ONE Unless you've been raped.

THE SEER We have the rape clause for that. You CANNOT incentivise bad behaviour. You cannot incentivise big thoughts in small people.

ONE Nah, you can't really...

THE SEER You understand me, One?

ONE I do, I do.

THE SEER This is Zero, right there. He's asleep. He needs to stay that way. He needs to know his place. For his own good.

ONE His own good.

THE SEER I'm worried.

ONE You think there'll be a storm?

THE SEER I'm worried about the nature of his ideas.

Silence

THE SEER Their origin

ONE The Home for Children was my idea. I was hungry when I was small.

THE SEER That's because you were greedy, not because there was no sufficient food.

ONE There wasn't.

THE SEER Question of money management then. Mother probably an improvident spender.

ONE Nah. Just a nurse.

THE SEER A nurse?

ONE At the Delphic Oracle. She'd sew them up after they've been getting high on magic mushrooms and banging their heads on marble walls for three days trying to get Pythia to reveal their glorious futures to them.

THE SEER I see.

Silence

THE SEER I don't think it was you.

Silence

THE SEER It was "them"

ONE "Them"?

THE SEER The foreigners. You see what I mean?

ONE Yea.

THE SEER There are rumours about Zero, if you want me to be very precise.

ONE About Zero?

THE SEER Yes.

ONE Really?

THE SEER Really.

ONE But Zero counts for zero, there can't be no rumours about zero.

THE SEER There are. He is doing "stuff" behind your back. Trying to get you off this boat. So he can get to destination alone.

ONE Oh...and what about me...?

THE SEER Permit me to be very direct, Mr. One. You have ambitions for your own sons.

ONE How do you know I have sons?

THE SEER I'm a Seer-duh!

ONE Oh, yea.

THE SEER Having Zero act like some saviour is not in your best interest. He needs to be brought down a peg or two.

ONE But he's my friend. My fellow-warrior.

Long silence

ONE What do we do now?

THE SEER I don't know.

ONE You don't know? You're the seer, remember –durrrh!

THE SEER You could- I don't know- throw him in the sea?

ZERO snores very loudly, twists and turns and opens one eye.

ZERO What time is it?

ONE We're before clock time, Zero. How many times do I have to-

THE SEER It's quite late.
ZERO Where's all the guests?
ONE They're here.
THE SEER They're gone.
ONE You said they wasn't.
THE SEER They have withdrawn. They may be back or not.
ZERO So what's with all our demands
THE SEER It's not my fault.
ZERO And whose is it? Mine?
THE SEER I was afraid.
ZERO Of what?
ONE Were you afraid of the rope?
THE SEER Yes, I was.
ONE But you're a Seer.
THE SEER You're two big men. I'm old and frail.
ZERO and ONE move menacingly towards the SEER
ONE So you are
ZERO Where are they?
ONE The guests?
ZERO Of the Big Ship?
THE SEER They were displeased. With your attitude.
ZERO You work for these people, old man?
THE SEER I mind their investments; their goats; their bovines.
ONE Are they good to you?
THE SEER They're good.
ONE They don't beat you?
THE SEER They wouldn't do that.
ONE He's a Seer
THE SEER I'm a Seer
ONE When are they coming back?
ZERO The guests? The Ministers? The eminent professors and the lawyers? When are they coming back?
ONE You said they were still about.
THE SEER They are. I can see them. Congregating. Right there in the distance.
ONE and ZERO squint to try and see them.
ZERO Are you seeing anything?
ONE I kind of am...Over there...
ZERO Where?
ONE There.
ZERO How do we know you're not lying to us?
THE SEER You do.
ZERO How?
THE SEER What time of day is it?
ONE The time when the sun's in the middle of the sky.
THE SEER I can make it night.
ONE What?
ZERO Nonsense.
ONE Do it.
THE SEER You don't mean that, do you?
ZERO We do.
ONE We do.
ZERO Make it night.
ONE Go on.
THE SEER It will not be undone once it's done.
ONE Let it be done.
He steps back, hesitates, turns and exits running. The light suddenly fails. In a moment it is night. The moon rises at back, mounts in the sky, stands still, shedding a pale light on the scene. It's officially nighttime.

ZERO Jesus suffering fuck!
ONE I know.
ZERO And he ain't even born yet.
ONE Who?
ZERO The Christ.
ONE Still,
ZERO I know.
They gaze upwards
ONE The moon.
ZERO I know.
ONE Gazing on the likes of us.
ZERO Listen, I'm off.
ONE Off to where in the middle of the night?
ZERO Off on a walk.
ONE We're in the middle of the Aegean Sea.
ZERO Oh well.
ONE What do you mean "oh, well", you can't walk on water!
ZERO I can try.
ONE You won't get far.
ZERO If Jesus can do it...
ONE That's nonsense, he won't be about for thousands of years yet.
ZERO Still,
ONE You can't compare yourself to Christ, he is an important fellow.
ZERO All our lives we'll be comparing ourselves to Him.
ONE But where He'll live is warm.
ZERO Yea, and they crucify quick.
ONE Precisely. So don't get into it. Move off the edge there!
ZERO I can't bear it no more.
ONE Don't go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better.
ZERO How do you make that out?
ONE Did you not hear what the Seer said?
ZERO I did.
ONE Unless...
ZERO Unless what?
ONE Unless we both tried it?
ZERO Tried what?
ONE Walking on water.
ZERO OK
ONE You go that way.
ZERO And you go that way.
Silence
ONE Well, shall we go?
ZERO Yes, let's go.
ONE Yes, let's go.
ZERO We're making progress.
ONE Are we?
ZERO Of course we are. Can you not see how much distance we've covered?
ONE looks behind him. He tries to gauge.
ONE Not much.
ZERO That's pessimism.
ONE So it is.
ZERO Let's keep on moving towards that bright future
They do not move.
ONE We'll be winners.
ZERO Victors.
ONE Sexy
ZERO Beautiful
ONE We'll get the best deals in history.

ZERO We will
ONE You got it.
ZERO Let's move.
ONE Towards the new dawn.
ZERO Onwards and upwards.
ONE With resolve.
ZERO And determination.
ONE Let's walk on water.
ZERO Let's.
They do not move
Curtain

SEAFARING II

ZERO *You can search the world for pretty girls*

Til your eyes grow weak and dim,

But don't go fishing for a mermaid, son

If you don't know how to swim"

'Cause her hair was green as seaweed

Her skin was blue and pale

I loved that girl with all my heart

I only liked the upper part

I did not like the tail

So I signed aboard of a whaling ship

And my first very day at sea

There I spied in the waves,

Reaching out for me

"Come live with me in the sea said she,

Down on the ocean floor

And I'll show you many's a wonderous thing

That you've never seen before

So over I jumped and she pulled me down,

Down to her seaweed bed

A pillow made of tortoise-shell

She placed beneath my head

She fed me shrimp and caviar

Upon a silver dish

From her head to her waist was just to my taste

But the rest of her was a fish

'Cause ...

Then one day, she swam away

So I sang to the clams and the whales

"Oh, how I miss her seagreen hair

And the silvery shine of her scales

Then her sister, she swam by

And set my heart awirl

From her head to her waste was an ugly fish

But the rest of her was a girl

ZERO *You again!*

ONE *Don't touch me!*

ZERO *holds back, pained.*

ONE *Do you want me to go away? ONE!*

Pause.

ZERO *Did they beat you? One!*

ONE remains silent, head bowed.)

ZERO *Where did you spend the night?*

ONE *Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!*

ZERO *Did I ever leave you?*

ONE *You let me go.*

ZERO *Look at me. Will you look at me!*

They look long at each other, then suddenly embrace, clapping each other on the back. End of the embrace.

ONE, no longer supported, almost falls.

ONE *What a day!*

ZERO *What a day!*

ONE *Another day done with.*

ZERO *Not yet.*

ONE *For me it's over and done with, no matter what happens. I heard you singing.*

ZERO *That's right, I remember.*

ONE *That finished me. I said to myself, He's all alone, he thinks I'm gone for ever, and he sings.*

ZERO *You see, you sing better when I'm not there.*

ONE I missed you . . . and at the same time I was happy. Isn't that a strange thing?

ZERO I can't believe it was our fault.

ONE What?

ZERO Letting them go. Missing out on that deal.

ONE There was ten of them. Hundreds of them. Thousands, perhaps.

ZERO There wouldn't have been that many.

ONE There was.

ZERO Look around you! How did they all fit in here?

ONE They did. It was an invasion. They decided to go, they went. Nothing we could do about it.

ZERO How come I didn't feel them?

ONE They was like cockroaches. You didn't need no space for them, could fit them in the palm of your hand.

ZERO Could no one else see them?

ONE You.

ZERO I didn't.

ONE Then the Seer.

ZERO The Seer didn't see nothing.

ONE He had his eyes closed the whole bloody time.

ZERO But he's a Seer.

ONE So?

ZERO Seers see. Anyway, *(Zero shakes his fist)*. You should have let me send him to the mermaids when I told you too.

ONE Is that why you're always getting people's back up and all that

ZERO I do irritate some, that's for sure.

ONE Why do have to do that?

ZERO It's intensely satisfying.

ONE That's not a reason.

ZERO Say you are, even if it's not true.

ONE What am I to say?

ZERO Say, I am happy.

ONE I am happy.

ZERO So am I.

ONE So am I.

ZERO We are happy.

ONE We are happy.

Silence

ONE What do we do now, now that we are happy?

ZERO See how stupid you feel when you just agree with everyone.

ONE OK, but let's not complicate it. Let's unite behind our decision.

ZERO Let's invite some sharks to give them a tour of the cruiser.

ONE We're not on a cruiser

ZERO Whatever.

Silence

ONE We have decided we're happy. Let's go with that.

ZERO Fine then. What next?

Silence

ONE Aren't we meant to keep on rowing?

ZERO Nah, we just wait.

ONE Wait for what?

ZERO Wait for the "Ship".

Silence

ONE The Ship will never come.

ZERO There's sugar to be had. We got to stick it out until that happens.

ONE And if it doesn't happen?

ZERO Why would we be punished so by the gods?

Pause

ZERO Is it because we decided to believe in fairytales?

ONE Fairy tales are for people. It's OK to believe in them.

ZERO Look at the ocean, though.
ONE It's never the same bit of ocean from one second to the next.
ZERO That's because the water's "running", duh!!
ONE dips a finger in the ocean.
ONE Was it not there yesterday?
ZERO No it wasn't.
ONE But what about this spear?
ZERO Spear was there alright. At the bow.
ONE How come?
ZERO We nearly cut our stomachs on it.
ONE How come the same spear was there?
ZERO Metal is solid. Besides, there's always implements you can stab yourself with It's just the way of life.
ONE But we didn't.
ZERO You wouldn't. Do you not remember?
ONE And all that was yesterday, you say?
ZERO Yes of course it was yesterday.
ONE And here where we are now?
ZERO Where else do you think? Do you not recognise the place?
ONE Recognise! What is there to recognise? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! (*Looking wildly about him.*) Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it!
ZERO Calm yourself, calm yourself.
ONE You and your landscapes!
ZERO All the same, you can't tell me that this (*gesture*) bears any resemblance to . . . (*he hesitates*) ... to Strawberry country for example. You can't deny there's a big difference.
ONE Strawberry country! Who's talking to you about Strawberry country?
ZERO But you were there yourself, in the Strawberry.
ONE Never.
ZERO But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking strawberries for a man called . . . (*he snaps his fingers*) . . . can't think of the name of the man, at a place called . . . (*snaps his fingers*) . . . ah! Man called Nathaniel.
ONE What kind of name is that? "Nathaniel"
ZERO It's Saxon.
ONE Sex-on. I'll have a bit of that.
ZERO slaps him on the head.
ONE It'd be better if we parted.
ZERO You always say that and you always come crawling back.
ONE The best thing would be to kill me, like the other.
ZERO What other?
ONE Like billions of others.
ZERO Who told you this?
ONE Oh, you're inexhaustible.
ZERO It's so we won't have to think.
ONE We have that excuse.
ZERO It's so we won't have to hear.
ONE It is best that way.
ZERO All the dead voices.
ONE They make a noise like wings.
ZERO How quaint.
ONE Like waves.
ZERO Listen...
ONE Like sand
ZERO Shhh
ONE They all speak at once.
ZERO It's deafening.
ONE Each one to itself.
Silence

ONE Rather they whisper.
ZERO Why is it so deafening?
ONE They rustle.
ZERO They murmur.
ONE *(Covers his ears with his hands)*.
ZERO What do they say?
ONE They say nothing. They're dead.
ZERO But can you not hear the screaming?
ONE I can.
They both cover their ears with their hands
ZERO Sshhh...hear? They're talking about their lives.
ONE Idiots. Like to have lived is not enough for them
ZERO They have to talk about it.
ONE Like to be dead is not enough for them.
ZERO They have to make a noise about it.
ONE Like waves.
ZERO Like ashes.
Long silence
ONE Say something.
ZERO I'm trying.
Long silence.
ZERO What do we do now?
ONE Wait for the Emperor. He's our last chance. He'll get us our deal alright.
ZERO Sing something.
ONE What?
ZERO Don't know. The mermaid's song?
He reflects
ONE We could start all over again perhaps.
ZERO That should be easy.
ONE It's the start that's difficult.
ZERO You can start from anything.
ONE Yes, but you have to decide.
ZERO Help me!
ONE I'm trying.
He takes off his hat, concentrates.
ONE Well?
ZERO What was I saying, we could go on from there.
ONE What were you saying when?
ZERO At the very beginning.
ONE The very beginning of WHAT?
ONE History.
ZERO What, like before the Beatles?
ONE Before the ocean, you custard pie!
ZERO Ah...
ONE You don't remember any fact, any circumstance?
ZERO Don't you?
ONE I'm not a historian.
ZERO The ocean. The gods. The "horse"... Do you not remember?
ONE They must have been there, as usual.
ZERO You didn't notice anything out of the ordinary?
ONE Let's try going back to the beginnings of humanity. Before we was born.
ZERO like before we was taught how to walk?
ONE Yes.
ZERO You'll help me?
ONE I will of course.
ZERO We don't manage too badly, eh One, between the two of us?
ONE Zero and One is the beginning of everything, isn't it?
ZERO Yes, yes. Come on, we'll try the left first.

ONE But let us persevere in what we have resolved, before we forget. (*He picks up a boot.*) Come on, give me your foot. (*ZERO raises his foot.*) The other, hog! (*ZERO raises the other foot.*) Higher! (*Wreathed together they stagger about the stage. ONE succeeds finally in taking one step.*) Try and walk. (*ONE walks.*) Well?

ZERO We always find something, eh One, to give us the impression we exist?

ONE It's working.

ZERO It don't hurt you?

ONE What?

ZERO The walking.

ONE Not yet.

ZERO Then you could carry on walking.

ONE But I'll fall in the sea.

ZERO You'd rather be stuck there doing nothing?

ONE Yes.

ZERO Please yourself.

He releases ONE, picks up his coat and puts it on.

ZERO Come on, let's go.

ONE We can't.

ZERO Why not?

ONE We're waiting for the Sugar.

ZERO Ah! (*ONE walks up and down.*) Can you not stay still?

ONE I'm cold.

ZERO We came too soon.

ONE It's always at nightfall.

ZERO But night doesn't fall.

ONE It'll fall all of a sudden, like yesterday.

ZERO Then it'll be night.

ONE And we can go.

ZERO Then it'll be day again. (*Pause. Despairing.*) What'll we do, what'll we do!

ONE (*halting, violently*). Will you stop whining! I've had about my bellyful of your lamentations!

ZERO I'm going. Farewell.

ONE Fine!

ZERO You'll never see me again.

A wait

ZERO I'm going.

Silence.

ONE You go and stand there. (*He draws ONE to extreme right and places him with his back to the stage.*) There, don't move, and watch out. (*ONE scans horizon, screening his eyes with his hand.*

ZERO runs and takes up same position extreme left. They turn their heads and look at each other.)

Back to back like in the good old days. (*They continue to look at each other for a moment, then resume their watch. Long silence.*) Do you see anything coming?

ZERO What?

ONE Do you see anything coming?

ZERO No.

ONE Nor I.

They resume their watch.

Silence

ONE You must have had a vision.

ZERO What?

ONE You must have had a vision.

ZERO No need to shout!

They resume their watch.

Silence

ZERO AND ONE

(*turning simultaneously*). Do you—

ZERO Oh pardon!

ONE Carry on.

ZERO No, no, after you.

ONE No, no, you first.
ZERO I interrupted you.
ONE On the contrary.
ZERO OK: Here goes:
Anticipatory silence and then:
ONE Bitch
ZERO Fat
ONE Fat bitch
ZERO You don't get to use my words, you got to be creative.
ONE It's a different meaning when you synthesise.
ZERO OK, that's fine then.
ONE Ape
ZERO Pig
ONE Bamboula
ZERO Banana
ONE Bog
ZERO Bog trotter
ONE You said to be creative.
ZERO I was: I added trotter
ONE Chug
ZERO Chimpanzee
ONE Coconut
ZERO Coon
ONE Cushi
ZERO Dego
ONE Fenian
ZERO Flip
ONE Frizz
ZERO Fuzzy-wuzzi
ONE Gammon
ZERO Golliwog
ONE Gook
ZERO Goyim
ONE Gypsy
ZERO Ike
ONE Jock
ZERO Jew
ONE Kebab
ZERO Nigger
ONE Monkey
ZERO Paki
ONE Pickaninny
ZERO Pshek
ONE Quashie
ZERO Sooty
ONE Spook
ZERO Squaw
ONE I'm out of breath.
ZERO Keep going.
ONE I can't
ZERO You can.
ONE Wog
ZERO Blackie
ONE Yellow
ZERO Yid
ONE Moron.
ZERO Vermin
ONE Cockroach.

ZERO Sewer-rat
ONE Zip
ONE Sodomite
ONE Tinker
ZERO Toad
ZERO Bender
ONE Faggot
ZERO Fruit
ONE Ponce
ZERO Flit
ONE Daffodil
ZERO Dyke
ONE Lesbo
ZERO Greek
ONE Hold on a minute,
ZERO What?
ONE You said "Greek"
ZERO So I did
ONE Like you made out it was a bad thing.
ZERO It is.
ONE How so?
ZERO We're sailing back from bloody Troy. In a dinghy.
ONE We have a purpose: we're moving towards the Deal.
ZERO In a *dinghy*.
ONE Floating; not sinking
ZERO For now.
ONE What else is there but the now?
ZERO Don't get all existential on me, One, please.
ONE There we go again. Listen: We're fine. Don't be stirring up trouble like you was yesterday.
ZERO We might sink.
ONE We might not.
ZERO All I'm trying to say is that we can't break the glass ceiling, man.
ONE We can always hang ourselves.
ZERO And achieve that overdue erection, yea?
ONE Yea
ZERO *whacks him slightly over the head*
ONE What was that for?
ZERO For letting them get away with it.
ONE We was fine just a moment ago. Throwing abuse at each other. Can we not just carry on like that?
ZERO NO! Not until you understand that we've been sent back, in a blessed dinghy, because they're actually wanting us to drown.
ONE Why would they want us to drown?
ZERO Because they've used us up and now it's bye-bye time.
ONE We fought in Troy.
ZERO They made up Troy. There was no need for Troy.
ONE But what about Helen?
ZERO Helen needed her suspension tested. Why did we have to get involved?
ONE You say we should have let them Persians get Helen and give her a good old poke-about and not made a fuss over it?
ZERO You actually believe it was Helen?
ONE That's what I read on Face Book
ZERO You can *READ*?
ONE Of course I can read. Capital letters. Mostly.
ZERO Let's go again
ONE (*stopping*). That's enough. I'm tired.
ZERO (*stopping*). We're not in form. What about a little deep breathing?
ONE I can't breathe no more.

ZERO Why not?
ONE We haven't eaten in three weeks.
ZERO We've had turnips
ONE I'm hungry.
ZERO So am I.
Some contemplation
ONE We could eat each other.
They seize each other up.
ZERO You're just skin and bones.
ONE I'm all there is.
ZERO How do I eat you?
ONE We've not decided that's what's going to happen.
ZERO We kind of have.
ONE How?
ZERO Because I say so.
ONE That's not democratic
ZERO It's not what?
ONE D-e-m-o-c-r-a-t-i-c
ZERO What does that mean?
ONE It's got to be majority rule.
ZERO It is.
ONE How?
ZERO I count for two.
ONE You don't.
ZERO I do. I own the dinghy. That's two of us: me *and* the dinghy.
ONE That's crap. The dinghy don't get a vote.
ZERO The dinghy gets a vote because *without* the dinghy you'd have sunk a long time ago.
ONE considers this.
ONE It's fifty, fifty.
ZERO That won't get us anywhere.
ONE considers this.
ZERO Listen: Things are bad. The Deal will never come. The Seer was a fraud.
A| short wait
ZERO We'll starve to death.
ONE We could die in each other's arms.
ZERO That'll look stupid.
ONE It's solidarity.
ZERO It's defeatism.
ONE I don't want to be eaten. I don't want to go to Hades. It's bloody cold down there and there's ghosts and things.
ZERO That's project fear. Hades is fine.
ONE I'll go eternally hungry in Hades.
ZERO You'll have all the food you'll ever you need. I promise you.
ONE I don't know...
ZERO You do. You don't want to be remembered as a scaredy cat. You're a warrior. A proud Argive.
A short wait
ZERO Aren't you?
ONE I suppose I am.
ZERO Well then. Place your head in the water and wait until you're no longer breathing.
ONE begins to manoeuvre himself into an awkward self-drown position. He pulls his head out.
ONE Are you going to tell Homer about me?
ZERO Of course I will.
ONE And my mum?
ZERO Your mum before anyone else.
ONE Of my bravery.
ZERO Your brilliance.
ONE My beauty.

ZERO Your eloquence.
ONE My patriotism.
ZERO Your self-sacrificial spirit.
ONE I'm doing this for Greece.
ZERO So that the pesky Persians don't think we're numpties.
ONE You'll have a good life after me. Spread the word of my sacrifice.
ZERO I'll have a great life. I mean...singing about your heroism from East to West.
ONE You'll be the apostle of my Greek buccaneering spirit.
ZERO The Apostles is after Jesus.
ONE OK, here goes.
ONE bends down again believing he is about to "drown". ZERO holds his head down. ONE does not resist. ZERO pulls ONE's head out of the water.
ZERO WAIT!
ONE What now?
ZERO You must close your eyes.
ONE I want to see the fishes.
ZERO You can't do that.
ONE It's my eyes. I can do what I like.
ZERO NO. CLOSE YOUR EYES.
ONE What's gotten into you?
ZERO I don't like being seen.
ONE Why? You're not as ugly as they say.
ZERO Do you think God sees me?
ONE Perhaps.
ZERO (*stopping, brandishing his fists, at the top of his voice.*) God have pity on me!
ONE Can we do it now?
ZERO Should we repent first?
ONE You're getting it all mixed up. We're Greeks. We don't do "repenting". That's for Christians. The repenting is not going to happen for a long, long time and even then, there'll be ones that never repent.
ZERO Like who?
ONE Like priests shagging choir boys.
ZERO They won't repent?
ONE Of course not.
ZERO And what happens when they get to Hades?
ONE You said Hades was project fear.
ZERO It is and it isn't.
ONE Oh, hold on a minute. Hold on a minute. I don't want to go if you're not sure.
ZERO I am. Go back in the water.
ONE I won't. You said Hades is "fine". I'll be given "all the food I need", you said.
ZERO Just put your thick head back in the –
A brief physical struggle ensues interrupted by a great thumping noise.
ONE Is that an engine whirring?
The sound persists.
ZERO A great big boat's engine.
ONE Is it the Sugar Ship?
ZERO It must be.
The SEER slowly makes his way towards them.
ONE I knew it was him.
ZERO Not him again!
ONE Let's eat him instead.
ZERO Where's he just come from?
THE SEER Help me!
ONE Let's just eat him.
ZERO Perhaps we should help him first.
ONE Whatever
ZERO Does he have superpowers?
ONE Ask him.

