

## The Meaning of Tragedy: Literary Pattern vs. Performance Form

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### Introduction

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. By 'language embellished' I mean language into which rhythm, harmony and song enter. By 'the several kinds in separate parts', I mean that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song. (Aristotle)<sup>1</sup>

What is this cry, like a dog howling in a dream, which makes your skin crawl, gives you this feeling of grief and unnameable uneasiness making you gag in a mad drowning frenzy? . . . At the same time there is this feeling of desperate truth, where it seems you are going to die again, you are going to die a second time. . . . At that moment some humidity, some moisture from iron or rock or wind refreshes you unbelievably and eases your mind, and you yourself liquefy, you get used to flowing in to death, your new state of death. This running water is death and from the moment when you contemplate yourself serenely and register your new sensations, it means the great identification has begun. You died, yet here you are alive again—*only this time you are alone*. (Antonin Artaud)<sup>2</sup>

As the above quotations suggest, the differences between a scholarly 'outside' view of theatre and a practice-based 'inside' can often seem so profound as to be irreconcilable. Aristotle's famous description of tragedy is a global explication given in precise, determinate concepts. Artaud's, by contrast, is personalised and couched in metaphors. If one were to ask which was the better, the reply might be that it would depend on the context. But this is disingenuous. To my mind at any rate, there is no doubt which, for most scholars, has the right to consider itself critically superior. Artaud's description is interesting but vague and open-ended. It eschews accepted scholastic terminology and fails to state a position. It has a

certain emotive suggestiveness but as a weapon in the war for critical understanding it is a blunt instrument. In fact, if Artaud were not the author it is hard to see his view of tragedy being taken seriously at all.

The problem here is not with the assumed disparity in explanatory power between the two definitions but with the difference in their perceived truth-value. We judge Aristotle's superior because its gloss on tragedy is abstract, extrinsic and annotated. However skilled artists might be, their statements about theatre are typically viewed as a Rousseau-ist cry, deeply-felt but unsophisticated, lacking in critical rationality. By contrast, academic theory statements are not usually assessed in the context of the theatrical achievements of those making them, but through a grid of partly explicit, partly implied scholarly rules. These rules encompass important values—clear expression, logical argument, honest citation etc.—but at times they can confer on assertions made in accordance with them a patina of authority to which they are experientially not entitled. And this is the point: that because the language of arts practice is, in Clifford Geertz's famous phrase, 'ideas thick', it can find itself dominated by the forms of academic discourse. By 'dominated' I mean seen as less authoritative, less acceptable, less truthful. An issue of language bleeds into one of epistemology. What artists say about theatre, however much experience they have of it, is not, in the critical sense, *knowledge*. Whereas academic statements, provided they are congruent with the rules of the day, are. Privately, we might deplore the situation. We might think 'artists know what they are talking about while critical scholars do not'. But there are no words to publicly argue this claim, because the only language available is precisely the one which seeks to assert its own predominance.

Having set such a fraught problem up, this paper fails to address it hereafter.<sup>3</sup> It offers no over-view of how the nexus between arts practice and academic discourse might be re-negotiated. Instead, it talks about one particular theatre show which I directed in 1998, contrasting the kind of 'inside' understanding that I believe the staging embodied with a critical-theoretical discussion running concurrently in the pages of the *British Journal of Aesthetics (BJA)*. The name of the show was, appropriately enough, *Judgement*.<sup>4</sup> It is a monodrama about a Russian officer involved in an incidence of cannibalism in the Second World War and the author, Barry Collins, self-consciously sub-titles it 'a tragedy'. During the year-long period *Judgement* was rehearsing, a number of articles appeared in *BJA* on cultural production, two specifically on the genre of tragedy. I enjoyed reading these papers. I share the core approach their authors adopt, especially the distrust of reductionist 'readings' of contemporary cultural production. A number went out of their way to acknowledge the value of the creative process and to show how this contributes, not just conforms, to art's societal reception. But what struck me at the time was how little common ground existed between my own task—to stage a tragedy—and that of *BJA*'s contributors—to explain how tragedy works.<sup>5</sup> The simplest way

of illustrating this is to say that only rarely in a wide-ranging discussion did any author acknowledge that tragedy is a *dramatic* form, that its function and fulfilment is to be performed live on stage. Instead, philosophical theories about tragedy from Aristotle to Nietzsche were reviewed, with comments made on selected aspects as perceived from a contemporary standpoint. And, brilliant though many of these insights were, the kind of knowledge they brought into being seemed to exclude my more mundane concerns.

