

Barrie Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects

Author:

Farrell, Charlotte

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Barrie Kosky's Theatre of Post-Tragic Affects

Charlotte Farrell

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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The 'post-' in post-tragedy marks the relation between Kosky's adaptations and what Hans-Thies Lehmann has called 'postdramatic theatre'. Through an analysis of various Kosky productions, the thesis demonstrates that post-tragedy operates as a subgenre of postdramatic performance. Specifically, post-tragedy troubles an audiences' mimetic relationship with the stage action by drawing nonrepresentational and representational performance tropes into dynamic relation. Through this relation, the boundaries between performance and audience collapse, mobilising an affective dimension that the thesis calls 'post-tragic affect'.

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*For my mother, Annabel, who always encouraged my love for the theatre; and to her sister and
my aunt, Jane, for encouraging that love to grow, wildly*

Under the influence of the narcotic potion hymned by all primitive men and peoples, or in the powerful approach of spring, joyfully penetrating the whole of nature, those Dionysiac urges are awakened, and as they grow more intense, subjectivity becomes a complete forgetting of the self.

– Frederick Nietzsche (1993, 17)

It is a theater which eliminates the author in favor of what we would call, in our Occidental theatrical jargon, the director; but a director who has become a kind of manager of magic, a master of sacred ceremonies.

– Antonin Artaud (1958, 60)

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Introduction: Where the Imagination Runs Riot

It has been ten years since I saw Barrie Kosky's *The Lost Echo*. A series of images from the production continue to cling to me; vivid, abstract, and affecting. *A drag queen emerges from inside a toilet wearing a feathered headdress. Jove (Peter Carroll), God of the sky and thunder reclines on a chaise lounge urinating, while doll-like figures lap at the stream like thirsty puppies. A group of young men inside an enclosed glass box dismember large bones in slow motion. Inside the box, there is someone dressed as a penguin. The Goddess Juno (Pamela Rabe) wears a glittering gown while holding a martini glass. Callisto (Amber McMahon), transformed into a bear after being raped by Jove, is stripped completely naked. She wears a plastic bear mask and walks slowly around the stage, as a group of actors dressed in school uniforms look on, singing.*

I attended Kosky's *The Lost Echo* in 2006. It ran for eight hours in total, and was divided into two acts and four parts. It was an adaptation of stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The third act included an entire staging of Euripides' *Bacchae*. *The Lost Echo* made me feel a spectrum of emotional intensities: exhaustion, boredom, disgust, delight. Most memorably, however, I felt an ungluing of my subjectivity – an excess of feeling beyond the bounds of myself. Seeing *The Lost Echo* is what first led me to consider the felt dimensions of the theatre in *infrapersonal* terms, informed by certain contributions to what has come to be called the 'affective turn' (Clough, 2007) in the humanities. My exploration into Kosky's theatrical practice, informed by theories of *infrapersonal affect*¹, has culminated in this thesis, 'Barrie Kosky's Theatre of Post-Tragic Affects'.

~

¹ My use of the term 'infrapersonal affect' throughout the thesis is taken from the work of Brian Massumi (2015a, 212). Affect as 'infrapersonal' is integral to all experience. In Massumi's words, "The preferred prefix for affect is 'infra-'. 'Pre-' connotes time sequence. But affect always accompanies, on the parallel track of potential" (2015a, 212). Affect as the more obviously social's infrapersonal companion means that it threads through all subjects, politics, and culture, at the same time as it operates 'below' or in excess of them. Describing post-tragic affects as *infrapersonal* in this thesis draws attention to "what actively lies below a certain threshold of appearance" (Massumi, 2015a: 212) in Kosky's theatre, and how these dynamic undercurrents come to impact upon spectators' and critics' experiences of his work. While Massumi is frequently criticised for the asociality of his approach to affect - a discussion of which will feature in chapter three – describing affect as *infrapersonal* in relation to Kosky's work shows that is always at once related to and in excess of the more obviously social and its subjects. There is another sense in which affect, in this sense, is "pure sociality" (Massumi, 2015a: 205).

At the time that *The Lost Echo* was staged, Kosky had been producing theatre productions and operas in Europe.² He relocated permanently to Europe from Australia in 2012 where he was appointed Artistic Director of the Komische Oper in Berlin (Hallett, 2008). Kosky's work in Australia was concentrated between the 1990s and early-mid 2000s. He mainly staged radical adaptations of classical tragedies and operas. This period of Kosky's career will be the focus of this thesis, with a particular interest in his adaptations of classical tragedy. Through detailed analyses, I develop a theory of what I call 'post-tragedy' to account for the particular ways in which Kosky approached the plays he staged within their contemporary Australian theatre context. The thesis examines what was singular about Kosky's approach to adapting classical tragedies, and what kind of impact they had on audiences and why.

After seeing *The Lost Echo*, I examined Kosky's theatrical tendencies as they emerged in his earlier productions: *The Exile Trilogy* (1991-1993) with his Jewish-Australian theatre company the Gilgul; *King Lear* (1998); *Mourning Becomes Electra* (2000); and *Oedipus* (2000). I accessed these productions through archival footprints made in theatre reviews, video footage, interviews, newspaper articles, blog discussions, and Melissa Rymer's documentary film *Kosky in Paradise* (1995). Research into these productions provided me with a fuller picture of his dramaturgical practice in Australia. Some productions I have listed here – *The Dybbuk* (1991) from *The Exile Trilogy*, and *King Lear* in particular – along with *The Lost Echo* and *Women of Troy* (2008), will be examined in detail in this thesis.

After *The Lost Echo*, I saw Kosky's *Women of Troy* in 2008 and *The Tell Tale Heart* and *Poppea* in 2009. A discussion of specific scenes from *Women of Troy* feature in chapter's two and six, whereas *The Tell Tale Heart* and *Poppea* are only mentioned in brief. This is because the thesis focuses primarily on Kosky's adaptations of classical tragedy, such as his *King Lear*, *The Lost Echo* and *Women of Troy*. Exceptions are made in chapter's one and three where I discuss one of his first productions, *The Dybbuk* (1991) which was an adaptation of S. Ansky's Yiddish play by the same title written between 1913 and 1916 (Ansky, 2013). A discussion of

² From 2001 to 2005 Kosky was co-director of the Vienna Schauspielhaus. Alison Smale writes, "[I]n 2001, Mr. Kosky had just moved to Vienna to co-run the Schauspielhaus, once the preserve of the director George Tabori. In 2005, Mr. Kosky fell out with his co-director, and with Vienna, which he said was now still full of 'unexorcised ghosts' of the Nazi era" (2015). He directed the following productions there during this period: *Medea* (2001), *Macbeth* (2002), *Boulevard Delirium* (2002) and *Tales of Hoffman* (2005). The director touches upon some of these productions in his Rex Cramphorn Memorial Lecture (Kosky, 2004).

The Dybbuk in chapter one operates to contextualise Kosky's later work in light of his theatrical tendencies as they began to develop earlier in his career. In chapter three, I suggest that the production marks a turning point in Kosky's career towards a theatre of post-tragic affects. One scene from Kosky's staging of Ligeti's *Le Grande Macabre* at the Komische Oper in Berlin will also be discussed in chapter three for this reason.³

As I began to develop a fuller picture of Kosky's work, a critical observation arose at the heart of this thesis' primary line of enquiry. Each production in some ways adhered to a mimetic, representational model of theatre performance *at the same time* as radically unraveling the tropes involved through nonrepresentational performative interventions. This, in turn, led me to the question: Is the relation between representation and nonrepresentation what lies at the core of *The Lost Echo*'s sustained affective resonance? Is this relation the recurring element across Kosky's Australian oeuvre that makes his work singular? This thesis poses these questions, arguing that the tensions between these two performance aspects in Kosky's work – representation and nonrepresentation – are central to a definition of post-tragedy, as well as to post-tragic affects.

Introducing Post-Tragedy

The term post-tragedy has not appeared in any great detail except in Eckbert Faas' *Tragedy and After* (1984) and more recently in an article by Sara Freeman (2010).⁴ Faas posits Euripides, Shakespeare, and Goethe as post-tragic playwrights. He suggests that post-tragedy "def[ies] or ignore[s] specific aspects of tragedy that we may describe as Aristotelian" (7). In what he calls anti- and post-tragedy respectively, Faas suggests that they complicate the successive narrative time traditionally upheld by the tragic. He writes, "Instead of arranging events in a progressively conceived unity, with beginning, middle and end, initial complication, climax and resolution, they show that things are basically unpredictable, repetitive, unfathomable..." (7) The progressive unity Faas refers to originates in Aristotle's *Poetics* where

³ A comprehensive engagement with Kosky's operas in Australia and abroad is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁴ While Freeman and Faas's discussions of post-tragedy are poignant, they are rooted in the literary analysis of a dramatic text, rather than performance. Shifting the critical gaze to performance allows for auteur dramaturgies to be considered a central characteristic in what I call post-tragedy and post-tragic affects in relation to Kosky's work.

the tragic plot “should have a certain length, and this should be such that it can readily be held in memory” (Aristotle, 1996: 14).⁵

More recently, in her article ‘Tragedy After Darwin’, Freeman defines post-tragedy as that which repudiates certain tragic traditions but also remains in conversation with them. She defines post-tragedy as “a form that is “after” tragedy, but which cannot do without a conversation about tragedy” (203). Kosky’s post-tragedies operate from a similar premise. They are after tragedy in that they radically reconfigure the plays for a contemporary audience, with direct reference to modern and contemporary culture. Yet they continue a conversation with Aristotelian tragedy by altering the successive temporality of the tragic narrative arc into a new configuration. This Aristotelian arc is not totally eradicated, a discussion of which will feature in chapter two. It is splintered and redoubled by the interpenetration of temporalities: the classical tragic past, and the contemporary political/ performance present. Ultimately, I suggest that post-tragedy’s refraction of the past through the present operates in an affective critique of neoliberal politics. Kosky’s post-tragedies, then, become sites through which the classical tragic past operates as a mirror to contemporary conditions of crisis.

In relation to the work of British playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker, Freeman makes a similar argument. She proposes that tragedy is employed specifically at times of crisis and social upheaval. She writes,

What consistently remains important about tragedy, then, is not its literary structure, but the sense that Western culture employs tragedy to understand itself when it is in crisis and that the literary structure therefore comes to reflect the culture’s modes of exploring and, depending on the view of catharsis, its mode of confronting its crises and upheavals. (2010, 202).

Along similar lines to Freeman, I am of the view that Kosky, to a certain extent, engages tragedy in an effort to work through conditions of cultural crisis: conditions I refer to under the umbrella term ‘neoliberalism’ throughout this thesis.⁶ Kosky’s dramaturgies work through these

⁵ Chapter two engages at length with Aristotle’s definition of tragedy in his *Poetics*. Chapter four explores Aristotle’s concept of catharsis, and rethinks it within a post-tragic context.

⁶ Neoliberalism is a term used to define certain features of contemporary politics. I employ the term throughout the thesis to characterise the socio-political context within which Kosky’s work was situated in the 1990s and 2000s.

conditions in specific ways, mobilising what I call ‘post-tragic affects’ in the theatre, orienting the spectator towards a type of post-tragic catharsis that I call ‘emergency’. This thesis explores how and why Kosky’s performances orient the spectator in this way, and what sort of counter-politics is suggested by these encounters.

Critical Absences

In addition to what has come to be called the affective turn, contemporary theatre and performance has witnessed its own ‘turn’ in the last two decades in Australia and abroad. This turn has been a significant increase in the radical adaptation of classical tragedy on the Western theatre stage by auteur directors. Kosky is a key, and often overlooked, contributor to this groundswell in contemporary Australian theatre. *Contemporary Adaptations of Greek Tragedy*, a forthcoming collection edited by George Rodosthenous, promises to provide “a wide-ranging analysis of the role of the director in shaping adaptations for the stage today” (2017). Part IV of *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama* (2016) includes sixteen chapters on global approaches to the adaptation of Greek tragedy in modern and contemporary theatre. In *Theorising Performance: Greek Drama, Cultural History and Critical Practice* (2010) Edith Hall and Stephe Harrop compile numerous contributions that approach the question of the role of classical Greek drama in contemporary performance.⁷

Kosky’s work is remarkably absent from the collections I have listed here, despite his considerable contribution to the radical adaptation of classical tragedy in Australia that this thesis makes evident. There are some exceptions in the literature where scholars touch upon Kosky’s approach to the classics.⁸ However, there is yet to be a full-length study of his career in

Neoliberalism is a mode of governance that favors free-market capitalism, often at the cost of human and environmental welfare.

⁷ See in particular chapters by Freddy Decreus (123-136) and Helene Foley (137-152).

⁸ For example, Paul Monaghan’s chapter, ‘Greek Drama in Australia’ in *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama* (2016, 422-445) refers to Kosky in brief. He describes Act III of *The Lost Echo* as “a dingy drag-show, the action included frequent urinating, a highly sexualized “seduction” (involving crotch-tickling), and a chorus of zombies” (436). Monaghan also touches upon Kosky’s 2008 adaptation of Euripides’ *Women of Troy*, describing it as “a mix of high tragedy, opera, grunge realism, and Yiddish cabaret” (2016, 436). John McCallum and Tom Hillard are a notable exception in the literature, where they examine the correlation between Ovid’s Rome and Kosky’s contemporary rendering of *Metamorphoses* in *The Lost Echo* (2010). Likewise, Rachel Fensham explores Kosky’s *Lear* in ‘Smell-bodies: Tragic Masculinity in a Postcolonial *King Lear*’ in her book *To Watch Theatre* (2009), where she examines Kosky’s “dismantling of Shakespeare’s textual authority... and the ways in which a postcolonial context for this play can shape the conditions for tragedy” (73). Phillipa Kelly argues that the

Australia. Few people have explicitly drawn on theories of affect for an analysis of Kosky's work.⁹ These are some of the gaps in the literature on Kosky's work that this thesis begins to fill, in which I seek to establish what the socio-political implications of his productions are within their Australian theatre context, with an emphasis on their intrapersonal affective impact.

Neoliberalism and Post-Tragedy

The increase in the number of auteur adaptations of ancient and classical tragedies in Australia and abroad – to which this thesis will make some reference – suggests that Kosky's contributions are one example of a broader shift in contemporary performance worthy of critical attention. One way of looking at this is in terms of neoliberalism and its effects in theatre and performance. Neoliberalism and its effects in theatre and performance have concerned scholars over the last decade (Wickstrom, 2012; Nielsen and Ybarra, 2012; Harvie, 2013). In her book, *Performance in the Blockades of Neoliberalism* theatre scholar Maurya Wickstrom posits neoliberalism in terms of,

the de-regulation or full-scale evasion of regulatory structures by private and corporate interests intent on opening up global markets on an unprecedented level. It meant the further withdrawal of government from finance, the placement of social welfare programs at the bottom of the list of state-subsidies, while promising globally comprehensive programs to address debt and poverty. (2012, 3)

How have these shifts in the political landscape impacted upon the theatre? What role has this shift played in Kosky's post-tragedies? These are some of the questions that motivate this thesis.

production's "pervasive air of vaudeville mocked the tones of inexorable tragedy that have traditionally marked *King Lear*" (2002, 12). Adrian Kiernander (2000, 2010), Helen Slaney (2009, 2011), Michael Halliwell (2011), Michael Ewans (2011), Richard Madelaine (2002), Elizabeth Hale (2010, 2011), and Marguerite Johnson (2011) have also touched upon Kosky's relationship to the classics.

⁹ Indeed, in his Philip Parson's Memorial Lecture McCallum discussed the *The Lost Echo*'s affective resonance, which led him to argue, "[g]reat theatre, live in the space, has an affect-level that is so high that you feel it in your body" (2010, 11).

Political theorist Jon Stratton describes the evolution of neoliberalism in Australia as occurring in “a two-stage process” (2011, 14). The first stage was under Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating respectively.¹⁰ The second stage was John Howard’s prime ministership between 1996 and 2007. Kosky’s post-tragedies were developed and appeared on the contemporary Australian stage during this latter period. His *King Lear* was performed in 1996, *The Lost Echo* in 2006, and *Women of Troy* in 2008, just after Howard’s leadership ended. Stratton shows that during this period Howard “set about fragmenting and individualizing Australian society” and “reinforced the closure of the geographical border” (16). The outcomes of Howard’s neoliberal incentives were catastrophic events such as the ‘Tampa’ crisis in 2001, in which the government refused to resettle “438 Afghan refugees from a sinking boat” in the Pacific Ocean (Stratton, 2011: 16). Instead, the refugees were transported to offshore detention centres.¹¹

The concepts ‘post-tragic affects’ and emergency are introduced in the thesis to describe those affective encounters in Kosky’s theatre that make these conditions of cultural crisis - symptomatic of the neoliberal political landscape - felt. Crucially, Kosky does not do this by representing moments from Australian politics onstage. Instead he develops modes of performance that mobilize post-tragic affects – those intense experiences in Kosky’s theatre where the boundaries between spectator and stage come radically unstuck. These modes are radical, at times even violent, asignificatory strategies that intervene with a representational paradigm.

The political dimension of what Hans-Thies Lehmann calls ‘postdramatic theatre’ applies here.

¹⁰ Stratton shows that under these Prime Ministers’ leadership, “Australia’s markets [opened up] to the impact of global economic flows” (2). He continues:

These measures directly impacted on the lived experience of Australians... many people were made unemployed as a consequence of their industries becoming unviable when forced to compete with cheap imports from countries where costs were lower because workers were paid less and worked in less safe environments. These changes began under Gough Whitlam, whose labour government ran from late 1972 to late 1975, and Malcolm Fraser, whose coalition government replaced that of Whitlam, but were mostly the work of Labor governments of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating.

¹¹ This event resulted in the beginning of the “Pacific solution”, where less equipped islands such as Papua New Guinea and Nauru were established as offshore processing sites for refugees. As Stratton explains, “By processing these people offshore, they do not have access to the procedures and rights granted to those who enter Australian territory” (16).

In the age of rationalization, of the ideal of calculation and of the generalized rationality of the market, it falls to the theatre to deal with the extremes of affect by means of an *aesthetics of risk*, extremes which also contain the possibility of offending by breaking taboos. This is given when the spectators are confronted with the problem of having to react to what is happening in their presence, that is as soon as the safe distance is no longer given, which the aesthetic distance between stage and auditorium seem to safeguard. Precisely this reality of the theatre, that it can play with the border, predestines it for acts and actions in which not an 'ethical' reality or a thesis is formulated but in which a situation develops that confronts the spectators with abysmal fear, shame and even mounting aggression. Once more, we can see that theatre does not attain its political, ethical reality by way of information, theses and messages; in short: by way of its content in the traditional sense. On the contrary: it is part of its constitution to hurt feelings, to produce shock and disorientation, which point the spectator to their own presence precisely through 'amoral', 'asocial', and seemingly 'cynical' events. (2006, 187: emphasis original).

Kosky's theatre can be considered an *aesthetics of risk* which does not use information, theses and messages to communicate its politics. Rather, the performances' capacity to "hurt feelings" and disorient the viewer draws attention to its socio-political force, affectively.

Postdramatic Theatre

Kosky's performances, geared towards intense spectatorial encounters, are contextualized in the thesis in relation to what Lehmann has called postdramatic theatre. Lehmann introduced the term postdramatic theatre in 1999. In 2006, Karen Jürs-Munby translated his book into English. Postdramatic theatre has been an influential concept in theatre and performance studies. The term has found currency in the work of theorists and practitioners alike. Lehmann defines postdramatic theatre as:

not simply a new kind of text of staging – and even less a new type of theatre text, but rather a type of sign usage in the theatre that turns both of these levels of theatre upside down through the structurally charged quality of the performance text: it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information. (2006, 85: emphasis original)

What Lehmann signals here, which draws likeness with Kosky's approach to adapting classical tragedies, is that the playtext no longer holds sway over what a performance can be. Rather, theatre as 'presence', 'shared experience', that foregrounds 'process' and 'energetic impulse', are qualities of postdramatic theatre, and I would suggest that these are qualities of Kosky's post-tragedies, too. I employ the prefix post- in post-tragedy to signal in part the stylistic resonances between postdramatic theatre and Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects.

In his book, Lehmann provides a vivid picture of postdramatic theatre through examples. When describing the aspects that comprise postdramatic productions, he discusses text, space, time, body, and media. In his discussion of text, he proposes that in postdramatic theatre text-based language is seized and comes under attack. Language functions "not [to] interpret individuals and the narrative threads of text but articulates its language as a disturbing reality on stage". This disturbing reality is articulated through "tones, words, sentences, sounds that are hardly controlled by 'meaning'". For Lehmann, postdramatic theatre in this sense is "not text oriented dramaturgy" (146), but rather a suffusion of potential meanings that "fails to make the expected meaning recognizable" (146).

In his discussion of space, Lehmann shows that the postdramatic stage does not operate as a measure of the fictive distance between the stage action and its audience. Rather, he emphasizes aspects of tableau and montage from the work of practitioners such as Robert Wilson, Jan Lauwers and Pina Bausch. Their works are examples for how this distance is shortened or eradicated completely in postdramatic theatre. Lehmann demonstrates the various ways in which postdramatic theatre shortens the distance between performance and audience where, instead, "the theatre becomes a moment of *shared energies* instead of transmitted signs" (150, emphasis original).

