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Archive, Repertory, Supplement: Thinking Theatre through Intersections

This article discusses the relationship between drama and performance, using the Derridean concept of 'supplement' in theatre, which exceeds polarities and attempts a more dialectic approach. A review of Marvin Carlson's theories of illustration, separation, translation, and fulfilment is a starting point for a comprehensive analysis of the views that encourage the binary drama-performance. This is examined in combination with Diane Taylor's distinction between the 'archive', which preserves and bears all the written culture, and the 'repertory', which contains the world of performance. The 'supplement' holds two meanings: as a supplement, an external *addition-to*, and as a complement, a *supplement-of*, that comes in to fill a gap. One example is used to present the relationship between archive, repertory, and supplement: Brecht's *The Downfall of the Egotist Johann Fatzer*. Theatre can be thought of in formations of *heteropoietic* sequence, through chains of supplements, including the texts, the performances, the rehearsal devices, the publication context, and the director's notebooks. George P. Pefanis is a Professor in the Department of Theatre Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and also teaches theatre and cinema history at the Open University of Greece and Cyprus. His publications include *Adventures of Representation: Scenes of Theory II*, *Spectres of Theatre: Scenes of Theory III* (both 2013), and *Theatre Adherents and Philosophers* (2016). In 2006, he received the award for the best book in the study of theatre for *The Kingdom of Eugena* (2005).

Key terms: Jacques Derrida, Marvin Carlson, Diane Taylor, Bertolt Brecht, supplement chains, drama, performance.

DESPITE THE popularity of performance theory concerning the degradation or even the depreciation of the dramatic text in a postmodern or postdramatic milieu, much recent work in the field of theatre and performance studies has been devoted to the importance of the junctions and the inner or interjective relationship between these disciplines and the arts.¹ Thinking theatre through the intersections between literary and oral cultures or textual traditions and performance practices is principally a matter of understanding that theatre has not rejected either its dramatic legacy or ideas of mimesis and (inter)textuality but has moved those terms out of the realm of the compulsory reference into the constantly shifting field of variable human perception and complex cultural scenes. Accordingly, the emphasis of this argument is on the relationship between drama and performance, or between text and stage creation, in order to clarify the dynamic field between them.

In a review of the theories that examine the relationships between drama and performance, Marvin Carlson detects four conceptual hubs through which these relationships pass: illustration, separation, translation, and fulfilment.² First, the notion of illustration is linked to a bundle of theories (the strength of which has drastically reduced since the 1960s) that view a dramatic work as a self-contained whole which is entitled to legitimize itself, to self-identify and to found itself on itself, regardless of historical conditions and cultural circumstances.³ Second, the separation between drama and performance stands at the polar opposite of the theory of illustration. At the centre of that position stand the ideas of Edward Gordon Craig about the autonomy of stage art and the need for its disengagement from drama.

Third, the theory of translation maintains the idea of the complete dramatic work, but it treats performance as an equally complete piece with its own codes that decode and

'translate' the dramatic text. This semantic approach concedes not only chronological, but also aesthetical priority to drama, since it is the text that is presumed to impose the parameters of stage work.⁴ Finally, the theory of fulfilment questions the self-containment of drama and supports the premise that only the performance of a play is able to complete it. Since the destination of the dramatic text is the on-stage presentation ('it is written to be performed', as is commonly said), its completion can be conceived at the attainment of this destination. Here lies another hierarchy: no matter how brilliant a text is, it does not define, but rather contributes towards, a total creation; it does not impose a certain principle but cooperates with the other arts for the achievement of the superior purpose that is the performance. The performance, therefore, is at the same time a process and a result of fulfilment; in other words: by fulfilling itself, it fulfils its individual components, including the dramatic text.