### The Play Itself

*Judgement* is a British 'second-wave' play written by Barry Collins in 1973.<sup>6</sup> It has had a few productions since then, the best known being for the Theatre Royal, Bristol in 1976, starring Peter O'Toole. In Australia it has been staged professionally three times, including my own production in 1998.<sup>7</sup> It is the only play by Collins which has been rated highly. His others have mostly curiosity value, as variants on 'the-condition-of-England' epics fashionable in the Britain during the 1970s. But *Judgement* makes up for these efforts because it is an outstanding piece of stage writing and an outstanding attempt at a contemporary tragedy.

The form of the play rigorously follows the neo-classical unities of time, place and action. A continuous slab of reported narration offers a detailed account of what Captain Vhukov, the protagonist, calls 'an episode of war'.<sup>8</sup> Seven Russian army officers find themselves incarcerated in the stone cell of an ancient Polish monastery towards the end of World War II. The capturing Germans, having taken away their food, water and uniforms, abandon the stronghold, leaving the men to die of hunger. But, instead, they take a collective decision to kill one of their own and eat the corpse. This lifeboat politics continues over a two month period until only two officers remain. The couple are eventually liberated by the advancing Russian army, one man completely deranged, the other apparently sane and so condemned to defend his actions (as he himself puts it), at length, to a jury of his military peers—the role the play assigns to the audience.

Uncut *Judgement* runs just over three hours. No stage directions are provided, nor is the text divided into separate acts or scenes. A short introduction informs the reader that the story is based on an incident reported in George Steiner's *The Death of Tragedy*, but no information about how the play itself should be staged is given. It is just eighty pages of words. But the shaping of these words is intricate and effective. The structure Collins uses to tell his story contains within it the information needed to give it performance life. This is not so much a 'sub text', an emotional truth behind the words, as a 'ghost text', a pattern of meaning that parallels the literal narrative and points up how it should be delivered. For example, the story is told a number of times, on each occasion at greater length. Suspense about how it will finish is effectively removed by page three. The ending itself is pre-

figured between pages thirteen to fifteen. A liberator figure is introduced, a young lieutenant who releases the two cannibals. A graphic description of the cell is given through the eyes of this man seeing it for the first time which parallels the imaginative journey of the spectator, also stepping into the play for the first time. In this way, Collins shifts the emphasis away from *explanation* and towards *understanding*: on the 'judgement', in ever-greater detail, of a series of discrete events. The effect is like that of a sharpening a pencil. The audience's response to the story is complicated, even as their capacity to assess it grows.

The main device driving *Judgement* is its protagonist, a character who by inclination and philosophical outlook is entirely opposed to the sensibility of its genre. In a way the play is a kind of tragic joke. Vukhov is the archetypal Soviet hero—rationalistic, materialistic, a keen observer of life's detail and variety. Yet he finds himself in a situation where reason has given way to biology, the material world to a single stone cell and wider society to a group of six hungry, naked men. For an existentialist, the predicament might be an image of the human condition reduced to its bare essentials: a world of savagery and need into which man is *thrown*. For Vukhov the language of spiritual acceptance is void. Instead he tries repeatedly and with increasing desperation to break down his threshold experience into the language of concerned observation, to be what he has been trained to be—a good Communist. The more he talks, however, the more the incidents he describes break apart and leave, like a slime in the mind, the residue of an abstract horror. The tragedy of *Judgement* is not that the protagonist can't give voice to an ineffable experience but that he thinks he both can and must. Yet his words only point up the dumb abomination of the base situation. The gap between what Vukhov thinks he is saying and what we believe he is feeling is the locus for the tragic sensibility of the play and the mechanism giving it emotional force:

I remember it—the exact moment—the precise sequence of moments. . . . It was night: the sixtieth night—only faint moonlight through the high grille—and suddenly the sound of footsteps beyond the door, the sudden vaulting of my heart, the shock, comrades, my ears pricking like a dog's, my breath caught, not thinking to shout, to intervene, my body rigid in attention—the shock, I say, comrades, commingled already with regret—dismay even—a fractional dismay, that it was over, that the pattern had changed again, that a new pattern would be needed . . . and the dismay mingling with the shock, the hope, then swallowed by it—all in an instant—swallowed by the joy, the exaltation of my life reopening, vast, without horizons, briefly, as the bolts were drawn, the locks were smashed and the door, the great iron door, cracked open at Officer Scriabin's shoulder,



his breath coming in gasps from the effort as the hinges split with a noise like thunder after all that silence . . . then his torchlight—a torch comrades, just a torch . . . [swept] quickly round the cell . . . The young lieutenant said only ‘Oh, my God!’ which was as serviceable a phrase as any, I think, in the circumstances—and at the very same moment, I said: ‘At last! You must have struck north through the birch forest’—and I felt him recoil, over there, at the far end of the torchlight, in the broken doorway . . . And then the torchlight moved from us; it began to seek out the cell; I watched it move and fix, and move and fix; and I saw again what Scriabin saw, I saw the cell as I had never seen it, with someone else’s eyes—the high walls, the carpet of blood, like moss, the . . . remains, the row of heads—oh, the row of heads—how reverently Rubin had placed them, those heads, five heads in a row, solemnly, their eyelids closed, their faces to the wall, as solemn, as private, to us, as undisturbed, as in a tomb, a brotherly tomb—but to him, the young lieutenant, unspeakably horrifying . . . and the torch moved back to us in the cool darkness, questioning—the young lieutenant tried to ask who we were: were we his, he meant, were we his? And I said: ‘Yes’. ‘Yes’, I said, ‘yes, yes, we’re yours. Captain Vukhov, Major Rubin. We’re yours! We’re yours!’ . . . And from those moments, comrades—perhaps you can appreciate—silence, for me, was no recourse.<sup>9</sup>

### **British Journals of Aesthetics: The Scholarly Approach**

The articles in *BJA* which caught my attention over the 1997-98 period were varied.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless there is a discernible thread of continuity running through them. Broadly speaking, they all seek to position themselves in that inaccessible middle-ground between on the one hand, a conceptually essentialist approach to cultural production—what used to be called bourgeois aesthetics—and on the other, various socially instrumental critiques. Art’s value is seen to reside in neither the internal parameters of its chosen form, nor the attenuated sign-system of wider society, but in a delicate manoeuvring between the two. As I said, I don’t have a problem with this. What I doubt is the capacity of a self-contained philosophical language—a theoretical language, if you like—to fully describe the object under examination. In other words, to seed a discourse which is adequate to the reality of art.

To briefly summarise the two articles on tragedy. Both authors take similar aim: to explain what they feel is ‘the paradox’ of the tragic form, a paradox

succinctly summarised by St. Augustine who asks, "Why do sufferings please?... Why is it that a person should wish to experience suffering by watching grievous and tragic events which he himself would not wish to endure? Nevertheless he wants to suffer the pain given by being a spectator of those sufferings, and the pain itself is his pleasure. What is this but amazing folly? For the more anyone is moved by these scenes, the less free he is from similar passions."<sup>11</sup>

Christopher Williams' solution to this problem is to break it down into three components: the fact that we enjoy tragedies, the fact that there is something unpleasant about them and the fact that our enjoyment seems to reside in the fact that they *are* unpleasant.<sup>12</sup> Taking as his focus what he calls 'the tragic sequence', Williams argues that these components are unrelated, that the mind's ability to entertain competing understandings of complex behaviour means we experience tragedy as both enjoyable *and* unpleasant without this being censurable as irrationalism.<sup>13</sup> He considers this thesis from a number of angles: what the 'proper object' of tragic enjoyment is; the issues of stylisation and abstraction; the role and function of spectacle and so forth. It is an intricate analysis, if a little uncontextualised. Williams is aware that tragedy's proper form is drama and he cites *Othello* at a number of points. But as he also mentions the novels of Thomas Hardy, safe sex, the paintings of Matisse and the career of Richard Nixon, it is clear that the 'tragic sequence' is being very widely defined indeed.