Lehmann also highlights an aesthetics of time in postdramatic theatre. In particular, he observes an aesthetics of repetition. In reference to the work of Tadeusz Kantor, William Forsyth, Heiner Goebbels and Erich Wonder, he explains, “repetition is an explicit theme” (156). Repetition as both a thematic and aesthetic device orients time in particular ways. For one, it deconstructs “story, meaning and totality of form” (156), and in doing so exhausts signifiers of their representational traction. Lehmann writes that postdramatic theatre’s configuration of time operates to show “that time is ‘out of joint’ ... always jumping between heteronomic spaces of time” (158).

Lehmann also discusses postdramatic theatre and the body in performance. He writes, “postdramatic theatre gains new potential for overcoming the semantic body” (162). The semantic body, for Lehmann, is a body that is held by and imprinted with representational signifiers that are then read and interpreted by an audience. Such a body is predicated upon pre-existing coordinates of representational signification. In postdramatic theatre, however, the body is overwrought by what Lehmann calls “pure gesture” (164). He defines pure gesture as “an excess of potentiality, the phenomenality of visibility that is blinding, so to speak, namely surpassing the merely ordering gaze” (164). In postdramatic theatre, the effects and affects of the body far surpass the limits of what can be read and interpreted semantically.

Similarities between postdramatic theatre and Kosky’s post-tragedies are discussed in chapter two of this thesis. Besides Kosky, there are other notable performance practitioners in Australia that could be considered examples of postdramatic theatre. Key names include Open City, The Sydney Front, Jenny Kemp, and My Darling Patricia. Organisations such as Performance Space in Sydney, and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts have championed performance forms that draw upon postdramatic theatre tropes since the 1980s. Along with these practitioners, Australian audiences have been exposed to the work of international postdramatic theatre practitioners such as Robert Wilson, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Jan Fabre, Pina Bausch, Forced Entertainment and William Forsyth through festivals. As Margaret Hamilton writes in her book *Tranfigured Stages* (2011), “Over the last twenty years, the Australian festival circuit has presented key examples of the postdramatic theatre paradigm” (196).

This contemporary performance context is where Kosky’s post-tragedies can be situated. His audiences may have been exposed to these Australian and international practitioners working in the postdramatic paradigm. My use of the prefix post- in post-tragedy in this thesis is, in part,

in reference to postdramatic theatre's influence on Kosky's work. Postdramatic theatre's drive towards creating performances where 'energetic impulse' and 'pure gesture' superscede the 'semantic body' can also be seen in Kosky's work. While the work of Australian and international practitioners influenced by postdramatic theatre are significant, I have chosen to focus exclusively on Kosky for developing a concept of post-tragedy in this thesis.

Post-Tragic Affects

In Kosky's post-tragedies, the viewer is constituted in a leaky, ephemeral, fleeting encounter with subjectivity through her relation to the performance. Because of this, as well as Kosky's particular auteur approach to the stage action, his productions demand a different mode of theatre and performance analysis to those that privilege the spectator as self-contained. This thesis develops a mode of analysis appropriate to Kosky's work through detailed engagements with his adaptations of tragedy in Australia, through the prism of intrapersonal affect. Through these engagements, the thesis introduces an affective analysis that could prove useful to future theatre and performance studies scholarship, one that engages with contemporary adaptations of tragedy, particularly those that draw representation and nonrepresentational performance modalities into relation. This, the thesis argues, is a defining feature of post-tragedy.

Theatre and performance scholars Erin Hurley and Sara Warner argue "the affective turn promises to bring us closer to that dimension of culture that cannot be grasped through semiotic analysis or a constructivist perspective by privileging those forces that cannot be fully socially determined" (2012, 99). This thesis fulfils this promise by drawing on select contributions to theories of affect by thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Brian Massumi, and Erin Manning, to illuminate those 'forces' in Kosky's stage productions that operate in excess of semiotic or constructivist analyses. Crucially, such an analysis is not divorced from or exists outside of politics and the social. In fact, such an approach is suffused with politics and is inherently social. While an analysis of the affective dimension of Kosky's theatrical practice attends to the edges of signification and its transgressions, the theatre is by definition a social space, always situated in varying degrees to politics. As theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann puts it, "theatre is an art of the social *par excellence*" (2006, 185). My engagement with theories

of affect in relation to Kosky's practice is situated within a zone that straddles the inherent sociality of the theatre, and the infrapersonal intensities that circulate within it.

Post-tragic affects are shown in the thesis to be produced through the potent interrelation between representational and nonrepresentational performance dynamics. One thing this allows the productions to do is, along with their foregrounding of nihilism, to critique neoliberal subjectivity; an apathetic subjectivity produced through fear and anxiety.¹² In Kosky's post-tragedies these inherent themes of nihilism are used as a springboard to critically engage with the affective dimensions of neoliberalism. The thesis shows that this produces a range of responses in audiences. Some are moved to tears in the encounter of what I call emergency in chapter five, whereas others close their eyes in apathy, as I argue in chapter six. Most important, however, is that post-tragic affects allow for a rethinking of the subject in what Erin Manning has called 'more than human' terms, what she describes as "less as that which is generated by the human for the human than a practice that foregrounds how the event itself attunes to a relational milieu that exceeds the human or wherein the human is more ecological than individual" (2013, 76). This spectatorial subjectivity is made most evident in Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects through what I call 'emergency'.

Post-Tragic Catharsis: Or, Emergency

Emergency is when post-tragic affects reach a boiling point in Kosky's theatre. Rather than tragic catharsis, where the theatre spectator is cleansed and purified of pity and fear, Kosky's post-tragic affects are geared towards moments of extreme intensity. These moments seep and spill: they do not neatly resolve themselves within the physical space of the theatre, or the measured time of the performance. These moments, for example, can be mapped through audiences' tears, as they are in chapter five of this thesis. I describe the intensification of post-tragic affects in Kosky's theatre in terms of emergency because it is a word that evokes the emergence of something urgent. This alerts audiences to the conditions of crisis not only inside

¹² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have shown that the social tendency produced through neoliberal politics "is to make everything public and thus open to government surveillance and control" (2004, 203). This produces a social subjectivity that is paranoid, overexposed, and politically apathetic. As Brian Massumi foretold in his introduction to *The Politics of Everyday Fear* in 1993: "What society looks toward is no longer a return to the promised land but a general disaster that is already upon us, woven into the fabric of our day-to-day life" (11).

but also outside of the theatre. It primes the spectatorial body to attend to these conditions in the world. Emergency in Kosky's post-tragedies becomes the encounter through which the world outside of the theatre can be reimagined and refelt, and does so as a type of politics.

Antonin Artaud becomes relevant here. His Theatre of Cruelty sought to dismantle conventional theatrical practices. In Elaine Scarry's book, *Thinking in an Emergency* (2011) she writes, "the immobilization of the theatrical audience... where the play assumes a potentially dictatorial power over the audience, stunning them into full attention..." lies at the heart of what Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty fought against (13). Instead, he wanted to violently affect the spectator. Scarry refers to the work of Artaud in her book to examine people's susceptibility to being controlled, and how artforms such as the theatre can sometimes intercept the mechanisms of power involved. In his *Theatre and Its Double* (1958) Artaud proposed, "a theatre in which violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator seized by the theatre as by a whirlwind of higher forces" (82-83). The spectator being 'seized', 'crushed', and 'hypnotised', 'by a whirlwind of higher forces' is somewhat analogous to emergency in Kosky's post-tragedies as this thesis will show.

While Kosky's work is part of a broader tendency in which theatres of post-tragic affect may also be identified, in the work of auteur directors such as Romeo Castellucci and Jan Fabre, for example, this project focuses exclusively on Kosky. It does this in order to provide a rigorous and in depth analysis of his theatrical practice in Australia, and create an account of the myriad dramaturgical strategies he employs towards a theatre of post-tragic affects. This, I propose, can serve as a model for the analysis of post-tragic affects in the work of other practitioners; an expanded analysis of which is beyond the scope of this project. This thesis analyses specific productions by Kosky, defining post-tragedy as an auteur director's radical adaptations of classical tragedy in contemporary performance within a neoliberal milieu. While Kosky is far from the only director that radically adapts classical tragedies in contemporary theatre¹³, his approach serves as a model through which the work of other post-tragic directors, and other theatres of post-tragic affects, can be considered.

Post-Tragic Trajectories

¹³ Other key names include Jan Fabre, Katie Mitchell, Anne Bogart, Thomas Ostermeier and Romeo Castellucci.

Chapter one of this thesis points to the role and function of radically adapting classical tragedy within a neoliberal context, one also informed by the anxiety that proliferated in the Australian theatre community around local plays being “swept of the stage” (Neill, 2013b) by European-inspired auteur adaptations of the classics. Kosky contributed specifically to this period in Australian theatre. I refer to this period in chapter one and throughout the thesis as ‘the auteur turn’. The chapter situates Kosky’s auteurism within the tradition of the European avant-garde auteur, while examining the Australian theatre context out of which Kosky’s theatrical practice emerged. It provides a close engagement with his early career with the Gilgul in Melbourne. The chapter examines early traits of Kosky’s theatrical practice, and how these were germinations of what came to flourish in his post-tragedies. The prevalence of elements such as intertextuality and site-specificity in these early productions marked the beginning of Kosky’s interest in fraying the boundaries of representation; or, more accurately, bringing representation and nonrepresentation into a potent interrelation.

Chapter Two introduces the concept of post-tragedy. It situates itself within scholarly discussions of the adaptation of classical tragedy in contemporary performance. Through detailed analyses of Kosky’s versions of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (1998) and Euripides’ *Women of Troy* (2008), post-tragedy is differentiated from ‘postdramatic tragedy’ (Decreus, 2008; Campbell, 2010; Stalpaert, 2011) and ‘postmodern tragedy’ (Houlahan, 2007; Ioannidou, 2008; Monaghan, 2010; Budzowska, 2014) in crucial ways. Kosky’s particular auteur approach, elaborated across all chapters comprising this thesis, is shown in chapter two to include durational performance tactics, the expulsion of fake bodily fluids on stage, and deliberately incongruous music. These performance modalities, all within the context of a radically adapted classical play, unleash a distinct affective dimension that I call post-tragic affect, a discussion of which is the focus of chapter three.

Chapter three argues that Kosky’s oscillations between representational and nonrepresentational performance modalities are what mobilise post-tragic affects. The chapter returns to a particular scene from *The Dybbuk* to demonstrate Kosky’s developing interest in a theatre in which infrapersonal affects operate in excess of what a scene represents. As suggested in part through the succession of images from *The Lost Echo* sketched at the outset of this introduction, Kosky does not approach the theatre spectator as a consumer to be entertained, at a remove from what they are watching. Rather, he positions them as a dynamic collaborator within

a viewing context that is challenging, exhausting, and affectively demanding. Such are the conditions that lead towards a theatre of post-tragic affects.

Post-tragic affects, as I develop further in chapter four, are critical, affective reenounters with the felt dimensions of neoliberal subjectivity, yet they operate in excess of the feeling subject. Chapter four thus rethinks Aristotle's notion of catharsis – and its numerous interpretations – through the prism of perpersonal affect. In doing so, it explores those encounters in Kosky's work that operate in excess of the human subject, to an often discombobulating extreme. In sum, post-tragic affects are shown to culminate in an encounter that could be described as a type of post-tragic catharsis, what I call toward the end of the chapter, 'emergency'.

Chapter five examines a scene from Kosky's *The Lost Echo* in which I was moved to tears. These tears are differentiated from cathartic tears in tragedy where an audience feels sympathy and compassion for the characters onstage. Kosky disrupts sympathetic mimesis between audience and performance. In consequence, the tears I cried were in excess of myself. In the chapter, this is discussed as a type of correlation to or contagion from the ways in which bodies are staged, with an emphasis on their corporeal rupture through the repetition of stylised gesture.

Chapter six discusses instances in which post-tragic affects geared towards emergency are blocked or remediated by the spectator. This produces 'meta-feelings'.¹⁴ The chapter explicitly explores the ethical and political dimensions of post-tragedy, returning to Kosky's 2008 production, *Women of Troy*. With a continued interest in the spectator-performance relationship in post-tragedy foregrounded throughout the thesis, chapter six explores what happens when post-tragic affects are remediated in what is symptomatic of neoliberal apathy. With a focus on the violence and allegory in the production, as well as the music and sound design, the chapter argues that post-tragic affects, when remediated, stymie emergency, producing a meta-feeling: in this case, apathy.

Twists and Turns

¹⁴ Meta-feelings are feelings produced in response to another feeling. See Feagin (1983, 103); Urban (1988, 386); and Trezise (2012).

Theatre scholar Edward Scheer asked rhetorically of *The Lost Echo*, “It works beautifully, but what the hell is it about?” (2006, 58). The fact that Scheer poses this question penetrates to the heart of what this thesis argues: that the nonrepresentational aspects of Kosky’s work operate in excess of meaning, and yet through their relationship to the representational dynamics— such as character, story, dialogue, and monologue – produce affects that, to borrow Antonin Artaud’s turn of phrase, supersede “its surface of fact” (1958, 13). Kosky’s theatre of post-tragic affects operates, at times, in excess of understanding. For this reason, I engage with theories of intrapersonal affect alongside concepts such as becoming-animal (chapter two) and the body without organs (chapter three) from the philosophical works of Deleuze and Guattari, whose ideas have helped give critical voice to theatre and performance effects that operate in excess of the symbolic, such as in Kosky’s theatre of post-tragic affects.¹⁵

In 2010, Kosky declared: “The stage is where anything ought to be possible, where the imagination runs riot” (Kosky in Conrad, 2010). Just as Kosky draws together myriad theatrical and cultural influences in a single production, this project is situated at the intersection of a number of conceptual crossroads. On the one hand, the thesis argues that Kosky’s auteur theatrical practice is a rich site for affective analysis, and on the other, the thesis shows that affective analysis is a rich prism through which to analyse radical adaptations of classical tragedy in contemporary performance. This is because these adaptations, drawing on developments in what Lehmann has called postdramatic theatre operate in excess of representation, yet also maintain some relation to the representational.

This Ph.D. thesis contributes to the theatre and performance studies discipline in two crucial ways. First, it provides an account of Kosky’s contributions to the contemporary Australian stage. There is yet to be a full-length account of this period of Kosky’s career. Second, it develops a theory of post-tragedy and post-tragic affect. This is used to discuss Kosky’s auteur approach to adapting classical tragedy, and the impact of this on audiences. In order to evoke Kosky’s theatrical practice and its affective undulations, my writing in this thesis is inspired by Kosky’s comment that “The stage is where anything ought to be possible, where the imagination runs riot”. The conceptual twists and turns that the dissertation takes are informed – and inspired – by Kosky’s productions and the risks they take.

¹⁵ A major contributor to theatre and performance studies scholarship that engages with Deleuze and Guattari’s theories is Laura Cull (2005, 2012).

1.

Barrie Kosky in Context: Australian Theatre and the Auteur Turn

Introduction: A Hazardous Venture

Australian theatre historian Geoffrey Milne writes, “attempting to classify the eclectic postmodern work of Barrie Kosky is a hazardous venture” (2004, 268). This chapter undergoes this hazardous venture by contextualising Kosky’s early theatrical practice within what Milne calls Australian theatre’s ‘third wave’, which he dates between 1980 and 1998. Within this context, the chapter focuses on what can be called Kosky’s auteur approach to performance.¹⁶ This focus, however, does not attempt to ‘classify’ Kosky’s approach. Rather, it provides social, cultural and theatrical context for the early part of his career, as well as analysing the form that his productions take. This chapter provides background for a closer engagement with Kosky’s later work that will be taken up in subsequent chapters, while positioning him as a key player in what I consider to have been a type of auteur turn that occurred in Australia in the late 2000s/early 2010s.

The auteur turn of which Kosky was part was a period marked by a significant collapse between mainstream and marginal performance practices; a collapse that had already begun in the 1960s during Australian theatre’s second wave (Milne, 2004: 119-122). The second wave was driven by a desire to establish a national theatre independent of the country’s British ancestry,¹⁷ while the third wave saw a significant rise in international, non-British theatrical influences in the work of contemporary Australian theatre makers, as well as a proliferation of smaller theatre companies.¹⁸ Milne situates Kosky’s early work during this third wave. This

¹⁶ Auteur theatre directors, writes Avra Sidiropoulou, are “the ‘authors’ of the theatre event” who “leave upon it a distinctive imprint, which expresses a sense of visual panache and a choice of subject matter that are constant across a body of work” (2011, 33).

¹⁷ Kosky also worked in contrast to a British classicism and colonialism. As theatre scholar Rachel Fensham writes, Kosky “vigorously opposes the inherited stuffiness of the bourgeois British theatre with its well-made play and the dominant naturalism of the self-consciously Australian theatre...” (2009, 75).

¹⁸ Other notable contributions during this period were Jean-Pierre Mignon and Bruce Keller’s Australian Nouveau Theatre in Melbourne; Thalia Theatre Company in Sydney; and Theatre Zart in Perth (Milne, 260-268). Melbourne director Renato Cuocolo, who will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two of this thesis, was radically adapting classical tragedies at the same time that Kosky was producing works with the Gilgul in the early 1990s (Monaghan: 2006, 2-4).

chapter posits Kosky's performances as an extension of the ongoing fracture in Australian theatre that erupted in the second wave between text-based productions on the mainstage and more experimental forms at its margins.

To this end, the chapter examines Kosky's early theatrical productions and their reception during Australian theatre's third wave to consider the ways in which he drew upon European theatrical traditions, specifically that of the auteur theatre director. It explores what Kosky's primary auteur modalities were at this time, and how they polarized audiences and critics. His auteur approach began to develop in the early 1990s with his Jewish-Australian theatre company, the Gilgul and during his post as Artistic Director of the Adelaide Festival. Both stages of Kosky's career will be examined here. These were critical periods that came to inform his reputation as Australian theatre's *enfant terrible* (Garde, 2007: 445)¹⁹, and led to what I define in chapter two as his post-tragedies.

The chapter structures itself as follows. First, after a brief introduction to auteurism in Australia, it provides a short definition of theatrical auteurism by drawing on the scholarship of Avra Sidiropoulou (2011). Second, it contextualises Kosky's auteur theatrical practice within Australian theatre's second and third waves. This provides critical background into how his work has been socially and culturally situated. Then, it turns to Kosky's work with the Gilgul in Melbourne and Adelaide Festival in the 1990s to examine his particular approach to auteur performance as it began to develop.

Heated Debates

Kosky is one significant figure within the auteur turn: a period that began in the 1960s and reached a boiling point in 2013 where, as performance theorist Sarah French writes, "adaptation

¹⁹ Kosky's innovative approach to performance and its polarised reception in Australia has been further inflamed by his widely publicised criticisms of the country's arts politics. He has been in equal parts lambasted and celebrated by media commentators for statements such as leaving Australia for Europe "was like having to break out of the concentration camp" and that "[e]veryone in the arts wants to get out, and needs to" (Kosky in Conrad, 2010). On Opera Australia's programming, he has said, "The stuff they put on stage is shit the likes of which wouldn't be served up in the worst provincial theatre in Europe" (Kosky in Smith, 2010). In a Sydney Morning Herald newspaper article entitled 'Kosky Lobs Grenades at Arts Leaders' he is quoted saying, "I have absolutely nothing to say about the current political situation in Australia and its impact on the arts scene except that it is as depressing, mean-spirited, ill-informed, banal and provincial as ever" (Kosky in Pickard, 2009). Kosky's critique of Australian arts politics, coupled with his radical, auteur approach to the theatre, has positioned him as a controversial theatre director and spokesperson.

was perhaps the most contested and controversial topic in Australian theatre” and “a series of heated debates erupted in the media” (2015: 81). A succession of newspaper articles either defending or condemning adaptation in contemporary Australian theatre proliferated, with headlines such as ‘Theatre directors are hooked on classics as the adaptation takes over’ (Neill, 2013a); ‘The local voices being swept off the stage’ (Neill, 2013b); ‘Theatre debate is a generational battle for the ages’ (Myers, 2013) and ‘What’s old is new again? The debate setting theatre on fire’ (Berthold, 2013). Theatre critic Alison Croggon responded to this debate – a debate she described was “marked by polarised and often vitriolic language” (2013) – using a statistical study as rebuttal, where she wrote,

The strangest aspect of this whole debate is that, for all the sound and fury, nobody bothered to check if these claims are true. Is it correct that new Australian plays are being “swept off the stage” by cheap and easy adaptations of classics written by auteur directors? I did check the facts, and I can categorically tell you that these accusations are completely untrue. (2013).

Regardless of whether Australian plays were being “swept of the stage” or not, it is undeniable that there was a palpable shift in Australian theatre in and around the time these debates escalated: a shift that was significantly contributed to by movements begun in Australian theatre’s second and third waves, and influenced in part by Kosky. This shift, if not factually as drastic as some contend (Neill, 2013a; 2013b), was irrefutably felt in the Australian theatre community. This affective groundswell led to an impassioned debate about the state of Australian theatre in the contemporary moment, about what Australian theatre should and should not be.