None of those four conceptual hubs in theory or in theatre practice has been completely abandoned, and none dominates in an absolute way. Illustration has much subsided in contemporary discussions, although many art readers still go to the theatre 'to watch Shakespeare or Sophocles'; translation is activated each time that 'a great text needs to be competently staged'. Fulfilment still appears very strong, in prose theatre, while separation is gradually enforced in performance art or in theories with anthropological or metadramatic orientations.

This somewhat schematic but quite functional division by Carlson could be combined with the contrasting semantic polarity suggested by Diane Taylor. This polarity develops between the archive, which preserves and bears all the written culture thanks to the permanence and the stability of writing, and the repertory, which essentially contains the world of performance. The archive is charged with 'centuries of colonial, evangelical, or canonical activity'⁵ of the imperialistic development of Western epistemology.⁶ The archive comprises the documents and the books, but also the buildings, the debris, and bones of archaeological

findings – everything resistant to time and oblivion. How can one conceal the *principle* inside the archive, and therefore the power together with the beginning? The archival principle is the remote power of indisputable meaning, of the authority-power that extends in space and time unaltered, immutable, irreducible, with its meaning safeguarded and its applications predefined. Besides this, though, the archive has the power of separation, since it can separate the source of 'knowledge' from the subject of knowledge:⁷ for example, the archi-text of *Antigone*, the text-archive of *Antigone* as a source of knowledge from the subjects of this knowledge, namely Hegel, Lacan, Castoriades, Judith Butler, or even Taylor herself. It can also separate the source of knowledge from anything we consider this knowledge to be each time, from anything this archi-text of *Antigone* is to the respective directors, designers, and actors that reset it on stage.

Inadequate Polarities

Against the cohesion, the stability, and the duration of the archive, the repertory raises the fluidity, the instability, and the ephemeral as it includes gestures and body movements, verbal performances, dance and song – all the transient and non-reproducible forms of knowledge. Taylor connects the repertory with device, spontaneity, physical presence during the process of production and reception of knowledge, as well as participation in that knowledge. We can easily understand that, in the example of the theatre, this dual thought can lead to disappointing routes. If we concede to the archive everything that Taylor's definition attributes to it, there would remain for the repertory nothing other than a sense of spontaneity, a brilliant presentness or an inventive flame that would quickly extinguish within the taxonomy and the classifications of the archive. The archive absorbs dramaturgy and its texts, the show programmes, the director's notebooks, the design sketches, costume figures, movement shapes, photographs, marketing videos, interviews, and journalistic articles – in short, everything that prepares, describes, and analyzes the performance until it takes place, plus the play-text.

Nevertheless, the archive does not stop there. It is insatiable, voracious; it also absorbs everything that follows the performance, anything that will be written about it, or anything spurred on by the play, such as essays, books, academic lectures, features in magazines, digital texts, and so on.⁸ Only this glorious 'here and now' of the performance is left to the repertory, with however big a range 'here' might have and however long 'now' might be.

This format is not validated by experience and Taylor herself admits that, like the archive, the repertory is often mediated through external, archival elements. On the one hand, the repertory is a product and a repository of histories and cultural traditions:

Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge.⁹

On the other hand, the archive is a mediated (not-enclosed) phenomenon. We know that the myth attending the archive is that it resists change, corruptibility, and political manipulation and 'that it is unmediated, that objects located there might mean something outside the framing of the archival impetus itself'; and this means that an archival object is determined by 'the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis'.¹⁰ Taylor avoids making an enclosed polarity out of archive and repertory, since she does not propose that the former has a wholly unchangeable character or that the latter is wholly transient or fluid. Her anti-colonial epistemologies of largely non-verbal cultural performances could certainly be applied in a fertile way and with many culturally specific and imperialist implications in a variety of fields of theatrical performances. To go further here is beyond the goals of this paper.