Amy Price's article is more narrowly focused.<sup>14</sup> Taking for her frame of reference *The Birth of Tragedy*, she argues that Nietzsche's theory of tragedy, stripped of its Wagnermania, goes beyond Aristotle's concept of *katharsis*, Schopenhauer's metaphysics of meaning and Hume's formalist aesthetics. She breaks tragedy into two: its cultural representation and its personal response—what she calls 'the tragic response'.<sup>15</sup> It is our *response* to tragedy, rather than tragedy itself, which prompts a Dionysian-joy in the appropriately strong-minded spectator, and so, again, there is no paradox in the genre and no charge of irrationalism to be answered. Rather the issue is why we should value the tragic response at all. She fast-forwards to Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* where this value is seen to lie in the ability of tragedy's fictive personas to keep talking eloquently whilst immersed in situations that in life would shut real people up. She argues:

Tragic drama is a valuable educative tool because it offers us not only a knowledge of suffering or a knowledge that suffering exists—for the newspapers do this well enough—but a knowledge, stunningly precise, clear and articulated of *what it is like* to suffer.<sup>16</sup>

This is an advance on Williams for a number of reasons. First, it implies that

tragedy is not simply a nexus of formal problems but a series of movements with some kind of temporal shape. Tragedy is something that *takes place* in an active sense, which is why it can not only represent suffering protagonists but communicate their immanent feelings directly (as Price says, tragedy gives a sense of 'what it is like to suffer'). Second, Price seems more aware that for the tragic response to be entrained it needs to be incarnated in live performance. She is less inclined than Williams to generalise the experience of tragedy and more inclined to cite actual tragic dramas. But beyond this she does not step. She does not ask *how* the immanent feelings of suffering protagonists are communicated or whether this process changes the representational problems tragedy involves. In fact, one could be reminded of a remark about English women's shoes—that they look as if they were made by someone who had often heard shoes described but had never actually seen any. Likewise, Williams' and Price's philosophical approach to tragedy seems to me to miss the point. Tragedy cannot be abstracted beyond the cultural forms that give it practical reality. In a historical sense, if there were no tragic dramas, then there would be no tragedy. More broadly, the methods and values of live performance provide an essential context for analysing any dramatic response. In a moment, I will touch on the differences between this understanding of tragedy and the one just paraphrased. But before this, let me bring my own experience back into the critical frame.

### Rehearsing Judgement: The Practice-Based Approach

When I first found *Judgement* I read it, enthused, from start to finish. I had the sensation, part intellectual, part instinctive, of hearing something expressed in a precise and concrete way which was part of me but had been, until then, unknown. All dramatists, Eric Bentley once remarked, are natural extremists. And so is Collins in *Judgement*: the thoughts in the play are prosecuted to a point of complete achievement. Character, story, even the richly poetic nature of the language—an Englishman imagining a Russian speaking a Russian that is in fact English—are secondary to a process of attack which drives the elements of the drama onwards to their final expression. And this, I believe, can be *read* in the text itself; an alertness or precocity, signalling the play's eagerness to be enacted and find a consummation. Or rather, the eagerness was mine, but the feeling did not seem isolate. Right from the start, there were two of us: the play and me.

The actor who performed *Judgement* was Neil Pigot. In 1997 I worked with Neil on a production of Douglas Stewart's *Ned Kelly*, during which time I became dissatisfied with my directorial approach. At the same time, Neil was starting to question his own craft. We both saw ourselves similarly: as hard-working, skilled but not unduly brilliant theatre artists, two erstwhile 'professionals' on the edges of a shrinking industry. How were we to orient ourselves? To begin with, we made some crucial decisions. These were:

To read *Judgement* in its entirety, in detail, slowly, a number of times to ensure we had a thorough understanding of the words on the page;

To not accept on trust any cuts inherited from previous productions of the play;

To reject a strategy of 'bright ideas', of bringing to the play anything which seemed extraneous to it, at least in the first instance.