In the late 2000s/early 2010s, theatrical influences from the European avant-garde intensified in mainstream Australian theatre venues such as the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC). French writes that experimental theatrical works, particularly radical adaptations of the classics “have become increasingly prominent on the mainstages at Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC) and Sydney Theatre Company (STC), especially from a series of young directors” (2015, 81) among which Kosky can be counted. Theatre critic and historian John McCallum attributes part of this intensification to the work of

Kosky, too. McCallum writes that at the turn of the century, Kosky created some of the most exciting theatre in Australia (2009, 377) and “led the way” for other “auteur directors” such as Benedict Andrews and Simon Stone (2010, 8).

There is yet to be a comprehensive account documenting Kosky’s career with a focus on his auteur approach to performance. This is a gap in theatre and performance studies this chapter begins to fill. Additionally, up until this point, Kosky’s work in Australia and Europe has been largely absent from discussions of auteur directors in contemporary performance (Ebrahimian, 2004; Sidiropoulou, 2011; Innes and Shevtsova, 2013). Through an examination of Kosky’s work, it can be seen that he has made significant contributions to the tradition of the auteur theatre director at both a national and international scale. So, this project also introduces Australian theatre to what Avra Sidiropoulou has attributed to “the rise of the modern auteur” (13) in Europe and America (8).

Enter the Auteur

An auteur director’s vision is one that supersedes the play text. It is a term that has roots in French New Wave cinema (Sidiropoulou, 2011: 1). For the auteur theatre director, in the process of devising the performance, the play script becomes secondary to their creative vision. The plays’ primary themes are distilled and reconfigured, informed by their contemporary performance context. Figures from European theatre history including Antonin Artaud, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski, and Tadeuz Kantor have been foundational influences on theatrical auteurism. These directors have been foundational influences on Kosky, too.²⁰ Sidiropoulou writes, “the art of the ‘director-auteur’ is almost instantly identifiable with experimental, image-oriented, non-linear work” (2011, 2). Such an approach can be seen across the work of these directors, including Kosky.

²⁰ In his autobiographical book *On Ecstasy* Kosky frequently quotes from Artaud’s *The Theatre and Its Double* (2008, 44; 50). Artaud scholar Ed Scheer notes that “there are clear links between Artaud’s vision and Kosky’s Carnavalesque constructions” (2006, 58). John McCallum and Tom Hillard have described the effects of Kosky’s work as “a Meyerholdian, even Artaudian, catharsis” (2010, 132). Kosky’s theatre company, the Gilgul showed influences from “the ‘holy theatre’ inheritance of the Grotowskian *via negativa*” and also “owed much to the European ‘theatre of the image’, in particular that of Tadeusz Kantor” (Richards and Prior, 2002: 35).

Kosky's own image-oriented and non-linear auteurism began to appear as early as the 1980s when he founded his own experimental theatre and opera company, Treason of Images at Melbourne University at the age of eighteen (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 160). In 1987, Kosky staged a version of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which he described as combining "the aesthetics of the evil empire in 'Star Wars' with a dash of Nazism and the eerie poetic of William Blake" (Kosky in Romney, 1987: 41). Kosky's revisioning of Shakespeare's play by engaging unlikely aesthetic cross-sections – in this instance, Star Wars, Nazism and William Blake – has been a consistent approach across Kosky's directorial practice; an approach that has often been met with fierce critique.

Critical Perspectives

Kosky's auteur approach to adapting the classics is seen by some as a disregard of tradition (McQueen-Thompson, 1998) while others see it as "an active vision of culture – as something that is vital and enacted, rather than inherited and worshipped" (Scheer, 2006: 57). According to French, adaptations such as Kosky's "reinvigorate and repoliticize historical texts through a contemporary [lens]... to speak to a contemporary Australian audience" (French, 2015: 82). Theatre scholars Denise Varney, Peter Eckersall, Chris Hudson and Barbara Hatley contend that Kosky's engagement with European influences and plays is an example of how "Australian-made adaptations largely ignore or express little reflexive awareness of the fact that they might be engaged in the representation of Europe in one of its othered cultures" (155). They examine what they call "the return of a Eurocentric vision in Australian adaptations" (13) to argue that these adaptations seem "to be in stark denial of the multiple ways in which modern Australia is geographically and economically connected to the Asia-Pacific region" (147).

Equally critical of Kosky's European-inspired, auteur approach, yet for different reasons, are two iconic Australian playwrights, David Williamson and Andrew Bovell. Both argue that Kosky's productions were supported at the cost of established Australian playwright's voices. In 2009, STC artistic directors Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton's programming included an adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and a radical revisioning of Shakespeare's *War of the Roses* directed by Benedict Andrews, as well as Williamson's 1979 classic, *The Removalists* and Bovell's *When the Rain Stops Falling* (2008). Williamson

responded to this programming by saying, “I’m delighted that [the STC] are still doing my old plays... But I get the feeling Andrew and Cate want to move on to new writing and new theatre, capital-T theatre. I think they want to do dazzle theatre and I don’t do that... I’m not theatre with a capital T. I’m no Barrie Kosky” (Blake, 2009).²¹ In another context, Bovell has added provocatively: “Write your own plays and stop effing around with everybody else’s. It’s lazy. It’s easy. It’s conservative. And it ignores the vibrancy of the contemporary voices that surround you” (Neill, 2013a).

Kosky has been positioned as the figurehead of what Williamson calls ‘capital-T theatre’, and what Bovell considers to be lazy (mis)appropriations of a playwright’s creative vision. While Varney, Eckersall, Hudson and Hatley situate Kosky “at the forefront of adaptation theatre in Australia” (146), they argue that his adaptations “tread a fine line between contemporary experimental theatre and the revivification and recentering of local cultural practices that are exclusively Western or European” (148). These critical discussions of Kosky’s auteur, European-inspired approach to performance are partly correct. I suggest that his European-inspired directing style began to develop with the Gilgul in the 1990s – and even before that, with his theatre company Treason of Images. Yet this became a significant catalyst for what led to a type of auteur turn in Australian theatre in the 2000s.²²

‘Oh, Half the Audience is Gone’: Nationalist Tensions

Tensions in the reception of Kosky’s auteur approach can also be mapped through audience walkouts. Australian theatre scholar Phillipa Kelly writes, for example, that during Kosky’s season of *King Lear* with Bell Shakespeare Company in 1998, “[m]any audience members were so offended that they walked out in the middle of performances” (2002, 12). McCallum observed that “there were apparently many walkouts every night” of Kosky’s stage adaptation of Euripides’ *Women of Troy* in 2008 (2010, 9). Kosky himself recounts an experience of the opening night of his production, *The Golem* with Opera Australia in 1993, with

²¹ Kosky has provocatively stated that Williamson, “is dealing with a theatrical form that is dead and buried. He is writing plays that are drawing room comedies, just in groovy ‘90s settings” (Kosky in Greenwood, 1993: 54).

²² While the Gilgul did not explicitly interleave cultural and theatrical influences from East Asia, it was the first professional Jewish theatre company in Australia. Kosky introduced cultural influences lesser known to Australian audiences, and made a significant contribution to the diversification of cultural representation in Australian theatre, which was a primary impetus of the second and third wave.

“I’ll never forget coming back after the end of the first interval [...] and thinking, ‘Oh, half the audience has gone’” (Kosky in Rymer, 1996).²³

Kosky’s version of Verdi’s *Nabucco* performed at the Sydney Opera House in 1996 is renowned for having “led to booing, walkouts and money-back demands” (Usher, 2005). Opera Australia continued to receive complaints about Kosky’s *Nabucco* in 2011, eighteen years after the production premiered at the Sydney Opera House. Opera Australia’s chief executive Adrian Collette has said: “When subscribers write to me and tell me how much they hated [last year’s] *Tosca*, they’ll add a [postscript] saying, ‘And I still haven’t forgotten *Nabucco*’” (Morgan, 2011).²⁴

The lasting impact of Kosky’s productions appears in more positive analyses, too. There is a recurring theme, for example, of his performances continuing to have impact after they have finished, transforming contributions to Australian performance and theatrical criticism in the production’s aftermath. Scheer notes, for instance, that Kosky’s *The Lost Echo* (2006) was “a singular moment in Australian theatre” reminding us “that the theatre can provide a radical alternative vision to the increasingly straitjacketed orthodoxies of Australian society”, and that he expects to “hear its resonances for some time” (2006, 57-58). Earlier in Kosky’s career, *The Age* theatre critic Helen Thompson said that the Gilgul’s 1991 production, *The Dybbuk* “was such an extraordinary theatrical production that it would, for me, provide a new benchmark of theatrical excellence that after that production we would not make theatrical judgments in exactly the same way” (Thompson in Rymer, 1996).

This chapter and the thesis at large infer that the polarised reception of Kosky’s auteurism has broader implications for questions of national identity. It suggests that these controversies are symptomatic of ongoing tensions that have been played out during Australian theatre’s numerous ‘waves’, particularly around what designates a performance to be ‘Australian’ or not. In a

²³ Australian academic Peter Conrad suggests that reactions such as the walkouts are a result of Kosky’s heterogeneous theatrical vision being at odds with Australian nationalism. Conrad writes, “Expressionism has never been an Australian style...Ours is not a country given to primal screams or Dionysian rampages...” (2010). What Conrad alludes to here is that Kosky’s ‘Expressionistic’ directorial approach contrasts with dominant Australian aesthetics and cultural practices.

²⁴ Kosky himself described the production playfully, as “a remembered version of the original [...] 1840s production which has been on tour for a hundred years and ended up being done on the stage of the Folies Bergère and then had a season in Las Vegas” (Kosky in Rymer, 2006).

discussion of national identity in relation to Kosky's *The Tell Tale Heart* (2008), for example, theatre critic Alison Croggon writes:

[A] couple of years ago, I was part of a fierce argument about whether Barrie Kosky's *The Tell-Tale Heart* – an adaptation of Poe's short story that was a sell-out hit at the 2008 Melbourne International Arts Festival – was Australian enough to qualify for a local theatre award. Although it was directed and adapted by an Australian, it was performed by a Viennese actor; the production itself was originally from Vienna, although it was translated and re-staged in Melbourne by the Malthouse Theatre, with input by local designers. At the time, I was surprised that the question was asked: surely Australian art is that made by Australian artists, and the authenticity of its provenance is a question for former times? Although in this case the argument formed as a generational division – old-school nationalism versus new-school internationalism – it's by no means a closed question. (2010a).

Here, Croggon shows that the question of what makes Australian theatre Australian or not is yet to have a straightforward answer. What these discussions ultimately reveal is that there are beliefs about what Australian theatre should be, versus the threat of what it could become or was becoming. With regard to the debate to which Croggon refers, Kosky's theatrical practice operates in excess of nationalist discourse.

In his account of Australian theatre history, Milne unpacks debates from 1946 onwards regarding the country's need to establish a national theatre, and suggests this never really eventuated. Instead, he writes, "states and territories each have separate arts funding bodies whose activity reflects differing policy attitudes and different funding methods" (2004, 12).²⁵ McCallum also suggests that Australian theatre "started out as a search for unity and a national identity" (2009, viii), although Garde observes that the supposed Australian theatre has been "dominated by Anglo-Celtic influences" (2009, 28). In the 1990s, Veronica Kelly notes that

²⁵ He continues: "These arts departments and ministries function independently of (although in some cooperation with) the Australia Council: since 1975 the name of the Federal Government's art advisory and funding body set up originally in 1969 as the Australian Council for the Arts. It is quite common for theatre companies and artists to receive funding from their State or Territory funding body without receiving support from the Commonwealth, but much more unusual for theatres to be funded by the Australia council without support from their state bodies" (2004, 12).

“much Australian theatre officially remain[ed] in the hands of those who are male, Anglo and white” (1998, 17).

Noting these observations here is not to overlook the extremely rich history of indigenous (Gilbert, 1998; Casey, 2009: 2013), feminist (Tait, 1994; Fensham, 2001: 2003; Fensham and Varney, 2005), LGBTQ (Parr, 1996, 1998; Tait, 2002; Bollen, Kiernander and Parr, 2008: 125-145; Campbell, 2016), and new immigrant (Tompkins, 1998; Gilbert and Lo, 2007; Dennis, 2013; Cox, 2015) theatre performance in Australia. What it does reveal, however, as Varney, Eckersall, Hudson and Hatley write, is that Kosky “is representative of one of a number of Australian-born artists with international reputations who has opened the provincial Australian curtain to global flows of text, image, music and interpretation” (2013, 149) that are not solely Anglo-Celtic.

In *Our Australian Theatre in the 1990s* Kelly observed that “[d]issident observers periodically charge Australian theatre with thematic safeness and stylistic unadventurousness” (1998, 5) where “annual seasons of major state companies must carry the burden of pursuing cultural mission with a judicious admixture of commercial hits and (decreasing) classic revivals” (3). Among the critical ‘dissidents’ to which Kelly refers, she describes Kosky as jeering “text based theatre and what he sees as the ‘market-driven, masterpiece-sofa kind of mediocrity’ dominating Australian stages” (6). She concludes:

[S]uch provocations... highlight the growing dichotomy between a more or less literary and text-based mainstage and an exciting innovative and hybrid physical theatre flourishing on its sometimes near, sometimes remote outskirts, wherein middle-class, old-Australian or ‘Anglo-Celtic’ voices are easily matched by queer, indigenous or new-immigrant voices. (6)

Gilgul affiliates Yoni Prior and Alison Richards reflect: “Australian theatre over the past twenty-five years has been a key forum for discourses of nationalism” (2008, 235). The Gilgul contributed to destabilising this nationalist discourse in Australian theatre and its representations of Anglo-Celtic cultural hegemony. The company “actively presented volatile Jewish bodies intersecting with unstable frontiers that were, and were not, Australian” (Prior and Richards, 2008: 235). They continue:

In the past decade, the frontier has shifted again, with the acknowledgement of Australia's inherent diversity once more under attack from a conservative government promoting a militant and militarized white isolationism based on a nostalgic Anglophone monoculture – the cultural politics of the Gilgul's approach to theatre may be more contrarian now than when it was first articulated.

As will be discussed in later chapters, during the early and mid-2000s when the debates around auteur adaptation and Australian nationalism in the theatre escalated, Kosky produced several works in mainstage theatres including *Oedipus* (2000), *The Lost Echo* (2006) and *Women of Troy* (2008). During this time, racial tensions in Australia simmered, boiled, and scorched. The aggressive assertion of a white-Australian identity proliferated in various ways, supposedly under threat by the infiltration of the immigrant 'other'. Bumper stickers on cars read, 'Fuck off We're Full' written across maps of Australia; the Cronulla Riots in 2005 saw angry mobs of white Australian men violently terrorize and attack Middle-Eastern Australians; and asylum seekers were placed in unlivable conditions in detention centers, sewing their lips shut in protest. Goldie Osuri and Bobby Banerjee draw links with the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 as having "relicensed a certain racialised logic, predicated on the anxieties of a white teleology of nation" in Australia (2004, 162).

While Kosky's work does not address these social issues in representational or didactic terms, his work in the 2000s emerged out of a political context where race, ethnicity, cultural diversity, and immigration issues were at the forefront. The form Kosky's performances took during this period, and the anxiety they produced in some spectators, echo broader tensions in the social around cultural homogeneity and the transgression of borders – borders of nation; borders of the body; borders of gender; borders of the self. In turning shortly to his early work with the Gilgul, the emergence of these themes in Kosky's performance practice can be located and discussed.

"Multi-Culti" Theatre

Jewish cultural influences have been at the heart of Kosky's theatrical practice, emerging first with the work of the Gilgul. So has colour-blind casting.²⁶ These approaches have continued in his work in Europe. After his production of *Medea* at the Vienna Schauspielhaus in Wien, which was performed "in Croatian, German and Yoruba", for instance, some Viennese critics described his work as 'multi-culti theatre', a term used in Austria to describe multicultural performance. Kosky responded to this by saying, "What's going on here? Is it because there's a black man in it? Or because a woman's speaking a foreign language?" (Kosky, 2004: 22). This has been echoed in other productions. While Rachel Fensham contends that his casting of aboriginal actress Deborah Mailman as Cordelia in his 1996 *King Lear* "provokes a postcolonial reading" (2008, 97) she adds that "Kosky refuses to admit any deliberate intent towards Mailman's role" (98).²⁷

Rather than positing Kosky's theatre as 'multicultural' with a focus on his engagement with representations of race and ethnicity, this chapter and project at large consider his work from a different perspective. A focus on his work in terms of auteur directorship situates our critical gaze on the effects of his theatrical modalities, and the ways they manifest on stage. Sidiropoulou writes that auteur theatre directors historically have "resisted retraction to easy pattern, as opposed to a recognizable style" (8). In other words, their approach to each performance is singular, while there may be recurrent aesthetics and trends across an oeuvre.

Kosky's aesthetics have fluctuated between works that are gaudy and extravagant and others that are more subtle and stripped back. Maddy Costa's review for *The Guardian* marks these stark differences in Kosky's approach by comparing *Poppea*, which premiered in Edinburgh before traveling to Sydney in 2009, with his production of *The Tell Tale Heart* (2008), both performed at the Edinburgh Festival.

Barrie Kosky's second appearance at the International festival could not be more different from his debut last year. Where his shotgun marriage

²⁶ Emma Cox defines colour-blind casting as a performance "in which a performer's indigeneity is not explicitly relevant to his or her role" (2011, 73).

²⁷ Fensham continues: "with very little 'cross-racial' casting in Australian theatre critics were hard-pressed not to consider this Aboriginal presence as a provocation" (2008, 98). Roanna Gonsalves adds, "At last count, Australians identify with over 270 ancestries, and speak over 400 languages, yet Australia continues to be represented as a racially and culturally homogeneous society, especially in the field of mainstage Australian theatre" (2011, 72).

of Monteverdi's *Poppea* to the songs of Cole Porter was colourful and camp, his meticulous staging of Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* is pitch black, tense and savage. (2008)

There are, however, resonant techniques across Kosky's performances, with consistent tropes emerging during his early work with the Gilgul during Australian theatre's third wave. These tropes include the use of music in his work, as well as violent, exhausting and extreme performance conditions for his actors.

The Second and Third Wave

Drawing on the work of Milne, Gay McAuley shows that in comparison to the first wave in Australian theatre, which had a "strongly marked British influence" (2013, 82), the second wave sought to "no longer respectfully imitate British actors and British stagecraft but taking a "down-under" look at [...] well-known works" (81). In Milne's words, "the first wave professionalised the repertory theatre movement in Australia along largely British lines" (6), whereas the second wave sought to explore and establish an Australian theatre independent of its British ancestry. The second wave's "principal effect", Milne shows, "was to throw up a wide range of alternatives to the established commercial and Trust-subsidised theatres" (2004, 121). Momentum that built during the second wave helped pave the way for auteur practitioners such as Kosky.

These shifts during the second wave impacted Kosky's theatrical practice in the third. The Gilgul was one of many theatre companies established as alternatives to commercial theatre venues during this period. Kosky's work with the Gilgul continued trends that began in the 1960s in Australia during the second wave, where, as theatre historian Katherine Brisbane writes, "groups set up performance spaces in warehouses and deserted factories in the major cities" (2005, 58). The Gilgul also contributed to what Brisbane describes as "the abundance of performances in eccentric small spaces" emerging in Melbourne in the 1970s (64). For example, both *The Dybbuk* in 1991 and *Es Brent* in 1992 were staged in a disused engine-repair shop (Meyrick, 2000: 158), and *The Wilderness Room* (1994) was staged in Karyn Lovegrove's art gallery (Prior and Richards, 2002: 29).

In comparison with much of his later work then, Kosky's productions with the Gilgul, for the most part, were not staged in conventional performance spaces. Indeed, Kosky's theatrical practice emerged at a time where there was an increasing investment in smaller theatre venues, and a growing interest in experimental modes of performance enabled by Australian theatre's second wave. In addition, another part of the second wave's major impact, notes Milne, "was the adoption of new ways of re-reading and re-staging plays from the classical repertoire" (121). Kosky began to radically reimagine classical texts such as S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk* through his auteur approach to performance with the Gilgul.

The Gilgul's productions contributed to the shifting focus of Australian theatre by drawing upon influences from the European avant-garde, along with trends evolving out of Australian theatre's second wave, such as radical, auteur adaptations of the classics, and the use of alternative theatrical spaces. In sum, Kosky's work with the Gilgul can be considered as being at once inspired by the momentum of the second wave, as well as making a significant contribution to the third. Again, the performance traditions Kosky drew together at this time stands out in contrast to Australian theatre's inheritance of influences from the British literary theatre.

So far this chapter has provided a preliminary discussion of Kosky's auteurism within an Australian theatre context. It has also situated Kosky's theatrical practice within the context of Australian theatre's second and third waves. The chapter will now explore in greater detail how Kosky's auteur performances reoriented the theatre field in Australia, with a focus on their socio-political implications. It contextualises and accounts for this reorientation by mapping the early stages of Kosky's Australian career and its reception. In doing so, it also frames the broader aims of the thesis, which are to develop a theory of post-tragedy through detailed analyses of Kosky's work, with an emphasis on their infrapersonal affectivity. The cartography this chapter outlines aims to contextualize Kosky's performance practice in Australian theatre, by beginning to highlight key characteristics that emerged across Kosky's oeuvre and its reception in the 1990s, commencing with the Gilgul theatre.