What is important here is to emphasize that, in various circumstances (for instance, weddings or judicial ceremonies), 'performative and also well-documented behaviours', which are elements both of the repertory and

the archive, are required.¹¹ This means that cooperation is required between natural, spontaneous behaviour that unfolds within the repertory, in the *here and now* of the instance, and behaviour coming from without, from the archive, dictated by the rules and norms that the latter indicates. This cooperation, however, is not explicitly recognized in theatre and performance theories that aim to bring out the wholeness of presence or the self-sufficiency, the autarky of the performance, such as Fischer-Lichte's theory of the 'autopoietic feedback loop'.¹²

If we wanted to combine the polarity archive-repertory with Carlson's four conceptual hubs, we would say that illustration focuses on the archive and uses the repertory as its mere instigation. Conversely, separation focuses on the repertory, as it is interested in its energy and liveness and not in the closeness of the archive. Translation and fulfilment, which presuppose both terms in one synergy but in a different way, hold intermediate positions. On the one hand, translation considers the archive as a body of reference with repertory as its server; on the other hand, fulfilment leans more towards the repertory, as it alone can activate and complete an archive. (Within this spectrum, fulfilment completely contradicts illustration.)

In all these taxonomies, an antithesis is certainly implied between 'textual' and 'performative' – in other words, between a dramatic/literary culture and a playful/performative one that promotes presentness, here-ness, physical presence, and verbosity.¹³ What would happen, however, in a more radical approach, if we accepted that there was no opposition between those poles; that the antithesis was nothing but a theoretical device that allowed the poles to appear as such? To that question comes the challenge of the coherence both of the archive and of the repertory. The cohesion of the archive is challenged by the fact that (as Taylor admits) no text is enclosed and self-referential in the process both of its production and reception. But the same is also true for the cohesion of the repertory: no performance is devoid of a minimum of text, which means a conceptual substrate, a mnemonic deposit, a horizon of expectations,

or a referential cultural tradition.¹⁴ As I suggest elsewhere:

There is no text or performance, reading or viewing, without references, this *minimum text* at the origin of creation, but also of interpretation of each text and each performance. This script might be . . . anonymous, unnoticed, but it is always read, already from the title of the book and from the show curtain.¹⁵

So, if in each archive one detects elements of repertory, and in each repertory one traces references to an archive, and, in theatrical terms, if in each dramatic text indeterminate performances are latent, and in each performance various nuclei of the minimum text are located, then the limits of drama and performance, can never be strict or definite. Within this spectrum, theatre does not comprise a whole, but is a constantly supplemented entity. From the archive and the repertory, and through them, we cross then to the supplement.

In his aforementioned essay, Carlson had used this Derridean notion in order to explain the open character of stage interpretations of a play.¹⁶ In his effort to deconstruct Rousseauist *Confessions* in regard to the relationships between oral and the written speech, Derrida introduces in *De la Grammatologie* two meanings of the concept of supplement: as a supplement and as a complement.¹⁷ Initially, the supplement appears as an external addition, as a complement to something that is a full presence. The paradox is that, as soon as the addition to something complete is identified, this addition seems to be nullified. It loses its value because what is added is added to a full presence to which it is external. Speech complements the overseeing presence, writing complements speech: 'culture comes to be added to nature, evil to innocence', just like theatre performance to dramatic text, and subsequently, theatre programme to performance, theatre review to programme and performance, and so on.¹⁸

The complement, however, is also a supplement. It comes in to fill a gap, an absence, an ellipsis that supposedly did not exist before the arrival of the supplement. The supplement with its presence thus betrays an absence; it is

supplement-of something, *it functions as*;¹⁹ it reveals an ellipsis that was not apparent before – a suspense or an uncertainty on something that seemed unshakeable. So the supplement-performance destabilizes the supplemented text through its presence alone. In reality, its presence requires and, at the same time, implies this 'destabilizable' and destabilized text, and includes it in a dynamic relationship of differentiability. The view now changes completely: there is no relationship of illustration or separation, translation or fulfilment, but only a relationship of supplement. The performance of whichever play witnesses that the play is imperfect; that it has always been imperfect.