ZERO Why is he all crouched like this?
ONE Get him to walk straight.
ZERO He can't walk straight?
ONE He wants to.
ZERO Then let him.
ONE He can't.
ZERO Why not?
ONE I don't know.
The SEER writhes, groans, beats the ground with his fists.
ZERO We should ask him about the Ship first. Demand proof of the sugar. Then if he refuses, we'll leave him there.
ONE You mean we have him at our mercy?
ZERO Rather obvious, wouldn't you say?
ONE Should we ask him for a deal?
ZERO There's a downside to that.
ONE That he might get back up magically and then we're bollocksed
THE SEER Help!
ONE He might even call on them guests that was here yesterday.
ZERO There was hundreds of them.
ONE I didn't see anyone but/
ZERO Your eyesight's bad.
ONE I think we're safe. He's inert.
ZERO And suppose we gave him a good beating, the two of us.
ONE You mean if we fell on him in his sleep?
ZERO Yes.
ONE But do Seers actually fall asleep? Pythia doesn't.
ZERO Pythia is a woman. They don't sleep. They got their wombs wondering about their bodies all night. This bleeder is a man.
ONE Let's pretend to help him.
ZERO In return for a tangible, superior deal.
ONE We've a deal. We have the dinghy.
THE SEER Ah!
ONE Come. We are all born good. Some remain so.
THE SEER Help! I'll pay you!
ONE How much?
THE SEER One hundred drachmas.
ZERO It's not enough.
ONE I'm not dealing in drachmas.
ZERO What do you want?
ONE Pounds?
ZERO That's worth less.
THE SEER Make your minds up.
ZERO Two hundred!
ONE We wait.
THE SEER Two hundred!
ZERO Will you stop it, you! Pest! He can think of nothing but himself!
ONE Who are you, old fella?
ZERO We must hold him.
They get him up again. The SEER sags between them, his arms round their necks.
ONE Feeling better?
ZERO Do you not recognise us?
THE SEER I am blind.
Silence.
ONE Now that's some twist in this boring tale, ain't it?
ZERO Can you not see?
THE SEER I am blind.
ZERO Perhaps he can see into the future.
ONE But you're supposed to be a seer. A man that "sees", *duuurh*

TH SEER I can see things you cannot see. Are you good men?
ONE Let's not get into all that detail right now.
ZERO He wants to know if we're good.
ONE Good enough to have passports.
ZERO If our passports says we're good who are we to doubt them?
ONE It's all in the passport.
ZERO The date you was born on,
ONE And who your mother knocked boots with.
ZERO And your good character, everything!
ONE Well?
THE SEER Can you prove it?
ONE We've proved it.
ZERO We've proved it.
THE SEER What is your good deed?
ZERO Oh come off it, man. We're not Christians. Jesus isn't even born yet.
ONE Zero is right, you're being anachronistic, my good man
ZERO You heard the big brain, he said it.
THE SEER But the Greeks value goodness too.
ZERO We do. We won in Troy.
ONE And sailing towards Empire Two. What more goodness do you need?
ZERO Empire Two is a lie.
ONE Let's not quibble about that now.
THE SEER Are you pirates?
ONE Do we look like pirates?
ZERO The man is blind, he don't know what we look like.
ONE So he is.
THE SEER What time is it?
ONE It's close to evening rising.
THE SEER What time of the year is it?
ONE It's when the winds are not too high. Else we'd be gazing upon the fishes from the horizontal.
ZERO Don't be badmouthing the weather, it might turn.
ONE Sir, it's evening, night is drawing nigh. My friend here would have me doubt it and I must confess he shook me for a moment. But it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day and I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory.
ZERO How much longer do we hold him upright?
THE SEER I can't really see you.
ZERO Can you tell what time it is?
THE SEER The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them.
ONE Time is pressing upon us though
ZERO It is, truth be told.
ONE We need to resolve the minor issue of food. We either eat each other or we eat you.
THE SEER What are you waiting for?
ONE Time.
ZERO Time to ripen. Tell us what we need to do.
THE SEER The answer is afoot.
ONE That's my foot you're standing on, blind fella.
THE SEER Look about you.
ONE I see nothing.
ZERO I see sea.
ONE I see...sky.
ZERO Sky, yea
ONE I see...the deep blue sea
ZERO We said that.
ONE OK, I see...
THE SEER You see rope?
ZERO Oh, yea!
ONE I see sea.

The SEER rises to his feet. He is very strong and appears much taller than his previously crouched self.

THE SEER You have shown yourselves to be bad men. Here's rope.

ZERO To induce an erection?

THE SEER To hang yourselves with.

ZERO And thereby induce an erection.

ONE How come you're so tall?

THE SEER I'm a Seer. I can become tall at very short notice.

ONE Is he threatening us?

ZERO I think so

The SEER shakes his arms and the "boat", ZERO and ONE shake with him

ONE He can make the earth move.

ZERO Blessed Hades, save us from this

ONE But what is our crime?

THE SEER You are two arrogant rogues out to make a quick fortune.

ONE How are we arrogant?

THE SEER You refused to help a blind old man when your help was needed.

ONE But you're a knave yourself.

THE SEER You set upon each other. Hardly virtuous warriors!

ONE You set me upon him!

THE SEER I was testing you.

ONE How?

THE SEER He set upon you.

ZERO You set upon me? When?

ONE Yesterday. While you snoozed.

ZERO Why?

ONE He said you're a lecher.

ZERO Me?

ONE He said you'd harm my sons' ambitions for greatness.

ZERO I don't even have sons myself.

THE SEER Here is proof if you needed any. Look at yourselves!

ZERO You promised us greatness

THE SEER I promised you nothing. You elected to read it as greatness.

ONE You promised us glorious guests and treasures.

ZERO You said bankers.

ONE Bakers

ZERO He didn't say bakers, they don't count for nothing

ONE Whatever.

ZERO You're the liar.

ONE Let's hang him.

THE SEER Zeus will have his revenge on you.

ZERO How do we begin?

ONE Let's pull on the rope

ZERO Until he's strangled.

ONE Let's give him a taste of his boot before that.

THE SEER Surely you don't mean this

ONE We've nothing to be afraid of.

They goes towards the SEER

ZERO Make sure he's alive before you start. No point in exerting yourself if he's dead.

ONE He's breathing.

ONE Then let him have it.

Amidst the pandemonium, the SEER disappears.

ZERO What's gone wrong now?

ONE Are you Zero?

ZERO I don't know...Are you One?

ONE I'm One.

ZERO The same One as you was yesterday?

ONE Same one.

ZERO I don't recognise you.

ONE I don't recognise you either.

ZERO Why not?

ONE Because you was a warrior. A man of beauty and pride. Look at you now.

ZERO Still a man.

ONE Weakened.

ZERO I have good reason.

ONE No reason for being a weak man.

ZERO There is.

ONE What is it?

ZERO Fear.

ONE What was you doing this morning when I cried out for you?

ZERO I was crying.

ONE What for?

ZERO Crying hard. I didn't want to but I couldn't stop myself. I couldn't stop myself so I thought about all the bad things and I fed it and fed it until I was crying so hard I had to gasp for breath. I thought about our wasted bodies fed to incinerators because people we didn't know hated us. I thought about all the women who had been hung, drawn, quartered and pulled apart because a judge who didn't care pronounced a sentence that had been written by people who didn't know him, for people they didn't care about. I thought about how my mother's family had been taken from her, just because she was a woman, how her life had been burned to ashes just because she was a woman, just because they were frightened of her, just because she couldn't fuck them, so they fucked her instead. Look at me sitting here in a dinghy, on dry land, rowing a boat without oars, crying hot, stupid tears, all because of a thousand-year old heirloom and monsters I cannot fight because they're all dead, beyond killing, beyond punishing, beyond any kind of reckoning.

ZERO cries

ONE Stop. Who's going to hear you?

ZERO Dunno

ZERO We're in the middle of the bloody ocean.

ONE Still,

ZERO Stop swaying like a woman.

ONE (*wild gestures, incoherent words. Finally.*) Why will you never let me sleep? I got a bloodied spleen for Zeus' sake!

ZERO I was wondering....you know ...is he really blind?

ONE Who?

ZERO The Seer.

ONE Blind?

ZERO He told us he was blind.

ONE Well what about it?

ZERO It seemed to me he saw us.

ONE Do you reckon he's Zeus?

ZERO Transformed into a Bull?

ONE There was no bull.

ZERO No, just fish bones.

ONE What are you trying to say?

ZERO I think he's clever. I think he could see us.

ONE So...you mean...there's nothing beyond this dinghy...?

ZERO There's Argos. Out to the west.

ONE But Argos is crap.

ZERO We could head to Corfu. Watch the birds in bikinis dive from up the big rock.

ONE Don't like birds in bikinis.

ZERO We could try...

ONE Are you being serious? There's nothing beyond this? *THIS?* Just a dinghy and...*you?*

ZERO I'm not that bad.

ONE You're atrocious. I hate you.

Long silence

ZERO I hate you too.

ONE What are we going to do?

ZERO We could...I don't know... make up our own thing...

ONE Like how?

ZERO Like...you know...what do we want...?

ONE We want a deal.

ZERO We want the Emperor to come.

ONE Adorned. In robes of gold and ermine.

ZERO Look out.

ONE I'm looking.

ZERO Can you see...

ONE I can scarcely believe...

ZERO Is it possible . . . but yes. . .but yes. . .incredible. . .and still it's true!

ONE YES!

ZERO The Ship.

ONE With the mermaid on her bow.

ZERO She, made of sugar too!

ONE Check out those breasts

ZERO They're staring at you, man.

ONE I could bite her nipples.

ZERO Look at her

ONE I'm looking.

ZERO Can you see her?

ONE I can

ZERO The vagina?

ONE Oh, Aye!

ZERO The other organisms?

ONE Organs, you moron.

ZERO Organs. Whatever. Can you seem them?

ONE Well, in a subjective sort of way...

ZERO Can you see the Professors and the Bankers carrying coffers?

ONE Adorned in gold and silver.

ZERO The Emperor.

ONE His most gracious Majesty the Emperor!

The light reaches its maximum intensity, but the light is cold, empty; more noises which cease abruptly

ZERO The Emperor on my humble dinghy!

ONE Do you realise what this means?

ZERO The Emperor. ..the Emperor? [*Then suddenly he understands.*] Ah, yes, the Emperor!

ONE Your little, shit! Sorry, Your great Majesty!

ZERO Your Majesty!Oh! what a sublime honour.

ONE A dream!

ZERO He's over here.

ONE Sorry, of course.

ZERO I'm here your Majesty!

ONE You have such beautiful hair, your Majesty

ZERO And such beautiful eyes!

ONE Ladies, gentlemen, stand up, our beloved sovereign, the Emperor, is among us!

ZERO There's others here?

ONE There's got to be. Otherwise how is it going to matter if he's here or not? We got to have idiots to fawn over him.

ZERO Your servant, your slave, your dog, your Majesty/

ONE Can you see me sire?

ZERO He can't for all those courtiers.

ONE In spite of the courtiers ...we're here, Your Majesty!

ZERO I'm truly the one who cares for you.

ONE No, that's me: the most faithful of all your subjects.

ZERO Let me through, now, men and women of Greece.

ONE We're not in Greece, this is international waters.

ZERO Whatever, just let me through.

ONE Will I ever be able to reach him?
ZERO Touch him?
ONE Touch his divine hands.
ZERO Do you think he has a big winky?
ONE Shut up, probably not.
ZERO We can't get through.
ONE Court intrigues trying to separate us from his Majesty.
ZERO His Majesty sees you, he's looking at you.
ONE His Majesty has given me a wink
THE SEER His Majesty is on our side!
ONE What's he doing here?
ZERO Don't try it old man, you're not getting a cut.
THE SEER I'm facilitating this.
ONE We don't need you.
THE SEER The Emperor is my friend.
ONE They say you must give the Emperor the best seat.
ZERO near the dais
THE SEER So that he can hear everything the Orator is going to say.
ZERO Who's the Orator?
THE SEER Sire ...Your Majesty may rely on him.
ONE Listen! He's asking for you!
ZERO Me?
THE SEER You. the Orator. You know everything. Tell us about it I a big booming voice!
ONE It's my friend, Your Maj
ZERO Don't bullshit him, what am I to say?
ONE It's ZERO: the people's representative who is at Your Majesty's side.
THE SEER It is indeed.
ZERO Gentlemen, ladies, young ladies, little children, I implore you.
ONE There's no children here, it's certificate 18.
ZERO OK. Men of Greece.
THE SEER There's foreigners here too.
ZERO OK Stop interrupting.
THE SEER Speak big man.
ZERO I want to see.. .move aside. ..I want. .. the celestial gaze, the noble face, the crown, the radiance of His Majesty. ..Sire, deign to turn your illustrious face in my direction, toward your humble servant. . .so humble . . .Oh! I caught sight of him clearly that time. . .I caught sight. . .
THE SEER Are you going to say anything of significance?
ZERO I'm at the height of joy. . .I've no more words to express my boundless gratitude. . .in my humble dwelling, Oh! Majesty! Oh! radiance! . . .here. . .here. . .in the dwelling where I am, true enough, a general. . .but within the hierarchy of your army, I'm only a simple general factotum. . .
ONE Has he been sniffing glue?
THE SEER I've not got glue on me.
ONE I bet you got glue on you. You stink of glue
THE SEER I have no glue on me. I think he's gone doolally
ONE Zeus and Aphrodite! What are we going to do? This is our last chance.
ZERO I'm proud . . .proud and humble, at the same time. . .as I should be . . .alas! certainly, I am a general, I might have been at the imperial court, I have only a little court here to take care of. . .Your Majesty. . .I . . .Your Majesty, I have difficulty expressing myself. . .I might have had. . .many things, not a few possessions if I'd known, if I'd wanted, if I . . .if we . . .Your Majesty, forgive my emotion. . .
THE SEER He's going to fuck up.
ONE Let him speak. The deal is coming.
ZERO May Your Majesty deign to forgive me! You are here at last. ..We had given up hope . . .you might not even have come. . .Oh! Saviour, I've suffered much in my life. . .I might have been something, if I could have been sure of the support of Your Majesty. . .I have no other support. . .if you hadn't come, everything would have been too late. . .you are, Sire, my last recourse. . .
THE SEER Confess
ONE Tell him how you've been an asshole.

ZERO I've brought bad luck to my friends, to all those who have helped me ...Lightning struck the hand which was held out toward me . . .They've always had good reasons for hating me, bad reasons for loving me . . .

ONE I do love you though.

ZERO But I am a victim of circumstance.

THE SEER You own a dinghy. You're a lucky fucker.

ZERO They've treated me badly. They've persecuted me. If I complained, it was always they who were in the right ...Sometimes I've tried to revenge myself. ..I was never able to, never able to revenge myself. ..I have too much pity. ..I refused to strike the enemy to the ground, I have always been too good.

THE SEER Tell the Emperor the truth. Else forget about Empires and treasures. You're a dead man.

ZERO I am a victim of my own luck. My father was an ambassador to Santorini.

THE SEER Right. That's how the lands and slaves are explained

ZERO But they never pitied me. I gave them a pin prick, and they repaid me with club blows, with knife blows, with cannon blows, they've crushed my bones. . .

THE SEER Blah, blah, blah

ZERO They've supplanted me, they've robbed me, they've assassinated me ...I've been the collector of injustices, the lightning rod of catastrophes. . . Your Majesty, I wanted to go in for sports. . .for mountain climbing. . .they pulled my feet and made me slip. . .I wanted to climb stairways, they rotted the steps. . .I fell down. . .I wanted to travel, they refused me a passport. . .I wanted to cross the river, they burnt my bridges. . .I wanted to cross the Pyrenees, and there were no more Pyrenees.

ONE Olympus

ZERO Olympus.

THE SEER The Emperor does not like all this self-pity.

ZERO No one has ever shown me due consideration ...no one has ever sent me invitations. . . However, I, hear me, I say this to you, I alone could have I saved humanity, who is so sick. Your Majesty realizes this I as do I ...or, at the least, I could have spared it the evils from which it has suffered so much this last quarter of a century, had I had the opportunity to communicate my message; I do not despair of saving it, there is still time, I have a plan...alas,

ONE His Majesty is here, thus you'll be heard, you've no reason to despair, you hold all the trumps, everything has changed, everything has changed. . .

ZERO If has deigned to come on our humble dinghy, it is because you have condescended to take into consideration our extreme circumstance. We have been promised Empire Two. We conquered Empire One. Killed Trojans. Gave pleasure to Trojan ladies

ONE Pleasure was all mine.

ZERO Shut up. Your Majesty, if corporeally I raise myself in order to gaze upon you! .. I throw myself at your knees

The SEER raises both arms.

THE SEER He's turning.

ONE He's *TURNING*?

ZERO HIS MAJESTY IS TURNING?

ONE Majesty! Forgive him. He fucked up. He's been sniffing glue.

ZERO I've been sniffing glue.

ONE If Your Majesty will forgive him.

ZERO His Majesty is so kind. His Majesty wouldn't depart just like that, without having listened to everything, heard everything

THE SEER You speak.

ONE Me?

ZERO Go ahead then.

ONE I, I cannot ...I lack the talent

ZERO Your Majesty, hear me, a long time ago I had the revelation ...I was forty years old. ..I say this also to you, ladies and gentlemen. . .one evening, after supper, as was our custom, before going to bed, I seated myself on my father's knees. . .my moustaches were longer than his and more pointed. . .I had more hair on my chest. . .my hair was graying already, but his was still brown. . .There were some guests, grownups, sitting at table, who began to laugh, laugh.

THE SEER Stop, stop, stop. Just stop.

ZERO Why am I meant to stop?
THE SEER Because you're an idiot.
ONE Him?
ZERO Me? An idiot?
THE SEER Yes.
ZERO How am I an idiot?
THE SEER Because you're talking to the wind.
ZERO I'm talking to the wind?
THE SEER Right into the wind.
ZERO I don't understand...
ONE The wind is blowing in that direction.
THE SEER Precisely
ONE So?
THE SEER So he's seeing what is not there.
A long, pained wait.
ONE But it was all here. The guests....
ZERO The adorned Emperor.
ONE The Big Chest bearing the Deal papers.
THE SEER Really?
A wait.
THE SEER Where?
ONE and ZERO look around.
ONE But...but...
ZERO Where is everything?
ONE It was all here a minute ago...
THE SEER The only thing that was ever here was my seeing.
ONE How is that possible when you're blind?
THE SEER It is. You and I are not the same. We never will be.
ONE We believed you.
THE SEER You chose to.
ONE We're going to eat you.
ZERO Alive
The move towards him menacingly.
THE SEER I can turn day into night.
ONE Nonsense.
ZERO Prove it old fella or you're toast
They are about to attack when day turns into night. The SEER is gone.
ZERO and ONE sit down and pick up the oars again. Disheartened, they begin to row.
ZERO What's wrong with you?
ONE Nothing.
ZERO I'm rowing.
ONE So am I.
Silence.
ZERO Where shall we row to?
ONE Not far.
ZERO Oh yes, let's row far away from here.
ONE We can't.
ZERO Why not?
ONE We have to be back at this same spot tomorrow.
ZERO What for?
ONE The Ship.
ZERO It didn't come?
ONE No.
ZERO How comes it?
ONE She melted.
ZERO Shit.
ONE I know
ZERO And now it's too late.

ONE Yes, now it's night.

Silence.

ZERO Why don't we hang ourselves?

ONE With what?

ZERO We haven't got a bit of rope?

ONE No.

ZERO How come?

ONE There's no rope. There's no mast.

ZERO What about the sails?

ONE I can't see no sails.

ZERO Then we can't hang ourselves.

Silence.

ONE Let's go.

ZERO Wait, there's my leather belt.

ONE It's too short.

ZERO You could hang onto my legs.

ONE And who'd hang onto mine?

ZERO True.

ONE Not worth a curse.

Silence.

ZERO One?

ONE Yes.

ZERO I can't go on like this.

ONE Why not? If I can go on with my spleen poking out, then we can both go on.

ZERO We thought we was so special.

ONE Well, we kind of are...I mean...Greece... *is* quite something.

ZERO Mother of Democracy and that.

ONE Oh, lock her up.

ZERO Make her great again.

ONE Locker her up is cooler. It's like...kinkier.

ZERO Jew

ONE Arab

ZERO Pansexual

ONE Monosexual

ZERO Tuberculic

ONE Syphilitic

ZERO Still Greek.

ONE I know

ZERO And beautiful.

ONE Not really.

ZERO Greece is actually great.

ONE The envy of the civilised world.

ZERO It's all shit.

ONE We just got shat on.

ZERO By some old fella who is special because, he "can see"

Silence

ONE We got pissed on.

ZERO And shat on.

ONE And we danced.

ZERO And cavorted.

ONE And ate figs

A pause

ZERO Was that during the parties?

ONE What parties?

ZERO I asked you when we set sail, did you attend any parties. You said no.

ONE I never attended parties.

ZERO We had an agreement. Parties cannot be attended without me, else they're illegal.

ONE There was no parties.

ZERO But you just said you ate figs.
ONE That was during the legal parties.
ZERO When did they become legal?
ONE After I attended them.
ZERO Right.
ONE Right.
ZERO Who said so?
ONE The Seer...he really sounded genuine.
ZERO Just a shyster.
ONE A divine one at that.
ZERO Delphic-oracle graduate.
ONE They're the worst.
Thunder and lightning.
ONE Get down, get down!
ZERO What is it?
ONE The tide's coming in.
ZERO Is it?
ONE It is. Can you not see?
ZERO Not really.
ONE Just get down.
ONE pulls ZERO "out of danger". They wait a moment. ONE determinately advances forwards and commands the "tide".
ONE Go back!
A moment
ONE Go back!
ZERO Yea?
ONE I said: go back! Lovely, it's obeyed.
ZERO Thank fuck for that. How did you do that?
ONE That was easy. The tide will do anything I tell it.
ZERO How so?
ONE I'm sovereign.
ZERO Oh, right...
ONE You see what I mean?
ZERO Yea, totally.
ONE What?
ZERO That didn't happen.
ONE It did if I say it did.
ZERO Red will turn to blue if you tell it to?
ONE Precisely.
ZERO *nods*
ONE 'Cause I'm sovereign.
ZERO *nods*
ONE 'Cause I'm worth it.
A moment
ZERO Hey One!
ONE What?
ZERO Do you work in finance?
ONE shakes his head. Gestures to us, incredulously.
ONE How did you guess?
ONE rises.
ONE Let's just row.
ZERO Let's.
They do not move.

Curtain.

THE ABSURD

Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins. In ihrer Behausung wohnt der Mensch. Die Denkenden und die Dichtenden sind ihre Wächter.

Language is the house of Being. In the house of language, man dwells. The thinkers and the poets are its guardians (trans. mine).

Heidegger, 1953

In his 1960 essay *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Martin Esslin prophetically warns us: “[...] The Theatre of the Absurd is the true theatre of our time” (Esslin, 1960). The second decade of the twentieth century is a time of denunciation of political language, affirming Esslin’s prediction, which, he may have felt was only apt to describe his own political time. It is, presciently, the present time, which is now invoking the devaluation, the emptiness, the inversion and the utter sloganification of language at the altar of power and authoritarian rule. In his recent study Ronald Berger terms this violent usage of rhetoric as “inflammatory rhetoric, deploying explicitly Hitlerian language” (Berger, 2025). This Act shows how looking inwards against a plateau of political corrosion and atrophy has the potential to show a full revolution of 260° rotational orbit around the axis of political nihilism. The tool was firstly, to reduce language to its bare minimum and watch it twist itself. Secondly, as Esslin directs, came the combining philosophy with psychology, and attempting to allow the void to manifest itself.

This Act examines autopoiesis as both self-creation, and discovery. The exilic unconscious attempted the move to intentionality and meaning in ACT II. Here, I look at how the dissolution of consciousness can present in a time of authoritarianism. I also consider the self-responsibility that emerges from this burden and man’s eternal desire to escape it when it may be impossible to do so. I have invited Beckett and Ionesco and, at times, Arnaud, to hold my hand in this effort where Absurdism attempts to reverse the process of birth and speed the return to the state of pre-conscious nonbeing from which it came. The *Seafarer* examines the Absurd through a surrealist and translational prism: the conditions and perils of the intimate and public vernacular when these are devalued and the implications for exilic writing. Translation serves autopoiesis not only externally but also internally. The carnality, the open wound translated into word, initiates a point of contact between theatre and philosophy by exposing the ugliness of what is habitually out of sight. Derrida augments the point that the exilic, in drama, acquires the possibility of the

dramatised Self integrating its Other and taking on the form of the thinking Self, the Self of reflection. The exile doesn't just perceive, see, or hurt. The exile can now begin to think.