The Gilgul

The Gilgul was “Australia’s first professional Jewish theatre company” (Nugent, 1993). It was founded by Kosky and manager and lighting designer Robert Lehrer in 1991 in Melbourne (Prior and Richards, 2002: 28). The company’s ensemble was made up of actors Tom Wright, Louise Fox, Michael Kantor, Yoni Prior, Elisa Gray and Rosalie Zycher, some of whom became key names in Melbourne’s Malthouse Theatre (McCallum, 2009: 378). It was a collaborative ensemble company under the primary direction of Kosky. Prior and Gilgul affiliate Alison Richards write that,

While this was not, as some inferred, a case of a tyrannical auteur director exploiting actors as puppets, it is still the case that Gilgul performances tested bodies to and at times beyond their limits as they climbed, rolled, were squashed into tight spaces, hung from ropes and beams, bounced off a range of unforgiving surfaces, and were drenched in a variety of liquids. (2008, 238).

In Kosky’s own words, the phase of his career with the Gilgul contained his first explorations into an “ecstatic theatre” (Kosky, 2008: 44), a term coming out of the work of Artaud, providing another link between the two directors outside of, but related to, their auteurism.

Prior and Richards describe Kosky’s collaborative, auteurist approach with the Gilgul when they write,

[Kosky’s] public image as an autocrat auteur was belied by his eagerness and ability to make work with, rather than on, his collaborators. The company dynamic most closely resembled that of an archetypal Jewish family: contradictory, belligerent, argumentative, but ultimately democratic. (2008, 233)

Defining Kosky’s work in auteur terms, however, is not to suggest that there is a ‘Kosky method’ that is superimposed upon each play text he adapts for performance. While there are recurring themes and aesthetics that recur across Kosky’s oeuvre, each production emerges as singular with regard to the social, cultural and theatrical conditions within which it is situated.

One recurring performance trope in Kosky’s productions that did gain traction with the Gilgul was intertextuality. Each performance was suffused with intertextual borrowings ranging

from Yiddish culture, vaudeville, literature, classical music, popular music and opera, with a lively injection of overtly camp and homoerotic aesthetics and themes. In Prior and Richards' words, the Gilgul worked "at the intersection of a number of fecund, if contradictory, historical and aesthetic influences" (2002, 28). By drawing together diverse iconographies, cultural traditions, and contemporary references, Kosky's intertextual approach was at odds, and even in tension with the British literary theatre that Australian theatre's second wave had already brought into question and begun to destabilise.

Intertextuality

In *Authoring Performance* Sidiropoulou writes, "[r]ather than 'annexing reality', auteurs choose to focus on the materiality of the present moment, the 'presence' of the performance *now*, which inadvertently enters the dramatic form causing a series of collisions" (78). These collisions in Kosky's own auteurism can be articulated through an examination of his use of intertextuality. Gilgul collaborator Yoni Prior, and affiliate Alison Richards explain that Kosky's directorial approach with the company

featured the quotation, recreation, and presentation in pastiche form, of a variety of performance styles including expressionist film and theatre acting from the 1920s and 1930s, Yiddish cabaret, 'classical' Western acting with a nod to its reception in the Yiddish high art theatre, folk comedy, recitation, task-based action, and so on.

They continue that Kosky,

deliberately foregrounded an Eastern rather than Western European inflection in both its traditional and avant-garde theatre references, using German Expressionist and Russian Constructivist tropes, interwoven with the Yiddish theatre's appropriation of (and contribution to) aspects of both high and low forms of European theatrical presentation. (2002, 35)

Kosky's intertextual approach to performance draws these myriad cultural and theatrical references into relation.

Theatre scholar Marvin Carlson has described intertextuality in performance as a theatrical ghostliness, where texts haunt each other through a type of performance palimpsest (1994, 113). Although Benjamin D. Powell & Tracy Stephenson Shaffer warn that, "[t]here needs to be more of a critical discussion centered on the differences between haunting and the concepts of citationality [sic], intertextuality, intersubjectivity" (2009, 11). Kosky's work with the Gilgul "dealt with themes of exorcism, mysticism, and castration" (Fensham, 2008: 75). Dealing with such themes, the company drew together Yiddish myths, vaudeville, and other intertextual elements, while making reference to Jewish traumatic memory and the holocaust.²⁸ For example in *The Dybbuk*, Gilgul actor Prior describes a scene where two other actors, Blake and Kantor "enter out of the darkness along the double row of remembrance candles which divide the audience from the acting space, their feet beating out the rhythm of train wheels - a distinct allusion to the train journeys which took their passengers to Auschwitz" (Prior, 1998: 37).

Throughout the documentary film, *Kosky in Paradise* (Rymer, 1995) intertextuality is a recurring trope used to describe Kosky's directorial practice. Here again this aspect of Kosky's work is drawn in explicit relation to his Jewish-Australian identity. The film opens to a plane soaring through the sky. The image of the plane soaring speaks to Kosky's sense of longing and cultural hunger for other places outside of Australia, particularly Eastern Europe. As text fills the screen with an anonymous, religious quote, a soundtrack of traditional Jewish folk music begins. We see a distant figure – presumably Kosky – walking through a sparse landscape. This then cuts to a panning shot of a cemetery cluttered with gravestones. The figure walks up a flight of stairs towards the door of a synagogue, a large Star of David carved into the wood. The figure opens the door and enters and the first talking head we see is Kosky.²⁹

²⁸ Crucially, these references were abstract rather than representational or didactic. Kosky has clearly stated that he is interested in exploring aspects of Jewish culture without representing the Holocaust (Kosky, 2004: 28). He has said, "some stories you can only deal with through abstract images and music, because the story is too complex to involve a literal representation" (Kosky quoted in Boland, 2006).

²⁹ 'Talking head' is a term used in documentary film for one-on-one interviews where the interviewee's head is foregrounded in the frame. For a discussion on the performativity of talking heads see Hallas, 2009.

I would like to think of myself as a mass of contradictions and paradoxes because... surging through my veins and my bones and my skin are paradoxes and contradictions that I don't think even I can fathom.

Just as these contradictions and paradoxes surge through Kosky's physical body in excess of what he can understand, so too do contradictions and paradoxes manifest theatrically on his stage through intertextuality.

In sum, Kosky's use of intertextuality emerged out of questions that occupied the Gilgul, a company that "created theatre about the Jewish experience, from an Australian perspective" (Prior and Richards, 2008: 230). Intertextuality afforded Kosky the creative license to create theatre that destabilised the traditions with which he did not identify, so as to recreate his own identity as a theatre auteur. During the documentary *Kosky in Paradise*'s fifty-two minute running time, Kosky – both actually and metaphorically – becomes the figure which appeared in the opening scene; a figure which is alluded to throughout the film as a 'wandering Jew.'³⁰ In his Rex Cramphorn Memorial Lecture in 2003, Kosky referred to himself as a Bedouin, a gypsy (2004: 31). His positions as Co-Director of the Vienna Schauspielhaus in Wien from 2001-2005 and Artistic Director of the Komische Oper in Berlin from 2012-2022 (Hallett, 2008; Galvin, 2014) further reflect his 'Bedouin' tendencies because of his nomadic movements between these countries away from Australia, although from another perspective these productions demonstrate his cultural and theatrical ties to Europe.³¹

The Wandering Jew

³⁰ In the film, Jewish historian Mark Baker notes that 'wandering Jew' has been used as a derogatory term towards Jewish people from the Christian perspective. However, when used by Jewish people, it denotes a devoted search for God.

³¹ International festivals have enabled Kosky to maintain a dialogue between European and Australian theatres. *The Tell Tale Heart*, originally performed in 2007 at the Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne, was staged at the Edinburgh Festival in 2008. Kosky directed *Boulevard Delirium* at the Vienna Schauspielhaus with a return season (the first performance in 2001 and the second in 2002) and it toured to Melbourne and Sydney in 2005. *The Lost Breath*, also originally performed at the Vienna Schauspielhaus, was brought to the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts with its original cast in 2003. While based in Vienna and Berlin, Kosky visited Australia to direct *The Lost Echo* (2006), *The Women of Troy* (2008) for Sydney Theatre Company and Liza Lim's opera *The Navigator* (2008) for The Brisbane Festival.

In *Kosky in Paradise*, Kosky identifies as “an Australian-Jewish director” noting that the “complex elements of my Jewish identity do play a very important role in my work.” In a later interview in 2008, however, Kosky said, “I long for a utopia where people would leave out the national or religious or racial adjective and focus on the noun [theatre]” (Benzie, 2008). So although Kosky’s Jewish identity was central to his theatrical process and his intertextual approach to performance in the early 1990s with the Gilgul, later he desires to move away from subjectifying adjectives in describing his theatrical practice.

In the early stages of Kosky career, however, Kosky used the Gilgul as a platform to explore his Jewish identity in relation to his theatrical work, and this does seem to be a connection that continues to be central to his practice. Viennese scholar Jürgen Bauer’s book *No Escape: Aspects of Jewishness in the Theatre of Barrie Kosky* (2008) explores Kosky’s work at the Vienna Schauspielhaus when he was the artistic director from 2001-2005, with a focus on the director’s trilogy ‘Jewtopia’ performed between 2002-2005. The book touches upon Kosky’s production of *The Dybbuk*, however it is yet to be translated into English.

In addition to intertextuality, site-specificity was a trope used with the Gilgul that emerged out of explorations into Jewishness. The site-specificity of *The Dybbuk*, which was performed in an engine-repair shop in St. Kilda as Prior extrapolates, had “some historical cultural resonance, relating partly to the image of the Wandering Jew, and to a history of European Jewish theatre replete with stories of performance created in adverse circumstances...” (2006, 26). Meyrick adds that this theatrical site was also partially an economic decision for Kosky and the Gilgul company, the smash repair shop Town Hall Motors where *The Dybbuk* premiered, and *Es Brent* was also staged, coming “free of charge courtesy of a local Jewish businessman” (158).

I will outline the productions comprising *The Exile Trilogy* (1991-1993) with a focus on their use of site-specificity to examine the stylistic trends and socio-political impetus fermenting in Kosky’s directorial practice at the beginning of his career. I will consider how this came to impact upon his work in more traditional spaces and the subsequent tensions in both their materiality and reception in chapters to follow. I will also explore how site-specificity was a performance trope employed by the Gilgul that emerged out of both their explorations into Jewish history and financial challenges. In chapter three I will provide a more detailed analysis of *The Dybbuk* through the prism of affect.

Site-Specificity

Kosky directed *The Exile Trilogy*, which he developed in collaboration with the Gilgul ensemble between 1991 and 1993. The trilogy was made up of three productions: *The Dybbuk* (1991), *Es Brent* (1992), and *Levad* (1993). Following *The Exile Trilogy* Kosky directed the *The Wilderness Room* (1994) and *The Operated Jew* (1997), the latter of which marked the final production of the Gilgul. Each of the productions comprising *The Exile Trilogy* were site-specific in the terms that Joanne Tompkins defines it, with “aims for a convergence between site and performance to create something new” (2014, 40). She elaborates that site-specific performance “is more directly intertwined with the social context, because it takes place outside what might be considered the ‘mediating’ architecture of a theatre building” (40). Indeed, as Prior and Richards write, “Each work was, in a sense, site-specific” (2008, 233), and Prior notes, “it was a stated aim of the company from its inception to work in non-traditional performance spaces” (2006, 26).

Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks’ define site-specific performance as follows: “Site-specific performances are conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations, used or disused...” (2001, 23). Site-specificity was a frequently employed trope in ‘marginal’ performance works in Australia during this period, as Meyrick explores in his book chapter, ‘Filthy Spaces’ where he provides a case study of three works, among which he includes Kosky’s *The Dybbuk* (1998). Meyrick suggests that site-specificity “threatened the distanced perception of the ‘far sphere’ modern audiences typically utilize” (2000, 156).

He continues,

The use of found spaces went against all the trends which had influenced Australian theatre architecture in the post-1945 period. Artists working in them sought to create ‘theatres’ only loosely, and in one important sense did not seek to create theatres at all: they were not interested in the re-use of spaces but in the unique qualities of certain locations for one-off productions. The result was a particular aesthetic: raw, uncomfortable, unconventional. (2000, 156).

After *The Dybbuk* premiered, it was then mounted in the ‘non-traditional’ space of Eveleigh Rail Workshop in Sydney (Prior, 8). The third and final part of *The Exile Trilogy, Levad* (1993) was staged in more conventional performance spaces: The Playbox Theatre in Melbourne, and Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney (Prior and Richards, 2002: 29). Their other productions, however, harnessed the raw, uncomfortable and unconventional potential within the activation of ‘found’ sites, transforming them into effective performance environments.

A specific example of how site-specificity functioned in Kosky’s work with the Gilgul can be observed through Prior’s evocative description of the site through which *The Dybbuk* was developed and performed.

The performance space itself had a resonance which supported and informed the atmosphere of the works, one which we attempted to impose on theatre spaces in which later works were performed – an industrial ambience, a long, narrow and cavernous space, a high, vaulted ceiling, the disintegrating remains of old shelving structures, the dark tunnel beyond the performing space from which the characters emerged – all suggesting images from Jewish history – the old wooden circus building in which the Vilna Troupe staged their first performances, the emptied ghettos of East European cities after they were cleared, the emptied gas chambers of the concentration camps after liberation, a remote and deserted Polish railway station. (2006, 27).

Site-specificity in Kosky’s work with the Gilgul afforded him the creative license to utilise various dynamics of site in his productions that operated outside of traditional theatre spaces. The Gilgul endeavored to carry this engagement across into more conventional theatre spaces where their later works were performed. Further, Kosky’s diasporic relationship to his Jewish identity inscribed itself within these modes, where the history of the wandering Jew became a thematic and aesthetic trope for the company. While his later work in Australia was invariably mounted in traditional performance venues such as the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Theatre Company, the Gilgul’s explorations into the contingency of site continues to lace Kosky’s theatrical practice in significant ways. Frequently, the design of his adaptations of

tragedy were developed in collaboration with designer and architect Peter Corrigan, who Kosky also worked with at the Gilgul.³²

Delicious Tensions

The Gilgul disbanded in 1997, and their last production *The Operated Jew* was staged in that final year. Kosky commented that “no one really came to see” it (2004, 28). It was performed at the Atheneum Theatre in Melbourne, a conventional performance space in comparison to that of their earlier productions like *The Exile Trilogy*. This move away from the company’s stated aims to perform in more experimental spaces was marked by two key changes in the company. If Kosky, as Richards and Prior put it, was “very much the dominant vision” (2002, 34) of the company, the Gilgul’s transition into more traditional theatre spaces was not only symptomatic of his interest in the “delicious tension between art and showbiz” (2002, 45) but also a result of increasing pressures placed on the company due to funding restrictions (Richards and Prior, 2002: 38).³³ The more state funding they received as they worked in more traditional spaces, the more they were subjugated to the expectations of working within the

³² Prior and Richards write, “It is testament to the contribution and influence of eminent architect and theatre designer Peter Corrigan that choice of site so informed the visual style of each of the works. Corrigan worked alongside the company, spending many hours in the spaces with the performance makers, and his theatrical intelligence conscripted the performance space, and its objects and machines, as another character. The company’s aesthetic thus built cumulatively, but was at all times distinct and recognisably ‘Gilgul’.” (2008, 233).

³³ Prior and Richards explain: “Whereas both *The Dybbuk* and *Es Brent* were the result of a group of unfunded theatre makers coming together of their own volition and rehearsing in their own time at night and on weekends, on the basis of mostly in-kind support, the success of these productions had resulted in attention from critics, and the offer of financial and production support from funding bodies and more established theatre institutions. The final play in the Exile Trilogy, *Levad*, was a co- production with Melbourne’s Playbox Theatre, and the ensuing revival and tour to Sydney of the entire Trilogy was sponsored by Belvoir St Theatre. The company had been awarded a special project grant for *The Wilderness Room* from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, which made it possible to pay professional wages, but also enforced a relatively standardised rehearsal and production process, with eight weeks stipulated for rehearsal, and performance space and season dates booked in advance. Although generous in established theatre terms, these constraints placed added pressure on the company. Individual company members were familiar with the constraints of a professional production process, and the company as a whole was certainly unwilling to compromise on their commitment to exploration, but they could not but be aware of the need to make decisions in light of the inescapable march of the production timetable. *Levad* had been made under similar conditions, but in that case only Kosky, Prior, Corrigan and Lehter were involved. Here, the expectation of a similar level of input from each member of a five-person ensemble produced an interaction matrix which was far more intricate. Another complicating factor was that competing demands on Kosky’s time and attention as a result of his Adelaide Festival commitments, placed additional pressure on his concentration and on company morale” (2002, 38-39).

confines of the Australian theatre ‘tradition’ a tradition which, for Kosky, had a language he did not understand.

In an interview in 2005 for *The Age*, Kosky said,

So much Australian iconic work is like Sanskrit to me, I don’t get it. Compound that with the eastern European stuff, plus the Jewish stuff, plus the gay stuff – of course that gives you an enormously powerful outsider perspective. (Kosky in Lawson, 2005)³⁴

I will now turn to a discussion of Kosky’s move away from the Gilgul to his directorship of the 1996 Adelaide Festival to examine how intertextuality and site-specificity as it emerged in his work with the company also impacted upon his artistic programming of the festival.

The Adelaide Festival, 1996

In 1993, Kosky was appointed Artistic Director of the 1996 Adelaide Festival, a festival that “has been described as one of the great multi arts festivals of the world” (Hunter, 2004). Contemporary auteur director Peter Brook has described the festival as “worth crossing the world for” (Brook in Hunter, 2004: 36). Kosky was 29, making him the youngest director in the history of the festival. Gilgul collaborator Elisa Gray observed that this commitment came at the cost of the development of the Gilgul’s *The Wilderness Room*, a performance that was met with mixed reviews. Indeed, according to Helen Thompson, “it failed” (Thompson in Rymer, 1996). While the Gilgul disbanding may have been a result of Kosky’s increasing commitments elsewhere, the productions he directed there from the company’s inception developed elements that continued into his curation of the Adelaide Festival. For example, his interests in challenging Anglo-Celtic Australian nationalism through artistic practice, as well as engaging site-specific and intertextual performance tropes, also appeared in the Festival’s program and advertising.

³⁴ A detailed engagement with the homoerotics of Kosky’s theatrical practice and its relationship to his sexual identity is mostly absent from the literature on his work. While it is not an aspect of Kosky’s work that is taken up in detail in this project, it is not without a significance.

In her article, “Utopia, Maps and Ecstasy: Configuring Space in Barrie Kosky’s 1996 Adelaide Festival” (2004) Mary Ann Hunter explains that’s Kosky’s curatorial impetus was to “examine and reinvent some of the colonial ideologies and historical ideologies underpinning the city’s contemporary perception of itself” (38). To this end, the cover of the festival guide reveals an iconic Australian image of a hills hoist burning in flames with a map of Adelaide in the background [see Figure 1.] The hills hoist is gripped by what appears to be a white child’s hand with painted red fingernails. This image articulated Kosky’s artistic vision for the festival, which “tapped into Adelaide’s competing collective memories” – colonial, indigenous, immigrant – and therefore “involved a clash of cultural value systems” in the Festival’s programming (Hunter, 40).



Figure 1.

Artists and works that were included in Kosky’s 1996 Adelaide Festival program were provocative and controversial. Among those included was Annie Sprinkle’s *Post-Porn Modernist*. Sprinkle, according to the festival guide, is “one of America’s most provocative, banned and talked-about artists” (21). Also included were: The Maly Drama Theatre from St. Petersburg who have been described as “wrapping the audience not in realism, but in the extremities of human tragedy, joy, and absurdity” (18); the premiere production of Australian playwright Jenny Kemp’s *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996), which “combines personal feeling with vivid and confronting imagery” (14); and UK based physical theatre company, DV8’s,

Enter Achilles, which the program promises to “leave you disturbed, amused, confronted and breathless” (12).

Alongside these confronting contemporary works included in Kosky’s Adelaide Festival program was classical music and opera: Ozopera’s *The Magic Flute*; French viola musician Jordi Savall; a whirling dervish ensemble from Turkey; masterpieces by Alexander Scriabin performed by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra; and Mahler’s Symphony No. 6 performed by the Australian Youth Orchestra. The sense of ‘clashing’ or generative opposition found in this juxtaposition of the classical and the confronting in Kosky’s work is a recurring trope, observed in this chapter’s discussion of intertextuality and site-specificity in the Gilgul; and now seen through his Artistic Directorship of the 1996 Adelaide Festival.

Conclusion: On Rupture

This chapter has mapped the beginning of Kosky’s auteur approach to performance as it emerged with the Gilgul and during his Artistic Directorship of the Adelaide Festival, and the cultural conditions that informed his work at that time. While some commentators agree that such programming marks “the return of the Euro-centric vision in works that are almost wholly chosen from the European dramatic cannon” (Varney, Eckersall, Hudson and Hatley, 2013: 13) others such as Croggon argue that “a present climate of internationalism in our theatre doesn’t so much dominate as stand out in relief against a wider culture that in general remains strongly focused on the task of reflecting ‘what it means to be Australian’” (2010: 57). Kosky’s work also introduced a new mode of performance to the contemporary stage which the following chapter defines as ‘post-tragedy’.