Let us not consider that the supplement-performance as a *complement-of* is inferior to that which it supplements or complements, which is the dramatic play. We will first have to wonder in relation to what the supplemented play is imperfect; in relation to what its completeness is a pendant. We will thus realize that the ellipsis, the suspense of the supplemented play, is manifested inasmuch as the work of supplementation is manifested. In other words, the supplement-performance offers the supplemented play its 'ellipticity'; it introduces the void to its alleged wholeness; absence to its quasi-dense presence.

Intersectional Relations

Brecht's *The Downfall of the Egotist Johann Fatzer* helps to clarify the relationship between archive, repertory, and supplement. It does not constitute a completed play, but comprises some chaotic material produced during five different periods (1926–1930–1951) and expands to 500 and more pages of unpublished dialogues and lyrical pieces, sketches and notes, and chorales and philosophical comments.²⁰ All these texts form the *Fatzer* archive: the dramatic scenes of this material form the 'Fatzer Document'; while the rest of the material forms the 'Fatzer Commentary'. This 'Fatzer Material' (Commentary and Document) functions as a source for re-fuelling various translations, adaptations, essays, stagings, and performances. The latter includes Frank-Patrick Steckel performing at

the Schaubühne in Berlin in 1976; Heiner Müller at the Schauspielhaus in Hamburg in 1978 and at the Berliner Ensemble in 1993; Greek versions by Takis Tzamargias, translated and edited by Petros Markaris, at Epi Colono Theatre in 2004, and by Simos Kakalas, in a translated adaptation by Eleni Varopoulou at the Experimental Stage of the National Theatre of Greece in 2018. These performances shape a *Fatzer* repertory which, with time, is registered in the archive. But there is also a mesh of intertextual relationships within the Brechtian corpus shaped around the 'Fatzer Material' – a chain of supplements as the 'Fatzer Document' lends its characters to other Brechtian plays such as *The Threepenny Opera*, *Mother Courage*, the short *Keuner Stories*, and other didactic plays. So, the relative stage rarity of the 'play' is counterbalanced by its strong intertextuality.²¹

Derrida additionally claims that the original body of reference was never complete; that it always hosted absence within it and, consequently, its wish for supplementation. In the end, origin is not strictly origin but a supplement of another origin, which is always already lacking in itself.²² Carlson, however, does not take that leap; otherwise he would have to admit that even the masterpieces of the theatrical canon are only supplements of other, perhaps less known, plays or mythological narratives, ritual figures, theatre performances, philosophical adventures, or political projects. Instead, he shifts his attention to the interpretations of the plays, to the endless interpretational chains that also form chains of supplements which enhance the play, enlarge the world of its meaning, and extend its range.

Such a shift cannot conceal the fact that a play receives supplements because it is itself a supplement of another preceding play or performance: it is a supplement that receives a supplement. So the supplementary movement has both a retrospective and a projective direction: it starts from a quasi-text-origin that has never been completely original, since it was already a supplement of other texts and performances; and it heads towards a future wholeness of presence to which Fischer-Lichte, as we saw above, assigns the name of

'autopoietic feedback loop'. This wholeness of presence will never occur, since this too will be supplemented by other texts and other performances. In its feedback, the supplementary movement seems to be turning towards the source, the root, the origin, the nature, the beginning.