The method of inserting the researcher's present reflexive modality into the past assists the task of introspection and was here supported by two pillars: psychoanalysis and dramatic restructuring. It can comprise past events, images, or testimonies of any kind. It initiates autopoiesis through a self-examination which includes self-analysis and self-interrogation: the self as object of reflexive self-interrogation and subject of a family history and present political reality. Family history is not of any particular interest as an autoethnographic detail, it is rather part of the exilic narrative filtered through an exacting and rigorous historical process. For Mieke Bal, memory is not simply confined to the individual's psyche as own experience but is likewise constituted within culture and, may I augment by saying, historical reality, as she explains in *Activating Temporalities* (Bal, 2018).

Undertaking the synthesis of past events as a researcher, I assumed the full responsibility of reopening wounds for those who no longer have narrative or interpretative mastery over them. *Seafarer* underlines the need to look inwards inside ourselves and our histories, but also inside others' histories and archives, who may or may not be with us, as well as inside the body politic in all its blatant and glaring ugliness. It also provokes the question as to what extent the "defiant rejection of language" (Esslin, 1960) can re-energise meaning and initiate its auto-creation for the remaking of a new language, built from the ruins.

After LESBOS, the political moment lent itself to inertia. This dormancy had been achieved in political and mediatised discourse by purposeful and steadfast linguistic pointlessness and atrophy of the notion of evidenced truth. This is our universe that lies beyond politico-juridical status, in Agamben's words, "where the non-Aryan passes into the Jew; the Jew into the deportee, the deportee into the prisoner, until biopolitical caesuras reach their final limit in the camp" (Agamben, 1999). ACT IV breaks the flow of this thesis and inserts a caesura; a mirror to our present moment's onto-linguistic lacuna against the psychic nothingness that would be our reality, should fascism impose its iron grip on history anew.

I invited Becket to help me, through the meaninglessness and the nothingness of language, to illuminate the space of the exile and that of the host. For the exile, linguistic emptiness is restorative in its purpose of dissolving and reconstituting meaning. It is further a dispositive for penetrating the deeper, more complex, areas of meaning, as directed by Esslin in his appointing Absurdist theatre as the arbitrator of our complex emotional

impulses where conventional grammar fails or misleads (Esslin, 1960). Languaging, within the ontologico-political void, the condensing image of the Jew as “enemy” or “vermin” is a progression to the dehumanisation of colonised people already in operation under the regime of slavery. Fascism’s ability to expand the meaning of certain signifiers while condensing the meanings of other signifiers, re-identified the function of ideology for the twentieth century. Fascist signifiers bear a chilling resemblance to contemporary, politically sanctioned, parlance³ as does fascism’s ability to control representation in such a way as to obscure contradictory political and economic conditions. This doubly contradictory system of representation is legitimised, in part, through the polarisation of signs into crude systems of binaries. A fine example of contemporary discourse is the grouping of signs and complex notions into soundbites and strategically aimed political messages delivered with high algorithmic precision to their corresponding target groups. The closing off slippage between these binaries is sanctioned through the imposition of state power. The absurdity of the message bears no import here; it purely is an exercise in repetition, designed to embed a chosen signifier to an audience through the brutal power of the messenger. The following verses are borrowed from the words of former Conservative Party Chairman, Lord Deben⁴, attempting to explain the absurdity of the British Houses of Parliament telling an “untruth and making it a truth [...] because we are sovereign”:

ONE The tide’s coming in.

ZERO Is it?

ONE It is. Can you not see?

ZERO Not really.

ONE Just get down.

ONE pulls ZERO “out of danger”. They wait a moment. ONE determinately advances forwards and commands the “tide”.

ONE Go back!

A moment

ONE Go back!

ZERO Yea?

ONE I said: go back! Lovely, it’s obeyed.

ZERO Thank fuck for that. How did you do that?

ONE That was easy. The tide will do anything I tell it.

ZERO How so?

ONE I’m sovereign.

ZERO Oh, right...

³ The US President repeatedly refers to undocumented citizens as “animals” and “vermin” see https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/trump-calls-some-undocumented-immigrants-animals_n_5afcae35e4b0a8ec921b85e4

⁴ On twitter Lord Deben, Brendan May (@bmay) · x, twitter.com/bmay.
<https://x.com/bmay/status/1758516267089104999?s=20> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2024.]

ONE You see what I mean?
ZERO Yea, totally.
ONE What?
ZERO That didn't happen. **ONE** It did if I say it did.
ZERO Red will turn to blue if you tell it to?
ONE Precisely.
ZERO *nods*
ONE 'Cause I'm sovereign.

Seafarer's Elegy

Lord Deben is referring to King Canute's attempt to convince everyone that he could stop the tide if he placed his throne on the shoreline. The absurdity of this 12th century questionable record is compared by Lord Deben to today's reversal of obvious and provable truths simply at the order of a minister. Once again, for the purposes of drama, I had recourse to Thérèse Coffey's (Secretary of State of the Environment 2022-2023) words urging the British public to opt for "British turnips" rather than "aspects of tomatoes" which are regularly subject to severe shortages in food supplies in British supermarkets. Coffey's incoherent postulation reflects the dissolution of language resulting in indeterminacy of meaning and the abasement of political life. "It is important to make sure that we cherish the specialisms we have in this country. A lot of people would be eating turnips right now rather than thinking necessarily about aspects of lettuce and tomatoes and similar" said, Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State for the Environment (The Guardian, 2023).

The sloganistic simplification of language bears the inevitable outcome of the devaluation of all areas of political and social life, a phenomenon which also extends into personal spaces and perception of events. *Seafarer* responds to our acute need for a break, a *caesura*, in our political and psychic continuity and a heightened fatigue at the incessant manipulation of speech and narrative in an attempt to redesign established, commonly founded principles. The political events of the last decade, compounded by the emergence of the Covid pandemic and Britain's direction towards centralised, autocratic rule are personified over the last six months in the hitherto unprecedented banning of protest and the outsourcing of refugees to Rwanda. These events have produced an exorbitant spatialisation of violence in the perception of our body politic. Artistically, they can be treated as representations of an arbitrary imposition of the sovereign sphere as the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice (Agamben, 1998). Agamben claims that the bond between sovereignty and bare

life, which was once the hidden contract that underpinned the law and bore witness to the violent founding moment of the social order (when power was acquired through acts of slaughter defining the limits of the kingdom), is brought to the centre of all the ‘calculations of the modern state’ (Agamben, 1998). The last few years have been the paradigmatic space of the exorbitance of this Agambean notion of the post-sovereign: Britain is re-imagined as a vast, lawless “freeport”⁵, designed in the mode of the localised inventions of modern-day feudal lords: freeports, charter cities all in a permanent state of emergency, implied as a temporary measure but instead intended to suspend the articles of the constitution indefinitely. In Britain’s case the constitution does not exist as a legal document, but only as legal precedent and protocol.

The writing of the *Seafarer’s Elegy* was begun as one forceful jolt of the writing Self – withdrawn, structured by its own conditionality and its own harmonising schemas of apperception, pushed into the brutality of historical matter under conditions thought impossible since the end of the WWII. I align here with Kant’s integral account in the *Critique*. I, the writer, process sensible representations produced by the imagination on the basis of what is given to my senses. For Kant sensibility “alone affords us intuitions” and this is what he focuses on in the *Aesthetic*. Having established the origin of intuitions in sensibility, these are processed by the imagination and understanding which he terms ‘synthesis’. In *Logic*, he concludes that there are “three original sources” of experience: the synopsis of the manifold [of intuition] *a priori* through sense, the synthesis of this manifold through the imagination and lastly, the unity of this synthesis through original apperception (Kant et al., 2017). The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that it locates meaning not solely in the object of experience, but in the structuring activity of the subject, the ‘I think’ that must accompany all representations. In this regard, the act of writing the *Seafarer’s Elegy* unfolds not merely as inscription but as transcendental labour, one that binds sensory immediacy and historical violence through the mediating force of apperception, or imagination. The *Elegy* becomes a site with the shattered manifold of contemporary events of exilic rupture, linguistic collapse and renewed fascism, is not

⁵ The Chancellor of the Exchequer, and later Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, in his Mais Lecture 2022 went out of his way to pay tribute to his economics professor, Paul Romer. Romer advocates the concept of charter cities and free ports as a method for stimulating growth in developing countries. A charter city is territory within a nation which is taken out of the sovereign charge of the host country to be governed by the rules of the assuming entity, often a private company, under guarantee of a third nation. The cities would have administrative, fiscal, monetary and judicial autonomy. Consequently, the laws of the host country concerning human and workers’ rights, wages, healthcare and resource to legal protection do not apply to these areas.

simply recorded but synthesised into form, albeit fractured form. The conditionality of my own experience was the synthesis of language, inflected by the *a priori* time folded into the original apperception of my mother's descent into forgetfulness and what I had perceived as her decision to leave me. Reading the *Elegy* back to myself, I detect a phenomenological procedure, the maternal wound notwithstanding. For me, Kant activates the transcendental condition within the scene of writing itself. Apperception is not pure but stained by time and by exile, wounded, yet synthetic of the sensory, the imagined and the remembered. For *Seafarer*, it had to pass through the absurd to help the writer make sense of the world. Alongside the absurd and the farcical, today's British political unfoldings are still insistent on the "resolving of fictional problems by building fictional walls" (Snyder, 2019). Surrealism's artifice arises in response to this state of farcical post-sovereignty.

Engaging with a similar historical reality, Beckett, Genet, Adamov, Ionesco and Camus base their plays on the twin pillars of Protest and Paradox. The purpose of this dramatic avant-garde is as protest against the social order and the human condition not as unemotional, rational criticism or traditional didactic drama. Ionesco's and Beckett's Absurd is a chaotic and often frenzied scream. The apparent absurdity of all of Ionesco's plays is, in reality, an attempt to break through the confining borders of reality to a beyond-reality which, by its very existence, renders the everyday reality against which it protests ridiculous by contrast. The seeming irrationality of the avant-garde drama is caused by the use of the selective exaggeration of reality in an inflated padding-out of the ridiculousness of certain aspects of everyday reality. The technique of paradox is precisely this exaggeration of selected aspects of everyday reality to demonstrate its pointlessness. Ionesco and the other avant-garde dramatists always show their truths by presenting their audiences with situations that conflict so strongly with commonly accepted codes of the reasonable as to seem senseless and absurd. The point is made all the stronger, once it has sunk in, by having initially masqueraded as apparent senseless iteration.

Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco's work represented a stripping away of context and setting as elaborated by Steven Connor in *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*. Theirs was an endeavour to know oneself through language, to comprehend objectively one's subjective existence and auto-poeticise Beckett's universe is not an abstract space into which he fitted an illusion of Ireland, but an extension of home, unresolved and continuing beyond its borders. It speaks not to a post statehood earth inhabited by exiles of already-occupied ground, but a vast realm of deferred, to an extent, Derridean, yet-to-be-realised habitations. Beckett, Ionesco and Genet's universe remains under the influence of

their known environments of enslavement and colonial dominion: Ireland, Algeria, Romania. As elaborated in the work of Ruby Cohn and Rueben Rabinovitch, Beckett's use of setting engages discourses of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics more so than older ideals of universal humanism, perhaps as a first and uniquely Irish attempt to combine European-ness, English expansionism and poetics all corporeally lived by a white English-speaking male subject, existentially and territorially exiled.

The perlocutionary effect of repetition is a dynamic component of absurdist work as it leads progressively to iterative reduction: saying less and less while creates a "consciousness squeezed between past and present." (Rabinovitch, 1984). As Rabinovitch explains in his analysis of Beckett's later fiction "[repetition] creates elaborate extended metaphors that suggest the enigmatic nature of the interaction between ideal and material reality.... Whereas Dante's metaphorical settings refer to a spiritual plane of existence... Beckett's refer to existence on a mental level" (Rabinovitch, 1984). In *Seafarer*, Zero and One are sailing on a boat which is not a boat, floating on the sea which is just dry soil under their feet. Creating a world freed from geophysical convention takes the writer back to the unutterable; to a "Cartesian separation ... from the world, the most basic, and most geographically independent, of modern human conditions" (Pilling and Knowles, 1980). It is the inexorable disjuncture of objective reality and the philosophical subject, the stark and featureless environment of the Being simply "in the cosmos" is indeed, one of Absurdism's greatest achievements; an aesthetically expansive, politically charged and dramatically coherent construction of cosmopolitics (Knowlson & Pilling, 1980).

Theodor Adorno, whose readings of Beckett provide valuable insights into the author's critique of modernity, also informs on some of the best examples of this spatially and temporally interpretation of universality in Beckett's aesthetic, an aesthetic which, although geographically and historically vague, was nonetheless resolutely poetic, and logically incoherent from his own Anglophone historical moment. As Deirdre Blair puts it: "first-person monologue became stripped of the externalities of place, plot and time [so as to] make his life universal, to represent the lives of all men". The work of absurdist literature has re-evaluated the concept of "pure citizenship", the general references to contemporary political parlance on "citizens of nowhere" and ethno-state belonging, incisively, re-appointing the locus of the onto-historical outwith the "logical" and reaffirming outside-ness and bewitchment as the centre, the a priori and the logic of the ontological. Adorno writes:

[...] the experience of existence as absurd. Yet this experience is not ontological but historical [(note by Adorno) Absurdity has its historical side: for people do not themselves determine their lives in a transparent way.] The historical inevitability of this absurdity allows it to seem ontological; that is the veil of delusion produced by history itself. Beckett's drama rips through this veil.

Adorno, 1961

What is notable here is what I referred to earlier as the cyclical, mythological, monumental and ahistorical frames in which controlling narrative is built into the specific order-producing structures which foreclose anti-canonical possibilities. The ability of the surrealist object to arbitrate oppositional forces and induce a desire for resistance was the scaffold which sparked in me the urge to understand reality from a different viewpoint and, aesthetically, desire its alteration. It was also the surrealist object which became the diffractor of political darkness and the restorative agent for any degree of healing offered to the artist through the oneiric and the imaginative. This is the Middle Passage; the interstice between *Lesbos's* deconstructive analysis where language and justice form the aporia of the “epoché of the rule” (Derrida, 1990) and the anticolonial potentialities of *Scotland's Poetic Constitution*. *Seafarer* aims to navigate this interstice not by resolving the contradictions but by dwelling in them staging a poetics of rupture and, hopefully, repair. It is intended as a vessel of linguistic propulsion. In this middle passage between unmaking and re-worlding, *Seafarer* proposes a poetics of form, (auto)-poeticised from wound, loss and melody.

A Surrealist Moment

The poignancy of recent historical developments within the British Isles has been devastating and its repercussions will last for decades. Britain's exit from the European Union and the re-election of Donald Trump into the presidency of the USA alongside the rise of a new class of theocratic neo-conservatism in post-Soviet Russia and the USA, are a direct result of the political reality of fascism's re-emergence. I have attentively followed here historian Timothy Snyder's analysis in the *Road to Unfreedom* where he explains the encroachment of neofascist ideology and action emerging from modern Russian thinkers: Snyder writes: “At the same time, the Kremlin rehabilitated fascist thinkers of the era, and promoted contemporary Russian thinkers who recalled fascist ideas. The major Eurasianists of the 2010s—Alexander Dugin, Alexander Prokhanov, and Sergei Glazyev—

revived or remade Nazi ideas for Russian purposes. In his time, Ivan Ilyin was in the mainstream when he believed that the future, like the past, belonged to empires” (Snyder, 2018). The word “empire” has also not coincidentally, formed part of the post-Brexit British political landscape with terms such as “empire two” becoming part of the vernacular. In the USA, this is still in progress with the current American administration seeking annexations, renaming geographical areas and reappointing accepted terminology to reflect imperialist and expansionist goals with notable popular support. In the UK, the material consequences of these developments have echoed across politics, Human Rights, employment, social protections, jurisprudence and recognised constitutional frameworks such as the right to congregate and protest. Furthermore, the vertiginous rise in levels of poverty and destitution (Human Rights Council, 2019⁶) and the vocal assertiveness of racist politics, not witnessed since the days of Oswald Mosley, form part of official state nomenclature. I therefore make a connection between this emergent fascist discourse and its historical outcomes as a digestive disorder of the body politic expressed in surrealist mode: an absurdist world in total disconnect (Camus, 2012), a bodily excretion of nihilism and a cry for hope.

On an autopoietic level, the Kantian synthesis of the manifold of intuition, workable through sense, was amputated because the unity of apperception was no longer possible. The unity of the writer’s apperception was replaced by the writer’s powerlessness and fear. The manifold of intuition, received *a priori* through sense, has been deliberately desensitised and the manifold’s synthesis through the imagination could only be animated through a new imaginary as the old one lay in ruins. These appellations rapidly coalesced with an urge for protest and revolt, much of which resulted in a compulsion to write, process, rewrite and digest. All was obscured by the underlining anxiety that, ultimately, power was being exercised on us in a manner never previously contemplated. Brexit, amplified by the conservatives’ assault on long established Human Rights structures, marked the beginning of my mother’s “forgetfulness”; a severe, neurotic amnesia which led to her demise by a fatal blow on her cranium against a solid wooden bedframe. Through her angry screams of “where is this place?” to my father’s repeated declarations of “perhaps moving to Ireland is the solution”, through to my own emotive states, reflective of the anxieties in the arts and academia, traversing Teresa May’s Lancaster

⁶ For the full report see *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Alston, P. (2019). Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights**. [online] <https://digitallibrary.un.org>. United Nations. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3806308?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2024].

House speech, the serial resignations of senior civil servants, diplomats, members of the House of Commons, through three sets of national elections and the tragicomedy of Boris Johnson⁷ as the British Prime Minister, my mother's death was, for me, the death of the Britannic integument that had encased us for decades and welcomed the birth of my daughter in 2008. The maternal wound had been ripped open and the process of scabbing and healing was beginning. This opinion is reflected by millions of others within the British Isles. I needed to dream; I suspect, others too. And I needed to hope, as I suspect others did. And the only option left was to dream in the surrealist while hoping in the absurd.

Dramaturgically, I sought a link, both visceral and material, within the oneiric, within memory, collated and made sense of, as a dream. This, I did, because I could find no other way of painting the picture of what happens when a collective memory, as atrocious as war and genocide such as Hitler's massacres in the thirties and forties, recurs and spreads through populations, across borders and beyond communication systems in the twentieth first century. So, I resorted to knitting and knotting the absurd as it came to me: swallowed, undigested, turned about and sunken through the entire spectrum of the digestive tract. In such a state of psychic and socio-political rupture autopoiesis becomes method and survival where Cartersian philosophy locates meaning through unity the auto poetic writer begins from fracture writing not from the assurance of the "cogito" but from the trembling of the "sum". Autopoiesis doesn't restore the shattered imaginary; rather, it cultivates a poetics of aftermath, a mode of speaking, not despite the wound, but with it and through it. This writing born of protest and mourning, becomes a living archive. An archive that metabolises trauma into form. The Self is no longer a fixed identity but a generative proposition, incessantly negotiating presence and absence, memory and silence, structure and chaos. In this negotiation, the language of exile becomes auto-poetic: self-producing self-discovering and self-witnessing. The death of the mother marks the pinnacle of grief.

⁷ The political uniqueness of appointing to the highest office a man considered to be a security risk by the British Secret Services while serving as Home Office minister is yet to be measured as it has no precedent in British history. Widely reported in the British press, Johnson's close ties with questionable individuals are vastly documented. His ultimate downfall was brought about following an investigation into the "Party-gate" scandal where he was found to have misled parliament and he was further recommended for a lengthy suspension from the House of Commons. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/boris-johnsons-russian-crony-evgeny-lebedev-got-peerage-after-spies-dropped-warning-3dp6sw29x> , also <https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/119174/security/mi5-seized-boris-johnson-phone.html> , also in terms of party donations <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/feb/23/oligarchs-funding-tories> and links to "dirty money" – funds of unidentifiable origin <https://www.ft.com/content/2ccd61c2-0c4d-48ec-bcda-03ad0bb6f85c>

To the writer of exile, it also marked the collapse of inherited narratives of safety: the protection of the state from injustice, the guarantee of welfare and wellbeing and the respect for human existence, at the very least, as it was set out in the Preamble to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1946. Autopoiesis transformed anxiety into syntax by dramaturging a world where language can begin again, heavily wounded, but with vulnerability at its forefront.

Through the years since 2016 and the present time of 2025, the autopoietic self was tasked to submit to an ideological transformation reflected in the legislation passed by the British Government in this period. This can be summed up in statute form simply by citation: The Investigatory Powers Act 2016, Immigration Act 2016, European Union (Approvals) Act (repealed) 2017, Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, Data Protection Act 2018, Windrush Compensation Scheme (Expenditure) Act 2020, Internal Market Act 2020, Environment Act 2021, Trade Act 2021, Finance Act 2022. The list is not exhaustive, only indicative. It is presently crowned by the repeated attempts at securing passage of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and the Nationality and Borders Bill, effectively extending the powers of the UK border force and outsourcing asylum applications. Clause 26 makes amendments to the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 and to the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004, by allowing removal to a safe Country while the claim for asylum is still pending. This means that the Bill envisages offshore accommodation centres for asylum seekers as one component of its asylum reception system. Offshoring, a border externalisation measure, involves relocating asylum seekers to a third country until their claim to asylum is adjudicated upon, relocating the moral duty of UK judges and border control. In June 2025, this is commonplace in the USA despite its unconstitutionality and the heavy objections of the judiciary. In the words of Alison Phipps, this Bill is so cruel that “I would get down on my knees and beg if I thought it would help. Vote against the #Nationality and Borders Bill. It is a criminalising, killing machine. Had it been in placed 13 years ago I would have no children or grandchildren” (Phipps, 2022⁸). This statement also marks a pinnacle of imagined grief: “I would have no children or grandchildren”, outlines an imagined tragedy and an unimaginable loss. And there were no words to describe it. In *Seafarer* my intention was to remove the word, the structure and the continuity from the dramaturgical edifice and allow it to arbitrate oppositional forces, make an interstice for the notion of revolution, let dream bleed into the

⁸ Twitter https://twitter.com/alison_phipps/status/1506164215744278538

narrated and the visual and “the fortuitous meeting of distant realities” (Balakian, 1986). To achieve this, I sought a linguistic bascule all across the play by operating metonymy as a material, causal, or conceptual replacement (Preminger & Brogan 1993). The play is suffused with subversive irony.

In August 2019, as I put pen to paper on the *Seafarer's Elegy*, I was unsure whether it was going to be just scribbles on a piece of paper or an entire thesis chapter. The play text was written in 3 days between 6 and 9 August 2019. In the opening lines, I set the scene for a sea voyage attempted on dry land by two characters who fought together at Troy: Zero and One.

*Zero and One sit one in front of the other, facing straight ahead.
They're rowing on dry land.
They are quite simple.*

ZERO Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily-merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream
Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily-merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream
ONE stops rowing

ONE I'm tired
ZERO You're fine.
ONE I got arthritis.

The Seafarer's Elegy, (L10-20) 2019

Zero and One are two old sailors - or two men who think themselves old sailors - with no obvious connection to the sea. Their names symbolise the descending and decaying order of our present political vision and an allegory to the much celebrated “majority rule” or “will of the people” as referenced by British politicians in relation to Parliament’s and the judiciary’s irrelevance⁹ and their desire to energise ochlocracy through the use of incendiary rhetoric and high states of emotion. The draft is raw and was deliberately not redrafted for dramaturgical or production purposes.

⁹ There are numerous examples in the conservative press, I cite the Daily Mail’s <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3903436/Enemies-people-Fury-touch-judges-defied-17-4m-Brexit-voters-trigger-constitutional-crisis.html>

The plot is static, episodic and entirely absurd. Zero and One are not at sea; they do, however, imagine themselves as modern versions of the Ithacan King Odysseus traversing the Aegean Sea on his return from Troy. They are not sailing a sailboat, yet they are convinced that they are. They are much preoccupied by the imminent arrival of a Big Sugar Ship, symbolising the visions of Empire Two and the mythologies of the past as propagated by the British State since 2010 and intensely since the Brexit referendum. References to “sugar” are designed to arouse potent emotional flows and the visceral sentiments of reminiscing of slavery’s material realities. Zero and One are both in high alert as they anticipate the arrival of illustrious guests to be hosted on their tiny dinghy which they continue to see as a significant sailboat. There are moments of clarity and discord. Zero is the Freudian Ego (Ich). He is by characterised by an undifferentiated psychic structure. His early disappointments have resulted in the separation between his desires and their fulfilments and he has learned how to manipulate. Against Zero’s dominance, One is the Freud’s Id (Es in Freud). He is more subservient; his iterations are the seat of desire and instinct. They are both subjected to the identical delusion of greatness-to-come without any regard to truth or evidence. As they fight the imaginary waves of the Aegean, the Seer, Tiresias, borrowed from Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, pays them a visit. The Seer joins in the absurdity but offers a cold reminder that our perception of ourselves is often only a marker of our ongoing oppression. In the words of David Graeber: “someone who is defined as Black is not allowed to forget that during a single moment of their existence; his or her own self-definition is of no significance to the banker who will deny him credit, or the policeman who will arrest him for being in the wrong neighbourhood, or the doctor who, in the case of a damaged limb, will be more likely to recommend amputation. (Graeber, 2004). Despite all their noble and comedic desires, Zero and One shall remain at zero level of both political significance and ontological affirmation. Their protest is swallowed by the imaginary dark waves of the Aegean; their reality shall remain uninstantiated.