We also tried repeatedly to ask certain fundamental questions. These were:

What is the play saying?

What is the means by which it says it?

Where do we fit in to this, as actor and director respectively?

What are the values by which the text could be united with its production?

As Neil and I laboured to answer questions about our craft, we clarified our thoughts about the theatre industry and our place within it. By a reciprocal process, as we interrogated *Judgement* for its particular, narrative qualities, we found it offered answers on a broader, artistic level as well. Put simply, we started to see *Judgement* as a play about the nature of theatre itself. 'The nature of theatre' is a complex issue, one which necessarily provokes endless debate. We came up with the following: theatre is not a fictive copy of 'real life'; or rather, it is not only such a copy. It is a public enactment whose rules of engagement are so ordinal that they impose on the precipitate not only integrity, but a kind of truth. *Judgement* is not a telling of a story which 'really' happened to someone else at some other time. Vukhov is not a fictional copy of a 'real-life' figure. He is a form of dramatic truth given voice, effectively for the first time, when duly enacted in the theatre.

When I say 'for the first time' I am not speaking historically but artistically. Other actors had spoken Collins' words before Neil, and other audiences had heard them. But theatre does not exist in the past. We cannot point back to O'Toole's version of the play and say 'there it is; hear and believe'. It no longer *is* and therefore forms no part of our life *now*. To say 'theatre is true only in the moment' is tautologous, because that is what theatre *means*, to be true in the moment (though standards of 'truth' will vary). It seemed to Neil and me, therefore, that here was a part answer to both our specific and our general problems. We were 'the moment' by which *Judgement* would enact its truth. Paradoxically, this truth was ours,

since we were the ones giving it 'real life'. But this is a paradox only when viewed from outside the theatre. Inside the theatre—in the structure of perception by which the art form confers its order of value—text and actor, play and production, exist on the same level, each as fictive as each other. Or as real.

After we opened and for the first nights of the run, Neil and I thought we had failed in our task. Our audiences were small and they were silent. Afterwards, people left quickly. I saw some spectators literally *run* from the theatre. Post-show, Neil and I wanted to *drink* and *laugh* and *talk*. But our audience wanted to go home. It was only towards the end of the first week, and the first favourable reviews, that we began to feel we had managed to get *Judgement* to work. We completed our season with larger (but still silent) audiences and more good write-ups. Eventually the show attracted three 1998 Victorian Green Room Nominations and two Awards.<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

Briefly, it might be useful to highlight the differences between a practice-based understanding of tragedy and a scholarly one of the kind summarised above. As mentioned previously, this paper is not in a position to put forward a worked-out theory/practice paradigm, only a series of 'artisanal remarks'. Nevertheless, it raises issues which any theory of tragedy must address if it is going to adequately correspond to the actuality of its dramatic form.

First, the scholarly approaches sampled here, by ignoring tragedy's performance context, tend to flatten it out. Tragedy is neither a 'sequence' as Williams maintains nor a 'response' as Price argues, but a *process*, a series of concrete, working relations which determine the form's reception and value. This process in *Judgement* did not begin with the play but with my discovery of it as a director. The idea that the text alone can speak to the tragic experience is erroneous. Scholarly approaches are inclined to privilege the alleged universal form of 'the tragic' over tragedy's impact live on stage. As a result, they collapse what should be a relation of value into a relation of structure. Tragedy becomes a pattern. A study of it reveals only whether this pattern is consistent or inconsistent. It cannot say whether it is good or bad as such. But narrative pattern is only the starting-point for the tragic experience. The performance aspect of a play is not something *more* than its written component but something *else*—one that seeds an entirely different critical object.

Following on from this, some scholars have a tendency, when addressing live performance, to lapse back into 'readerly' metaphors, to see the accrual of meaning in a play as a two-way relationship between on the one hand, a static text and on the other an empowered reader. This excises the contribution of the actors or views them in an instrumental way. My experience as a director suggests a more complex situation. The position of the performer as an intercessionary figure mid-

way between text and audience introduces into the graph of tragedy's reception a new axis. *Judgement* involved a *three-way* relationship between text, performer and audience. Where exactly meaning is located at any one moment in time is hard to say. At the heart of the tragic process lies the hermeneutic equivalent of the Bermuda triangle, one where the separate components of tragedy combine in an experiential way. The key corner of this triangle, however, is the performer. More than the vehicle for a chosen style, the performer is the validating stamp for the whole stage world.