The chapter has shown that Kosky was a key figure in Australian theatre that ushered in the groundswell that drew upon influences of the European avant-garde, specifically traditions of the auteur theatre director. It has compiled an account of Kosky’s early work in Australia with a focus on the repertoire of his theatre company, the Gilgul, and his artistic direction of the Adelaide Festival. It has begun to examine how Kosky’s role in Australian theatre marked a significant shift in mainstage performance cultures that began in the second wave, and culminated in the passionate debates around 2013. The chapter has also touched upon the social,

cultural, and political tensions inferred by these discussions and their implications for Australian theatre.

Kosky was a key player in creating the shift that I posit in this chapter as the auteur turn in Australian theatre. To this end, the chapter has contextualised the overarching argument of the thesis, which is that Kosky's work has created theatrical and socio-political rupture in Australia in large part by working with what I call 'post-tragic affects'. A concept of rupture serves as a refrain throughout the thesis, to help think about that which was disrupted in and by Kosky's work, at the same time as opening up a transformative space for the emergence of new performance potentials in contemporary Australian theatre. A concept of rupture considers how causing 'damage' to national artistic heritages can open up the potential for new modes of performance, in turn leading to new modes of thought.

Thea Brejzek and Peter Falkenburg in their contribution to the *Performance Research* issue 'On Rupture' suggest through their discussion of the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2010 that ruptures can create "openings and a sense of urgency for creative experimentation and challenges to the status quo" (2014, 22). Kosky's ruptures with the Gilgul were created by Kosky's feeling of dislocation in the context in which he was producing work in the early stages of his career, and his fascination with contradiction culturally as well as a theatrical device, such as intertextuality as manifestation of performance ruptures.

Kosky has significantly influenced other Australian theatre directors, including Benedict Andrews and Simon Stone. They make up part of the conglomerate of Australian theatre directors who have stepped outside the confines of narrative realism, in what theatre critic Keith Gallasch has called Melbourne's "radical theatre lineage" of "theatre magicians" (2006, 15). Andrews and Stone, after Kosky, continue to explore and deconstruct traditional performance texts and styles in Australia and abroad. While a thorough engagement with their work is beyond the limits of this project, chapter two will make reference to specific productions of theirs in order to illustrate the impact of auteur theatrical traditions on their work.

Kosky has had a considerable impact on European theatre, too. In a newspaper article for *The Australian*, Julian Tomkin writes, "the Komische Oper has reinvigorated its reputation and bottom line under Kosky's watch... Box office sales are up almost 20 per cent and his enchantingly sensorial interpretation of *The Magic Flute* has played to more than 40 full houses in Berlin to date — 46,349 people have rushed through the gates since the show debuted in late

2012” (2014). The Komische Oper was voted best opera house by Opernwelt Magazine after Kosky’s first season in 2012/2013 and he was awarded best director at the International Opera Awards in 2014, a long way from the reception of his Nabucco production with Opera Australia in Sydney in 1996.³⁵

³⁵ Whereas in Berlin Kosky’s work has been financially profitable, in Australia, his works, particularly *The Lost Echo*, were at a significant financial loss. According to the Sydney Theatre Company’s 2006 annual report, *The Lost Echo*, Part I had 7,777 paid attendees for the first part and 6,639 for Part II. These figures are significantly less than the attendance and gross profit amounts from the other performances at Sydney Theatre in the same year.

2.

Towards a Theory of Post-Tragedy:

Barrie Kosky's *The Women of Troy* and *King Lear*

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Jürs-Munby translated Lehmann's *Postdramatische Theater* from German into English in 2006, introducing the now widespread term 'postdramatic theatre' to Anglophone discourse. Postdramatic theatre has come to stand for performances post-dating the 1960s demonstrating an experimental engagement with mise-en-scène, a rethinking of the audiences' role in performance, and a deconstruction of the dramatic text.³⁶ Lehmann writes, "The 'style' [...] of postdramatic theatre demonstrates the following characteristic traits: parataxis, simultaneity, play with the density of signs, musicalization, visual dramaturgy, physicality, irruption of the real, situation/ event" (2006, 86). In light of the previous chapter, it can be observed that Kosky's work with the Gilgul theatre company in the 1990s displayed some of these characteristics, particularly through his use of intertextuality and site-specificity. These are performance tropes that have become associated with postdramatic theatre.

Jürs-Munby observes, for example, "palimpsestuous intertextuality and intratextuality are a significant quality of much postdramatic theatre" (2006, 8). Likewise, Lehmann draws a correlation between postdramatic theatre and site-specificity. He writes that in site-specific performance, space "is made to 'speak' and is *cast in a new light* through theatre. When a factory floor, an electric power station or a junkyard is being performed in, a new 'aesthetic gaze' is cast onto them" (2006, 152: emphasis original).³⁷ Postdramatic theatre directors that Lehmann cites include Tadeusz Kantor (13), and Antonin Artaud (38). These directors, as noted in Chapter One, were also significant influences on Kosky, and are well known names in the tradition of the

³⁶ Before the 1960s, Lehmann cites Gertrude Stein's *Landscape Play*, Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, and Stanislaw Witkiewicz's theatre of pure form as prehistories to the postdramatic (2006, 49).

³⁷ Lehmann continues, "The space presents itself. It becomes a co-player without having a definite significance. It is not dressed up but made visible. The spectators, too, however, are co-players in such a situation. What is namely staged through site specific theatre is also a level of *commonality* between performers and spectators" (2006, 152: emphasis original).

theatrical auteur. From this, we can deduce that Kosky has worked within what has come to be called postdramatic theatre.³⁸

Postdramatic theatre is “a theatre that does not valorize drama above all other elements of the theatrical experience” (Campbell, 2010: 55). It seeks to “secure for itself something ‘primal’ or ‘direct’ in the generation of meaning” (Jüres-Munby, Carroll and Giles, 2013: 5). Postdramatic theatre also demonstrates a “political responsibility to let in other voices that do not get heard and that have no representation within the political order” (Lehmann, 2012: 14-15). The marginal subjectivities that the postdramatic makes heard, as well as its aesthetic dimensions that destabilise the representational order, have been seen to play out in Kosky’s work discussed in chapter one. So Kosky’s early productions could be considered in terms of postdramatic theatre. His radical adaptations of classical tragedy in the late 1990s and 2000s are another case in point, the discussion of which will be the focus of this chapter.³⁹

By focusing on the ways in which Kosky radically adapted classical tragedy through an analysis of two of his productions – *King Lear* (1998) and *Women of Troy* (2008) – in this chapter I seek to establish how Kosky introduced a new genre of performance to the contemporary Australian stage, an offshoot of postdramatic theatre that I call ‘post-tragedy’. Through an analysis of Kosky’s work, post-tragedy can be seen to operate as a sub-genre of the postdramatic that explicitly turns to the tragic past as a means to critique and engage with the political present. It does this by exaggerating the plays’ nihilistic themes. The productions’ refraction of the political present through the past, and the past through the present to privilege nihilism illuminates the timelessness of tragedy’s themes. Yet it also shows that the changes Kosky makes through his auteur approach have socio-political significance. Nihilism becomes a thematic device through which this temporal refraction is enacted and made felt. By highlighting the continued relevance of the plays’ nihilism, and by taking the nihilistic themes to an extreme, tragedy’s skeleton remains in Kosky’s post-tragedies, while its organs are rearranged.

In the late 1990s and into the 2000s, Kosky staged several adaptations of classical tragedy in Australia and abroad. In Australia, these included versions of Eugene O’Neill’s

³⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of postdramatic theatre in Australia, see Hamilton, 2008; 2011, 119-206.

³⁹ Lehmann’s *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* (2016) has just been published in an English translation by Erik Butler. Unfortunately, it was released too late to engage with in this thesis. The book includes a chapter, ‘Tragedy and Postdramatic Theatre’ (390-450) that would no doubt be useful to my own research on Kosky and post-tragedy in its future iterations.

Mourning Becomes Electra in 1998 – itself an adaptation of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* – and the aforementioned productions of Seneca’s *Oedipus*, Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Euripides’ *Women of Troy*. His 2006 production *The Lost Echo* included stories from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and a version of Euripides’ *Bacchae* in a script adapted by Tom Wright.⁴⁰ I turn to this phase of Kosky’s career to ask the following questions: What was the purpose of Kosky adapting tragedy during this period? What propelled Kosky’s particular dramaturgical decisions in adapting these plays and how did these decisions take shape? How did Kosky’s socio-political and theatrical concerns manifest through the contemporary adaptation of classical tragedy, and why were the plays’ nihilistic themes pertinent to their contemporary socio-political context?

A Future for Tragedy

In his essay ‘A Future for Tragedy?’ Lehmann poses similar, albeit broader, questions about the role of tragedy and whether it continues to be relevant for contemporary theatre audiences, a task *Postdramatic Theatre* ultimately overlooks.⁴¹ In the chapter, he begins by writing that approaching a concept of tragedy now is no easy task. He writes, “[t]he question whether there is still (or again) room in our contemporary culture for something which may be called tragic and/or tragedy at all can be answered neither easily nor quickly” (2013, 90). Lehmann proceeds to argue that the tragic can no longer articulate itself through the representational staging of tragedies – meaning, a performance that creates a world onstage that

⁴⁰ I use the term ‘adaptation’ in relation to Kosky’s work because of his auteur approach as a director. His approach to staging the play is an adaptation of the classical text. In terms of the translation/adaptation of the text itself, Kosky frequently worked with his associate, Tom Wright, who would adapt the play text for performance. However, I refer to Kosky as having adapted the tragedies through auteur performance modalities, rather than focusing on an analysis of Wright’s adaptation process. This is not to overlook the significant role Wright plays in Kosky’s process of adaptation. In Shakespeare scholar Richard Madeline’s words, however, “all productions are adaptations to some extent, but it is a matter of degree” (2008, 16). In a similar vein, Erika Fische-Lichte writes, “Each and every production that uses a text performs its dismemberment, a ritual sacrifice... In every instance the text [has] to be sacrificed in order to allow for the appearance of something new – the performance” (2010, 35). While I agree with Madeline and Fische-Lichte, I continue to use the term ‘adaptation’ in reference to Kosky’s work because it helps to articulate his particularly bold reimaginings of classical tragic plays. Kosky’s productions explicitly perform this dismemberment and sacrifice by integrating tradition with a radical new vision in ways that communicate the tragic narrative, while accelerating its visceral and nihilistic dimensions to new heights.

⁴¹ Although Lehmann does not provide a detailed discussion of classical tragedy and their contemporary adaptation in *Postdramatic Theatre*, he does posit postdramatic theatre in opposition to Aristotle’s concept of tragic unity: a temporal ‘whole’ that, Lehmann writes, “is nothing but the abstract formula for the *law of all representation*”, “with beginning, middle, and end” (173). In defiance of Aristotelian narrative unity, he writes, “the reality of the new [postdramatic] theatre begins precisely with the fading away of this trinity of drama, imitation and action” (37). Lehmann uses Aristotelian drama as that which postdramatic theatre responds to and ultimately rejects.

resembles ‘real life’ – but only through performances that cause “the necessary shock to our cultural habits” which he doubts “can be achieved within the limits of a theatre of representation” (2013, 97). He continues:

Since tragedy is essentially the experience of reaching and overstepping for a moment the limits of a given ‘cultural intelligibility,’ a presentation of tragedy within a theatrical convention that does not put basic cultural presuppositions at risk cannot be a legitimate heir to the tragic today. Instead I have the strong impression that nowadays the field of what we may term the tragic *is rarely found any longer in the realm of theatre where ancient, classical, modern and contemporary tragedies continue to be staged*. On the contrary, we have good reason for seeking an experience of tragic transgression mainly in the seemingly marginal, dispersed, creative as well as problematic field of performance, ‘live art’ and postdramatic theatre practices. (97, emphasis added)⁴²

If, as Lehmann proposes, a ‘legitimate heir’ to the tragic cannot be located in the contemporary staging of tragedy, what is the function or purpose of Kosky’s auteur adaptations of them? Would ‘postdramatic tragedy’, as that which Peter A. Campbell writes “highlights the interruption and fragmentation of story and character” (2010: 68) be an adequate term to describe them? Or would ‘postmodern tragedy’ and its “tendency to mix chronologies” (Monaghan, 2010: 247) be a more accurate descriptor?

Rather than postdramatic tragedy’s fragmentation of narrative, story and character, and postmodern tragedy’s “purposefully incongruous scenographic elements” (Monaghan, 2010: 247), in this chapter I argue that Kosky’s integration of representational *and* non-representational performance tropes within the context of a classical tragedy is precisely what causes “the necessary shock to our cultural habits”. Kosky’s adaptations are at once text-based and experimental, narrative and abstract. In answer to Lehmann’s question as to whether there is a future for tragedy, in this chapter I propose that tragedy’s future is in post-tragedy: a sub-genre

⁴² While Lehmann doubts that stagings of tragedy in contemporary theatre can cause cultural shocks to our socio-political habits, he does preface this statement by saying “Although there are exceptions in today’s institutionalized theatrical practice...” (97). Kosky is considered here as one of those exceptions.

of the postdramatic that (re)turns to the tragic past and radically refracts it through the performance – and political – present, accelerating the play’s nihilistic themes. This chapter explores how Kosky enacts this and how it informs a definition of post-tragedy.

Unpicking Representation’s Seams

Kosky has staged classical tragedies with mainstage Australian theatre companies such as STC and MTC in ways that could be considered ‘marginal’ in the sense to which Lehmann refers (2006, 97). His productions were text-based theatre that upheld a tragic narrative arc in one moment, and tore it apart the next. Kosky’s adaptations not only tore apart the tragic narrative arc, but foregrounded a camp homoeroticism, non-normative sexualities, ethnically diverse performers, and a feminist impetus. In *King Lear*, for instance, Kosky cast a famous aboriginal Australian actor, Deborah Mailman, as Cordelia and included actors from non-English speaking countries who spoke in their native tongues. Kazahuro Muroyama played a Japanese Oswald, and Rostislav Orel played Kent in Russian.

There was also sexualised behaviour in the production where “Lear’s knights were undomesticated hounds with oversized genitals” (Madelaine, 2002: 16). According to Phillipa Kelly, the knight’s “large, floppy penises” were one aspect of the production that stood for Kosky “cut[ting] loose conventional expectations for language, scenes and relationships” (2002, 12). In Kylie Moriarty’s review of Kosky’s *King Lear*, she observed that the production abounded with “incestuous relationships and childhood sexuality... with an explicit focus on the shift from the anal to the genital stage” (1998, 32). For her, Kosky’s “ironic play at the margins of sex” made it worthy of condemnation (32). Additionally, Kosky “diminished the power of Shakespeare’s important men” (Madelaine, 16). In *Women of Troy*, Kosky also foregrounded the experiences of the women, and every male character in the production was rendered either abusive, or impotent, or both. Fake bodily fluids spilled copiously from the bodies of characters onstage in very ‘unclassical’ ways, rupturing the smooth, athletic, white-marble bodies of the Ancient Greek imaginary.⁴³

⁴³ In Adrian Kiernander’s analysis of the ‘unclassic’ bodies in Kosky’s *King Lear* he writes, “The ideal classic body is eternal, immutable, and unreceptive, without points of linkage to the world outside it” (2000, 132). The bodies in Kosky’s *King Lear* were the opposite of the classic body. Katrina Cawthorn, however, provides a counter-history of the classical body in Greek tragedy where she writes, “when we turn to classical Greek medicine, to the medical

Kosky's response to critics such as Moriarty was that sexual themes in the performance were already inherent in the play. Kosky spoke to this in an interview, where he said:

Anyone who says that they can't see the point of some of the more sexualised imagery doesn't know the play. The play deals with the cutting down of Lear's masculinity. He constantly refers to the fact that his manhood is being undermined by his daughters. So anyone who actually says there is not a rampant tone of confused sexual relationships or attitudes in the play is not reading the text. (Kosky in Fensham, 2009: 80)

Evidently, in light of Kosky's comments here, he is interested in what the text communicates, and how these themes can be read and interpreted in contemporary performance. Kosky takes latent aspects of the play such as the confused sexual relationships in *King Lear*, and exaggerates them through his auteur approach. In consequence, nihilistic themes become foregrounded in ways that the chapter will unpack.⁴⁴

Kelly shows that in his *King Lear* "some of the 'best' passages in the English language disappeared" with Kosky "removing chunks of the text" (2002, 12). Kosky cast the fool to be played by a female actress, Louise Fox, who performed a highly sexualised version of the role as a type of adult Shirley Temple. She sang 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy' to Lear in a provocative vaudevillian style.⁴⁵ Kosky removed the characters Albany and Cornwall from his version. In *Women of Troy* the character Talthybius was omitted from the play, and so, too, were the chorus' speeches and lamentations, which were replaced by classical and pop songs. Through changes such as these, it can be argued that the 'marginal' and 'dispersed' qualities in Kosky's performances draw likeness with postdramatic theatre, because, as Lehmann writes, the postdramatic "denotes a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time 'after' the authority of the dramatic paradigm" (2006, 27). However, there were specific elements in these productions, namely their foregrounding of nihilism, that necessitates new performance

discourses on male and female bodies, the classical body begins to look very different. The strange bodies of medicine, subject to flux and flow (in particular the female body, with its shifting organs and porous flesh), emerge from the text in a surprising way" (2008, 6).

⁴⁴ For a discussion of nihilism in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, see Bloom, 1998: 492-493.

⁴⁵ For an extensive discussion on constructions of gender in relation to Kosky's casting of the fool see Kelly, 2005: 221-224.

terminology better articulated through a concept of post-tragedy. This is not to overlook, however, the significant influence postdramatic theatre has had upon the emergence of what I call post-tragedy in light of Kosky's work.

Before elaborating on the similarities and differences between postdramatic theatre and post-tragedy in any great detail, I examine some trends in Australian theatre towards staging adaptations of classical tragedies over the last few decades, already discussed in part in chapter one under what I call the auteur turn. The groundswell in adaptations of classical tragedy during Australia's auteur turn suggests a demand for what these plays communicated, as well as a hunger for their themes. Such a demand situates the resurgence of tragedy in Australia as a phenomenon responding to certain socio-political conditions colouring the contemporary moment: a moment that I refer to throughout this chapter in terms of neoliberalism.

Echoes of Influence

As a predecessor to the auteur turn, one figure that radically reimagined classical tragedy on the Australian stage was Italian theatrical visionary, Renato Cuocolo. Cuocolo founded the IRAA theatre in Melbourne in 1991 (Monaghan, 2006: 2-4). Paul Monaghan writes that Cuocolo,

opened up new ways of responding to Greek tragedy in Australia by seriously challenging the dominant conception of tragedy as 'hysterical/realistic', and by providing audiences – in Melbourne at least – with exactly what that approach to tragic performance was lacking: *a theatre based in the expressive power of the body* (2006, 3: emphasis added).

Monaghan defines hysterical/realistic performance styles as those that engage an interiorised, psychological approach to character and a 'realistic' representation of mise-en-scène. His interest in the expressive power of the body of Cuocolo's work describes how the director "radically reworked [...] tragedies by paring down the Greek texts to a bare minimum, by the inclusion of contemporary texts, and by the strong focus on the actor's body as the key expressive medium" (3).

Kosky also pares down tragedies, already noted in this chapter through reference to him “removing chunks of the text” from Shakespeare’s *King Lear* in his own production, which, Kelly writes was “mercurial and willfully nonsensical” (2002, 12). In further correlation to Cuocolo, Kosky included contemporary texts within his stagings of classical tragedies. This is an auteur modality that I referred to in chapter one as intertextuality. Kosky’s *Women of Troy* was intertextual in that it was peppered with songs performed by the cast, “ranging from John Dowland to Slovenian folk song” (Ewans, 2011: 58). In *King Lear*, camp, vaudevillian show tunes such as ‘My Heart Belongs to Daddy’, and the 1962 pop ballad ‘What Kind of Fool Am I?’ are some examples of Kosky’s integration of “contemporary texts” – or intertextuality – in his adaptations of tragedy that had developed in his early work with the Gilgul.

Two Australian directors already mentioned in Chapter One - Benedict Andrews and Simon Stone - have become key figures in continuing the adaptation of classical tragedy in ways similar to Kosky. Andrews’ *War of the Roses* (2009) marked a significant moment in the auteur turn, and some comparisons have been drawn between him and Kosky (Croggon, 2010c; Blake, 2010). *War of the Roses*, like Kosky’s *The Lost Echo*, was performed in the Sydney Theatre at Sydney Theatre Company. Drawing further likeness with *The Lost Echo*, Andrews’ *War of the Roses* was divided into four acts and two parts, running for eight-hours, and the script was adapted in collaboration with Wright. Andrews’ *War of the Roses* conflated Shakespeare’s history plays and pushed the performers to their limits through performance-based exercises in endurance. The production was replete with scenographic and bodily excesses. In Huw Griffith’s account of the production, he saw these mechanisms as being “startling in some of the demands it made on its audiences and featured staging and performance that were a long way from what might be seen as a conventional adaptation of the history plays” (2013, 91).