Seafarer proposes to stand as transitional space between the deconstructed new bodies of LESBOS and the palimpsest of bodies imagined in the *Poetic Constitution for Scotland*. The question in *Seafarer* is how to create a theatrical metaphysics of speech “gesture and expression in order to save it from its servitude to psychology” (Artaud, 2013). The enquiry becomes about the metaphysics of being *qua* being, all the first causes of beings, to get past language and delineate all fundamental concepts and standard assumptions between the ontological and the teleological, between necessary and contingent truths. Things happen in the world and natural events produce other events but what is the nature

of the causal relation that underlies these transactions. As Artaud urges, I attempted an “equation between man, society, nature and objects” using language no longer as a vehicle for direct communication or interpretation of the psychic movements of a character but rather in its grammatical, syntactic and especially intertextual force. Without delving too profoundly into Kristeva’s theory of pre-linguistic semiotic contesting Lacanian Symbolic, I will affirm that, conditionally, the poetic pre-discursive disturbs the universality of the Symbolic, intelligible, rules-governed speech. The poetic is ungovernable, as is the exilic. They are both unpredictable, fearsome and boundless and that is why in fascist and neofascist contexts they are both brutally opposed. In 2022 the American Library Association released new data documenting “1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago” (Kay, 2023). The autopoietic function resisted this by ordering the poetic to act as a meta-reflexive schema granting form and motion to the different layers of language, so it could be seen, felt and heard differently.

In the context of the Anglo-Scottish relation, I mark the transition from *Lesbos*’s deconstructive poetics to the *Seafarer*’s post-poetic with pastiche, parody and absurdism. *Elegy* and the sublime give way to the unconscious elegiac and the undemocratic sublime. The constitutional upheaval of Brexit is the moment of utter dyspepsia of post Second World War Britain’s digestive tract. The performance of sovereignty, beginning with the performative constitution of the subject and the performative generation of the legal person, theatricalises language by creating a meta-jurisprudence in which the law sees the world as the atoms of classical jurisprudence. The legal person (*ius civitatus*) is not the human being with its own ontological existence. It is a linguistic output of semantics internally constructed within law’s self-referential and self-replicating discourses.

Enter the Seer.

THE SEER I am the Seer.

ONE Hello good sir.

ZERO Where are you from?

THE SEER I am not from these parts.

ONE Alrighty...

ZERO Are you not a parliamentarian?

THE SEER No

ONE A proletarian?

THE SEER No.

ONE A revolutionary?

THE SEER No.

ONE A functionary?

THE SEER I'm not a functionary.
ONE A reactionary?
THE SEER You could say that.

The Seafarer's Elegy L608-621

In the chronological moment of Britain's post grand narrative iterated through the Windrush scandal and Brexit, *Seafarer* has no choice but to confront the complexity of being-in-time and being-in-the-world. The gentlemen's agreement which formed the foundation of the British constitution foundered not on an administrative principle but, also, on the disappearance of gentlemen. The metamorphosis occurred suddenly, and the consequences were dire for Britain's digestive tract. The monstrous ego of the great imperial power imposed on itself isolation separation and degeneration. Victor Klemperer's *The Language of the Third Reich*, accounts for the Nazi era's ubiquitous "appeasement" and "inaction" by German intellectuals which the regime willingly used to "encode the message of fascism" and pervert the truth; to give falsehood the appearance of truth (Klemperer, 1942). Ionesco's protagonists pervert language, and in their meaninglessness, his iterations become deadlier as semantic anarchy equals moral anarchy. The sovereign isle metamorphosed into a tedious illusion with its future only an eternal present, "flowed out of the present and down the drain to be swallowed up by nothingness" (Sartre, 1952). For the writer in exile, this process stigmatises both, the historical event but, more agonisingly, the writer himself. In the words of Cixous, "stigma hallmarks, for the best and for the worst: stigmata on the body are as noble as they are ignominious, depending on whether it is Christ or the outcast who is marked" (Cixous, 2010). The stigmatised is the outlaw, the martyr and the condemned. The stigma conveys the strongest message. Whether good or bad, the stigmatised will never remove the stigma and those who have inflicted it have committed an irredeemable act. Learning to walk alongside this stigma constitutes a principal and fundamental condition for autopoiesis as it conveys its transpositional movement across linguistic, ontological and discursive levels.

Mutilation: The Middle Passage

British political developments since 2016 were schematised in my own imaginary as a poetics of castration and loss: Amputation of the organs of nurture, sustenance and pleasure against a canvas of necropolitics. In that vein, I conceived of the imagined Sugar Ship with its soaring mermaid on her bow. Her parodied body, I imagined as one of a crouching lion

featuring exposed, imagined, female genitalia. I realise the provocation in this. As an artist, this is my function. To offer a needling to what is out there and hope to vex. Traversing the middle passage, the very locus of trauma, pain and loss, is a significant step towards the poet's autopoiesis. The language before languaging, the physical, the chōric and Kristeva's semiotic before the symbolic. It was imperative that the juridical self disappear to allow an opening for the unspeakable self to emerge.

Through this process, there was an augmented sense of helplessness for the woman/artist existing and surviving in the newly formed Britannic encasement which necessitated the form of a regal, ironic and powerful symbol of womanhood, implicated in both invocations and subversions of metonymies of class. The mermaid, reminiscent in posture of the Egyptian Sphinx, traditionally used for rulers and the otherwise powerful "masters", both in ancient times and in recent centuries (Regier, 2004), stands here for the enslaved people of modernity and race-based slavery in particular, invoking, Windrush. Revisited today, it also prophesises the forced Rwandan deportations proposed by the Johnson government.

THE SEER Monsieur Le Commissaire
ZERO Sshhh, he talking to the Commissaire!
ONE Oh, right...
THE SEER The moment will come soon when the big chests are opened.
ZERO The sooner,
ONE I'm scared.
ZERO Of what?
ONE They're never going to leave us alone
ZERO Are you raving mad? We waited for this for weeks, years. The big ship! The sugary treats: the huge big lips, the hyperbolic vaginas, the welcoming breasts, the nurturing arms. These passengers upon her are going to save us!
ONE I can't see them very well.
ZERO That's because your eyes are faulty.
ONE Can you touch any of them?
ZERO Don't be so impatient. Good things take time.

The Seafarer's Elegy 1:824-990

This enormous sugary ship which carries on its bow a gigantic Mermaid with "large breasts that are staring at you" proposes irony and satire against the dominant gaze, as it is deployed in critiques of coloniality (Bhabha, 1994). It proposes role reversal against the organising principle of culture itself to which the Mermaid has neither access nor influence. She is inanimate and therefore beyond caring and beyond pain. She is indestructible.

Historically, body position (vertical/horizontal) has held metonymic relevance for power and submission. Visual representation, including art, has often used the upright or standing/soaring body (usually masculine) for power or authority while using the reclining/resting body (usually feminine) for weakness, helplessness, or disempowerment (Nasser, 2011). With the exception of Queen Victoria, even now, statues of powerful women standing in public spaces are very rare (Baird, 2017).

ONE YES!
ZERO The Ship.
ONE With the mermaid on her bow.
ZERO She, made of sugar too!
ONE Check out those breasts
ZERO They're staring at you, man.
ONE I could bite her nipples
ZERO Look at her
ONE I'm looking.
ZERO Can you see her?
ONE I can
ZERO The vagina?
ONE Oh, Aye!
ZERO The other organisms?
ONE Organs, you moron.
ZERO Organs. Whatevs. Can you seem them?
ONE Well, in a subjective sort of way...

The Sugar Ship invokes the soaring mermaid and her parodied body of a powerful yet powerless female figure. In political materiality this was the removal from a European family, the abhorrent consequences of Windrush, the removal of rights and protections re-labelled as “red-tape”, the removal of environmental and phytosanitary protections relabelled as “Empire II”, the extermination of the farming and fishing industry, the removal of money-laundering safeguards, the triumphalisation of “unregulated deals”, tax havens and Special Economic Zones (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/freeports>), the removal of the right to resist (Public Order Bill 2023) and the redesigning of the devolution settlement aiming for the total subjugation of the four nations of the British Isles under the absolute, centralised and heavily controlled outfit, “Global Britain”. In Stanley’s interpretation, this is an appearance of neo-fascism in a very specific form – the past is mined not for a uniform set of traditions and cultures. It is rather mined for a “sense of past glory – which is why fascist leaders always appeal to a sense of loss not merely about traditions, but about *empire* – and why fascist politics is particularly dangerous in times of loss or decline of empire” (Stanley, 2020).

Resorting to often disturbing imagery of mutilation and decay is a natural reaction for the artist. The metaphorical uses of consuming and digesting into political critique proved incalculably powerful tools of metaphorising the *a priori* sensible of intuition unified and digested onto the material page. Similes of consuming, digesting, and excreting, used metaphorically, are widespread during agonistic moments of political instability and conflict. Literature and drama are replete with allegories of the physical body replicating the dyspepsia of the body politic. Physiologists often investigate the emotional and psychological manifestations of indigestion, colloquially understood as what is happening in the guts, or “gut feeling”. The focus on digestion in concomitance with visual and literary sources, plays a role in helping us understand the levels of meaning in political caricatures and in particular where women’s writing metonymises dissection, maternity and their visualisation in the implication of colonialism with slavery and respective sugar production. The backbreaking, perilous, and expensive labour in transatlantic slave trade which ensured continuous supply of luxury sugary goods and the economic system that accompanied it was a barrier to mass production—until the development of “colonial sugar.” Sugar slavery in the Americas enabled the generation of “white gold,” a source of wealth for [...] the British Empire in particular (Aronson & Budhos, 2017). Adding to my previous mention of Agamben, it is worth noting that slavery not only provided an imagistic and aesthetic addendum to colonial domination, it also significantly underpinned the law and bore witness to the violent founding moment of the colonial social order which brought to the centre the design of the modern state (Agamben, 1998).

For African women novelists, Africa is the protective maternal womb and, by extension, a potentiality of rebirth and a possibility of a good life. The literary production of the Négritude movement between the 1930s and the 1960s within its Francophone context grants this work much of its impetus both for its fortitude and resistance. Négritude, revolutionary in its time, had as a main objective the re-appraisal of Black history and civilisation. By the 1960, as independences were won in the French African colonies, three French-Caribbean women writers, Condé, Schwarz-Bart, and Warner-Vieyra, undertook the complex task of demystifying Négritude against male Francophone Caribbean thinkers such as Jacques Stéphen Alexis and Frantz Fanon. What is a significant common denominator in the works of these three women writers, is their rejection of the traditional feminine representation of Africa and their subsequent preference for a masculine allegorisation of the continent. *Heremakhonon* (1976) and *Une saison à Rihata* (1981) by Condé, *Ti Jean L’Horizon* by Schwarz-Bart in 1979, and *Juletane* by Warner-Vieyra in 1982, all depict Africa as a disappointing father figure, removing the all-powerful

omniscient male figurehead. What is particularly meaningful for my own writing is that these women writers' subversion of the metaphorical figure of Africa is tied to their womanhood. Aimé Césaire, Guy Tirolien, and Maryse Condé, among others, came to portray Africa, quite consistently, as the maternal figure from which the Black Diaspora had been severed due to the Middle Passage. Africa is implicitly compared to a female womb by Césaire's in these poignantly visceral lines:

Je force la membrane vitelline qui me sépare de moi-même, Je force les
grandes eaux qui me ceignent de sang [I break the vital membrane that
separates me from myself. I break the huge waters that cover me with
blood]

Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*

Africa, for the poet, represents the original womb from which he is reborn in order to access his true identity. A uterine space, Africa is also the afterlife at the end of the hero's journey. The spleen metaphor in *Seafarer* is inspired by "les grands eaux" of the maternal womb:

ZERO Nothing to be done.

ONE Try again.

*ZERO with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off a bit of flesh. He
peers inside the wound, finds nothing feels about inside it, turns, shakes
ONE, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing.*

ONE Well?

ZERO Nothing.

ONE Show me.

ZERO It's just a bit of your flesh.

ONE Put it back in.

ZERO I can't put a bit of meat back into your body man, I just pulled it out.

ONE I can't row your boat then without that bit of meat that covers my spleen.

ZERO There's man all over for you, blaming on his meat the faults of his laziness.

Seafarer's Elegy L170-178

Notwithstanding the profoundness of uterine and placental metaphor, observing first-hand brains, hearts, livers, stomachs, and intestines, makes for vivid comedy in *Seafarer*. The process of objectifying these impulses became, for me, a process of historicising and ordering events, a shifting of the focus from the ultimate material expression all the way to the complexity and intricacy of social inter-dependencies (Dombroski, 1999). I need to admit that the pathos of digesting, albeit for myself, our neo-fascist moment and the power of its accumulative potential became a dialogue with the self, with my supervisor, Alison

Phipps, with the few who read it. And that is also let one artistic process bleed into the next. There is a natural evolution between the deconstructive impetus in *Lesbos* ordered by the merciless spread of an inexplicable plague, yet braced up and encircled by Platonic erotics, hospitality and the historical incalculable, to the *Seafarer's Elegy*, a dialogue with the self and the maternal self, a disposition rather than a position. I will make a pause here to circle back to the self. Surrealist approaches often meander through and beyond the absurd for it is in the elusiveness of the absurd that the nihilism of the historical moment can be surveyed and poeticised.



Alberto Giacometti's *Femme Egorgée* (Woman with the Throat Cut) 1932. Scottish Galleries of Modern Art

By the time the *Poetic Constitution for Scotland* was conceived, my mother had departed. The absurdity of Britain's digestive disorder had become the materiality of "world-beating global Britain" and the intestine was preparing to expel its imperial contents into the full view of the world. Free of obligations, regulations, unbound like a latter-day Prometheus only not bringing fire but discord and abjection. The *Seafarer's Elegy* became *Scotland's Poetic Constitution*.

The obsessive preoccupation with the dis-eased body politic continued and is enfolded in the present day in the arrests of peaceful protestors carried out on behalf of the Home

Secretary Patel¹⁰. Little is left for the artist to hold on to, with the exception of the irony and tragedy to be found in self-harm and self-castration.

ONE Let's hang ourselves!

TWO What?

ONE Hang ourselves.

TWO Why?

ONE To get an erection.

ZERO I don't need an erection, thanks.

ONE It's not a bad thing to get.

ZERO A bit unnecessary under the present circumstances wouldn't you agree?

ONE Still, quite a positive thing.

The Seafarer's Elegy L441-469

The textualization of the corporeal and the symbolic haemorrhaging, is here shown in the circumcision rite. It represents a less exceptional form of the religious ablation of a part of the body, and even though the patient himself does not act, this rite is seen here as a kind of collective auto-mutilation, a somatisation of an intrapsychic conflicts. There is considerable medical scholarship to attest to these intrapsychic conflicts as manifested in the mouth, the stomach, the small intestine, the large bowel, and the anus. There is also a long history of psychoanalytic treatments for patients with peptic ulcer, regional ileitis, and ulcerative colitis, irritable stomach, even with hyperacidity and irritable colon. The duodenal ulcer and the ulcerative colitis belong to the true somatopsychic and psychosomatic diseases (Clodi, 1977) among the most frequent disorders caused by psychosomatic mechanisms. Loss, disorientation in the political and social continuity and collective amputation reflects what Pierre Janet describes as "legendary psychasthenia" in which the psychotic is unable to locate himself or herself in a position in space (Grosz, 1994). Grosz explains this phenomenon of "depersonalisation by assimilation to space" experienced both by insects and by the psychotic as:

Both the psychotic and the insect renounce their rights to occupy a perspectival point, abandoning themselves to being spatially located by/as others. The primacy of one's own perspective is replaced by the gaze of another, for whom the subject is merely a point in space and not the focal point organizing space.

Grosz, 1994

¹⁰ I cite two examples: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/25/woman-arrested-at-sarah-everard-vigil-to-start-legal-challenge-against-met> and on the day of compiling this piece <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jun/28/police-swoop-on-stop-brexit-man-under-new-anti-protest-law>

Naturally, the play between the body, power, size, omnipotence and impotence reverts to the penis. Luce Irigaray represents the history of philosophy, literature and art from the time of Plato on as “the expression of a seamless masculine imaginary” (Battersby, 1993). In *Seafarer* I attack this moment of seamlessness in utilising the grotesque collocation of the catastrophic and violent – rope, sails, dinghy- with the banal and the merely absurd – the last hope for erection, affirmation of the Symbolic order and Lacan’s prohibitive law of the father, culturally sanctioned and yet only possible in Thanatos “not worth hanging yourself over. I think it is”.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar used the metaphor of the pen as penis entitling the patriarchal order to have authority over the creative process. By saying “women have sexual organs more or less everywhere” (Irigaray, 1985), Luce Irigaray inaugurates the idea that woman’s creative organ is their body. In that vein, I have further followed Hélène Cixous’s prompt to explode the oppressive structures of conventional thought and language; giving myself the ownership and the authorship of my own genealogy in the moment that it was most poignantly denied to me as author and as citizen. Cixous says, “By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions” (Cixous, 1999).

Progressing on from Cixous’s thoughts, I suggest that our body politic has assumed the conceptualisation of a dyspeptic disorder and has engendered an insidious form of farcical identification through dis-ease: “queue jumpers”, “those who steal our jobs”, the “judges who rule against the people”, “the women who do not know their place”, the “European Convention of Human Rights attempting to overtake the British State” all common expressions used in British tabloids daily, read and applauded by tens of millions of people. At the time of writing *Seafarer*, the constant onslaught of these phrases in both press and television, provided me with conceptual parallels which strayed towards Dada, not only parodying art and culture but also extending the allegory across conceptual and semiotic fields to self-mimicking and self-parody caricaturing.

SURREAL-ISING FASCISM: TRANSCENDENCE OR PRAXIS?

ONE Are you telling me we're to keep on rowing until we see this magic "ship" then?

ZERO Yes.

ONE puts down the imaginary oars.

ONE Well I'm going on strike.

ZERO You can't go on strike. It's just you and me here.

ONE I can. I go on strike; you keep on rowing.

ZERO This thing will capsize with just me rowing.

ONE Look, I can't lift my arm no more. I'm wounded.

ZERO You just remembered that?

ONE It's just started oozing out blood.

ZERO Oh, this is most unsightly.

ONE It is. Look away now. And let me get a nap.

He lies down to sleep

Seafarer's Elegy L122-140

"Who makes empire possible?" has been an overarching question guiding my work of the last five years. With hyperbolic iterations of greatness and empire in the UK echoed by the MAGA slogans in the USA and the triumphalisation of "historical Russia" by Vladimir Putin (Snyder, 2021), echoed by other fervent patriots the world over. While I accept that the piece has sprung from transcendental intuition and by an aesthetic ordered at a given time by the conditionality of my own experiences and perceptions, this happened inside a historical moment and was, inevitably, reordered by material events. I cannot ascertain the degree to which our intuitive perception conditions the world around us. As an artist, I rely on intuition very heavily while being in an incessant dialectics of processes and relations within our social formation. Mirroring this, the linguistic absurdity of the *Seafarer's Elegy's* characters subsists both in their solipsistic comedy and its multi-layered modes of production, history, memory and complex modes of meaning-making. While an extensive explication of Marxian philosophy is not within the scope of this work, it is important to underline the constitutive role of relations of production and meaning-making and reassert the duty of the artist to enunciate their art in the material world shared by all humans, especially in times of ideological earthquakes such as the present.

Making sense of Britain since 2010 requires revisiting the precepts of fascism as an ahistorical core with wide interpretative applicability. In his political philosophy Jason Stanley aims to rescue the concept of fascism from the discipline of history and demonstrate its centrality in political and social philosophy. He argues that "such a rescue would in fact constitute a return; some of the greatest theorists of fascism, such as Theodore Adorno and Hannah Arendt, were philosophers" (Stanley, 2017). The first task is

to locate fascism's universal significance and recognisable characteristic as a philosophical concept. To this end, I have followed the philosophical and linguistic interpretations of Stanley in both *How Fascism Works* (2018) and *How Propaganda Works* (2021), Timothy Snyder's analysis in *On Tyranny* (2017) and the poetic philosophy of Umberto Eco in *How to Spot a Fascist* (2020). In *How Fascism Works*, Jason Stanley argues that the "proper term is *fascism*."

Much as the interwar era was a crossroads of shifting conceptions, this may be a time to re-examine bodies in the street; in the auditorium; bodies on the sea; bodies exiled; bodies politic and bodies natural, highly susceptible to persuasion by image, emotion, and myth; bodies antithetical to reason, dialogue, and individuality. The present moment has brought about the destruction of fact and propositional truth and their ultimate replacement by farcical, unmeritorious and vexatious post-truth. What, in our political dramaturgy, has replaced fluid, pluralistic, anti-authoritarian discourse with regressive, dysfunctional and disposable cheerleading programmed to prop up cult figures and renege on the social contract in spite of its frailties.

The conclusion of the *Seafarer's Elegy* offers no consolation. The great and the good come to the realisation that Democracy, in all her transgenerational and meta-historical glory, with internal organs poking out is the receptacle of the world's last bowel movement.

ZERO One?

ONE Yes.

ZERO I can't go on like this.

ONE Why not? If I can go on with my spleen poking out, then we can both go on.

ZERO We thought we was so special.

ONE Well, we kind of are...I mean...Greece... *is* quite something.

ZERO Mother of Democracy and that.

ONE Oh, lock her up.

ZERO Make her great again.

ONE Locker her up is cooler. It's like...kinkier.

ZERO Jew

ONE Arab

ZERO Pansexual

ONE Monosexual

ZERO Tuberculic

ONE Syphilitic

ZERO Still Greek

ONE I know

ZERO And beautiful.

ONE Not really.

ZERO Greece is actually great.

ONE The envy of the civilised world.
ZERO It's all shit.
ONE We just got shat on.
ONE We got pissed on.
ZERO And shat on.
ONE You might say so.

The use of slurs based on religious backgrounds is common in everyday parlance and commonly used by the press to insinuate moral reprehension. According to a comment published as early as 2007 in the Guardian newspaper¹¹ “Yid, Spic, Chav Scum, Towel Head, Rag Head, Pikey, Chinky, Paki, Terrorist, Half Breed, Nigger,” read the signs held up by children on the front of the Sun” (The Guardian, 2007). The European Commission’s Report Against Racism and Intolerance levelled serious criticism against the UK press (European Commission, 2023). The commission noted “considerable intolerant political discourse in the UK” chiefly focusing on immigration, discrimination against ethnic groups, and a spike in online abuse and violent racist incidents. The unprecedented spike in inflammatory discourse, often uttered by senior Cabinet Ministers and Prime Ministers serving between the years 2010 and 2023 have provided the absurdist foundation of anti-theatre.

Imitating political discourse’s utter inability to counter the official narrative of the last decade, *Seafarer’s* two protagonists are aware that any action or attempt at action in itself is directionless. Zero is the questioning intellectual, One is the instinctive, sometimes childish, dependant. The elements of theatre that would support a narrative have themselves become the narrative the play is not about the sugar ship it is about waiting and about the compulsive need for action where action seems the least plausible solution. This view of the world, the unnecessary misery of our human condition, is possibly the best way to interpreting this work. Exilic Life is “bare”, to borrow from Agamben. It is bare suffering in a meaningless universe: existence, ontology and responsibility are meaningless and therefore expel the individual into a world filled with suffering. There is value in acknowledging this prior to seeking redemption. The act of acknowledgement and dialogue with oneself can be interpreted as the first step towards expiation. In pedagogy, this may be a process of self-evaluation prior to seeking outward acknowledgement.