The third point is more contentious. It is that the accrual of meaning in live performance takes place in a way that makes some scholastic beliefs about it inoperative. One of the realities most frequently overlooked in the approaches typified here is that theatre is a temporal medium. It is a form distributed through time in a particular way, regardless of the sequentiality of its literal narrative (if there is one). Academic approaches to live performance often bounce between two extremes. Either meaning is enshrined in a single, culturally-fixed interpretation (a canonical view) or it is limitless and entirely open (à la Roland Barthes). This stems from what might be called the 'sedentary fallacy', the folding over of the means by which scholars accrue meaning into non-scholarly processes. The activity of the Academy is not reading but re-reading: going back over a flat text numerous times in detailed exegesis. This is a valid activity but one excluded by the reality of live performance where, short of breaking with the stage world entirely, there is no way to go back over anything. Meaning is accrued on the hop, imperfectly and as it is required to deal with the next bloc of information. This knocks out interpretative extremes. The spectrum of meaning available to performers and audience excludes the infra-red and ultra-violent of single, fixed meaning or theoretically limitless ones. A number of finite, distinct but competing meanings become possible and these are the ones the tragic process focuses on. This is a consequence of theatre's temporal shape. It is less that it is *life-like* in terms of its representational surfaces, and more that it is *like life* in that the flow of action and meaning goes only one way: forwards.

Finally, some theorists writing about tragedy are still fighting a battle two and half thousand years old. I refer to the epistemological status of non-conceptual thinking, the point this paper began with. Haunting many critical studies of live performance is Plato's accusation of false knowledge, bluntly put in *The Republic* when he asks "do poets really know the things that people think they say so well?"<sup>18</sup> Many scholars have taken issue with Plato's views on tragic knowledge, most particularly Martha Nussbaum.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting, however, that some theorists, while repudiating Plato's theory of forms, nevertheless retain his epistemological prejudices. In theatre, this expresses itself as a demand that drama which is valued in an experiential way should translate itself into a defensible 'critical' equivalent. This creates a false schism between concept and image, setting up the former as

the true repository of knowledge and relegating the latter to the status of ambivalent and contentious pseudomorph. It also sets 'reason' and 'emotion' at each other's throats, as if these two dimensions of human understanding could be defined apart and appealed to separately. In the twentieth-century there has even been an attempt to seed a theatre theory based on this separation. I am referring to Epic drama, which can be said to follow on from Irwin Piscator's apothegm that audiences should "learn how to think rather than to feel".<sup>20</sup> That this remark can be taken out of context and used as the corner stone of a totalised theatrical approach—Brechtian dramaturgy—is problematic, to say the least. One should treat Brecht's theories as one treats his plays: as historical objects. The valorisation of some aspects of his legacy, one suspects, comes less from their intrinsic usefulness to live performance processes than the epistemological assumptions they incidentally confirm.<sup>21</sup>

Tragedy, like life, is an experience. If the feelings flowing from it find final form in emotion-laden images rather than concept-rich discourse, then this does not invalidate it as a type of knowledge. Perhaps it makes it what some philosophers call a 'mixed good', a type of experience in which truth and falsity are so conjoined that only a critical method sensitive to its foundational conditions can assess the final result. Plays are shapes, bodily shapes; and they enact themselves in bodily terms. What happens in that enactment is a form of choreography, and its resulting truth is a form of dance: a moment or series of moments suspended in time, caught physically, understood artistically. But the result, now and then, is an ingress into the mind so deep it not only returns art to the level of the real but may go beyond it. Neil and I used to say about *Judgement*, 'everything that happens in this play, happens forever'—which is both a kind of curse and a kind of hope.

## Notes

1. Aristototele, *Poetics*, trans. Richard McKeon (Chicago & London: Chicago UP, 1973) 1449b.1.25.

2. Antonin Artaud, "Who, in the Heart..." *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, trans. Victor Corti (London: John Calder, 1968 & 1978) 90.