Another contribution to radical adaptations of classical tragedy on the contemporary Australian stage is seen in the work of Stone. His version of Seneca’s *Thyestes* in collaboration with the independent theatre company, The Hayloft Project was performed at Carriageworks in Sydney in 2012, and was initially staged two years before that at the Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne.⁴⁶ Stone took Seneca’s revenge tragedy and set it in what appeared to be a student share-house in an affluent Australian suburb. There were also bodily excesses in the production:

⁴⁶ For an illuminating discussion of The Hayloft Project’s *Thyestes* in light of debates on adaptation in contemporary Australian theatre see Hamilton, 2014.

voluminous fake blood was poured onstage. On each side of the stage was raked seating, with half the audience sitting opposite the other. At times, each side of the audience could see the other spectators opposite them watching the performance, an aspect which Croggon said “becomes increasingly disconcerting, because one of the paradoxical effects of this show is to erase distances: between *then* and *now*, *them* and *us*, the actors and ourselves” (2010). In her analysis of the production, Croggon adds,

the performers embody Nietzsche's idea of the tragic: a Dionysian image of absolute negation becomes, through the ecstasy of performance, "the absolute limit of affirmation". It's a quality that Barrie Kosky also achieves, although in very different ways: and the secret is in the balance between restraint and excess.

Stone's *Thyestes*, Andrews' *War of the Roses*, as well as Kosky's *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* used classical tragedies in ways that shortened the distance between the performance and its audience drawing on postdramatic theatre tropes. Specifically they, first, rendered the actors body as material; second, subjugated the text to the vision of the theatrical auteur and third, engaged scene dynamics driven towards asignificatory excess. While drawing on the postdramatic theatre lineages that Lehmann describes such as “[t]he body becom[ing] the centre of attention” (2006, 95) and “staged text (*if* text is staged)” being “merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc., total composition” (46), and erasing “the division between playing space and auditorium” (123), Kosky, followed by Andrews and Stone, also continued to engage and apply the dramatic tradition in certain ways. Despite their intertextual dimensions and experimental approach to scenography, all of the aforementioned works by these directors were text-based productions that privileged monologue and dialogue.

Text-based performance was something many international postdramatic adaptations sought to dismantle. The postdramatic dismantling of the tragic text at a global scale can be seen, for example, in the work of Heiner Müller, Societas Raffaello Sanzio and Dood Part, which I will discuss in brief shortly. And while Lehmann does suggest that postdramatic theatre can encompass “‘almost still’ dramatic theatre” (2006, 69) – meaning, theatre that continues to resemble a cohesive narrative structure – there are aspects particular to Kosky's stagings of

tragedy relevant to designating his work as post-tragic.⁴⁷ For one, Kosky's upholding of character and plot is antithetical to the postdramatic which is defined through its use of texts - if using a text or texts at all - that are fragmentary and non-linear.

For Kosky, character remains a central part of his adaptations of tragedy, even if his characters' subjectivity becomes fragmented and destabilised at times. In Jürs Munby and Steve Giles' introduction to *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political* they write that in postdramatic performance "character is largely dispensed with" replaced by "vestigial figures, 'text bearers', characters without coherent psychological 'interiority'" (2013, 3). In addition, "text is relegated from its position as authoritative source to that of 'material'" (Munby and Giles, 10). In Kosky's work, the playtext still has authority in the performance, even if that authority is different to that of the original text.

Although Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Euripides' *Women of Troy* were significantly adapted and at times used as 'material' in Kosky's versions, his actors did play characters in ways that could be considered representational. They showed an interior psychology and reflected, at least in part, the playwright's intended characterisation within the fiction. At the same time there is a tension between this and some fragmentation. In *Women of Troy*, for example, Cassandra (Melita Jurisic) performed a nonsensical monologue before vomiting – what seemed to be her subjectivity – all over herself. Mythologically, and as Euripides portrays her in the play, Cassandra is a cursed prophetess. Apollo cursed her for not having sex with him, so that no one would believe her prophecies. This makes her appear to be mad and delusional. While the nonsensical nature of Cassandra's monologue in Kosky's version held true to Euripides' script in the sense that it portrayed her perceived madness, Jurisic's performance of the monologue, and Wright's adaptation of the script⁴⁸, drastically eroded language making her speech garbled and opaque.

This undoing of language in Cassandra's monologue – which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six - created a split between representation and non-representation. This is because Cassandra's speech at once communicated her characterisation as the mad prophetess,

⁴⁷ Andrews and Stone's productions in Australia could also be considered in terms of post-tragedy, but a comprehensive analysis of their work alongside Kosky's is beyond the scope of this project.

⁴⁸ Michael Ewans explains Wright's adaptation process: "As the first stage in their work, Kosky's collaborator Tom Wright prepared a version of the whole text, based on consultation with a number of existing translations" (2011, 58).

while her body broke through the confines of character. She became an embodiment of excessive feeling, and quite literally spilled over the sides of her self through her vomit. Additionally, the set of Kosky's *Women of Troy* resembled an Iraqi prison whereby the mise en scène imbued Cassandra with an additional layer of characterisation. As well as being Euripides' Cassandra, she recalled the more recent political past by evoking figures from photographs of tortured Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. She stood on a cardboard box, and members of the chorus had electrical wires tied to their ankles. In combination with these loaded referents, during her monologue, Cassandra's body could no longer contain language, or its own fluids. She was at once emptied of the referential and filled up by it.

Such is an example of Kosky's tightrope walk between representational and nonrepresentational performance tropes, manifest in this instance through his approach to character. Kosky's approach in this way foregrounds nihilism because, as Nietzsche famously defined it, in nihilism, "[t]he highest values lose their value. A goal is lacking. An answer to the question 'why' is lacking" (Nietzsche, 1976: 557). In Kosky's post-tragedies, and in Western neoliberalism, humans have become victim to their own manmade catastrophes.⁴⁹ The gods are no longer responsible for the tragic hero's downfall.

In Fensham's reading of Kosky's *King Lear*, "[f]rom the outset Kosky had a nihilistic vision" (2009, 76). Kelly observed that Kosky showed "a Lear who shadowed the many thousand faceless figures in contemporary society... perhaps not even able to acknowledge the misery they have been reduced to" (2015, 71). For Madelaine, "Kosky manipulated the genre of the play, and the audience was left disturbed" (2002, 17). Adrian Kiernander notes, that it "concluded with a convincingly desolate, hopelessly nihilistic ending [...] as if he [Kosky] could smell the wind and sense that something very unsavory was on its way" (2010, 112).

In scenes proceeding the madness scene, as Fensham describes in her analysis, Lear, who was played by Australian theatre luminary John Bell, was "[i]solated in a narrow spotlight" and made a "compelling solo" (2009, 87). Fensham describes the classical tradition of Bell's monologue as "doing what a Shakespearean actor does best. Mouthing the words, the complicated phrases, the lovely rhythms, the awesome tonalities of Elizabethan rage" (87).

⁴⁹ A parallel discussion would be the connection between post-tragedy, neoliberalism and man-made catastrophes such as global warming. For discussions in theatre and performance studies that point to these debates, see Kershaw, 2007; Bottoms and Goulish, 2007; Arons and May, 2012; Lavery and Finburgh, 2015.

Following this, Lear/Bell was surrounded by half naked figures wearing grotesque over-sized animal heads, dancing around him in a Dionysian frenzy to techno music with strobe lighting. Lear/Bell's classically acted monologue contrasted significantly with the surreal and frenzied scene that followed it, an example of what I referred to earlier as Kosky's upholding of the tragic tradition in one moment, and tearing it apart the next.

Lear/Bell's monologue revealed the King to be able to articulate the cadences of his emotions, conjuring the Elizabethan tradition of the Shakespearean monologue for its audiences, "doing what a Shakespearean actor does best". However, the blaring techno music, strobe lighting, and surreal figures dancing around him overwhelmed Lear's sense of self. From this point onwards in the production, as Kiernander observes, Lear "shuffled about dressed like a bag lady" (2000, 130). This drastic fall of the tragic hero in Kosky's production was shocking; an effect created by the swift transition from classically acted monologue to Dionysian frenzy. This transition was exacerbated further by casting Bell as Lear, who is the director of Bell Shakespeare company and figurehead of Shakespearean performance in Australia (Kiernander, 2014). These factors contributed to making the slippage of Lear's subjectivity – performed by Bell – rapid, exaggerated, and nihilistic.

Kosky's particular approach to staging tragedy in ways that straddle representational and nonrepresentational approaches to character and acting and the subsequent foregrounding of nihilism demands a discourse that adequately accounts for it. His work necessitates terms beyond 'postdrama', 'postdramatic tragedy' (Decreus, 2008; Campbell, 2010; Stalpaert, 2011) and 'postmodern tragedy' (Houlahan, 2007; Ioannidou, 2008; Monaghan, 2010; Budzowska, 2014) that have come to dominate the discourse so far. I will now outline how postdramatic and postmodern tragedy have been theorised in reference to specific productions by Heiner Müller, Società Raffaello Sanzio, Dood Paard, Pan Pan Theatre and Michael Marmarino, before proposing the alternative performance concept - post-tragedy - in light of Kosky's work. A discussion of these practitioners also provide a further snapshot of the broader trend towards the adaptation of classical tragedy over the last two decades in Australia and abroad.

Postdramatic Tragedy

Postdramatic tragedy has been used to describe productions that overturn any semblance of narrative structure, using the bones of a classical tragedy as its material. An example can be seen in German dramatist Heiner Müller's 1977 *Hamletmachine*. *Hamletmachine* textually eroded Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and, according to Lehmann, tore apart the dramatic continuum (1982, 81). The play does not have a conventional plot and strings together a series of loosely connected monologues that do not directly relate to each another. In Australia, *Hamletmachine* was first staged by auteur director Jean-Pierre Mignon at Anthill Theatre in 1982 (Hamilton, 2011: 153).⁵⁰ In her description of the production, Hamilton writes "Müller's conception of literary resistance is manifest in a series of texts for the stage that defy traditional principles of narration, action and characterisation". She continues, "[a]s consequence, Müller offered specific Australian artists textual material that emphasized the problem of representation" (153). Müller's defiance of dramatic tradition collapsed the representational apparatus, and, as Hamilton suggests, may have played a significant part in introducing European postdramatic theatre practice to marginal theatre venues in Australia through the work of directors such as Mignon.

Similar textual tearings can be seen more recently in the work of the Italian performance collective, Societas Raffaello Sanzio whose 2002-2004 performance cycle, *Tragedia Endogonidia* was spurred by the question, "'How might it be possible to make tragedy today?'" (Kelleher and Ridout, 2007: 15). The production traveled to Australia in 2006 for the Melbourne International Arts Festival. In the performance, the collective drew on diverse influences from "biblical, Renaissance and contemporary iconography" (Lyandvert, 2005: 37) to "reckon seriously with the perils of illusion" (Ridout, 2007: 10). Its episodic structure, like *Hamletmachine*, also seemed to loosely connect scenes that did not link in narrative terms, but had thematic and aesthetic resonance across them. The production's reckoning with 'the perils of illusion' sought to dismantle the tragic narrative arc through fragmentation and dream/nightmare-like imagery such as "the relentless bashing of a man by performers wearing police uniforms" (Trezise, 2014: 137) and "the beheading of a boy... but then present[ing] the head of a cat" (Lyandvert, 2005: 37). *Tragedia Endogonidia* is an example of a postdramatic

⁵⁰ In a roundtable discussion on theatre in Melbourne in the 1980s, Russell Walsh notes: "There was also a sense of being part of a huge alternative to the 'Australian style'. Because it was run by somebody called 'Jean-Pierre', Anthill had this sense of, not the exotic, but Anthill was an Australian [Nouveau] theatre" (Eckersall, 2014: 120)

approach to tragedy because it used tragedy as a springboard into a radically reconceived approach to performance, with little or no resemblance to a tragic narrative structure remaining.

Another example of postdramatic tragedy observed by Campbell in ‘Postdramatic Greek Tragedy’ (2010) is Dutch theatre collective Dood Paard’s *medEia*, first performed in 1998. *medEia* has been touring internationally since its premiere, traveling to the Melbourne International Arts Festival in 2007 (Monaghan, 2009: 2). Campbell observes that the performance’s engagement with Euripides’ *Medea* was an instance of postdramatic tragedy because it had “no character designations” (2010, 71). Further, Paul Monaghan writes, “the very active relationship between the audience and the performers in *medEia* is typical of postdramatic theatre” (2009, 1). These aspects, and the absence of “stage directions, or act or scene breaks” makes *medEia* “a [performance] text that indicates little about dramatization” (Campbell, 71). As such, both Campbell and Monaghan define *medEia* as postdramatic tragedy. Through the absence of linear structure, and by having no act or scene breaks or fixed characters, Euripides’ *Medea* became the primary material for Dood Paard to create an entirely new production.

Postmodern Tragedy

Postmodern tragedy is another term that has been used in theatre and performance studies to describe productions that challenge “the cherished idea of cultural continuity within antiquity” (Iannidou, 2008: 14) through the radical staging of classical tragedies. Malgorzata Budzowska writes that “quotations and clichés” are “a feature of postmodern staging” (2014, 230) and are frequently employed in contemporary adaptations of tragedy: what she calls postmodern tragedy. While Kosky’s adaptations could be – and have been – read as postmodern (Milne, 2004: 268; Monaghan, 2010: 247), a deeper consideration of how postmodern tragedy has been theorised and understood through performance will inform a different approach here.⁵¹

For Kathleen M. Sands, postmodern tragedy foregrounds the “nihilistic negation of meaning” and is “the opposite of the tragic” leading to “political indifference” in the spectator (2008, 88). While Kosky’s *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* display a nihilistic negation of meaning through his approach to character and text, they are not driven towards a spectator’s

⁵¹ However, as Lehmann writes, postmodern performance “can indeed be ‘nihilistic’ and ‘grotesque’ but so is *King Lear*” (2006, 25).

political indifference.⁵² In contrast, as latter parts of this chapter will show, by foregrounding the plays' nihilistic themes in reference to contemporary political events, the post-tragic spectator is poised to critically refeel what performance theorists Rebecca Schneider and Nicholas Ridout call neoliberal affects (2012, 8). In this way, Kosky's stagings of tragedy are not the opposite of the tragic per Sands definition of postmodern tragedy. Rather, they are in dialogue with tragedy through the dynamic 'rub' between the tragic tradition and more experimental performance modes.

Rather than the postdramatic's self-reflexive questioning of the continued role of tragedy today, postmodern tragedies mock tragic traditions and in this way are "the opposite of the tragic" (Sands, 2008: 88). An example of postmodern tragedy's mockery can be seen in Irish theatre company Pan Pan Theatre's *Oedipus Loves You* performed in Australia at the Sydney Festival in 2010. The performance showed a "dysfunctional suburban family in a deadpan, drugged-out style" (Fricker, 2006). After gouging out his eyes, Oedipus sang in his family garage-band before taking off his clothes revealing his sexless body. While the genderlessness of Oedipus' naked body could potentially have been a disruptive force in the production; ultimately, the scene parodied Freudian interpretations of the Oedipus myth, rather than entering into a critical dialogue with classical tragedy and its relevance to audiences today.

Mockery was seen again in an earlier scene in *Oedipus Loves You* when the characters were in family therapy together led by the blind prophet, Tiresias. In my viewing of the production, the audience responded to this scene with riotous laughter. Rather than reconfiguring aspects of classical tragedy, or considering the ways in which tragedy can be relevant for contemporary audiences today, Pan Pan Theatre's *Oedipus Love You* shows, to use Campbell's words, that postmodern tragedies "interrupt the narrative and the characters at points, [yet] there

⁵² Lehmann continues to highlight the broad ranging scope of the term 'postmodernism' in performance when he writes, "Some of the key words that have come up in the international postmodernism discussions are: ambiguity; celebrating art as fiction; celebrating theatre as process; discontinuity; heterogeneity; non-textuality; pluralism; multiple codes; subversion; all sites; perversion; performer as theme and protagonist; deformation; text as basic material only; deconstruction; considering text to be authoritarian and archaic; performance as a third term between drama and theatre; anti-mimetic; resisting interpretation" (2006, 25). The broad-ranging scope of postmodernism in describing performance led Lehmann to define postdramatic theatre, which is more specific. He continues, "Process, heterogeneity or pluralism in turn are true of all theatre – the classical, modern and 'postmodern'" (25). The lack of specificity in the term 'postmodern' in relation to performance reveals its limits in a discussion of Kosky's adaptations of classical tragedy, and the terminological specificity required to engage with them adequately.

is still a reclamation of that mythology” (66). Through mocking its mythologies, postmodern tragedies ultimately reinstate them, whereas postdramatic tragedies tear them apart.

Eleftheria Ioannidou calls contemporary Greek director Michael Marmarino’s stagings of classical Greek tragedy postmodern (2008). In fact, she describes Marmarino’s work in ways that draw startling likeness with Kosky, albeit with crucial differences. Ioannidou writes that Marmarino has “triggered critical reactions which ascribed to the director the role of the *enfant terrible* of the Greek theatre” (17). As noted in chapter one, Kosky has been posited as the *enfant terrible* of Australian theatre. In addition, Marmarino’s use of music recalls Kosky’s intertextual approach. Ioannidou writes,

English nursery rhymes and extracts from the *Barber of Seville* by Gioacchino Rossini were integrated into the performance of *Medea*, while in *Electra* a song from Auschwitz was hummed by Pylades and a nursery rhyme was sung by a little girl. The song ‘Heavenly Salvation’ from Kurt Weil’s opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany*, popular and traditional Greek songs, the Greek National Anthem and an extract from the memoirs of a captive in Auschwitz were all interwoven within the dramatic text. (21)

While this description of Marmarino’s use of music in his adaptations of classical tragedy recall aspects of Kosky’s work, such as his use of Slovenian folk song in *Women of Troy* and pop and techno music in *King Lear*, Ioannidou also observes that Marmarino displays a “subversive approach to the impersonation of the tragic role” (22). His approach to character, she writes, “contest the authority of the director-*auteur*” where “the actors-participants are allowed to make their own contributions, from personal gestures to lines and songs written by themselves” (22). In his 2006 production of Euripides’ *The Suppliants*, for example, Marmarino cast his own mother and two of her neighbours in the play (Ioannidou, 24). They were non-professional actors, and they played themselves. Marmarino’s approach to casting and subsequent destabilisation of the role of director-*auteur* are all critical difference between his postmodern tragedies and Kosky’s post-tragedies.

While this is far from a comprehensive survey of postdramatic and postmodern tragedies performed over the last two decades in Australia, the select examples of *Hamletmachine*,

Tragedia Endogonidia and *medEia* show that postdramatic approaches to tragedy go “some way to unpick the seams of representation” (Munby, Giles and Connor: 2013, 8) working “to finally disempower the prevalence of the Aristotelian model of theatre, with its focus on plot and character, which still dominates our representational modes...” (Campbell, 2010: 56). Pan Pan Theatre’s *Oedipus Loves You* and Marmarino’s productions show that postmodern tragedy uses pastiche to disrupt the boundary between character and actor/non-actor. Postmodern tragedy also mocks classical tragic myth-making and its psychoanalytic interpretations.⁵³ The Aristotelian model that postdramatic and postmodern tragedies seek to disempower, and that Kosky’s post-tragedies call into question, too, has ancient roots in Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

The chapter now turns to a consideration of Aristotle’s definition of tragedy. This provides the context in which to consider how Kosky maintains aspects of the tragic traditions he elasticises. I will outline key concepts from Aristotle’s *Poetics* to show that Kosky reconfigures aspects of the Aristotelian tragic arc in ways that differentiate him from Müller, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, and Dood Part’s postdramatic tragedies, and Pan Pan Theatre and Marmarino’s postmodern tragedies as they have been discussed here. A consideration of aspects of Aristotle’s *Poetics* provides material to explore Kosky’s relationship to the classical tragic tradition, and how that relationship played out onstage in his *King Lear* and *Women of Troy*.

Aristotelian Tragedy

Believed to have been written in 335 B.C.E., Aristotle’s *Poetics* is the first recorded text to account for a theory of tragedy (Dukore, 1974: 31). In a translation by Malcolm Heath, Aristotle’s oft-quoted definition of tragedy in *Poetics* is as follows:

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete, and possesses magnitude, in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated into different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions (1996, 10).

⁵³ In contrast, Philipa Kelly suggests that Kosky’s *King Lear* mocked the tragic tradition. She writes, “Kosky’s production of *King Lear* set up a world where notions of sense and meaning were not just abandoned in despair – they were wildly mocked” (2002, 12).

The different parts defining tragedy and shaping its plot are recognition (*harmatia*), reversal (*peripeteia*) and catharsis (*katharsis*). *Harmatia* is the crucial moment where the tragic hero recognizes a flaw, error or mistake that afflicts him or her. Through the hero recognising their tragic flaw, there is then a reversal of his or her fate which Aristotle calls *peripeteia*. *Peripeteia* occurs, for example, in Sophocles' *Oedipus* when Oedipus realizes that he has unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. This, for Aristotle, would then result in the catharsis of pity and fear in the spectator. These parts make up what Aristotle has defined as tragedy's concepts of plot: completeness, magnitude, unity and determinate structure (1996, 13-15).

Lehmann compares Bertolt Brecht's 'non-Aristotelian drama' (2006, 158) to Aristotelian tragedy. He writes,

While Brecht privileges jumps and cuts at all levels, the logical and the temporal, in Aristotle the central importance of the unity of time is to guarantee the unity of action as a coherent totality. No jumps and digressions must occur that could cloud clarity and confuse understanding. (Lehmann, 2006: 159).