¹¹ Busfield, S. (2007). The Sun’s front page insults. *The Guardian*. [online] 30 Jan. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/organgrinder/2007/jan/30/thesunsfrontpageinsults> [Accessed 7 Nov. 2023].

The narratives of exile are principally characterised by, and inscribed in, their temporality. Temporality cannot escape changeability nor can exile escape the inevitable change that time dictates. Exilic time, on the margins, can, with time, become civic time, regular time or even “central” time as the exile morphs on differentiated ontologies. This space is not easily controlled nor is its narrative. The controlling of narrative is a constitutive atom of the formation of national consciousness and the division of hierarchies in human society. Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes were amongst the first to present the scaffolding of synchronicity as an anthropological study. They reconstituted the syntax of human behaviour, as a retracing of the course of choices facing the human character. Barthes discusses Levi-Strauss’ and Jakobson’s paradigmatic operations extended along the lines of narrative as well as Todorov’s attempts to “determine the rules by which narrative combines, varies and transforms a certain number of basic predicates”. This is a polemic point. The temporally iterated narrative is the point of exclusion, the opportunity and the temporality to avail ourselves to the temporally Other and the temporally distant, a reaffirmation that time as insuppressibly open to the “radically Other” and thereby perilously available to the exile.

Synchronicity or a certain immobilisation of time renders the text governable and well-behaved to the controlling mechanisms of state dissection and articulation. Barthes notes that the notion of the synchronic “accredits a certain immobilisation of time”, which beyond affirming the Platonic comfort in unchangeability, and describes it as the “controlled succession of a certain number of mental operations whose goal is the reconstruction of an object”. The Levi-Straussian precept of “myth as the suppression of time”, I am guessing, rests on the binary logic of myth as reducible to the logic of timelessness. Exilic time discloses the biographical and through this attachment the diachronic. It thus gains privileged access to the experience of time and the complex matrix of temporal narrative. A-historical state-sanctioned utterances of exile are given as a synchronic, a-historical, flattened and ossified statements designed to exclude time. The reason for this is that time is to be controlled and along with time, the ordering and manipulation of historical time and, in turn, the ordering of production and its outputs.

Dwelling on language’s pedagogical value as a transformative, enriched, displaced, intra-existential force, *LESBOS* and *Seafarer* follow this cross-correlate, circular, splitting/re-joining narrative matrix. I will agree with Derrida that presence is the primary phenomenon of language. It is made possible by the relationship that the utterance in question bears to

the various differential series to which it belongs and to their respective intentions and references. Presence is the inflected accusative of a linguistic subject's desire. Making "present" draws in pasts and futures. Performing present threatens order and invokes the wrath of history. That is why dominant discourse implements all it can to paralyse it.

DAS ES UND DAS ICH: ZERO AND ONE

"When we all fall asleep,

Where do we go?"

Eilish, 2019

In this Act, I have examined the inner space of exile against its outer layer and re-ordered language against its Other. Following Schmitt, I have petitioned Agamben to help me create a caesura between between what is inside and what is outside of the law. I have drawn heavily on the apparatus of metaphor both in its linguistic and aesthetic but also its structural potency. Metaphor unveils the manifold of control mechanisms available to power and the incalculable impacts these wield on individual consciousness. It thus bears on our ability to exercise our deliberative function and our interpretative capacity.

Sovereignty, as both metaphor and materiality, is the potentiality of juridical enunciation; it opens the space within which the law can speak while at the same time being above this same sphere and above determinate jurisdiction. The suspended, divided space between sovereignty and Agamben's bare life is the caesura of political signification and its excess. For Agamben, the border of the political is the division between politically qualified life and 'bare life', between a juridically determined order, and an anomic political space. This is not a division between political identities. It is, rather, a caesura between a life that is determined by political identity, and an anomic life outside determinacy.

Seafarer offers the remedy between these two forms of politico-juridical caesura: the paralysis of *bare life* and the potentiality of delimitation of political identity over and against its excess. For Agamben's metaphysical thought, the limit of language is the point at which signification recoils. The linguistic presupposition involved in the metaphysical conception of language thus institutes a caesura between the word, conceived of as signs, and the being of those entities which those signs attempt to represent. While the word can represent utterances about its subjects, it cannot "*sagen*" (say) its existence, the fact of its

being (Agamben, 1991). The utterance cannot be said in language but is rather presupposed in it.

Seafarer was written at a time when, for its author, the ability of language to “speak” had a limit. This linguistic limit is all that is found outside and before determination and has its philosophical correlate in the metaphysical category of ‘pure being’ or πρώτη ουσία (prōte ousia). I will accept here Heidegger’s reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit* that this “before and outside” of language is essential. It is the ground of all categorical determinations of being and is as such the “possibility of any knowledge of being” ([Hegel in] Heidegger, 1994). The absurd attempts and fails to address this lacuna and thus creates the break, the caesura of the unsayable, the unutterable. Our condition of possibility of using words as signs is more originary than the division between sign and signified; it is the moment when language opens. It is possibly the moment when language gives us the power to feel, intuit and attempt the unutterable. For Derrida, fascism is the ultimate terror and the ultimate surrender. What it needs to flourish is control of discourse and removal of our temporal consciousness. If the ‘when’ of history can be misunderstood, so will be the ‘how’. The sign, in Derrida, is a sign of something, it stands in for the thing in its absence, representing it in view of its return: the sign stands between two presents, and can only be understood in relation to the priority of the presence of these two presents (Derrida, 1982). The texts of LESBOS and *Seafarer* aim to lead us down philosophy’s slippery slope: that since Plato’s *Republic*, time and change are isomorphic to chaos. Intelligibility and control begin with the elimination of the temporal (Wood, 1989). Philosophy’s grand project of discovering truth is perennially threatened by the temporal because the temporal is underwritten by change. And change, from Aristotle to our times, is inevitably slippery and evasive (Coope, 2005). Philosophy’s discovering of truth is and shall remain an unreciprocated and unresolvable quest but in the present time of algorithmic distortion and the authoritarian rule, Beckett’s 1953 guttural cry in the *Unnamable* is all too unescapable : " What I speak of, what I speak with, all comes from them" (Beckett, 2010).

Esslin characterises his own moment as the “the dramatic riddles of our time” (Esslin, 1960), a term heavily pregnant with our contemporary condition. *Seafarer* illuminates the other side of the riddle of what it means to be human by creating a language outside of syntax. The answer is simple, and it is disturbing: to be human is to seek endlessly for a universe in which to enjoy being human. The doctrine of absurdity puts man in a meaningless universe but enumerates the characteristics of that universe without really suggesting ways for man to cope with life in it. In the historical moment of writing

Seafarer there was neither time nor place to address the very process of structuring experience into the poles of subject and object. There was also a strengthening of the significance of autopoiesis in the exploration of the flight from self and what happens when object and subject are severed, and language no longer serves the political Self. Revisiting Beckett's *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*, I observed the impossibility of the isolation of human consciousness and the longed-for release. Release from the "mother", release from the body and release from consciousness. Language is both a burden and a blessing. Even as language fails him Molloy continues to be verbose, often circular in his narration. Molloy finally concedes: "The truth is, I haven't much will left. If I could, I'd just lie down in the ditch and stay there. But I have to move on. I can't stay here. It's not allowed" (Beckett, 1955). The exiled Irishman longs to retract himself but that longing is defeated by a persistent force keeping him in the world.

Experience had become an experience of nothing. The only reality I, the exile, knew was the inability to interpret the present's own structure (Leavy, 1980). Graphically put, in the words of historian Simon Schama: "over two millennia of political- philosophical debate since Aristotle and Plato - has culminated in "flooding the zone with shit" (Schama, 2025). Fascism's work is done. Only Absurdism can show it in its full, terrifying dimension. The forced language of others, present in Ionesco and Artaud signals submission, destined for "the masses" (Artaud, 1956). Autopoietic creation provides a defence against Beckett's "them", the unidentifiable Other in the creation of a personal, intimate, anti-syntactical, absurdist language.

It may point to a reversal to a prelinguistic, pre-conscious path, if only, in man's quest to make sense of the world. In short, where political language is manipulated to induce passivity and polarisation, the autopoietic exilic writer insists on a refusal to be absorbed into the cycles of outrage and instant recognisability. She writes not to be legible to power, but to read between, over and above its lines. Tentatively and hesitantly, following Beckett's suspended laws of physics, Derrida's grammatology and Soyinka's tragic ethics, on the recursive structure of autopoiesis, the exilic writer can begin to reclaim the poetic as political.

ACT IV

THE FOREIGNER'S POETIC CONSTITUTION: PERFORMING EXILE IN SCOTLAND

CHORUS Who are we?

Each gets up and repeats after the line

CHORUS Gaels

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Eritrean women

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Irish poets

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Indian surgeons

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Jamaican sculptors

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Jewish philosophers

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Sikh policemen

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Italian artists

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Polish doctors

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS Malaysian architects

ACTOR I am Scotland

CHORUS The McGeechies of Kilchenzie

CATRIONA I am Scotland

CHORUS (*to Billy*) Go on!

BILLY I am Scotland

A Poetic Constitution for Scotland, 2020, Act 3 Scene 16

The final practice piece of drama in this thesis is the *Poetic Constitution for Scotland*.

Written in 2020 the author/exile (myself) was tasked with researching and writing a complex authorial piece whose culmination became the eponymous theatre play, filmed at the James Arnott Theatre in Glasgow on St Andrew's Day, 30 November 2020. The video can be viewed on the YouTube platform of the University of Glasgow's College of Arts <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Js422sG1XWI>. This final piece poses the ultimate question on how the exiled Self writes the exiled Other. It makes the Constitution, in a Brechtian manner, the protagonist in a national drama with events and tensions unfolding around it. Written by a New Scot inextricably involved in the complex world of pedagogy and performance, the thesis ends with the aporia of what is the Other; the historical, the

cultural, the inalienable and bizarre Other who is forever there, uninvited, to discomfit our ontological lullaby.

The play, commissioned under the auspices of the Chancellor's Fund of the University of Glasgow, the Being Human Festival¹² and the British Academy, was filmed in strict lockdown after a short rehearsal period, reduced to only three days following lockdown guidance issued by the Scottish Government. The project's creation and the play text's authorship were entrusted to me, in both my capacities as artist and researcher. Above and through it all, I am an exile, deemed as ontologically *ex*-(outside) *orion*-(of boundaries) in terms of ethnic identity but also epistemically exterior, in respect to cultural norms. As such, my presence as the embodiment of the boundary-crossing Other, forces both an interruption onto the canonical national narrative and a provocation: by writing the *Poetic Constitution*, I meddled in other people's affairs. I translated Scotland in order to write Scotland. I allowed myself to be "extracted", in the spirit mentioned in the methodology, in order to extract language. I listened to the vernacular, to the ancient tonalities of the Picts and the Celts, the Norman, and the Saxon, both comprehensible and incomprehensible to me, in order to be listened to. I invited the vernacular to be written on me, in order to give myself permission to write it. What is different about this piece is that the writer of exile is writing about a nation in exile. Scotland is of course, constitutionally and jurisdictionally, an integral part of the United Kingdom. Her existence, however, has been marked by her struggles within and against English hegemony, historically since Edward I's invasion in 1296 which deposed King John Balliol, followed a year later by William Wallace's victory against the English at Stirling. Scotland's land is not inert, it has etched itself with cycles of enclosure, Highland and Lowland roots and uprooting, clearances, coastal ruins, rebellion and many more physical stigmata of meaning-making. Since the early 2000s Scotland has charted a path through environmental shifts, agricultural and land reforms (Land Reform Scotland Act 2003) and against extractive capitalism amidst a commanding renewed movement around Independence. Scotland re-authors history, sedimenting conflict and kinship into her contours. The glens and the bruachs are not receiving of history, they are a giving Chorus in an ever-unfolding autopoiesis of land and water.

The Poetic Constitution for Scotland provokes the structure of Scottish-ness at a time of acute danger and acute possibility for Scotland. I shall be asking if, through the

¹² <https://www.gla.ac.uk/events/listings/index.html/event/11878>

performance of visible mimicry against colonial authority (Bhabha, 1984), renewed authority for the chorus of the marginalised and the unauthorised Other, is possible. Dramaturgically it can take the form of rupture of existing representations and open the way towards a transformative constitutionalism (Santos, 2018). Following Anderson (1983), Phipps (2013), Mumford & Phipps, (2002) and Stanley (2019), I shall be asking how language mythologises, makes and breaks nations. And ambitiously perhaps, how can a performative re-conceptualisation of our present juridical language resuscitate its emancipatory potential.

The *Poetic Constitution* was written by extraction and by translation. Extractive research, in this case, took the form of an imagined dialogue where the writer agrees that the Host shall make use of or extract the writer's skills, services and abilities so that a new linguistic DNA may be dramaturged. This new dialogue contains the narrative genome that inscribes the double helix of exiled and host wound, stigma, language and instinct. The institutional host becomes part of the autopoietic process by offering their own vernacular up for negotiation. Scottish vernacular is a fertile site of political, historical and linguistic tension. Scots themselves have lived between languages for as long as historical records exist and it has always reflected meaning, power and authority. For the exile, Scottish vernacular carries a heavy emotional weight. It encodes trauma and the stigmata of exile and rupture. Permitting oneself to be "extracted" through this vernacular and translating it traces both the ontological and the affective dimension of exile and creates a dynamic space for negotiation.

Meerzon and Ještrović reappoint the exilic host city "not as an object, but as "a paradoxical megalopolis that swallows but also has the potential to sustain strangers (Ještrović & Meerzon, 2009). In *Performance, Exile and 'America'*, they conduct a surgical analysis of the mythical, ontological and performative space of exilic language and the autopoietic dynamism which is found in this "exacting science" (Ještrović & Meerzon, 2009). The *Poetic Constitutions'* extractive work occurred for me across four different institutions of the "megalopolis": The Scottish Government, Broadcasting Scotland, the Being Human Festival and the British Academy and the Maryhill Integration Network. I was invited to work for all these institutions as the *observing* and *observed* creator of language, experiences, interpretations, political documenting and drama. I listened, contributed to, transformed and twisted the poetic vernacular of the street which the writing self then transformed into drama.

The translational work and all its attendant compromises, negotiations, transmutations, phonic reassignments and acoustic re-readings happened across more than 100 televised news broadcasts and interviews, the commissioning of the film *A Poetic Constitution for Scotland* and countless workshops, events, symposia and training organised by esteemed Scottish and British institutions. Markedly, while working under commission by the Being Human Festival and the British Academy, I enquired whether the commission wished me to temper my poetic licence in the language used in the dramatic text. The unanimous answer was, “no”. The brief was to “go as you are, in all directions”, as if the text were many different texts wrapped in one. The writer of exile was called upon to use her very particular linguistic, comparative, restorative and resisting lens to effectuate this work. Methodologically, while this extractive work was taking place, I saw two discernible elements: the use of the exiled lens, as described earlier in this paragraph and its attendant inhabiting of the host’s worlds to absorb, be absorbed and transmute. The transmutation which results within the exile but, more importantly, outwith the exile and within the host, is the product of this process.

Scotland is an ancient nation occupying approximately one third of the northern part of the Great Britain including more than 790m adjacent islands in the archipelago of the Hebrides and the Northern Isles. Great Britain is identified as a modern state and often, misleadingly, as a “nation-state” subcategorising Scotland as a “region” of the UK¹³ which has traditionally adhered to a simplistic narrative of nation building, where “regions” of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are seen as the consummation of principally political developments. In this vein, the space of the British state is rendered politically and materially incontestable. The British state’s violent process of state consolidation was in part motivated by legitimisation-oriented undertakings where cultural and linguistic assimilation were paramount. The intent was to subsume Northern Ireland and Scotland deploying a type of trained inattention to the historical meta-politics of their political imaginaries.

¹³ members.parliament.uk. (n.d.). Explore regions - MPs and Lords - UK Parliament. [online] Available at: <https://members.parliament.uk/region>. See also The National. (2023). *Tory ministers under John Major wanted Scotland treated ‘as a region of England’*. [online] Available at: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/23718555.tory-ministers-wanted-scotland-treated-as-region-england/> [Accessed 27 Dec. 2023].

The Poetic Constitution for Scotland was written as a provocation against linguistic, political and cultural assimilative regulations imposed by the British State (Devine, 2012 and McCrone, 1974) and, more particularly, as a discourse of resistance. These themes have been explored in previous chapters through the lens of hospitality, drawing on Derrida, Cixous, Snyder, Phipps and others. At the UNESCO Spring School (2019, 2020, 2021), Alison Phipps made significant interventions which, performatively and philosophically, open out the field to poetics and towards an interrupting political dramaturgy, inaugurating what in this chapter I shall refer to, as ‘provocations’. In the *Poetic Constitution* these provocations were present in both the form and the content of the performed text, more specifically in the (omni)presence of the Gàidhlig-speaking chorus and the masked characters of colonial representation, Lady Annunziata and Lord Cosmo against a background of working-class Scottish struggle. The principal provocation is the alienating character of the Constitution. The Scottish Constitution, in this context, gestates, squirms, rebels, kicks and yells in both English and Gàidhlig until it meets its dramatic twist through the proposed separation between Billy Stevenson from Margate and Katrina McGeechie from Argyle. The relationship between the Gàidhlig text, the target-language text and the final performance output activates a multi-modal form of pedagogic reception. As put by Mumford & Phipps: “familiarization through empathy and sympathy [...] alienation, the act of failing or refusing to comprehend the unfamiliar so that it remains shockingly bizarre or a hostile alien; and finally, *Verfremdung* [...] a twofold act of reception involving, on the one hand, making the known strange [...] and [...] recognising what is dissimilar about the historical and cultural other” (Mumford & Phipps, 2002).

The plot follows the timeline of the runup to Christmas in the home of one Catriona McGeechie, “daughter of Andra and Morag McGeechie, both of Kilchenzie in Argyle”. Catriona is married to Billy Stevenson who, the story tells us, is an Englishman born in Margate. Their marriage is about thirty years old and has produced two children: Alexander and Victoria. The marriage is going through a difficult phase. In 2014 there was talk of divorce. The couple decided to remain married while their children are now young adults. Alexander, who is not the biological son of Billy but lovingly raised by him is looking to return to full time study and become a historian. Victoria goes to London but decides to return at the end of the play.

The *Poetic Constitution* was the commissioning, dramaturgy and production of a work as an example of feminist patronage within an institutional setting of higher education, shaping the structure and dissemination of the film under the auspices of the University of

Glasgow. Written and stewarded by women, the *Poetic Constitution* was subsequently dramaturged into the Gàidhlig text by Fiona Dunn under the University's Gaelic and Celtic Studies Department, musicalized by Beth Thompson. Echoing the work done producing Marieluise Fleißer's *Fegefeuer in Ingolstadt* (Mumford & Phipps, 2002) the *Poetic Constitution* was also reflective of the scepticism towards the omnipresent political canons of predominantly male authors. The paternalistic character of Lord Cosmo and the narrated character of Lady Annunziata's father are somewhat ridiculed allowing a feminist poetics to breathe through the text. The Constitution herself, speaks through the mouths of the various Scots in both English and Gàidhlig in a non-linear lullaby of events, fables and myths, like an exiled woman's wild woman archetype, "the uncombed cat and cross-eyed hen", in the beautiful prose of Clarissa Pinkola Estés (2003).

Inevitably, the *Poetic Constitution* became a theorisation of this difference within itself as the possibility of exilic time to perpetually evade ontological entrapment, as Englishness and Anglicisation, as mimicry and metonymy. The parallel existence of the two languages of Scots and Gàidhlig in the text evidences the ways in which writing becomes awareness of how language is about protest and community and not just about itself. The process also became an enquiry on the often-enigmatic problem of transforming the nation's vernacular and allowing the natural rhythms and melody of their hopes for the future. William Yeats Butler in his Nobel speech in 1923 draws the parallel between the old Irish Gaelic representing the "nationalism[...] romantic and poetical" and English "the language in which modern Ireland thinks and does its business in" (Butler Yeats, 1923). Circling back to Anderson, if the language of the nation is no longer the language of God, a new nation needs a new -or indeed older- language which will provide identificatory support within the new and imagined order. The Gael to the coloniser is the imagined foreigner, the Other.

THE EXILE IS INVITED

The *Poetic Constitution for Scotland* was conceived as both a commissioned project and a live/filmed performance. The process had been one of strenuous reading and counter-reading, of reinterpreted metaphoricity and of cultural socio-dramatizing. A close textual, graphic and acoustic analysis of both the linguistic and the cultural vernacular of Scots and Gàidhlig and its close associations Irish Gaelic alongside the contested territory that is Scotland today. Words and sentences were analysed in English, in Scots and in Gàidhlig and subjected to philological, historical and political debates. The team who assisted me

through these demanding processes included my doctoral supervisor, Alison Phipps, doctoral colleagues from the University of Glasgow and the University's Celtic and Gàidhlig Studies Department which includes both artists and academics as well as native Gàidhlig speakers. I worked to stay loyal to the literacies of the land, the sea, the Scottish isles, the soil, the contentious anger and interreligious strife as well as the spirit of what our discussions had delivered in the tempestuous times of Covid-19. The work focuses on the semiological interactions across fields of activity and knowledge production as well as the resulting psychological conceit of the British constitutional order which has negatively impacted Scotland in both its modernist presence in the world (isolationism of Brexit, disruption of European relations) and its internal politics (fiscal, educational and Internal Market Act 2020). Pressing the point a little further, Scotland's image can be temporalized through Deleuze's theory of film in the history of the encounter the history of encounter which does not cease to preoccupy the present: much of the Great British ethnoscape is a "creolization," a historical process of "the construction of culture out of fragmented, violent, and disjunct pasts," rather than seeing a static national culture or set of racial and ethnic maps superimposed on state-administrated territories (Murray, 1970).

As the work was developing through the months of June to October of 2020, it rapidly became clear that Scotland's *Poetic Constitution* needed to be a collective voice of protest, of hope, of laughter and lament about a nation, its land, its diverse peoples, its braes and its bruachs; a Nation defining itself not through the metaphysics of purity but through the common goal of hospitality, community and a desire to reach out and interdepend. Distance and the willingness to gaze on what has come to pass and create history are therefore a central tenet of the dramatic text of Scotland's *Poetic Constitution*.

FIRST PROVOCATION: CHORUS CÒ TH' ANNAIN?

There are three points to be made about this opening question: "Cò th' annain? (Who are we)?" Firstly, it is spoken in Gàidhlig. Secondly, it is the most contested question any grouping of people could ask themselves in terms of both its psychoanalytic implications but also its political, linguistic and cultural repercussions. Thirdly, it is sung by the Chorus of citizens which brings us to question our own perception of choric/civic utterance: What is Chorus to us, today? Is it as a constant of collective practice, a challenge to traditional conceptual frameworks that pushes performance into the different, the imagined and the

political? Is there a parallel between a modern Chorus in performance and the street protest of Fadwa Laroui, or the Indignados of Spain, the Outraged of Greece, the Occupy Wall Street in the United States, through to the spontaneous protests on Tahrir Square and the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa to Puerta del Sol, Syntagma Square or the London Riots and the candlelit vigils of women in Krakow? Are these gatherings that implicate fundamentally the very condition of “corporeal standing in public” (Butler & Athanassiou, 2013), in the urban street, a dithyrambic song provoking everyone into action? Is it bodies as “complex bricolages in which reasoning and arguments mix with emotions, sorrows and joys, loves and hatreds, festivity and mourning” (Santos, 2018). Are the choric bodies to be found at the centre of the struggles or are they themselves struggling as “resisting bodies [being] far more than the struggle, and the struggle, in turn, encompassing much that is generally believed to be absent from it, be it dance, theatre, music, sleep, love. Bodies mobilise different skills in different struggles or at different moments of the same struggle: now skills of the legs, now hand, ear, voice, or nose” (Santos, 2018).

As soon as the *Poetic Constitution* was conceptualised, I instinctively took it back home, to Aeschylus. In both theatrical form but equally in all the paradoxes, I opened my notebook and wrote: “Enter the Εὐμενίδες/Furies.” It seemed obvious to me to make visible, in both language and content, the changelessness of the oppressive structures of the cognitive empire (Santos, 2018) and its forms which the exilic writer seeks to vex and unmask. The Gàidhlig itself as a language spoken in the Highlands and part of the Lowlands, both vexes and exposes, not simply a breach of etiquette where very few, if indeed any, members of the audience will be speakers of Gàidhlig, as does the repeated reminders of assemblies, protest and bodies on the street.