A false hope. 'One wishes to go back,' Derrida writes, 'from the supplement to the source: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source.'²³ In its projections, the supplementary movement seems to be turning towards a supplement, an *end* [*telos*] or a completion. But nothing is completed by the fall of the curtain; each curtain that falls equals another that is lifted; each circular move proves to be a spiral and a ramification, an evasion to an interminable succession of other supplements. We want to draw the curtain. We want to eject to the completion of the performance, to conquer the *end* of the stage action. Yet we ought to acknowledge that there is a supplement at the end, that the end is postponed by the respective mediations of the supplements. The performance (or at least an amount of its elements) carries on by being supplemented through the reviews it receives, the publication of the play, the photographs and the videos, and, later, the memories of the spectators and the creative team. And then there are the interpretational studies that it evokes, the studies that these studies will fuel, the historical narratives, the narratives that these narratives will bring out, other performances that will converse with it indirectly or directly, other dramatic texts that will take it into account or will 'embed' it in their unsaid substrates: the chain unfolds ever more. The mediations 'produce the sense of the very thing they defer'.²⁴ The beginning and the completion, the origin and the finality, the source and the end are postponed indefinitely through the supplementary chain.

It is clear that the supplementary chain surpasses the relationship of text–performance as it expands to the whole range of theatrical phenomena and, certainly, much further than that. Under the principle of supplement, however, the perspective open to theatre studies to adopt the theatrical performance – a certain performance each time – as its main object risks

being considered ungrounded, in that its ground is no longer as stable and solid as it was previously believed to be. If the performance is not the principal deadlocked event but a distinct supplement of another performance or text, or, furthermore, if it is not the outcome of a creative journey but an evolutionary stop of a journey that continues indefinitely, then it should change the structure of theatre studies; the performance would extricate itself from the 'autopoietic feedback loops' that are neither autopoietic nor circuits but spiral developments that include with the same cohesive force both the published dramatic text and the apocryphal director's notebook, both the buzzing premiere and the humble rehearsal – and all these in often unforeseeable supplementary formations that extend to unknown territory in the future.

Perhaps it is now time to replace the history of theatre as a quotation and as a causative line-up of linear events with another narrative: one that is less cohesive, but more adventurous, less certain and more unpredictable; a narrative that traces supplementary chains behind the linearity and the stability of events and which pursues the fluidity of the intertextual, complex receptive mechanisms and creative reconstructions, the dialogism and the potentiality of social and cultural fields. It is important at this point to make clear that, besides the Derridean theory of supplement, there are other theorizations through which we could think of the theatrical event as something that expands beyond an idea either of the play-text alone or the time and place of the performance in itself. The sociological model developed by Maria Shevtsova, which examines theatre productions through the Bakhtinian view of dialogism and Pierre Bourdieu's notions of 'field' and 'habitus', is of great interest here.²⁵

It is also important to acknowledge that the principle of supplement will be difficult to be adopted and applied, since it will impinge on habits, strategies, and mechanisms that oppose its orientation. But at least, for the more restless researchers and intellectuals of the theatre, the removal of the binary polarity that underlies and penetrates our thought will always be an inducement. What would the

challenge be here? It would be to try and consider theatrical phenomena without hierarchical classifications and without the ease of such comfortable disjunctions as ritual–myth, performance–text, role–subject, mask–face, speech–writing, rehearsal–performance, performance–representation, stage–auditorium, and former–latter; to think that perhaps the former, what for conventional thought *comes first* (chronologically, in evaluation, or morally), could be nothing but a shadow cast from the latter;²⁶ that in the phrase 'comes first', 'comes' indicates only one of the many possible sources, whilst 'first' means only one possible point of an interminable, retrospective, and projective movement. The challenge would be to think of the theatre not in incisions, but continuums; not in ownership signatures, but formations of *heteropoietic* sequences which show that the performance is prepared and produced with elements 'outside of it';²⁷ thus, not in conditions of autopoietic loop but, on the contrary, through intersections and confluences, with inbreeding and chiasms – in short, with chains of supplements. And, furthermore, to attempt 'dangerous' journeys through the body of texts, the map of performances, rehearsal devices, publication contexts, and the smudges of the directors' notebooks, and in-between.