3. This paper is no overview of contemporary tragic theory either, the volume and complexity of which is beyond easy summary. However, the ubiquity of Aristototele's definition as a starting point for academic works such as *Tragedy: Developments in Criticism*, ed. R. P. Draper (London: Macmillan, 1980) and Michelle Gellrich's *Tragedy and Theory: the Problem of Conflict since Aristotle* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988) makes it a critical benchmark, and so a useful stalking horse.

4. Barry Collins, *Judgement: A Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974).

5. I am grateful for Professor Michael Ewans comments on this paper and for raising with me the important distinction between 'tragedy' and 'notions of the tragic'. This difference is explored in his own "Patterns of Tragedy in Sophokles and Shakespeare", where tragic power is seen very much in performance terms (in *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond*, ed. M. S. Silk (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). In this light, the articles in BJA would not rate as a theory of tragedy at all but,

at best, a nebulous discussion of 'the tragic'.

6. I am drawing here on the nomenclature used by John Russell Taylor in his classic studies on post war British drama, *Anger and After* (London: Methuen 1962) and *The Second Wave* (London: Methuen, 1971).

7. These were: for Melbourne's Playbox Theatre in 1980 with Malcolm Robertson performing, a production which toured to Sydney's Nimrod Theatre the following year; for Adelaide's Troupe Theatre in 1983 with Ron Hoennig performing; and my own, for Melbourne's La Mama Theatre in 1998 with Neil Pigot performing.

8. Collins 90.

9. 23-25 (text reproduced only in part).

10. They include: "The Marxist Theory of Art" by Gordon Graham 37/2 (1997):109-17; "Is Tragedy Paradoxical?" by Christopher Williams 37/2 (1997): 47-62; "Luckas and Realism After Marx" by Gordon Graham 38/2 (1998):198-207; "Farewell to Danto and Goodman" by Joseph Margolis 38/2 (1998): 353-74; "The Redemption of Art" by M.E.L. Whibley 38/2 (1998): 375-83; "Nietzsche and the Paradox of Tragedy" by Amy Price 38/2 (1998): 384-93; and Daniel Palmer's "Heidegger and the Ontological Significance of the Work of Art" 38/2 (1998): 394-411.

11. St. Augustine. *Confessions* (397-400). Trans. Henry Chadwick. (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1991) 35-6.

12. Christopher Williams, "Is Tragedy Paradoxical?" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37/2 (1997): 47-62.

13. Williams summarises: "Our minds essentially occupy different perspectives, and different values (or disvalues) attaching to the same item become visible . . . from these perspectives. Thus, a tragic sequence of events . . . pleasingly excites the imagination and fixes our attention on itself as an object of contemplation, while the subject matter, not so presented and instead considered from the viewpoints of all-out judgement or action, does not so engage the imagination." (49)

14. Amy Price, "Nietzsche and the Paradox of Tragedy" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38/2, (1998): 384-93.

15. 387.

16. 391.

17. For newspaper reviews of my production see Lee Christofis "Confessions of a Noble Cannibal" *Australian* (10 July 1998), Tina Ross "Spine-Tingling Performance" *Age* (30 June 1998), and Kim Trengove "The Judgement" *Sunday Age* (28 June 1998).

18. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1987) X.1.599.

19. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986). Nussbaum defends the claims of ancient Greek tragic poetry to be considered on equal terms with ancient Greek philosophy in its capacity to reflect on ethical problems. In doing so she takes direct aim at Plato's disavowal of the notion of tragic knowledge (12-21).

20. Maria Ley-Piscator, *The Piscator Experiment* (New York: Arcturus Books, 1967) 13.

21. For acerbic comment on the misuse of Epic theatre methods and the ungainly ways of



"Brechtian voodoo" see Tony Pinkey's introduction to Raymond Williams' *The Politics of Modernism* (New York: Verso, 1989) 20-1; and Rainer Friedrich's "Brecht and Postmodernism," *Philosophy and Literature* 23/1 (1999): 44-5.

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