Cò th’ annain? (Who are we?) serves as a choric vexation but equally so as a pedagogical instigation towards a participatory, autopoietic, political dramaturgy. And it goes further. It goes right into the heart of what it means to be a Scot, a Celt, a Briton, a foreigner, a willing participant or a colonised subject. In his 1983 study *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson charts the shift from divine language to republican nationalism; the sanctity found in Latin, Classical Arabic and formal Chinese united peoples towards the divine. When vernacular languages took their place, the people’s language became the language of government, the language of national identity, the medium to control a socially constructed group through language’s consolidated force separate from ethnicity, class or history.

‘In some fashion’ – a suitably artistic conceptualisation – intercultural encounters are primarily scenes of drama, memory, conflict or possibility. The *mise-en-scène* of the applied sciences and social sciences instead involve transcriptions, focus groups, interviews and observations. When data are ‘codified’, ‘captured’ and ‘cleaned’ the drama of the interactions gives way to scientific, proprietorial presentation. To be analysable, the affect, artistry, awkwardness and ...
(Phipps and Sitholé, 2022)

The *Poetic Constitution* marks the moment when the foreigner cries out not only the appropriation of the body by colonised subjectivity but also the conceptual anaemia in the signifiers of colonial capture. This is a noteworthy point in the construction of the *Poetic Constitution* as a bifurcated utterance between the unmanageable presence of the Highland Gàidhlig and the directness of the Scottish characters of the McGeechie-Stevensons and the farcical speeches of Lady Annunziata and Lord Cosmo. There is here a potential for building a narrative of resistance where the constitutional/normative meets and clashes with the performative: It mimics, it exceeds and it unveils the performative surfacing of the legal subject and the “law-abiding citizen”; a citizen unmasked as a construct given the legal powers of a metaphysical entity. Notwithstanding this metaphysical naivete contained within the juridical assignment of citizenship, its legal and material powers are overreaching and immense.

If Derrida is right about the priority of writing to speech in language, then the symbolic order is, from the very beginning, from its first instance and in its most basic and formal aspect, an imaginary enterprise. Bhabha, via Lacan, extends this seeming paradox by insisting that Lacan’s interdictory desire, what he refers to as “destruction of narcissistic authority through the repetitious slippage of difference and desire” (Bhabha, 1984). In Lacan’s famed matheme in *Écrits*, $S \rightarrow \bar{S}$, the rendering of the subject by the line draws attention to the ineluctable materiality of the signifier, to its stroke and curves and other modes of presentation and production. In other words, signifier is its own image. Bhabha extends Lacan’s dual condition in respect to the coloniser’s excess vis-à-vis the colonial subject: constituted in language through her/his own lack with respect to language, it impels language always to work around the very anomalies that are immanent to it- and the exemplary anomaly is the matheme. While the matheme’s authority may have waned, Bhabha insists that “farce is the method and weapon through which colonialism takes power in the name of history” (Bhabha, 1984). The production of power and knowledge is realised through what Said describes as “tension between the synchronic panoptical vision

for domination- the urgent need for identity, stasis and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of the history-change” (Said, 1979). In this equation, mimicry represents an “ironic compromise” (Bhabha, 1984). The Other - the Gael, the Celt, the Pole, the Eritrean, the Jew – find themselves forced into a process of disavowal in mimicry’s slippage, its excess and, ultimately, its difference. Gàidhlig words in choric dithyrambs serve *the Poetic Constitution* as the signs of this double articulation: a stealth strategy of reform and discipline, unregulated by official surveillance and yet, inappropriate in its appropriating of normalised knowledges and accords.

The writer/researcher operates within limitations “who we are” towards the terrain “of whom we are” (Phipps, 2013). On the question of the colonised subject, the enquiry remains aporetic as to whether full disclosure might be possible as their narrative reconstruction of themselves undergoes constant revision (Butler, 2005). I here agree with Bhabha that the effect of “mimicry is profound and disturbing”. It is a form of engendering renewed authority for the chorus of these unauthorised Others to make visible their political ontology and rupture existing representations by mimicking the inaccessible juridical functions of the coloniser but equally by the slippage provided in the strategic awareness of the law/power nexus.

Gàidhlig is the language of the Scottish Highlands and its tragic history of the Clearances where the role of the Highland landlords was conventionally whitewashed. It bears symbolic, political and psychoanalytic hallmarks as both the confected site of romantic, theme-park reminiscent Scottishness and the historical reality of cultural, ethnic and linguistic extermination. But the romantic orientalising reflection has a darker side. Gàidhlig speakers are a marginalised linguistic community perceived in by colonial observers as brutes and represented in literature as “as barbarous, incurably indolent, eaten up with beggarly pride, sneaking sycophancy, unconscionable extortion, filthy, dishonest, inhospitable, nay cowardly” (MacLean, 2014). The sixth verse of the British National Anthem bears testament to the anxiety at any notion of Scotland contemplating her independence.

Lord grant that Marshal Wade
May by thy mighty aid
Victory bring.
May he sedition hush,
And like a torrent rush,
Rebellious Scots to crush.
God save the King!

In *Reflections on West African Affairs*, Sir Edward Gust perfectly sums up the psychoanalytic effects of “all the paraphernalia and ceremonies of the imperial legislature” admitting unreservedly to the “folly of conferring such privileges on a condition of society that has no earthly claim to so exalted a position”. A mimic representation of the British Constitution is, according to Sir Edward, the strategy by which the mother country apprehends the psychic momentum of her dark-skinned children. Almost the “same but not white, the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction” (Bhabha, 1984). It is a form of discourse at the juncture of what is not permissible and what must be kept hidden; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them. In Sir Edward’s own words:

It is out of season to question at this time of day, the original policy of conferring on every Colony of the British Empire a mimic representation of the British Constitution [...] A fundamental principle appears to have been forgotten or overlooked in our system of colonial policy - that of colonial dependence. To give to a colony any forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station.

Sir Edward Gust, "Reflections on West African Affairs"

addressed to the Colonial Office" Hatchard, London 1839.

These accounts echo the mental contortions evident in nineteenth century contemplations of the pure children of the mother country against their Other juxtaposed alongside the purified idea of the landscape of the Highlands as ‘sublime’, sanitised in the colonial imaginary, with the natives as septic ‘Other’. That very impossibility of the Other repeatedly resists signification, thereby engendering resistance *sui generis*. The desire of mimicry, an interdictory desire, may not have an object, but it has strategic objectives all of which act as metonymies of presence. In the words of Bhabha: “Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse-the difference between being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications, the Simian, the Black, the Lying Asiatic--all these are metonymies of presence” (Bhabha, 1984).

The counter-hegemonic proposition here is the choric body, the mimicking body, the struggling body, the body unauthorised to speak and yet unafraid of speaking. The body that makes visible its exteriority by placing itself the interior of the performance-uninvited yet revelling “in pleasure, feasting, laughter and dance” (Santos, 2018). This is an autopoietic act: the body denied legitimacy, scripts its own presence into being, not as a

reactive symptom but as a performative syntax of becoming. Autopoiesis in language thus arises from this dissonance between imposed silence in insurgent articulation. A language that is not granted, but seized, a language not inherited, but invented. In this dramaturgy the speaking subject is never fully inside the discourse but dances on its margins where meaning is unsettled, porous and resistant. The choric body then is not merely a vessel of mimicry but a producer of fugitive grammar, rhythm and poetics. This type of re-languaging reroutes the syntactic bloodstream of the host language and deposits the exilic wound into every cell of the host's speech. In this function, autopoiesis becomes a mirror: it deflects the violence of scar and reflects the birth of another mode of intelligibility, one authored from the underside of the archive.

SECOND PROVOCATION: BODIES IN THE STREET: CHORUS, PROTEST, LIBERATION

Do bhrìgh 's gu bheil e uile do-sheachanta feumail - mas e nach bi an duine air a cho-èigheachadh mu dheireadh gu ceannairc a dhèanamh an aghaidh ain-tighearnas agus fòirneart gum bi còirichean an duine an duine fhèin air an dìon tro riaghladh an lagha¹⁴. (Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law..." trans. mine)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Syntactically, this passage is highly interested when compared to Irish Gaelic with vocabulary cognates *duine* = man or person (same in both), *còirichean* / *cearta* = rights (cognates), *lagh* / *dli* = law, *fòirneart* / *foréigean* = violence (slightly different pronunciation) *do-sheachanta* / *dosheachanta* = inevitable. I observed that both strands of Gaelic use formal, compound conditional and subjunctive structures in philosophical or legal style writing. This particularity does not enlighten the present research. It does, however, provide an insight into the Irish Celtic and Scottish Gàidhlig morphemes for law, revolution and authority and their ancestral parentage. The reflexive marker "self" is *mé fèin* in Irish and *mi fhìn* in Scots is profoundly embedded in Scots and Irish iterations of self-identity and autopoiesis. The reflexivity in Irish *cruthaím mé fèin* and the Scots Gàidhlig *cruthaich mi fhìn* reflect a Cdetic worldview of a relational Self, yet self-

¹⁴ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Scottish Gàidhlig <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/scottish-gaelic>

contained and formed in action. I found a parallel between the linguistic structure in the exilic autopoietic self and the Constitution as a character in an ever-unfolding drama.

When using one's practice as compass, one is compelled to shift between the positions of subject and object with great agility. It also entails great risks for both the object and the subject of this practice. As both researcher and exile, the writer is summoned to separate the "auto" as the reflective, meta-historical moment with its temporal implications from the urge to place oneself into the narrative. If metaphysics is broadly understood as the realm of a speculatively constructed architectonic system and an attempt to provide an absolute, non-perspectival account of reality, then the exile becomes both a provocation and a transgression; the exile becomes the Other angle and the very abstention from the absolute ontological commitment of one perspective as one truth. In that vein, having an exilic view is not limited to the spectatorial or the optic. It includes one's actions which are or can be just as, perhaps more so, constitutive and revelatory of one's exilic stance in the world. Like the exile, the Chorus stands outside of the world and offers another world view. The moment when exilic optics become exilic action is the very condition which imperils the national narrative because it threatens it with the possibility of exilic meaning-making, a lethal alteration to the strong and stable national tranquiliser. It is when the Constitution becomes alive and malleable, like the character in a play.

On taking on the *Poetic Constitution*, I immediately knew I had to go home to Aeschylus. Conceptually, the analogy between the mythical blood crimes committed within the House of Atreus in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and the symmetry between the spilling of blood and the choric involvement in the *Eumenides* provides both a formalistic scaffold and a moral justification in my work. But it was the potential of the chorus as a living, beating heart within the text that principally energised my choice, not simply in what it can utter but also in what it could *do*. Over the course of the twentieth century, the chorus was granted a new status with Stanislavsky's *Antigone* of 1899 (Moscow Arts Theatre), a pivotal moment in this timeline. The production boldly experimented with mass choruses, a practice which continued in Stanislavski's later productions of classic drama, which he described as 'bright, burning, and revolutionary' (Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, 1969). In what could be interpreted as the beginnings of community choruses and amidst the spirit of pre-revolutionary Russia, Stanislavsky deployed a cast of more than 200 Romans, played by labourers and university students. This experiment in mass chorality inaugurated choric performance as collective protest voiced by untrained performers chosen from the lower economic strata. It rippled and powered through Western European theatre finding

different expressions in Europe's tumultuous twentieth century social and historical moments. British performable lyric chorus is most powerfully represented by three Northern English voices: Tony Harrison, Ted Hughes, and Blake Morrison who have all had versions of Greek drama premiered by the northern voice ensemble Northern Broadsides. Harrison and Morrison have been bold in discovering the dramaturgical dynamics of the individual versus the collective in choric form as part of their thematic exploration of commonality. In the *Oresteia* (1983, Royal National Theatre), Tony Harrison, combines Northern diction with pre-Shakespearean Anglo-Saxon and returns Greek drama to the popular theatre, while asserting his right to write in his authentic voice.

“It seemed to me that the common language was used in the theatre. It has to be in the theatre, the common bond of the theatre, especially in Greek theatre where the audience and the actor were lit by the common light of the sun, that this was ideal conditions to create a common language.”

Tony Harrison, 2021.

Harrison is, in effect, putting the case forward for translational writing. Harrison's northern routes are imbued by the broad Yorkshire accent and its monophthongal vowels alongside the distinctive rhythmic cadence, steady grounded tempo and, inevitably, the flat intonation. His adaptation/translation of the *Oresteia* was a unsurpassed translation and a testament to his roots, his trajectory, his devotion to theatre and his seeing of what England was in the early 1980s. As the century drew to a close, Harrison's “common light of the sun”, the theatrical Chorus-as-protest coalesced with more abstract concerns that had become increasingly pressing issues, such as the financial crisis and the other pressures exerted by the economic traumas of late-Capitalism as well as being the direct outcomes of forced displacement and exile. Chorality, in this regard, brings the ostracised element in from the margins and sets in motion complex political questioning while energising an intricate and multifaceted linguistic and cultural aesthetic. Choruses are choreographies “interested both in making political performance and in making performance politically, whether they address the existing public sphere of national discourse, alternative and local structures for re-imagining democratic politics, or call on the contradictions of local, national and global politics to perform varieties of hope, terror and critique” (Hunter, 2013).

In the intoxicating experience of the theatre, the construction of selfhood in the historical horizon evidenced, time and again, that the perspective of the exilic observer can inaugurate a new metaphysics of inter-dependency; of porous, receptive land, analogous to

Irigaray's interpretation of the Platonic *chōra* and a new, democratic way of embodying the encounter with the Other. Capturing the collective protest and the shared lament for what was and what could have been, impelled me to place chorality at the centre of the dramaturgical element. In the *Poetic Constitution*, the Chorus's inherently radical, subversive potential was assigned to the Scottish element against an austere world of order, colonial inherited privilege and pseudo-meritocracy. None of the *Poetic Constitution's* characters were unworthy, riotous or "lazy" but they were all heavily penalised in an aesthetics of staging labour and resisting categorisation in a profoundly "categorised" society. None of the characters own any land or property; they struggle to find work. Their dreams are shattered, their ambitions frustrated and yet, they are united in song and in protest. Expressing this discontent through the natural bleeding of Scots into Gàidhlig, an unforced rhythm emerged: a solid, repeated humming of a verse, a secret melodised tune, like an iambic human heartbeat: da DUM, da DUM. Da DUM

CHORUS Fagail Liosmor

Deòir air mo shùil chaidh m' aighear air chùl,
 Iùbhrach air ghleus gam ghiùlan thar sàil,
 On tha mi gad fhàgail, eilean mo chridh',
 Sòlas is sìth ort 's àgh.
 Cadal no dùsgadh cluinnidh mi uam
 A' bhanarach òg ri luinneig mun chrò,
 'S an ùr-mhadainn Chèit 's an smeòrach air geug
 A' gleusadh a piob gu ceòl
 (Leaving Lismore
 Tears in my eyes, my joy left behind,
 Ready and swift, I'm borne over the sea.
 Since I am leaving you, isle of my heart,
 Peace, joy, and fortune be yours.
 Asleep or awake, I still seem to hear
 The young dairymaid singing by the fold,
 On May's fresh morning, the thrush on the branch
 Tuning her pipe for song.
 Trans mine)

The centrality of the Chorus, as both a performative and a conceptual device, enlightened this co-creation and confluence of Scotland's disparate historical, linguistic and political imaginaries and opened up new possibilities for rethinking the distance between mimesis and history. As our times strive for more factual and numerical accuracy, history and reality in the *Poetic Constitution* appeared ready to see itself spoken and delivered by and through the mimetic. The Chorus's function is, however, dual. It delivers the menacing and the melodic in Gàidhlig but it also delivers the declaratory in English.

CHORUS And thus ends the story of Cartriona McGeechie, daughter of Andra and Morag of Kilchenzie in Argyll, and wife of Billy Stevenson of Margate. Their legacy is their children: Victoria and Alexander who went on to labour, love and hurt and write more histories for these Isles.

CHORUS Do bhrigh 's gu bheil e uile do-sheachanta feumail - mas e nach bi an duine air a cho-èigheachadh mu dheireadh gu ceannairc a dhèanamh an aghaidh ain-tighearnas agus fòirneart gum bi còirichean an duine air an dìon tro riaghladh an lagha. (Because it is all inevitably useful - if the person is not finally forced to rebel against tyranny and violence that the rights of the person will be protected through the rule of law.)

A Poetic Constitution for Scotland, Epilogue

The central plot and choric interruptions are framed by the narrative device of the narrator's voice. The narrator functions like a friendly deus-ex-machina who pops in and determines the articles of the *Poetic Constitution*. I cast the part to all five actors, each assigned specific lines either in Scots or in Gàidhlig without subtitles. The invocation of historically significant and transnationally symbolic "constitutional" articles was drawn from the Declaration of Arbroath, the United Nations Charter, the French, Italian and Icelandic Constitutions as well as the South African documents of reconciliation. Their purpose is the retelling of a story rather than the realistic representation of the events of a narrative. Two camera lenses were positioned to capture a wide and a focal shot of all actors at all times with the "Narrators" alternating between Scots and Gàidhlig.

The decision not to provide translation for the Gàidhlig was deliberate. I did not wish to accord primacy to the English language but rather to emphasise difference as a constitutive element of making meaning and attaining knowledge. While Scots enjoys a linguistic fraternity with English and is therefore accessible to English speakers, Gàidhlig does not. Audiences are therefore impelled to look outside of their comfort sphere, to embrace the melody, the embodied and the symbolic and the implied meanings of theatrical ritual. But above all, the aesthetic and performative outcome was the spontaneous chorality supplied by spoken words of pain and loss. Their effect was the erasing of the distinction between mimetic spectacle and history, as the chorus members -as both actors and Scots- recreated the very same Scotland's Constitution spoken at Arbroath, at Edinburgh and under the Claim of Right. The Constitution evolves from rigid text, read out at the beginning of the film, to mild revolutionary dithyramb spoken by Catriona and sung by the Chorus shows new knowledges and a welcoming of difference as a thing-in-Scotland's-making (Ellsworth, 2005). Like a human body it absorbs the bio-subsystems pertinent to it: conventions, institutions and patronage which set the parameters for the poetics and

ideology, circulation and reception of creative work and [...] the individual and institutional powers surrounding us like the publishers, translation agents and educational academy (Mumford & Phipps, 2002).

In the *End of the Cognitive Empire*, Santos theorises Cartesian approaches to the body as the *res extensa* of the *cogitans*- the philosophical foundation for what he terms the “epistemologies of the North” and contrasts these against the complex bricolage of the physical, emotional, struggling body which provides a scaffold for conceptual processes. I will accept this theory in so far as it lends weight to the notion of choric presence as an anti-techno-corporeal knowledge which challenges Cartesianism: instead of the *res cogitans* investing the *res extensa*, it is the *res extensa* with its passions, its clamour, its pain and its lament which invades the *res cogitans* and, to an extent, defines it. In that vein, it makes knowledge from the play of physicality bleeding into the orderliness of the *cogitans*. For both Santos and Butler and Athanassiou (2015), the corporeality and the physicality of knowledge that summon oppressed individuals and groups, affirm that knowledge is never engendered only on the basis of reason and analysable concepts or data-derived arguments. If action involves existential risk, codified and sanitised argumentation will not lead to remedial action unless “soaked in emotions, affections, and feelings” (Santos, 2018). Santos argues that emotions and feelings are indispensable for converting resistance into an “imperative or an unavoidable challenge.” I would go further and suggest that while he pithily presupposes that “if everything had to be known and weighed before starting, nothing would ever start”, indicating an interdiction to the exclusivity of reason.

Opposite my own Chorus in the *Poetic Constitution* asking Cò th’ annain? (Who are we?), I place Aeschylus’s closing lines in the *Eumenides*. Orestis, the matricidal son of the Argive king, Agamemnon, is confronted by his conscience, the Furies. Opposite them, the goddess Athena marking one of the highest summits of political dramaturgy: in this chorion, she inaugurates trial by jury, she inaugurates performative justice and unjust law and opens up the way to the “testing of the cause” as the Leader of the Chorus prompts us to do in the passage below.

antistrophe 4
 Who of mortals hearing
 Doth not quake for awe,
 Hearing all that Fate thro' hand of God
 hath given us
 For ordinance and law?
 Yea, this right to us, in dark abysm and

CHORUS Cò th’ annain? Who are we?
 Gàidheil Gaels
 Tràillean Afraganach African slaves
 Cò th’ annain? Who are we?
 Seòladairean Èireannach ? Irish navvies
 Luchd obrach Innseannach le tuarasdail
 ìosal Indian indentured labour

backward
Of ages it befell:
None shall wrong mine office, tho' in
nether regions
And sunless dark I dwell.

ATHENA

Far off I heard the clamour of your cry,
As by Scamander's side I set my foot
Asserting right upon the land given o'er
To me by those who o'er Achaea's host
Held sway and leadership: no scanty part
Of all they won by spear and sword, to me
They gave it, land and all that grew
thereon,
As chosen heirloom for my Theseus' clan.
Thence summoned, sped I with a tireless
foot,-
As, linked to mettled horses, speeds a car.
And now, beholding here Earth's nether
brood,
I fear it nought, yet are mine eyes amazed
With wonder. Who are ye? of all I ask,
And of this stranger to my statue clinging.
But ye-your shape is like no human form,
Like to no goddess whom the gods behold,
Like to no shape which mortal women
wear.
Yet to stand by and chide a monstrous
form
Is all unjust-from such words Right
revolts.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

O child of Zeus, one word shall tell
thee all.
We are the children of eternal Night,
And Furies in the underworld are called.

ATHENA

I know your lineage now and eke your
name.

LEADER

Yea, and eftsouns indeed my rights shalt
know.

ATHENA

Fain would I learn them; speak them
clearly forth,

LEADER

Cò th' annain? Who are we?

Banaltraman Iameuganach Jamaican
nurses
Tàillearan Iùdach Jewish tailors
Sàighdearan Sikh Sikh soldiers
Tidsearan Eadailteach Italian teachers
Dòtairean as a Phòlain Polish doctors
Seòladairean Malaysianach ? Malaysian
sailors

CATRIONA Here the women made a
stout resistance. We disarmed policemen
we burned the eviction notices in a heap,
we set fire to immigration letters; we
ducked the smooth-haired men in the
pinstripe suits. And you know why?
Because we don't buy it. This "good" and
"bad" storyline- I, we- don't buy it. Since
the time of the evil man Enoch Powel who
said aboot a country "foaming with blood",
we fought and fought and stayed all quiet
and hardworking and waited to see better
days. But them-them- come to chuck us
oot our homes, oot our mothers' wombs
into some new "data-driven-techno-mad-
theme-parky" land of their dream, well
NO, It ain't happening. We'll sit here until
their castles have crumbled and they're
forced to come out and smell the air. If
there's any air left by then.

CHORUS What is actually going on?

There is no doubt that a change has to
come Scotland: the young are finding new
ways to understand themselves and to love
each other. On the other hand, the land is

We chase from home the murderers of men.

ATHENA

And where at last can he that slew make pause?

LEADER

Where this is law-All joy abandon here.

ATHENA

Say, do ye bay this man to such a flight?

LEADER

Yea, for of choice he did his mother slay.

ATHENA

Urged by no fear of other wrath and doom?

LEADER

What spur can rightly goad to matricide?

ATHENA

Two stand to plead-one only have I heard.

LEADER

He will not swear nor challenge us to oath.

ATHENA

The form of justice, not its deed, thou wilt.

LEADER

Prove thou that word; thou art not scant of skill.

ATHENA

I say that oaths shall not enforce the wrong.

LEADER

Then test the cause, judge and award the right.

inefficient. The old plagues of broken souls and stolen tongues are being spoken about again. Even before the great infection, many of the young were seeking lives abroad. But this coincided with something else: English – and Scottish – capital was growing powerful and hungry for swallowing up more and more of the land and its labours. Huge profits were being made already on the stock markets, the speculators and the property men.