Notes and References

1. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London and New York: Routledge 2006).
2. Marvin Carlson, 'Theatrical Performance: Illustration, Translation, Fulfilment, or Supplement?', *Theatre Journal*, 37:1 (1985), p. 5–11. The essay is republished in Philip Auslander, ed., *Performance: Critical Concepts*, Vol. 2, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 79–85, from which the above references have been taken.
3. These theories have various sources (for example, from the positions of critics Roger Fry, Charles Lambard, and Clive Bell) and different orientations. However, they converge in the view that the work of art is enclosed and self-contained. Clement Greenberg's term 'self-containment' in regard to the works of modernism arises from this view.
4. Marvin Carlson, 'Theatrical Performance', p. 82.
5. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). (p. 15).
6. George P. Pefanis, *Adventures of Representation: Stages of Theory II* (Athens: Papazisis Publications, 2013). (p. 389).
7. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 19.

8. On the university as an archive of theatre, see Bonnie Marranca, 'Theatre and the University at the End of the Twentieth Century', *Performing Arts Journal*, XVII (1995), p. 55–71.
9. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 21.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
11. Diana Taylor, 'Remapping Genre through Performance: From 'American' to "Hemispheric" Studies', *PMLA*, CXXII (2007), p. 1416–30 (at p. 1428); and Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 21.
12. Fischer-Lichte's original term is 'autopoietische Feedbackschleife'. See Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Sasya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 39–40. For a critique of the term in theatre studies, see Pefanis, *Adventures of Representation*, p. 259ff., and Walter Puchner, 'Aesthetics of Performativity: A Mental Dialogue with Erika Fischer-Lichte', *Parabasis* 12:2 (2014), p. 15–38 (at p. 22–6).
13. On the term 'Playing Culture', see Wilmar Sauter, *The Theatrical Event. Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000), p. 79 ff., and Benjamin Bennett, *All Theater is Revolutionary Theater* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.185.
14. On the concept of the minimum text, see George P. Pefanis, 'The Minimum Text of the Performance and the Intertextual Binding', in *Imagination, Sensuality, Art*, Proceedings of the III Mediterranean Congress of Aesthetics, (Portorož, Slovenija, Ljubljana 2007), p. 162–6; and, more explicitly, Pefanis, *Stages of Theory: Open Fields in Theory and Critique of Theatre* (Athens: Papazisis Publications, 2007), p. 195–246.
15. Pefanis, *Adventures of Representation*, p. 298.
16. Carlson, 'Theatrical Performance', p. 83–4.
17. Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967); English translation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), from which all citations are taken.
18. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 167.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
20. See the account of a recent adaptation and translation of the play by Eleni Varopoulou for the performance at the National Theatre of Greece at the Experimental Stage in 2018, directed by Simos Kakalas in *Bertolt Brecht: The Downfall of the Egotist Johann Fatzer* (Athens: Sokoli Publications, 2018).
21. See Eleni Varopoulou, *Live Theatre: An Essay on Contemporary Stage* (Athens: Agra Publications, 2002), p. 235–9; Nadia Valavani, 'Theatre Participating in Processes of Social Change: The Organizational Function of Brecht's Didactic Plays', in Nadia Valavani, ed., *Bertolt Brecht: Critical Approaches*, (Athens: Polytropon Publications, 2004), p. 441–502; and Valavani, 'The Womb of Brecht's Didactic Theatre Plays: *The Downfall of Egotist Johann Fatzer*', *I Avgi*, 16 January 2005.
22. Gerasimos Kakolyris, *Jacques Derrida and the Deconstructive Reading* (Athens: Ekkremes Publications, 2004). (p. 209).
23. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 304.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
25. See Maria Shevtsova, 'Appropriating Pierre Bourdieu's Champ and Habitus for a Sociology of Stage Productions', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 12:3 (2002), p. 35–66; reprinted in her *Sociology of Theatre and Performance* (Verona: Qui Edit, 2009), p. 83–109.
26. Kakolyris, *Jacques Derrida and the Deconstructive Reading*, p. 217.
27. On 'heteropoiesis', see Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 98; and Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 188.