Lehmann continues, "[i]t is essentially this unity of time that has to support the unity of this logic that is meant to manage without confusion, digression, and rupture" (160). If we return to the examples of the scenes already discussed from Kosky's *King Lear* and *Women of Troy*, there are confusions, digressions and ruptures on the one hand, and a doubling of tragedy's unity of time on the other.

Aristotelian components of plot that privilege a unity of time are what postdramatic approaches to tragedy such as *Hamletmachine*, *Tragedia Endogonidia* and *medEia* seek to disavow by 1) complicating a sense of continuous narrative time, 2) disrupting stable character designations and 3) pulverising the dramatic text through a privileging of the body as material.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The tragic narrative arc, outlined by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, continues in most Australian playwriting. In an opinion piece by performance theorist Jana Perković published online, "Australian theatre is Western theatre and the dramatic text at its heart is a highly specific form, a product of socio-historical forces. Western/European drama as we know it, largely defined by mimesis of reality (in its most extreme form called naturalism), arose in Elizabethan England, was refined in 17th-century France through an interpretive reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and was stabilised in the classical period of the 19th century. At the centre of its universe – a bourgeois, humanist, atheistic universe – it puts an ordinary individual, subjected to social forces. Refracting the forces of this universe through the fate of the individual, it seeks to create an artistic mirror for ourselves. This is the theatre of an individual who is a

Postmodern tragedies subvert Aristotle's formula through theatrical devices such as pastiche observed in *Oedipus Loves You* and the work of contemporary Greek theatre director Marmarino. Kosky brings an Aristotelian model of tragedy into question through stretching the boundaries of what plot and character can be. He does this while rubbing them up against nonrepresentational modalities such as the desubjectification of character and the introduction of fragmented and non-narrative scenes.

Classically acted monologues such as Lear's in Kosky's version, followed by half-animal, half-human figures dancing around him in a frenzy, enact this rub. So, too, does Cassandra's garbled monologue in *Women of Troy*. The monologue conveyed Cassandra's characterisation while giving way to her desubjectification. In both Kosky's *King Lear* and *Women of Troy*, for example, certain key Aristotelian elements such as tragedy being "whole" by having "a beginning, a middle and an end" (Aristotle, 1996: 13) were confused, digressed and ruptured at times. Further, both plays have been critiqued for not having adhered to the Aristotelian tragic formula in the first place. What are the implications of Kosky staging plays in a way that does not adhere to the Aristotelian tragic arc, and how does this aid a definition of post-tragedy?

In performance theorist Diana Taylor's words, an Aristotelian tragic plot is "neatly organized" (2003, 95). Yet the plays *Women of Troy* and *King Lear* have been criticized for not being neatly organized in ways that are relevant to this chapter. In particular, *Women of Troy* has been criticized for not wholly adhering to the Aristotelian formula (Croally, 2007: 27-31). Kristine Gilmartin observes that, "Wilamowitz and others criticized the play as a loosely joined series of scenes. In reply scholars have admitted that the tragedy does not have Aristotelian unity..." (1970, 213).⁵⁵ *Women of Troy* reads as a series of scenes, rather than a cohesive narrative plot tracing the tragic phases of *harmatia*, *peripeteia* and *catharsis*. In this way, Euripides' *Women of Troy* does not exemplify Aristotelian unity.

social and political subject, who *acts*, who makes decisions based on their own personal ethics, who pursues their desires, ideas and emotions – because that defines them, not ancestry, belonging to a social group, or worshipping a god. At its heart is a dramatic conflict between characters, which unfolds through dialogue and interpersonal communication. Everything external to the dramatic world is largely excluded (including the playwright and the spectators). Time, place and action are coherent and continuous" (Perković, 2014).

⁵⁵ For additional accounts, Gilmartin makes reference to Kitto, 1939: 221; Grube, 1941: 80; Webster, 1939: 155.

Likewise, Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been called a particularly unstable text because of the differences between its Folio and the Quarto versions (Madelaine, 2002: 14).⁵⁶ Nahum Tate's 1681 version, *The History of King Lear* is an example of this, in which Tate altered Shakespeare's original to have a happy ending, while making other significant changes.⁵⁷ Tate himself spoke to the play's 'disorder' writing that Shakespeare's version was "a heap of jewels unstrung and unpolished, yet so dazzling in their disorder that I soon perceived I had seized a treasure" (Tate in Wells, 2000: 62). While on the one hand *King Lear* has been read as ignoring "the classical dramatic 'unities' of time and place" (Petronella, 2012: 28), it has also been shown to have "elements of the Aristotelian framework" (Petronella, 2012: 28). Specifically, the play "asks that we identify ourselves, through pity, with the tragic figure" (Petronella, 2012: 28).

Richard Madelaine writes that the differences between the Folio and Quarto texts of Shakespeare's *King Lear* suggest that, "Shakespeare occasionally, or perhaps habitually, revised his texts according to changing performance needs" (2002, 4). In relation to *King Lear*'s textual instability and Kosky's 1998 version of it, Madelaine writes,

Many audience members and reviewers saw Kosky's production as reductionist; some even wondered whether directors have the moral right to try to force their audiences to read texts in an 'idiosyncratic' way. [...] It is important to remember that variant readings confirm the richness, as well as the instability, of the text. (2008, 17).

Here Madelaine proposes that Kosky's interpretation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* speaks to the play's inherent richness, instability, and malleability. He notes that Kosky's *King Lear* was "a complete rewriting of the story... Kosky made use of Shakespeare's text, but the result was probably more a product of Kosky and his society than of Shakespeare and his..." (16).

⁵⁶ Stanley Wells observes that among his contemporaries, Shakespeare "was not thought of as an immortal classic, but as a dramatist whose works, however admirable, required adaptation to fit them for the new theatrical and social circumstances of the time" (2000, 63).

⁵⁷ Wells writes that Tate, "shortens the text by around eight hundred lines, removing entirely the character of the Fool; he modernizes the language at many points; he adds a love story of his own composition, removing the King of France and turning Edgar and Cordelia into virtuous lovers who come together at the end; most notoriously, he makes 'the tale conclude in a success to the innocent distressed persons,' preserving the lives of Lear, Kent, and Gloucester and sending them off into peaceful retirement" (2000, 62).

Both Euripides' *Women of Troy* and Shakespeare's *King Lear* had begun the post-tragic footwork towards breaching the limits of an Aristotelian tragic formula. Kosky continued and extended these steps already taken by the playwrights. He altered and displaced Aristotelian unity further by creating ruptures in the performers bodies (Cassandra's vomit in *Women of Troy*) and digressions in the mise-en-scène (the Dionysian frenzy in *King Lear*). Consequently, he exacerbated the plays' nihilism. Through these ruptures and digressions, the characters that the audience is meant to pity tip into zones of madness and irrationality. To recall Nietzsche, in nihilism "[a] goal is lacking. An answer to the question 'why' is lacking" (1976, 557). These momentary transgressions operate in contrast to the tragic classicism that bookended these scenes. Nihilism exists in close proximity to the reality with which we are familiar.

In Kosky's *Women of Troy*, the tragic event unifying the stage action – the fall of Troy – was taken beyond the Trojan War itself. From the opening scene, the audience recognised the sterility of the set, arranged like a football locker room. The masked guard photographing a hooded Hecuba all recalled highly mediated images from the Iraq war. The mise-en-scène evoked not a single tragic action upon which the narrative pivoted, but layered the Trojan War and the Iraq War as a kind of post-tragic doubling, where Aristotelian unity of time and space thickened and folded. Likewise, in Kosky's *King Lear*, theatre critic Kylie Moriarty described the scenes following the madness scene as having captured a "twentieth century wasteland – the Greyhound station from hell" (1998, 32). Kiernander described the scene as a "waiting room of some ominous institution" (2000, 130).

After interval of *King Lear*, the stage was lined with rows of orange plastic chairs. Kelly writes that in the scene Lear was "[u]tterly divested of his familiar symbols of grandiosity" (2002, 12). "[H]e sat at home in his new surroundings, his absentminded, speculative delivery chillingly underscored by the way in which he compulsively tore pieces of paper into tiny shreds" (2002, 12). Kosky's disoriented Lear snaked through the rows of chairs aimlessly, tripping over them at times. The figures with oversized animal heads later sat, oblivious, among the rows. Kelly writes that the scene created "one of the most moving, and, in a sense, inexplicable, scenes I have witnessed in the theatre" through its illustration of "for the moment, what humanity amounted to" (2015, 71), concluding that, "Kosky set a landmark *King Lear* for the turn of the century, a time of radical uncertainty" (2002, 12). Similarly, for Peta Tait, the scene "was expressed with profound social relevance" (2003, 7).

Kosky's engagement with contemporary culture through evocative scenography such as waiting rooms of ominous institutions, greyhound bus stations, and football locker room-meets an Abu Gharib prison, means that the unified action revolving around the tragic hero expands beyond the individual, operating as a broader contemporary socio-political critique. What results is the exacerbation of the plays' nihilistic themes in a critique of neoliberalism. Madelaine infers this aspect of Kosky's *King Lear* when he writes,

The production was lively, fast, different, and coherent; but it left out and changed so much that it offended not only cultural materialists and feminists, but theatrical critics as well.⁵⁸ Radical surgery of the text and alteration of its events radically altered power relations... While keeping the nihilism, he removed all the pathos (which he saw as 'sentiment') and radically altered the reconciliation scene, which is usually the lynchpin of the audience's participation in the protagonist's process of transformation and sense of overwhelming loss. (17)

Madelaine's observation that Kosky did away with pathos and yet maintained the play's inherent nihilism is central in defining his production as post-tragic. Emphasising nihilism shifts the perspective from the pitiful fall of the tragic hero, to the injustice of the world in which he/she is part. This relates to the climate of neoliberalism because, as political theorists Brad Evans and Henry Giroux write, neoliberalism is marked by the "forced partaking in a system that encourages the subjugated to embrace their oppression as though it were there liberation" (2015, 4). They continue: "neoliberalism's discourse insists that the fate of the vulnerable is a product of personal issues ranging from weak character to bad choices or simply moral deficiencies" (2015, 4). Lear's madness as it was portrayed in Kosky's production was no fault of the individual. It was symptomatic of a social world in which characters were devoid of humanity for no fault of their own.

In sum, *Women of Troy* and *King Lear* are plays that destabilise the Aristotelian tragic arc. Kosky's approach to staging these plays demonstrates a postdramatic impetus further

⁵⁸ While Madelaine contends that Kosky's *King Lear* offended feminists, Fensham quotes Moira Gatens to argue, "From a feminist perspective, Kosky's orchestration of this assemblage significantly contradicts conceptions of a body politic that are still dominantly 'based on an image of a masculine body which reflects fantasies and values about the capacities of that body'" (Gatens, 1996: 23 in Fensham, 2009: 77).

towards the disavowal of narrative unity. His explicit interest in exacerbating themes of nihilism differentiates his approach from postdramatic and postmodern adaptations of tragedy, with implications for their performance within a neoliberal climate. A discussion of Kosky's work in light of their neoliberal context helps to understand the social and political implications of these productions and post-tragedy more broadly. Further discussion of the relationship between Kosky's adaptations and neoliberalism provides a fuller picture of post-tragedy's socio-political specificity.

Nihilism and Neoliberalism in Post-Tragedy

While the Aristotelian tragic model seeks to make the spectator feel pity and fear resulting in catharsis, the foregrounding of nihilism in post-tragedy alters this encounter.⁵⁹ Through this alteration, as Madelaine has shown, the audience is unable to participate in the protagonist's process of transformation. They are suspended in an indeterminate zone in their relationship to the performance, its characters, and the world it reflects. Rather than being able to participate in the protagonist's process of transformation, the audience's participation in post-tragedy can be productively considered as a critical re feeling of neoliberal affects.

Neoliberalism began in the 1980s during the Reagan/Thatcher era and intensified during postmillennial events like the War on Terror and the 2008 financial crisis (Harvie, 2014: 642). This thesis shows that Kosky's productions bring out the violence and the terror that line the neoliberal condition, with consequent feelings of fear, anxiety and depression, in a way that challenges audiences to work through these realities rather than politely recognising them and moving on. The nihilistic dimension of Kosky's post-tragedies becomes a political tool to this end.

Political theorist Anita Chari writes, "we could minimally describe the complexity of neoliberal political subjectivity as producing forms of political and normative ambivalence" (2015). Post-tragic spectatorship is a process whereby the spectator is propelled to critically reflect upon these normative ambivalences by re feeling them, with a sense of urgency. By 'staging' this ambivalence in Kosky's productions through the foregrounding of nihilism, the

⁵⁹ A discussion of catharsis will be the focus of chapter four, 'From Tragic Effect to Post-Tragic Affect: Rethinking Catharsis in Barrie Kosky's *Le Grand Macabre* and *The Lost Echo*'.

spectator is poised to critically refeel neoliberalism and its “attendant dystopian malaise” (Marder and Viera, 2012: x).

In *Depression: A Public Feeling*, Ann Cvetkovich writes, “The neoliberal management of racial conflicts and differences through politics of multiculturalism and diversity cultivates certain affects of polite recognition at the expense of really examining the explosiveness of racialised histories” (2012, 12). Cvetkovich’s commentary, when read alongside my discussion on the post-tragic, suggests that the nihilism Kosky foregrounds has renewed currency as an urgent alternative to the polite recognitions of socio-political complexities provided by neoliberalism.

In their project on existential utopia, Michael Marder and Patricia Viera write,

The project of overcoming nihilism... does not mean that these negative phenomena are to be left behind; instead, this task would require deepening or working through them. To work through nihilism and dystopia is to *harness their negative and critical energies for the project of social and political change*, preventing their fossilization into a pessimistic and resigned outlook where all possibilities have been preemptively foreclosed.

They continue,

Positively put, a revived utopian thought enjoins us to search for meaning in the immanence of collective life and to fashion a common space *devoid of an overarching unity*, a malleable and plastic space, where shared existence is interpreted each time anew. (2012, x: emphasis added).

The links between nihilism, political critique and Kosky’s stagings become clear. The characters in Kosky’s *King Lear* were at a chilling remove from the action they participated in. It was as if their agency was suspended and the social was something that was done to them, not something that they had an active role in making or changing. Neoliberalism similarly, “sets stock in fear and collective disenfranchisement” (Schneider and Ridout, 2012: 8).

Another example of Kosky's post-tragic approach to performance in dialogue with the neoliberal condition can be observed in a scene from *King Lear*. One of the most alarming moments in dramatic history appears in the play when the fallen King enters holding the dead body of his daughter Cordelia in his arms. At the beginning of the scene in Shakespeare's 'original', Lear rehearses his apology to Cordelia for having rejected her from his kingdom, dreaming of the future they would share together; dreaming that they would "live/ And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh/ At gilded butterflies" (Shakespeare, 2007: 175). Lear's hopes come too late, and his daughter is hanged.

In Kosky's version of the play, Cordelia's hanging did not occur offstage. Instead, her sisters Goneril and Regan suffocated her with a plastic bag in full view of the audience.⁶⁰ While wanting to place blame on the sisters, the perverse world that the audience bore witness to, especially in the final acts, revealed a world unconscionable for anyone to manage to remain sane in. The State no longer harbours responsibility for the hanging. Yet the characters in the play became themselves products of a society devoid of compassion.

Something similar occurs in Kosky's *Women of Troy*. Here, the Euripidean chorus standing for "a voice of the community and a representative of ethical and political norms" (Segal, 1982: 242) was brutally shot dead. In Euripides' script, the chorus continued to thrive beyond the downfall of the tragic hero and Troy's ruin. In Kosky's version, they were shockingly killed by a soldier whose face is veiled with a hockey mask. Hillard and McCallum comment that the murder of the chorus was performed "without ceremony or pause" (2010, 152). The soldier's lack of compassion and desensitization to this act of violence further reflect that Kosky's post-tragedies suggest a critique of neoliberalism and its accompanying "normalization of dystopian narratives" (Evans and Giroux, xiv). The veiling of the soldier's face was a veiling of the personal, rendering the man an anonymous symptom of the neoliberal war machine.

The bleak outlook communicated by these changes in Kosky's *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* respectively, foreground and exacerbate both of the plays' inherent themes of nihilism. Kosky described Shakespeare's *King Lear* as "one of the bleakest documents ever written", and suggested that in the play "there is no redemption or sanity" (Kosky in Fensham 2009, 76). He also emphasises that his particular version of the play "is very pertinent to the end of the

⁶⁰ As Kelly describes the scene, "Their wicked-witch routine was capped off when they murdered Cordelia on-stage with a plastic bag" (2005, 222).

century” (Kosky in Fensham 2009, 76). The exacerbation of themes of nihilism in Kosky’s *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* performed a spectatorial reorientation. The plays were no longer relics of the past. Audiences could see contemporary society reflected in them.

Goneril and Regan’s brutal murder of Cordelia, and the masked guard’s murder of the chorus, meant that the human individual – not the Gods nor the State – were to blame for their own moral deficiencies. However, neoliberal tendencies to blame the individual for injustices resulting from accumulative systemic faults were shown up in various ways in both productions. Lear’s madness and Goneril and Regan’s unfeeling evil was clearly a symptom of the depraved society in which they were part; and the anonymity of the depersonalised masked guard in Kosky’s *Women of Troy* likewise showed up the unabashed violence and cruelty of humans participating in contemporary warfare.

Witnessing Absence

Beyond the brutal deaths in the performances, among them being Cordeila’s suffocation at the hands of her sisters in *King Lear* and the abrupt murder of the chorus in *Women of Troy*, another aspect in both productions where neoliberal feelings of fear were foregrounded was the absence of certain characters. In *Women of Troy* Kosky did away with Talthybius who played the role of messenger in the play, and in his *King Lear* there was no Albany or Cornwall who were the husbands of Goneril and Regan. With the absence of Talthybius, and Albany in particular, certain evils became foregrounded. In the originals these character’s roles operated as observers and critics of the evil they bore witness to in the narrative fiction.

According to Helen Slaney’s discussion, the absence of Talthybius in Kosky’s version “confronted the audience directly with the unbearable responsibility of witnessing” (2011, 33). Talthybius’ lines were delivered by an emotionless male voice through a loudspeaker hanging overhead. This disembodied voice recalled the use of loudspeakers in Nazi war camps, making the instructions barked through the speaker more cruel than if delivered by a person. Similarly, without Albany to observe Goneril’s increasingly evil ambitions through his critique, “O Gonerill/You are not worth the dust which the rude wind/ Blows in your face” (Shakespeare, 1992: 209) in Kosky’s *King Lear*, the audience was confronted more with evil rather than the redemptive qualities of human character.

Kosky's erasure of characters that would usually stand in for the redemption of human evil relates to Eckbert Faas' contention that, "suffering is neither meaningful or absurd. It simply and unavoidably exists" (1984, 6). The chorus' death speaks to Faas' notion of post-tragedy as unavoidable suffering and hopelessness. The chorus traditionally represented the way society could prevail and make meaning out of suffering in order to survive. In contrast, Faas' definition of post-tragedy outlined in the introduction of this thesis stresses nihilistic tendencies more than classic tragedy's tendency towards redemption. Kosky's performances demonstrated a similarly nihilistic thrust to Faas' concept of post-tragedy.

(Re)Introducing Post-Tragedy

So far it has been suggested that the postdramatic is a theatre that calls into question representational performance strategies through an active dismantling of the playtext. Postdramatic tragedy would therefore be the active dismantling of a tragic text for performance. Postmodern tragedy is the deconstructivist mockery of the tragic tradition. What I am calling post-tragedy, however, is more related to the postdramatic. Post-tragedy unravels the dramatic continuum. More specifically, it explicitly foregrounds and exaggerates classical tragedy's themes of nihilism in a critique of neoliberal political subjectivity.

While Hamilton refers to Kosky's work as postdramatic (2008, 9-10), and others have called his work postmodern (Milne, 2004: 268; Monaghan, 2010: 247) there are factors at work in his performances more specifically encompassed by the term post-tragedy, not least because of its foregrounding of themes of nihilism through changes he makes to the successive Aristotelian tragic arc. As the previous discussion showed, Kosky did this in *Women of Troy* by doubling narrative time and the context of place by suggesting both the Trojan War and the Iraq War. Within this loaded context, however, Cassandra's monologue transgressed the representational bounds of the production, rupturing tragic organisation and coherence. In Kosky's *King Lear*, in the scenes following the madness scene, there was a sense of surreal meaninglessness devoid of narrative coherence and stable character designations.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Eckbert Faas first introduced the term post-tragedy in his book *Tragedy and After* (1984). Faas writes that tragedy is explanatory, whereas "anti-tragedy and post-tragedy are exploratory... Their forms abound with loose ends,

digressions, broken-backed structures, and fake solutions” (7). For Faas, anti-tragedy and post-tragedy designate plays that have in common “a basic denial – or at least a questioning – of the tragic vision of death and suffering as somehow meaningful in the general order of things” (6). He clarifies that anti-tragedy is more closely aligned with Theatre of the Absurd: it “confuses and shocks” (6) by not providing the audience with the comforts of linear narrative. On the other hand, for Faas, post-tragedy is “concerned with the authors’ post-tragic attitude towards human suffering and only by extension with the dramaturgical techniques that help to communicate this vision” (6). This post-tragic vision, as Faas describes it, is that pain and suffering is inevitable, and therefore life is meaningless. He also contends that the playwright communicates this vision, and the productions’ dramaturgy is only an extension of it.