Siostam na Tìre, a th' air a bhith slàn on an Ath-leasachadh ann an còig ceud deug sa trì fichead, a' ciallachadh gur ann le nas lagha na còig ceud daoine a tha an leth as motha de dh' Alba. The system of the land which has remained intact since the Reformation in 1560, meaning that it belongs to fewer than five hundred people who own more than half of Scotland (trans. mine)

Aeschylus, *Oresteia: the Eumenides* 1003-1040

In this chorion the goddess Athena unsettles the work of the Furies, the *Eumenides*, whose duty as jury is to convict Agamemnon's son, Orestes of matricide for the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra. The Eumenides make their identity very clear to the goddess, in a menacing tone: "We are the children of eternal Night, And Furies in the underworld are

called.” She reassures them that she knows who is standing before her but the essential element here is Athena’s acceptance of the right to respond, defend and be heard: “Two stand to plead - one only have I heard.” The goddess intervenes and inaugurates the political act of trial and the performative act of uttering and acting the right to be heard. Hélène Cixous in her analysis of her own oeuvre, *Perjured City* cites Aeschylus, a source of much inspiration to her over the course of her work with Arianne Mouschkin: “The Eumenides stages the birth of democracy and the subordination of justice to the law. But legal justice is not justice” (Cixous, 1994). Not all speakers are granted the same degree of the credibility by their hearers, human history attests to this with slavery and the injunctions and ownership clauses around women’s bodies and property, possibly the most enlightening examples. Miranda Fricker in her 2011 study identifies this as “epistemic injustice”: ‘when a speaker receives the wrong degree of credibility from his hearer owing to a certain sort of unintended prejudice on the hearer’s part’ (Fricker 2003).

One of the most recognisable examples, the trial of Nelson Mandela, echoes with immense power the dictum that the “whites regard it as fair and just to pursue policies that have outraged the conscience of mankind . . . They suppress our aspirations, bar our way to freedom, and deny us opportunities to promote our moral and material progress, to secure ourselves from fear and want”(Mandela, 1964). Mandela’s trial highlights what it means to pursue illegality through legal means. The *Poetic Constitution’s* chorus attends to this inherent injustice within the juridical and to the forced silencing of any attempt to derail it. The frail relationship between the juridical and the just is vulnerable to this type of epistemic sensibility induced by dramaturgy which, imaginatively but also articulately, creates a new subject in history who threatens to contest what was previously left unuttered (Derrida, 1995).

The *Poetic Constitution* hopes to make room for the Constitution’s various subjective constructions along a line stretching from the accommodationist to the revolutionary activist might be seen in relation to the totality which produces the possibilities of these varied positions. Given the surgically accurate unveiling of exteriority, the exile here becomes both a mediating structure and an autopoietic tool for Scotland’s own exile within the Britannic integument. The *Poetic Constitution* is the index of exile between two seas, between many civic identities and many worlds. It is both an acknowledgement of the exilic condition and a new agreement on what exile does to us and what it can give us in return. It is both an interrogation of the nation and a decision to choose redemption over expiation. It is also a standoff between the foreigner and the Ghàil within the authorial

process. I, like any exile, bear the hallmarks of exilic consciousness; of fundamental difference from that which is understood as ‘indigenously Scottish’. The Scots themselves in language, in land and history also bear the hallmarks of being exiled within one’s own land and language. Scotland, exiled from constitutional arrangements¹⁵, exiled from history, land and language is always looking for its choric memory and collective rhythms which accommodate the exile with greater ease. This impels towards the search for a common and collective imaginary for shared literacies and understandings. As the authorial process moved through conventional theatrical and dramaturgical structures, these differences touched on history, on geography, on the colloquial and the quotidian, on weaved knowledges (Shukla, Barkman, & Patel, 2017), and rhythms and helped materialise the work of the imagination and imagined futures.

In that sense, I rewrote Scotland’s *Poetic Constitution* as an autopoiesis of survival.

THIRD PROVOCATION: PERFORMING RESISTANCE, CLAIMING LAND: *OOR BRAES AND OOR BRUACHS*

The rule of law and the juridical universe within which it exists lend both the moral authority and the enforceability of the coloniser’s rule over the colonised as political theology. The law’s normativity has been instituted as deriving from a mystical and divine authority which carries within it the performative in utterance and action: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians” (Exodus 19:4 LXX) constitutes ‘both a legal order and a nation’. It is the performative speech act - God’s speech act through thunder, trumpet and smoke- that substantiates the invisible and unspeakable. foundation of authority in Judeo-Christian tradition. The declarative “we” in most states’ Constitutions “drives political authority from the pure performativity of institutive language” (Allo, 2013), assigning “a fabulous retroactivity to every signature” (Derrida & Rottenberg, 2002) generated by the unsuspected signer. The point of Derrida’s deconstruction here, as explained in his *Declarations of Independence*, is not simply to unveil the consequent absence of authority/origin in the founding of a state and the performative knowledge it encapsulates but to elaborate on the justification via a performative coup de force, of the performative violence that both institutes law’s authority and regulates the exclusion/inclusion of those

¹⁵I am here referring to the “first past the post” electoral system in the UK which guarantees strong monpartite governments against the d’Hondt method for Holyrood elections designed to ensure the SNP never achieve parliamentary majority.

who benefit from or are harmed by it. It is precisely the performing of the force of law which constitutes an “institutive usurpation” (Allo, 2013) and lays the foundation for Resistance, itself instituted on the performative, to redirect and remedy the power/knowledge constellation and, ambitiously, articulate an action that it seeks to resist.

The *Poetic Constitution*’s characters, all the “I”s in their plural are therefore not independently existing entities but subsisting under the coloniser’s linguistic and discursive performative frameworks. David Cameron’s infamous “Devo Max” (van der Zwet & McAngus 2014) during the 2014 Scottish Referendum on Independence fully unveils the deception between the speaker being the author of the discourse when the human subject was and continues to be a semantic artefact. As such, the legal personalities of the Scot, the Gael, the Eritrean, the Syrian, Ukrainian or the Briton are purely semantic integuments through which law codifies and grants recognition to its subjects and social groups and compels them to yield to prescribed norms of behaviour.

The *Poetic Constitution* attempts to reset the big Other’s founding moment as the foundational site of truth by intertwining the purely theatrical with the choric and the historical with the mimetic. The second part of the play is the runup to Christmas in the home of one Catriona McGeechie, and Billy Stevenson. Their children, Alexander and Victoria, join them for the festive period. Length does not permit me to analyse the full nuances of the children’s names invoking King Alexander III of the Scots whose doomed attempt to co-exist with Edward I of England, in the form of an agreement, the Treaty of Birgham⁹, ended in dynastic tragedy as opposed to England’s Queen Victoria and her imperialist successes across four continents. Both children desire better futures and venture to England to work and study. Both children are tempted by the delights of capitalism: glitzy lifestyles, money obtained through questionable means and, ultimately, the lure of becoming part of a social elite by facilitating the surrender of Scottish land and community. As the cracks in the couple’s relationship begin to appear they mirror the metaphorical tensions in the Anglo-Scottish constitutional relationship which has taken new dimensions following the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood and the Devolution Settlement of 1999. As the Stevensons are threatened with eviction by an unscrupulous landlord, the perennial question of land ownership emerges. Against Billy’s advice, Catriona becomes heavily involved in the women’s action against landlords and takes part in the ensuing violence within the community.

BILLY She was gone. To meet with other women, she said. There had been at least 300 eviction notices handed out to folk in the last couple of months; some had been late with rent, some hadn't. But one thing was for certain. We'd all paid the bastards ten times the value of these properties and still had nothing to show for it. I tried to stop her. But "the Infection", I said. "You got to social distance, make sure you don't catch it. But she weren't having any of it. I turned my head and she were gone. That bloody Catriona McGeechie: stubborn as a mule. Always"

CATRIONA There was eviction notices being handed oot all over the city. Despite the Infection. Despite the Brexit, people was being evicted to make room for a new generation of spaffers and shysters oot to make money oot of our blood and sweat. A woman were found dead, of starving next to her baby in a hotel room in Glasga. She were a black woman, come here for safety. Nae matter, said Billy. What's wrong with their own countries? Why can't they fight their own battles there? It's like we've not got enough of oor own. But not tae me. Tae me,
WE ARE ALL ONE PEOPLE

Poetic Constitution for Scotland, ACT I

Scottish land and its possession -and dispossession- are at the centre of Scotland's constitutional question and, not least, forms the main emphasis of Scots' hopes and wishes for the future. Property is equally the nexus of signification of feudal power and the metonymy of possession and authority. The British legal tradition, uniquely compared to most jurisdictions, welcomes the, what it understands as, continuity in land ownership to feudal and imperialist land acquisitions in the form of trusts and provides full fiscal relief to all royal property which passes down to the heir and his or her heirs in perpetuity (Fowler, 2020). Scottish land reform is the subject of the Scottish land Commission and despite the formal abolition of feudal land tenure, Scottish land is out of reach for the working Scottish citizen and generally subject to the Capitalist model of corporate and inherited ownership. In the *Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, John McGrath uses plot, Chorus and traditional Scottish ceilidh techniques to revisit the subject and the realities of what this means for Scotland. McGrath's play still resonates today and its themes were mirrored across the dearth of testimonies submitted to the *Poetic Constitution*, hence the desire to create a synaesthetic sphere of sensory experience more total and loyal to both the provocations in the narrative but also the blending of the celebratory with the surreal and the absurd.

CATRIONA Here the women made a stout resistance. We disarmed policemen we burned the eviction notices in a heap, we set fire to immigration letters; we ducked the smooth-haired men in the pinstripe suits. And you know why? Because we don't buy it. This "good" and "bad" storyline- *I, we-* don't buy it. Since the time of the evil man Enoch Powel who said about a country "foaming with blood", we fought and fought and stayed all quiet and hardworking and waited to see better days. But them-*them-* come to chuck us oot our homes, oot our mothers'

wombs into some new “data-driven-techno-mad-theme-park” land of their dream, well NO, It ain’t happening. We’ll sit here until their castles have crumbled and they’re forced to come out and smell the air. If there’s any left by then.

A Poetic Constitution for Scotland, ACT II

Catriona’s repeated concern with land matters alludes to the struggles of the Glasgow Women’s Association and the impactful rent strikes in Glasgow in 1915. I have, again, elected to place this within a wider choric representation. “Women”, understandably of non-landowning class, meet and discuss in both Gàidhlig and Scots. The format is conversational and there is no strict metric observance. Scotland, represented here by Catriona, is of little meaning without its land. This holds for any other national entity and so, beyond Catriona’s dramatic entanglements with her own struggle, the Chorus becomes an actioning of collective confrontation for and about land.

Exilic poesis and exilic praxis on a theatre stage necessitate actionable drama; a dialectics of struggle between what ought to be and what can be; a meeting between reality and imagination, between history and mimesis. An interstice between dominant ideas of compliance and an imagined potentiality. Invoking Scottishness as both the historically unbecoming and the rebellious, demands an opening up to historical temporality and its vagaries. It also serves as an acknowledgment against the politically constructed and now much contested “site” of Britishness, a unifying schema of Scottish and wider colonial history constructed under the banner of Anglo-lingual, imperialist monolinearity. In seeking to remain loyal to the testimonies collected through the consultation process, the *Poetic Constitution for Scotland* presents a case against dispossession. Much in the same spirit, in *Dispossessions*, Judith Butler and Athina Athanassiou have this to contribute:

The formation of prevailing assumptions about what constitutes land as colonial settler space, sovereign nation-state territory, or bourgeois private property lies at the heart of the history of western modern human subjectivity[...] This has manifested in the current politics of economic precarity in the form of temporary, low-paying, and insecure jobs, in combination with cuts to welfare provision and expropriation of public education and health institutions [...] Common, collective, and public assets are converted into private property rights [...] In neoliberal frames jobs are being taken away, hopes are obliterated, and bodies are instrumentalized and worn out. But new life forms and forms of subjectivity are also being produced (that is, human life turned into capital), as “debt” becomes a fundamental technology of biopolitical governmentality – a political and moral economy of life itself.

Butler & Athanassiou, 2015

Butler and Athanassiou's analysis occupy the concern around the colonial settler-space that Lady Annunziata Hogg-Clipe personifies. In contrast to rhythmic choric delivery, Annunziata's monologue veers between comedy and the absurd but it is, in content and tone, not far removed from the English upper-class vernacular often exchanged in private clubs and institutional settings where power dynamics are at play. Formalistically, this is a monological iteration, contrasted against collective chorality knowing of and protesting against dispossession.

Lady Annunziata and Lord Cosmo who only appear masked, personify empire. They are grotesque as they are surreal but not so far removed from current British politics which openly advocates for the transformation of vulnerably asylum seekers into human cargo eligible for forceful removal to Rwanda¹⁶ and the moral and legal punishment of those subjected to ill health and poverty. By using satire and hyperbole, I am attempting a separation between justice and the law whose owners and makers are Cosmo and Annunziata. Law is the highest source of constitutionality and 'legality' in any given context. This circularity of law-legality, however, manifests the retroactive validation of the law's own legitimisation. According to Allo the law is invested with "the illusion of coherence, naturalness, and apparent necessity" which does not necessarily reflect its moral posture or ethical responsiveness (Allo, 2013). What Allo signals to is the division between Law as juridical utterance and Law as justice. He denies Law its constitutive validity as an a priori proposition but rather terms it performative fiction. This consigns the Law's potential for justice away from an originary, metaphysical quality. It further warrants the function of the Law to be interpreted as a convenient codicil which merely underwrites the politics of the moment. Allo's explication is particularly significant in relation to the interruptive/performative function of political dramaturgy and how this may assist in making the law "responsive and responsible". The pseudo-primacy of Law's supremacy as the institutive moment is personified by Lord Cosmo Montrose and Lady Annunziata Hogg-Clipe. They are the symbiosis of the potentially manipulative function of the Law used to serve its own creators; they are the tragic and the satirical and they are purposely not written as full dramatic characters in order to convey the impersonable, apathetic and calculating face of a master narrative.

¹⁶ The Home Secretary Suella Braverman's tenure at the Home Office is marked by her "dream and obsession" to transport asylum seekers to Rwanda <https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/politics-rwanda-plane-suella-braverman-b2196123.html>

LADY ANNUNZIATA Hi there. I'm Annunziata Hogg-Clipe, AC to my friends. I am an interventionist. You may have heard of my latest novel *Weeding in Cyprus: Dandelions, nettles and other oddities of the Mediterranean Civilisation*. Well, that was about how my granddad, Waldo 16th Earl Bootle, Marquess of Barcarrota, Sarria and Tarazona was my inspiration. He was sent by the Great King to suppress some shite rebellion in Timbuktu in 1899 and thereafter in Cyprus. It was in Cyprus where he invented the camps. That was for the indigenous people's own safety. So, we have a long history of public service in my family and I recently discovered a talent for writing. *Weeding* is not about the negro slaves. It's about a girl's ascent to the highest echelons of society having come from humble beginnings.

Incidentally, I am married to the government's Anti-Corruption Hero Cosmo Montrose. Together, we shall fight the great infection and make the whole stupid thing disappear like that!

I've been visiting with my dad at his delightful home in London, Albermarle House, and his country home in Gloucester: that's called Bang-Bang House. Then I was at our ancestral home Wildrobin Castle, in Scotland. My dad is unlike my granddad who banged up the Cypriots and the Timbuktuans. My daddy is a very enlightened man. I adore him. Above everything perhaps- for his undying devotion to the oppressed people of the world — the negroes, the slaves, the gypsies, even the Irish — he thinks they all ought to be treated much better.

There is talk I may be appointed Head of Trick and Trace to ensure none of our citizens dies as a result of this horrific illness. We are making sure the economy takes priority and there is enough money in all our pockets towards the advancing of civilisation. And as for those who happen to get it, well, they are mostly low-value individuals. Possibly, Poles or Portuguese or even Nigerian. Some of them are even from Margate. But philanthropy and compassion are always our compass: Even for those persons, we don't want to see you suffer. Sharp and short is the way forward. If you're going to get it, well, we'll make it short and sweet for you: get it between the eyeballs. You won't know what's hit you.

Poetic Constitution for Scotland, 2020 ACT III

'Britannia' as a political, cultural, linguistic but most importantly, an imagined state (Anderson, 1983) provides a commonality which instinctively negates resistance. The nation-state would be unthinkable without the linguistic unity provided by print-capitalism. For Aristotle the explanation of time moving from an epistemological premise "we notice time, when and only when we notice change", to an ontological conclusion, "time does not exist without change" (Aristotle, 2008) enlightens the debate on temporality. This is suggestive of the Resistance potential of temporality when inserted into the sign and, I, tentatively believe that it enhances Bhabha's position of the triad of mimesis/ menace / Resistance.

CHORUS Nuair chaidh na ceithir ùr oirre
Dhen darach làidir sùbailte

ANNUNZIATA Hi again. I am Annunziata. The landlady. Again! Well, this time, I have a plan. Can you stop that singing please? The people of Scotland – and generally the people of the world- have become very resistant to change. I favour their moving towards a more holistic, market-led approach based on our common values as citizens of the Anglophone world.

Poetic constitution for Scotland (321-329)

This abrupt displacement by the chorus of the imperative represented by Annunziata “Can you stop the singing, please”, I argue, marks a radical break with the past, a break that interrupts the continuity of the past that serve as a referent for the present. It is a break that constitutes an ‘event of rupture,’ - what Derrida calls a force de rupture, and appears as an event “on the state of historical processes” (Derrida, 1972). In this historicisation and re-politicisation, the chorus in Gàidhlig creates an opportunity here for an event of rupture, a destabilisation of Lady Annunziata’s discursive affirmation of the history of her forefathers. By unravelling the dirty linen that resides just beneath the glorious history of her ancestors, Lord Hogg-Clipe, Annunziata’s account unearths the violence of aristocracy’s terrifying portraits meant to remain invisible. Her character engenders resistance by defining its exteriority, by repudiating of the acts that legitimise it.

The *Poetic Constitution*’s protagonist is, in its design, the χώρα (chōra), guided by Kristeva’s reading of the Platonic chōra in Plato’s *Timaeus*. In ancient and modern Greek χώρα signifies country, space, area and place. The noun is gendered feminine and its usage has not changed since the inception of the Doric dialects and through the Homeric epic poems. Kristeva’s reading of the Platonic dimension spans four decades of scholarship and is directed towards the pre-oedipal sphere, the pre-linguistic, pre-accultured area before subjecthood enters its identificatory -or rejective in the case of the female- process with phallic potency. The *Poetic Constitution* is a character and a time of the political where the modern differentiation of public and intimate have not yet been formed. It allows for the intimate to be woven into the public and for the synchronic to be temporalized by history. Kristeva’s interpretation of this psychoanalytic notion of temporality insists on a Freudian view of the unconscious as timeless (Sjöholm, 2005). For Kristeva, Freud has indeed discovered negativity as the condition for all forms of questioning. This negativity allows for critical pedagogy and critical alterity, disallowing its usurpation by the “father, brother and lover in the familial rocking chair, signifying the younger males’ desire to usurp and hold the patriarch’s position” (Mumford & Phipps, 1999).

The *Poetic Constitution's* *χώρα* is Kristeva's poetical language of Plato's *chōra*/chorus and the free motility of signs in the primary process, promoted by the pleasure principle. It is an aesthetic praxis where I mixed realist dramaturgy with the alienating effect of a *speaking* Constitution, engaged in discursive process with history and with herself. The *chōra* is not cast under the symbolic law, but nevertheless subsists under a regulating process; it is apprehended in the phallic schema and understood in language. In the *chōric*/choric substratum corporeal affects are intertwined with language but are generated from a domain of impulses which precede language. This is the domain of the pre-Oedipal sphere, Kristeva's *chōra* which I interpret here the sphere of the political before differentiation of public and intimate have not yet been formed. What the *chōra*/Constitution produces is not a subject of the law, but a subject in process/on trial [sujet en procès] refusing axiomatic form (Kristeva, 1984). My point here is that the pre-discursive/pre-Oedipal body of the Constitution is ready for transformation and differentiation. Taking recourse to Plato, the Constitutional *chōra* is a model of the body not representable as object and therefore resistant to realism. I would take the chorus/*chōra* further into autopoietic pedagogy. Kristeva's chorus/*chōra* offers the potential to expand the terrain beyond the poetic self into the collective, the embodied, with semiotic and the pre-symbolic. This subject-in-process provides an ontological grounding for pedagogy of emergence. The *chōra* is not a place, but a process of semiotic/amniotic flux that enables the symbolic to emerge. This very space before articulation, the murmuring, the exile's gesturing and sensing, the hesitant, often incomprehensible utterance can provide a pedagogy of becoming a *chōric* field where, with astute study, and phonic, acoustic, semantic, melodic and mathematical observation being comprehensible becomes a reorganising, interpretative and translational force.

The seeing of the character of the Constitution is no neutral affair. Like any character, especially female character, a theatre personage is there to be *θεαθῆναι* (theathînai- be seen). And all acts of seeing are mediated. The Constitution is being *seen*, *gazed upon*, perceived in aesthetic representation. In contrast to Catriona and Billy's Aristotelian temporality, the Constitution is laid out in incremental juxtaposition as a Brechtian interruptive device providing commentary to other characters' underlying motivations. I am sensitive to feminist theorists' critique of realist theatre but remain convinced that realism can and does counteract the Oedipal narrative and reverse the representational strategies of character and causality away from the hegemonic subject by reasserting the corporeal dynamic, re-historicising the narrative and inserting the dramaturgy of *corazonar* (Santos, 2018) by integrating heart into analysis. *Corazonar* is attentively analysed by

Santos in the *End of the Cognitive Empire*, but its beginnings are in the “Corazonar” Meso-American pre-colonial civilisations and in Mayan cosmology. Corazonar emphasises the significance of a strong face and a strong heart in the holistic development of morality, intellect, and community responsibility.

Scottish land is a repository of trauma and contestation and a scene of political resistance. It carries cultural and linguistic memory, and its stigmata are etched on her body politic. Its narratives self-create by reasserting and generating both the wound and the imagination of a new-born Scotland, striving against imperialist and capitalist homogenisation. The Scottish Land Reform Act (2003) is an act of autopoiesis, reasserting the commons and access to land and water, all inscribed in statute. Gàidhlig placenames across the breadth and length of Scotland form an autopoietic narrative in themselves, resisting erasure and installing a site of political resistance. Like Nan Shepherd’s poetic meditation on the Cairngorms, *Living Mountain*, the land and the water is *felt* and *lived* in Scotland, not just observed or transacted. “I have walked out of the body and into the mountain”, (Shepherd, 2008), she says. Shepherd signals a moment towards geo-poetic becoming, an autopoietic act where the land speaks through the body and the body inscribes the land. Many of Scotland’s ancestral, often mythic placenames are offered to the writer as linguistic vestiges of cultural trauma, writing the nation into presence. The act of dwelling in language exceeds the individual and forms Kristeva’s semiotic trace, beyond language and towards a syntax of place, mapping the relationship between self, land and water. In the words of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson: “land is not a backdrop, it’s a teacher, it’s pedagogy, it’s an archive, a relation, not metaphor, but methodology” (Simpson, 2014). In Scotland, the exiled writer has inhabited Gàidhlig’s tonal and topographic contours and was given permission to auto-poeticise a new epistemology, a new “how”, beyond the “what” and the “when”. In Scotland, the land and the water has protected the exile’s wound, trans-morphed it and allowed it to dwell in the braes, the bruachs, the glens and the lochans, on a promise, or a contract of imagining new possibilities.

FINAL PROVOCATION: WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM

I began this piece with a provocation. Given that power pervades all spheres of life, including the resistant subject and more particularly the exilic subject, can political dramaturgy with its Chorus of the silent, the stateless and the marginalised perform a public repudiation of the constitutive, juridical and regulatory conditions of our political

reality? Can performance and the Chorus of the Eumenides, the Scots and the Stateless shake the foundations of unjust law by defining it through the very interactions it excludes?

Tentatively, I would say yes. Today's relationship between the Greek tragic chorus and Modernity is a tactics of resistance. According to Edith Hall, Athenian society had given more political potential to more and poorer citizen than any society previously had (Hall, 2013). This political innovation is represented in Athenian theatrical chorality and carries significant revolutionary potential. The complex forms and disparate metrical components of our contemporary Choruses are, in a way, the natural continuation of the dramatic hero at the centre of the action; they are the traces of the social tensions and radical newness of the Athenian revolution translanguaged into modernity with all the embodied dimensions of the language and intercultural pedagogical experience (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004). Action in itself, and representation of action, the *Poetic Constitution's* Chorus is mimesis and praxis and the blurring of boundaries between the two.

If Greek democracy has anything to bequeath us, it is its choric potential. It is the advancement of the idea that *παιδαγωγία* (pedagogy) and cognition can and does go beyond its dryly communicative competence; it must reach across the choric divide, past protagonist, antagonist and the *demos*, to the mysterious Other and poeticise the transcultural and the political. Greek democracy was fresh, cruel and experimental. For the Plato in the *Laws*, to be “without chorus” (ἄχόρευτος) was to be deficient in political terms. Plato declared “the uneducated man as the one without choral experience” (ἀπαίδευτος ἄχόρευτος) in the *Laws*, a citizen cut off from a major form of social interaction, of religious worship, and of aesthetic pleasure (Billings, Budelmann & Macintosh, 2013). It attempted to capture the transcultural, influx and subjective and tragic dimensions of the human encounter. Today's Chorus can be openly political in the sense of its relationship with agitation for democracy in its subtle, dialectical, and communal nuances. In constructing the *Poetic Constitution*, I deliberately appointed the strategies of resistance as both a protest and an ethics knotted together into a hope and a Scottish lament. As exilic writer, I did not relate to rhythm and language merely as a declaratory tool, but rather allowed myself to be inhabited by it as an Other within. The hope is to “allow for critical spaces in which the unexpected can emerge and the narratives of subjects take on a life of their own’ (Phipps, 2013).

The *Poetic Constitution's* choric resistance is performative resistance. I dare suggest, it may be the only resistance available when the juridical and the executive have merged and

the deliberative becomes progressively anaemic. Choric resistance, in this sense, could never be a new orthodoxy, only a possibility-to-come- to paraphrase Derrida. Less so than in *Lesbos*, the *Poetic Constitution* is also the scene of a tribunal. The essence of a tragic action is a trial. As the following passage from Aeschylus's *Oresteia* demonstrates, it was his *Eumenides* that inaugurate trial by jury in the theatre. The importance of this insertion into theatrical practice is twofold. Firstly, it initiates the practice of Platonic rhetoric and argumentation as sound dramaturgical praxis where the juridical event and the good are opposing and contesting structures. Most importantly, it grants the performative the *right* and the *reason* to place itself in the political. In the words of Hélène Cixous "there is a fundamental lie in the democratic show which many people are aware of, I think, and which tries to veil the gap between Law and Justice" (Cixous, 1997).

The cry and the desire to create a richer imaginary can become the instituting force for the Chorus to the Indignados, the Outraged, the protests on Tahrir Square, the London Riots and the candlelit vigils of women in Krakow but also to the Women's Association rent strikes described to us by Mary Barbour and Helen Crawford¹⁷. In *Choruses Ancient and Modern*, Edith Hall asks: "In a world where the revolutionary immersion of self and other will not only erase all hierarchies and class distinctions, but extend to all nationalities and all languages, why would the choral collective need to close off its open vowels with the consonants that demarcate one language from another?" (Hall, 2013). Hall's image is evocative: vowels are song, consonants are borders of separation. She pleads here for the plurilingual chorus, as a democratic utterance against a structure of linguistic enclosure. I would add that at a time of rising authoritarian rule, of regression and of polite economic vandalism, the Chorus is means of social reconstitution. As a light that art can shine on the world to reignite action and propel us to better imaginaries. In the words of Santos, counter-hegemonic appropriations (Santos, 2018) "philosophies, and practices developed by dominant social groups to reproduce domination, but which are appropriated by oppressed social groups and then re-signified, reconfigured, re-founded and creatively changed so as to be turned into tools for struggles against domination" (Santos, 2018) can enlighten towards transformative constitutionalism. I hope that the *Poetic Constitution* has gone some way in this endeavour, in apprehending the scenes of this potentiality for constitutional transformation in the metonymy of its constitutionality with mimicry as its camouflage, a resemblance that differs/defends.

¹⁷ For more in-depth information on the Glasgow's rent strikes <https://remembermarybarbour.wordpress.com/about-mary-barbour/>

If the *Poetic Constitution* enters the register only as disdainful, as ‘noise’ against the hegemonic and privileged discourse of the state, only as bothersome small constitutionalism, then that is alright. If it only provides a timid process of the bricolage of the human condition which Santos terms as “corazonar” (Santos, 2018) as an archive of gestures, movement and orality then that will be the signifier of its repertoire of resistance. Its ambition was to show the road to deconstructing authority’s contingent dispositif, vex it and unveil its inner workings.

As the final lines are being written in this Chapter, news is coming in via BBC world service from Tehran of a women’s revolution taking place on the contentious matter of the headscarf. Images of thousands upon thousands of women who between May of this year and the present time, October 30th, 2022 – only a matter of four months – have practically overturned the law on head coverings for women in Iran, a law often punishable by torture, imprisonment, social castigation and death since the Ayatollah’s repressive religious dictatorship in 1979 (Women in Iran, 2022). Following the death of Mahsa Amini something unthinkable is happening. Women, whose bodily integrity has been seriously and perilously undermined by such social conventions and laws, are ignoring juridical menace and pouring into the streets of Tehran to overturn the illegality of the law. Chants of “death to the dictator” billow out of apartment block windows, every evening, men’s and women’s voices clearly audible. Women are defying the might and the menace of the law and continuing to fight in perfect choric harmony and, in spite of young innocent blood being spilled, “corazonar” is no longer a bricolage: in Tehran, right now, it is becoming an unmanageable ontology and matter. Performing Resistance is taking on a more acute form; the form of embodied protest, mediated on Twitter, sung and filmed as women and schoolgirls are beaten, dragged and still fighting in the full knowledge of 13,000 arrests and 250 deaths. The Greek Chorus is both a witness and an echo in the liminal space between action and observation, between narrating and dictating.

In exile the body negotiates disintegration and reintegration. I draw a connection here between the Platonic and Kristevan chōra and the dramatic chorus. This is not an etymological connection but rather an interpretative and phonic one. In *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) and in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), Kristeva borrows the Platonic chōra as not yet the self but where the self emerges from, pre-symbolic space, before and outside of language and narrative. Kristeva terms this as the semiotic which becomes poignantly visible in times of exile, crisis or trauma. “To become subject is to

accept being separated from the *chōra* [...] yet the semiotic constantly returns, in the poetic, the infantile, the traumatic” (Kristeva, 1974). The subject must and does recreate the self through choric re-symbolisation and often speaks in collective forms: liturgical, poetic, rhythmic, resisting or protesting. In practice, this extends further than the juridical and political aspects of exile, often seeping into the personal, the intimate and the corporeal. I quote here a tweet from a mother describing her attempts at relanguaging herself, learning from her six-year-old Eritrean daughter, where the divide was not the body but the symbolic.

[...] as a mother needing my daughter's tongues, I found the contours of a new script and the exhaustion and frustration of autodidacticism giving way when alphabet flashcards and a fascinated six-year-old Eritrean began pointing to my ears, nose, mouth, lips, and face, urging me to chant back what she was saying. A forty-year-old white professor of languages learning a language from a six-year-old Eritrean refugee girl in the Sudan. Capability for a relationship across so many divides, colonial histories, atrocities and surprises was made human and possible because we could begin to communicate with each other through an inversion which humoured us both.
Phipps, 2014

What does the receiving of the “new script, the exhaustion and frustration of autodidacticism [...] and the alphabet flashcards” amount to? The secret between two bodies in chorus: the maternal and the maternal body’s daughter, two languages: English, the language of Commerce and against it, Eritrean a “tongue of every stripe collided” (Djebar, 1993). Exile often keeps its secrets in coded tongues. Seeking to paint a language for women, novelist Assia Djebar notes: “French for secret missives; Arabic for our stifled aspirations towards God; Lyico-Berber which takes us back to the most ancient of our mother idols. The Fourth language, for all women, young or old, cloistered or half-emancipated, remains that of the body” (Djebar, 1993). A body that remains the principal witness: flawed, mortal and aporetic. The vastness of transliterating and translating possibilities is lost “in the abyss of receiving, of reception, or of the receptacle, the abyss of that *endekhomenon*” (Derrida, 2000). The incessant enigma of the host, the receiving/welcoming (*accueillant*), the received/welcomed (*accueillie*), the acceptance, the self and the Other than Oneself. The interdependency of these multifaceted concepts of hospitality evidence how beginning, transit and *telos* (end) are inextricably bounded to the line of division between the inside and the outside. As the mother and the daughter are intimately bonded through blood or promise, so is the borderline that divides the self and the Other along an intangible edge. This edge is otherwise known as exile.

For the *Poetic Constitution*, I, the writer, had to inhabit that border of land and promise by becoming both the object of the extraction and the makar of poiesis. Makar is the Scots word for the author of a literary work, and it befits this description. As object of extraction, I became the source of cultural and linguistic capital, the archive of memories and the synthesiser of insights. The exile is known as being the repository of disparate cultural capitals, appointed by the Host society as a bearer of “authentic” trauma, insight, and linguistic polysemy. The exile’s exile is thus mined with the exile’s full consent: it is mined as wound, memory, imaginings and futures (Cixous, 1998). Extractive poiesis as method offers a system in which the writer’s positionality becomes that which it could yield to others’ choruses; institutions, academia, TV broadcasts and theatre audiences. This, in turn, grants the writer the ‘contract’ – implied and often legalised- of translation, of reconstitution and of a new exilic aesthetic. The exilic writer is offered the contract of extraction but, through it, becomes the makar of poiesis. Through this, often complex process, a chorus is born which for the *Poetic Constitution*, included land, water, memory and many tongues, ancient and new.

Tehran’s chorus of her own Eumenides’ daughters signals our desire to “mark the time”, to choreograph, dramaturg and master it and, through this, to give shape to the finite and *ek-static* happening of exilic time itself. Replying to our very own “Cò th’ annain?”, Tehran’s protest song is loud and clear:

Woman امرأة

Life الحياة

Freedom حرية

ACT V

CONCLUSION

Writing is an exercise in self-creation. It propels a recursive, reflexive and performative act into being. In turn, autopoiesis, is the exiled writer's progression from unintentionality through a process of exposure, vulnerability and translation towards intentional, active, self-organising and meaningful becoming and being in the world. From Cixous's "*l'auteur écrit en sang*" /the writer writes in blood", trans. mine (Cixous, 1975) to Assia Djebar's *Algerian Cavalcade*, writing is an act of generation, negotiation and reassembling of the self through textuality. Through this work, I have offered a template for a methodology in exilic autopoiesis, laying out the components that have assisted me in exposing the linguistic layers through philosophical enquiry and dramaturgy. The creation of dialogue is not only a dramaturgical device, albeit its most obvious. It is a method for uncovering what lies behind the word, the *semion* and the metaphor and, ultimately, meaning itself.

The methodological innovation of autopoiesis is not incidental in the present historical moment. Historian Timothy Snyder has termed the present time "a descent to fascism" (Snyder, 2025), a period marked not by overt authoritarianism alone, but by the slow and systematic corrosion of epistemic trust, the instrumentalisation of language and the mobilisation of nostalgia and grievance into political weapons. Language, once the terrain of critical engagement and resistance, is now turned against itself: emptied, inverted, appropriated and stripped of genealogy, language is now redeployed as a rhetorical device in service of digital demagoguery and algorithm radicalisation. Ronald Berger proposes a social theory of contemporary American fascism which, I would suggest, is now a worldwide phenomenon. This theory conceptualises fascism not as a static regime but as a mutable socio-political process whose manifestations can be historically contingent and nationally conjugated. Within this framework, right wing populism emerges as the rhetorical conduit that links traditional conservatism to fascist imaginaries. It broadens fascism's appeal and facilitates its diffusion as a mass political movement. Berger further contends that fascism is characterised by a stylistic mode of governance, one that mirrors the discursive habits of right-wing conservatism, thereby rendering the boundary between them porous (Berger, 2025).

As this stylistic convergence erodes the distinctions between democratic rhetoric and authoritarian tropes, autopoiesis offers a counter-method: a practice of auto-creation and semantic agency. By formalising the wound, writing retrieves the possibility of meaning from the ruins of language's political co-option. It insists that the poetic and philosophical self can still speak, not over, but *into* the ruins producing a dramaturgy of ethical relation. This work has borne out a contract of vulnerability, signed by the consenting exile, fully aware of their extractive and extracting potential, and the host, whose semantics, linguistic rhythms and epistemologies have, in this thesis, been subjected to examination, dramatisation and re-languaging. This new exilic condition is not merely poetic or linguistic. It is ontological. It is a re-worlding through which both exile and host encounter new subjectivities.

Exilic autopoiesis as drama imagines dialogical discourse and compels the host to confront its own foundational myths and its linguistic automatisms. The exile does not merely adapt to the host language but performs within it a poetics of resistance, interruption and renewal. By accepting the fissure created within it, the host's language is thereby freed and regains the capacity to mean otherwise. This takes it beyond reconciliation and into mutual exposure to difference.

CHORUS/CHŌRA

In Act II and IV, I have proposed that the Chorus of new resistances is autopoietic. The mythical citizens of Lesbos and the very real citizens of Scotland make themselves into a new structure of praxis and poiesis not from the margins of the language but from its trembling centre. The Chorus of Lesbos and the choruses of Scotland showed their wounds to me because I exposed mine first. This is the reality of exile: the exile goes first. The exile offers the wound up for inspection- metaphorical and real; the exile consents to full disclosure; the exile is stigmatised, inverted and interrogated. And that is the exile's part of the contract.

The exile then becomes wound and witness and, when the times call for it, the exile becomes wound and whisper. For British and Scottish institutions, broadcasters,

government, universities, councils, schools and theatres, the exile becomes wound and wordsmith and, when he is ready, languaged, attested, archived and seen, the exile becomes wound and warrior. This polymodality and polyphony of the exile becomes a privilege only after it has ceded itself as wound. And when the ‘contract’ is signed between host and exile, then language is born. A new chorus is born. In this thesis, I was fortunate that the collective wound of Scotland and the stigma of exile, of the soil, of languages erased in violence and blood, of memories and loves, manifested themselves to me, no longer as sores and lacerations, but as new structures of becoming. Language composed of “this eco-sociality of languages and earth is to transcend oneself, to rediscover identity, linguistic and otherwise, in relation to other flesh and soil, beyond the limits of space, time, and language” (Phipps, Sitholé and Yohannes, 2025).

What distinguishes the exile is that his self-creation, his autopoiesis, is permeable. This leaves it open to pathogens, linguicide, institutional extraction and psychic discontinuity. And it is this openness, this exposure of the wound of exile, which constitutes the *aporia* of exile, the fecund site where the exilic subject negotiates institutional power and poetic autonomy for the sake of praxis or just merely poetry. Like Gayatri Spivak’s concept of the “native informant” (Spivak, 1999), the exile’s voice is made audible only through epistemic authority. The vernacular, the new language and the new “genetic mutation” then, by rights, belong to her and she can strategically retool them into resistance. This retooling, reorganising and regenerating is what makes it possible to restructure that from which the exile is structurally excluded and build anew.

AUTOPOIESIS IN PEDAGOGY

Autopoiesis offers a reframing of pedagogy as a dialogic ecosystem of learning where new negotiations are possible, and vulnerability is power. By proposing a synthesis of historical, embodied, and syntactical fields, autopoiesis makes possible the ontological production of the learning Self by reorganising both knowledge and its structures. It is possible for the exile to attain epistemic sovereignty by beginning to consider the learner not as consumer but as LESBOS’s unforeseen, the *Poetic Constitution’s* incalculable, and the *Seafarer’s* hypothetically absent. The key aspect in this research is that the learner can be and can remain vulnerable. This vulnerability becomes a condition of knowledge and encompasses the prospect of epistemic authority, clarity, conciliation and educational power.

Former New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern provides an incisive outlook for vulnerability, or “kindness”, as she terms it in her new study, *A Different Kind of Power*. Ardern proposes “kindness” as modality of power in future politics. Her own political practice formalises a new paradigm of authority and learning (Ardern, 2025) that does not foreclose the wound but rather centres it and can, as a result, offer a renewed contract of epistemology. This has the potential to revisit the method and the manner by which learning can be encoded to incorporate vulnerability, or “kindness”, into the very structure of political writing. This has the potential to reverse the course of the epistemic violence the world is witnessing at the present time considering the growing problem of increasing violence in schools according to both UNESCO (UNESCO, 2024) and OECD (OECD, 2023). While the specific issue of violence in schools is beyond the scope of this work, the thesis is profoundly concerned with how language creates violence and the ways to re-dramaturge different political imaginaries. It is therefore apt that the thesis positions vulnerability, “kindness” and the *wound* as dramaturgical interventions with potential to rescript authority as attentiveness and pave the way towards a non-violent epistemology.

Autopoietic pedagogy engages imagination and performance in its ritual dimension. In Wole Soyinka’s dramaturgical philosophy, the classroom becomes a space of ritual rehearsal, where learners are not consumers but dramatists staging, revising, and re-embodying knowledge. Students are permitted to reframe their own position within the world, to relanguage it and to mobilise dialogue and ritual in more active and knowledge-led settings. For Soyinka and for Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o ritual and performative vulnerability have the potential to reinitiate language as not merely structural iteration but as an ethical event. Soyinka’s *Fourth Stage* is radical in the context of today’s psychographic authoritarianism. The exilic writer or student does not only document repression but re-dramaturges it (Soyinka, 1976a), and can disarm the ideological machinery by understanding its codes.

At the precipice of the twenty-first century, I pose the question of how it is possible to live *with* and *through* exile is ubiquitous. The question of whether it is possible to emerge on the other side of the exiled human, remains unanswered. However, this work has engaged with exile, as both a meta-space of reflective consciousness and a historical marker of political reality. My quest has been to examine how these tensions can create new ethical and aesthetic imperatives for the future and demarcate our own limits of responsibility. It has done so using the methodologies of autopoiesis and re-dramaturging the meeting points

of exilic theatre with the exilic wound. I have concluded that, if our collective duty towards the memory and the reality of exile is to be discharged, every subject is a subjects-in-crisis. As hosts or exiles the subject's positions are delimited by its own human vulnerabilities and by the wound and the stigma: hosts and exiles as subjects-in-crisis, wounded and stigmatised. In exile, the question of who speaks, for whom, and on whose behalf, emerges and reemerges, as a perpetual discursive space, without any possibility of resolution. However, the posing of the question remains a paramount duty of the researcher, the exile and the host.

In exile, the stage is a world, not of make-believe, but made up of composites of end-fleshed persons. In its pedagogical aspect, the dramaturgy of exile shows to its dramatic characters, and to all of us, how to live *with exile* and walk alongside it. Deployed as dramaturgy of exile, philosophy does one more thing for us. It dissects the dialogue between agonistic forces thereby providing solid proof that, to understand oneself, the subject must first be able to narrate itself but also be able to find the moral stamina to withstand the Other's argument. In this dialogue, which implicates δύο (two) and never εἷς (one), lies the force of *θεαθῆναι* (theatēnai), the power of theatre and the advancement of pedagogy. At the juncture of philosophy and praxis, there is disorder. Its presence is imperative to ensure orderly observance of our flawed state. Theatre and theorisation are in dialogue as is the exile in perpetual dialogue with the host. Exile's vocal dexterity and its enunciative diversity are invaluable dispositifs, holding together networks of differentiated elements. This is the entire network of resolutely heterogeneous discourses, institutions, juridical and administrative arrangements alongside philosophical and moral proposition, Foucault's "du dit aussi bien que du non-dit (the spoken and the unspoken)" (Foucault, 1994) which guarantee the continuation and the integrity of this dialogue in perpetuity.

Exile is a frontier, a distance understood in anthropo-theology as the limit of life / the death that carries the entire onto-theological foundation on its shoulders: the cave (Plato), the care (Heidegger), the flesh (Irigaray), the guilt (St. Augustine), the mask (Fanon), the disorder (Derrida), the Self (Kant), the phallus (Freud), the wound (Cixous) the One (Husserl) and the Other (Levinas). In concluding, I shall remark that the host is not possible without the exile, nor is the exile possible without the host; the Inside is not sustainable without the Outside; the Centre is not defensible without the Margin and without the historicity to which this margin testifies. In the unpredictable topography of

edges, the included are conditional upon the including and the metaphor is produced in and producing of exile.

In the final words of *Aporia*, Derrida paints for us the metaphor of the Marrano Jew as the XV century figure of the man keeping the deepest secret, that of his Jewish faith, from being revealed to the Catholic authorities in Spain under pain of execution. All exiles are Marranos, holding onto unspeakable secrets of other worlds, other tongues, other smells, other suns and other loves. All hosts are Marranos too; holding onto the lie of sovereignty “in the unchallenged night” (Derrida, 2000) when he, the host, alone, knows that, for him too, there is no place beyond the imagined frontier. Exile is the condition of possibility of all existence and, regardless of our perception or our interpretation, walking in and alongside it, is our sole attendant in a disorderly world.

LANGUAGE AND EXILE

I have argued that autopoiesis in exile offers a method: a contract of vulnerability and a way to extract from the self, translate and re-language the wound of exile. The exilic writer accepts the wound not merely as a site of pain but as a generative rupture, an opening toward a poetics of survival, as was the case in *Poetic Constitution* and in the *Seafarer*. To write from exile is to write, as Cixous insists, “on the hither side of the wound” (Cixous, 1998). It is a writing of the scar that does not seek to erase it, but to keep it in motion. Our times are perilous with the shadowy wind of fascism rising over the world (Stanley, 2024). By apprehending the mechanisms by which authoritarianism is instituted and normalised, it becomes possible to detect and resist the very mechanisms by which democratic progress is attacked. Democracy is made in language and through language. It lives and breathes; it contracts and expands. Exile is not simply spatial but linguistic and psychic, haunted by a spectrality, a delay and by displacement. It is from within this Derridean delay that the exilic writer composes, simultaneously extracted and extracting; being mined by appointment of the host while, concomitantly, mining a future syntax from the ruins.

As I arrive at the end of this enquiry, I conclude that language has overtaken us. It has overtaken us as both subjects and writers. Language, once a tool of resistance, has become inverted and is now legitimately appropriated by neofascist discourse foreclosing the exile from defending the very terrain language was used to protect. As this thesis has argued, autopoiesis in exile exposes and protects the wound of exile, rearranges its temporality, transliterates and translates the old vernacular anew. The exile enjoys a privileged position

of invulnerability in that, like Antigone, he cannot be marginalised easily as he has already been sentenced to an exterior. Antigone cannot be wounded because she has already been sentenced to death, yet her unique posture allows her to speak to Thebes in given language and yet, to apprehend that very language, its tropes and twists to create a new language of defiance and new imaginings. It is therefore exile that grants the exilic writer a languaging of dissent outside of language and, yet, entirely spoken in language.

Exile regenerates language and births new melodies and words, spoken and unspoken. This birthing takes place through the imagined birth canal, wounded and stigmatised by exile. But as this research has shown, language has moved ahead of us. The inversion of historical and temporal contexts, the transposal and overturning of the terms “freedom”, “truth” and “resistance” have been stripped of their genealogies and redeployed in the service of disinformation, exclusion and demagoguery and digital extremism. The work of Jason Stanley, Miranda Fricker, Timothy Snyder, Achille Mbembe and many others illuminate these intersections between language, authoritarianism and demagoguery and their work is set to continue. They all concur that language’s radicalising potential has been hollowed out and appropriated by both carefully orchestrated operations of linguistic reversal and by digital means. This work agrees that the writer in exile, of the double temporalities of Old Home and New Home, now confronts an even deeper fracture: a discursive field in which the codes of liberation have been compromised.

To write in exile today is not simply to speak across a linguistic or territorial divide, but to speak into an ontological ecosystem where meaning itself has been de-realised. As I argued in the Praeludium, today’s neofascist discourse has progressed from its inception in the 1920s. Arendt remains a beacon to understanding its intricacies as do Klemperer and Benjamin, but today’s political order is faced with linguistic pyrotechnics which reorder memory, perception and human anger, using various tools but principally language, to reorganise subjectivity and what it means to be human. No one is exempt from the ‘new rage’, where time and resources are scarce, and anger is abundant. Against this backdrop the dramaturgy of exile becomes a poetics and a politics of staged displacement, an embodied aesthetics which aims to generate new forms of language and community. It is not merely a theatrical or filmic representation but a methodological site where memory, language, land and the host’s entire epistemic and aesthetic apparatus converge. This is the site of autopoiesis. In it, the exile is self, archive and actor, the body is text, and the wound is the epistemic junction, the nexus that bridges the One to the Other.

This is the new landscape in which we are all exiles. Autopoiesis withstands the derealisation of meaning by forging new linguistic circuits and new genetic mutations, in language, before language, and at its most precarious edges.

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