While I agree with Faas’ contention that post-tragedy is nihilistic, Kosky’s adaptations of classical tragedy are contingent upon the specificity of their contemporary social, political, and theatrical contexts. The influence of developments in postdramatic theatre is one aspect that needs to be taken into account for an analysis of Kosky’s work. Another is the neoliberal socio-political context in which these works were developed. Nicholas Ridout makes a link between the radical adaptation of tragedy and neoliberalism, helpful for a discussion of post-tragedy here. In his discussion of the work of Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Ridout examines how the performance collective respond to questions of tragedy in a neoliberal society, a society that David Román has said “is already infused with the tragic” (2002, 2). Ridout writes that Societas Raffaello Sanzio’s production *Tragedia Endogonidia* operated from this premise: that the contemporary moment is littered with the debris of catastrophe; an idea

...that we have passed, perhaps not irretrievably into a period that is postpolitical, postdemocratic and post-tragic. The political task of theater, in the face of such a collapse, is somehow to hold open a tiny space between the collapsing walls [...] in which we might still be able to appear to one another in a way that allows us to speak and act collectively. (2007, 9-10).

Within this context of utter catastrophe and collapse to which Ridout and Román refer in their respective discussions of tragedy, tragedy’s role in performance has to be reconsidered in order

for theatre to operate effectively within this new political framework. Tragedy's main task is to create spaces within which to imagine a different way of being together collectively.⁶¹

Although the discussion of scenes from Kosky's *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* emphasised their nihilistic dimensions such as Cordelia's and the chorus' brutal murders, theorists such as Kelly were "moved" (2015, 71), and for Tait the production was "profound" (2003, 7). *Women of Troy* had similar impact. For Elizabeth Hale, "it was memorable theatre that provoked an engagement with the meaning and role of classical theatre in contemporary Australia" (2011, 31). McCallum describes his experience of the production as "one of the most harrowing nights I have spent in the theatre" (2010, 9). Because of the nihilism and Kosky's approach to *mise-en-scène* in the productions, Kosky's *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* facilitated encounters for these commentators that could be described as urgent (re)encounters with contemporary conditions of crises through radical reconfigurations of the classical tragic past.

Theatre scholars engaging with Kosky's *King Lear* have echoed the view of the performance's relevance to the contemporary political moment. Kelly observed that Kosky showed "a Lear who shadowed the many thousand faceless figures in contemporary society... perhaps not even able to acknowledge the misery they have been reduced to" (2015, 54). In Fensham's reading, "[f]rom the outset Kosky had a nihilistic vision" (2009, 76) and subsequently "his representations of human figures border on the grotesque" (86). For Madelaine, "Kosky manipulated the genre of the play, and the audience was left disturbed" (2002, 17). Kiernander notes, that it "concluded with a convincingly desolate, hopelessly nihilistic ending [...] as if he [Kosky] could smell the wind and sense that something very unsavory was on its way" (2010, 112).

This juncture between the political past of the plays, and the political present expressed through Kosky's auteur vision, is where the prefix 'post' in post-tragedy can come to be better

⁶¹ These spaces in performance could be considered alongside what Jill Dolan has called 'utopian performatives'. Dolan writes that utopian performatives are

small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention to the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. (2005, 5)

For Erika Fischer-Lichte, a similar experience to Dolan's utopian performatives is articulated through her concept of 'enchantments' which she describes as being "[w]hen the ordinary becomes conspicuous, when dichotomies collapse and things turn into opposites, the spectators perceive the world as "enchanted". (2008, 180)

understood. For Jüers-Munby, the ‘post’ in the postdramatic designates “a rupture and a beyond that continue[s] to entertain relationships with drama” (Munby, 2006: 2) For Campbell, it similarly “can mean beyond, after, or some combination, but always already implies a relationship to the drama which is fluid and defined differently in various postdramatic works” (2010, 56). Likewise, I use the prefix post- in post-tragedy to articulate that Kosky’s productions are chronologically and stylistically ‘after’ tragedy, at the same time as they are both interestingly within and ‘beyond’ the limits of the present moment. Post- designates something that is simultaneously belonging to the past, the present, and the future.

Afterwardness

In this vein, ‘post’ in post-tragedy comes to signal not a simple chronological ‘after’ that Jüers-Munby warns against when she writes that it “is not to be understood as an epochal category, nor simply as a chronological ‘after’ drama, a ‘forgetting’ of the dramatic ‘past’...” (2006, 3), but an ‘afterwardness’. Peggy Phelan describes this:

Not as charged as a flashback, which overwhelms awareness of the present tense, and more charged than “regular” memories, afterwardness allows us to access the copresence of the past and the present in the same moment (2002, 981).

Phelan develops her concept of afterwardness in the article, ‘Woodman’s Photography: Death and the Image One More Time’. Drawing on the work of Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin for an analysis of Francesca Woodman’s photography, Phelan argues that, “photography might be the best medium we have for responding to the ongoing temporality of mourning” (979). While ‘afterwardness’ for Phelan is a concept that emerges out of photographic analysis, and is defined through its temporal relationship to mourning, in an analysis of Kosky’s post-tragedies afterwardness takes on new life. If afterwardness “allows us to access the copresence of the past and the present” at the same time, could we think about post-tragedy’s afterwardness as a platform through which an alternative politics of collectivity can be touched? In other words, do Kosky’s (re)turns to the classical tragic past enable audiences to experience the present in ways

that are more densely textured and intersubjectively intense, and if so, what are the outcomes of this?

It could be suggested that commentators such as Kelly, Tait and Hale, for example, were lifted “slightly above the present” through afterwardness’s interpolation of past, present and future in Kosky’s post-tragedies. Many of these encounters of being moved or lifted up by Kosky’s post-tragedies are propelled by the stage action’s profound relevance to their socio-political context. These encounters not only call attention to the audience’s role in the theatrical performance and its accompanying politics, but reveals a spectator caught in the encounter of afterwardness. This concrescence of tragic time imbues post-tragedy with its particularly palimpsestous quality in performance, but also lines it with the weight of being confronted with the nihilism that accompanies late capitalist subjectivity.

The emphasis on the minutiae of moments of being ‘uplifted’ in the theatre (Ridout uses the word ‘tiny’) compares to the “magnitude” that Aristotle called for in his definition of tragedy in *Poetics* where he writes, “[t]ragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete, and possesses magnitude” (1996, 10). Post-tragedy’s emphasis shifts away from having to tackle the political sphere at a macro level, onto the potential in tiny and yet profound moments in performance. These commentaries suggest that the theatre takes on renewed importance as a forum for hope in the contemporary moment through post-tragedy. This is not to suggest that the performances issuing from this outlook convey happy stories with happy endings. On the contrary, reimaginings of ancient and classical tragedies seen in Kosky’s *Women of Troy* and *King Lear* on the contemporary stage enact desires for hopefulness, paradoxically, by working through its themes of nihilism.

Post-tragedy’s afterwardness, an aspect of which is designated by the prefix post-, makes the past and present accountable for the ways in which they interpolate towards a future in the charged forum of live performance. In this way, post-tragic performance articulates a paradoxical vision that is in part nihilistic as a proposition for socio-political transformation. It also shows that desires for hope, collectivity and togetherness in the theatre by scholars such as Jill Dolan (2005) and Erika Fische-Lichte (2008) are antithetical to neoliberalism’s stock in fear and collective disenfranchisement. I would suggest that through the very refeeling of neoliberal affects that Kosky’s productions stage, the post-tragic spectator encounters glimmers of utopian alternatives, to feel and act differently. The push-and-pull effect between representing reality and

radically reconfiguring it in Kosky's work brings nihilism and utopia into an unlikely – and potent – intimacy.

Conclusion

With one foot in the past, and the other in the present, yet both angled towards a utopian future, Kosky's productions answer Lehmann's question 'is there a future for tragedy?' in the affirmative. Part of its continued relevance, seen through its contemporary incarnations in Kosky's post-tragedies, is its foregrounding of themes of nihilism as they have particular resonance within a neoliberal climate. This chapter has argued that at the same time as foregrounding themes of nihilism, Kosky's dramaturgies approach the spectator's relationship to the work as a utopian, transformative site with potential beyond the theatre's walls. This territory is not promoted too much through explicit political content in his work. Rather, Kosky's politics of futurity is mobilised through afterwardness. On the one hand, Kosky's post-tragedies foreground the nihilism of what Faas has defined as a 'post-tragic' view of suffering, while on the other, propels the spectator into thinking about how suffering can be avoided.

Dolan advocates for "beliefs in the possibility of a better future... that can be captured and claimed in performance" (2005, 3). For Fische-Lichte, "By transforming its participants, performance achieves the reenchantment of the world" (2008, 181). These views contrast with contributions in theatre and performance studies at the intersection of memory and trauma studies (Phelan, 1997; Trezise and Wake, 2013; Trezise, 2014; Willis, 2014; Duggan, 2012): what Alan Read has described as "the current morbidity of performance studies" (2008, 66). These latter contributions are concerned with the ways in which performance becomes a site in which the past can be revisited, and how trauma is rehearsed and reenacted as a passage into the historical, cultural imaginary. While one branch of theatre performance studies over the last decade is marked by a fascination with questions of pastness, trauma, memory and death, the other is marked by an optimism of how performance can help make a better future taking up themes of utopia, optimism and hope.

Both these fascinations in theatre and performance studies with the past on the one hand, and the future on the other, come to be articulated through post-tragedy in terms of both theory and practice. Post-tragedy has one foot in the past with the other in the future, straddling themes

of painful death at the same time as utopian futurity. While Kosky's performances are laden with bleakness, they are also often lively and playful, oscillating between stripped-back, classically acted monologues, and the carnivalesque. These oscillations situate post-tragedy as a contemporary genre of performance that takes a classical tragic text into its folds, and radically reimagines it.⁶²

Post-tragedy is a theatrical response to shifts in contemporary, globalised spectatorship and neoliberalism. Kosky's *Women of Troy* performatively reassessed the role of performing tragedy within this shifting landscape. He recontextualised Euripides' play in reference to the Iraq War and Abu Ghraib. In *King Lear*, his desolate, existential reading of the madness scene and its aftermath brought a sense of hopelessness to the foreground. Yet post-tragedy, while staging the nihilistic negation of meaning uses nihilistic themes as a site for a productive, affective politics angled towards the future. It does this by redoubling neoliberal affects of fear in an encounter of refeeling as a creative act. What better theatrical genre to stage this ongoing negotiation than ancient classical tragedy, which has always been used to critique the present through the past, and the past through the present?

This chapter began by situating Kosky's adaptations of tragedy in relation to the emergence of what Lehmann calls postdramatic theatre. It demonstrated the ways in which contemporary adaptations have been theorised in theatre and performance studies using the terms postdramatic tragedy and postmodern tragedy. The literary focus of the term post-tragedy in the work of Faas and Freeman found its limits in a discussion of Kosky's work. The chapter argued that post-tragedy is more productively considered as an auteur director's response to

⁶² As opposed to the contained structure of tragedy that Aristotle provides, as Bertolt Brecht wrote in 1929: "today's catastrophes do not progress in a straight line but in cyclical crises" (1964, 30). The same can be said of Kosky's post-tragedies, and of the contemporary, neoliberal moment. In the article, 'A Forum on Theatre and Tragedy in the Wake of September 11' theatre and performance studies luminaries were brought together to reflect on the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their impact on questions of performance (Taylor, 2002). Much of their considerations concern performances of tragedy "at a time," Una Chaudhuri writes, "when every cultural practice is reassessing itself and its role" (2002, 98). The distinction between tragedy in the aesthetic sense, and tragedy in its vernacular usage are used in the same breath in this article to question what theatrical tragedy can mean and do specifically after the tragedy of 9/11. While the crossover between tragedy as a performance genre and real-life tragic events have existed since tragedy's emergence in Ancient Greece (Rabinowitz, 2008; Goff, 2009), this crossover has become increasingly pronounced in theatre and performance studies in the wake of the events that occurred on and after September 11, 2001. While Taylor reflects on the inability of the contained Aristotelian notion of tragedy to be able to articulate the complexity of tragic human experience in the contemporary moment, W. B. Worthen shows that thinking about "the events of September 11... as tragedy forces us to ask what our role in this spectacle and its resolution might be, how we may be transformed by the action, and what that acknowledgment might cost us, as individuals and as a nation, even as citizens of a postmodern, globalized, polis" (2002, 100). These questions strike to the heart of concerns of post-tragedy.

neoliberalism by foregrounding tragedy's nihilistic themes in a relation of afterwardness to classical tragedy. Inviting the spectator to participate in an event of refeeling neoliberal affects is post-tragedy's critical response to the current socio-political climate. The next chapter will continue and extend this discussion by returning to a discussion of Kosky's *The Dybbuk* with the Gilgul theatre.

3.

Leaky Feelings:

Affect and Becoming-Animal in Barrie Kosky's *The Dybbuk*

Art is not about representation, concepts, or judgment; art is the power to think in terms that are not so much cognitive and intellectual as affective.

– Claire Colebrook (2002, 12).

Great theatre doesn't happen on a stage, and it doesn't happen in our heads. It happens in the whole room.

– John McCallum (2010, 11).

Introduction

As mentioned in chapter one, Kosky's version of Solomon Ansky's Yiddish play *The Dybbuk* was first performed with the Gilgul theatre company in 1991 in an engine repair shop in St Kilda, Melbourne. *The Dybbuk* was staged three times. It had two seasons in the engine repair shop, and one at the Everleigh Railway Yards in Sydney (Meyrick, 2000: 158). It demonstrated Kosky's signature approach to performance that came to mark his post-tragedies. *The Dybbuk* was one of the first theatre works in which Kosky developed his distinct style. In the performance, and in collaboration with his Gilgul colleagues, Kosky engaged intertextual elements with the original play including "the prophecies of Ezekiel, Yiddish vaudeville, Judaic mysticism, psychoanalysis, [and] the Kabbalah ..." (Boyd in Meyrick, 2000: 157). Most of the dialogue was performed in Yiddish and included a corresponding meta-narrative concerning the theatre group, the Vilna Troupe, who first performed *The Dybbuk* in Warsaw the 1920s (Sandrow, 1996: 217).

The Dybbuk was the production where Kosky “first attracted critical interest” (Akerholt, 2000: 229). In returning to a discussion of it in this chapter, I trace the foundation of Kosky’s interest in the potent affectivity of theatre performance. Although as Alan Read writes, all “[t]heatre operates as an affect machine” (2008, 13), it is the particular affective dimension of *The Dybbuk* that mobilised a shift in the trajectory of Kosky’s theatrical career, not only for spectators and critics, but for Kosky, too. In Kosky’s own words, “*The Dybbuk* was a seminal moment for me... For the first time, I spoke in a language on stage which I believed was mine” (Kosky in Hallett, 2008). What Kosky refers to here as his own ‘language’, is a *preverbal* language of charged affects⁶³; drawing likeness with what Artaud described in his manifesto for a Theatre of Cruelty: “a kind of unique language halfway between gesture and thought” (1976, 242). For Artaud, and I suggest for Kosky, too, this ‘unique language’ belongs to “a mind in the flesh, but a mind as quick as lightning” (Artaud, 1978, 164). Between gesture and thought, as quick as lightning, the affects in Kosky’s theatre belong neither to subject or object; inside or outside; person or thing. They are a quickening of the flesh that undoes the spectators’ and actors’ “cellular stitching” (Trezise, 2014: 137).

Manifesting the Ecstatic

Following a discussion of *The Dybbuk* in his autobiographical book, *On Ecstasy* (2008), Kosky provides a definition of the theatre that resonates strongly with a discussion of intrapersonal affect in performance. Kosky writes,

The theatre seems to me the perfect place for the ecstatic to manifest itself. Theatre is by very nature an alchemical mix of manipulation, ritual and simulation. Body, voice, light, sound. Who really knows what will be unleashed or unearthed when these forces combine. Or in what theatrical moments these forces will choose to emerge. (51)

⁶³ While I am suggesting here that Kosky’s theatrical affects operate in excess of language, this is not to suggest that they do not function in some relation to language. As Massumi writes in *Politics of Affect*, it is a common misconception that affect is outside of linguistic function: “The nonverbal grades on the continuum of experience are not in opposition to the verbal registers... They companion them” (2015, 212).

This quote raises several points relevant to this chapter's discussion of intrapersonal affect in Kosky's *The Dybbuk*. Here, Kosky describes the theatre as an alchemical space, where body, voice, light and sound come together to unleash forces outside of the director or actors' conscious control. A central factor in philosopher's Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of affect is that the human is not necessarily at the center of affective experience. For them, affect preexists a human body, and yet can impact upon the way a human body comes to experience the world. In their own words, "affects imply an enterprise of desubjectification" (2004, 297) where "there is a circulation of impersonal affects, an alternate current that disrupts signifying projects as well as subjective feelings" (257). This alternate current of nonsubjective feelings, and the disruption of signification, is precisely what we read in Kosky's definition of the theatre, and what we see in the following scene from *The Dybbuk*, again taken from Kosky's book, *On Ecstasy*. He writes,

One night was particularly cold. Freezing cold. The space was not heated. The audience were wrapped in scarves, hats, gloves, coats and each other's horror. The two actors were virtually naked at the end of the exorcism. When they had been finally cleaved apart in a monstrous howl of separation, they made their way to the row of butcher's hooks, swinging behind them. On this winter's night, as they hung motionless and drenched on the hooks, steam rose from their wet, naked bodies. For a good three minutes, as another actor quietly recited the Kaddish prayer for the souls of the dead, this steam poured off the bodies of the two actors. A freak combination of room temperature and body temperature had produced one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen in the theatre. Slaughtered kosher meat steaming from glittering butcher's hooks. (2008, 49-50).

At the level of narrative, what this scene showed was an exorcism to rid the bride of the demon – her dead lover – that had come to possess her. As Kosky describes, "The bride is consumed by him, her voice becomes his, her language becomes his and her body becomes his. She struggles against him as much as she wants him. He is fighting her and fucking her inside her own body" (2008, 48). In Kosky's production, rather than the actor impersonating her dead lover by lowering her voice and changing her physicality, as in Lili Liliana's performance of the

role in Michał Waszyński's 1937 film, one actor played the bride (Yoni Prior), and another the demon (Tom Wright). As Kosky evocatively describes them, in his production they appeared as "[t]wo screaming, deformed Siamese twins... [t]wo cockroaches scuttling and fucking among [...] wet potatoes" (2008, 49). Their separation through the exorcism was a key moment in the narrative of the play as well as the performance.

In Kosky's description of the scene, however, he does not describe the narrative content or story of *The Dybbuk* but rather recalls the performance's temperature and its sounds, conjuring a string of images and sensations. These aspects of the scene – the freezing cold, the actors' howls, the whispered prayer – ultimately led to something extraordinary that the director had not consciously planned. This extraordinary something, for Kosky, was that the actors' bodies, billowing with steam, did not *represent* 'slaughtered kosher meat', they became it. This process of becoming was mobilised through the "freak combination" of body heat and room temperature. In this sense, the affects the scene produced functioned in excess of signification. It was not the narrative or what the performance signified that created "the most beautiful thing" that Kosky had ever seen in the theatre. It was an eruption of the Real – the actors' bodies actually steaming – that made them pass through a veil of narrative representation, becoming, for a moment, dead animal flesh.

This 'becoming' within the particularly charged affective dimension of Kosky's *The Dybbuk* will be examined in this chapter in order to argue that infrapersonal affect, as it has been theorised by Deleuze and Guattari, was the central force impacting upon the way the scene was experienced. Although *The Dybbuk* is not exactly an example of post-tragedy, which the previous chapter defined as the contemporary adaptation of classical tragedy by an auteur director within a neoliberal climate, this chapter helps to establish how affect can be theorised in performance. In the following chapter, affect and post-tragedy will be discussed alongside each other, to develop what I call post-tragic affects.

A survey of theories of affect in this chapter will provide a basis for my analysis, and a point of reference for chapter four's discussion of what I call post-tragic affect in Kosky's later work. An understanding of infrapersonal configurations of affect afforded by Deleuze and Guattari opens up new potentials for analyses in theatre and performance studies. In particular, their theory of affect benefits nonrepresentational approaches to *mise-en-scène*, as well as an engagement with uncanny, asignifying eruptions in the theatre as that witnessed by *The Dybbuk*

scene. The previous chapters examined these asignificatory aspects through Kosky's use of intertextuality, site-specificity and his bodily approach to performance. These aspects of Kosky's work are better understood through a prism of infrapersonal affect because their power is in excess of what can be readily recognised or known.

Raw, Sweaty, Nightmarish

In theatre critic Bryce Hallett's words, Kosky's work with the Gilgul "was exciting and raw, sweaty and nightmarish. There was always music or singing in one form or another and great moments of beauty, which quickly dissolved into ugliness or squalor" (2008). Kosky's 'nightmarish' transitions between "great moments of beauty" and "ugliness or squalor" such as those in *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* were shown in the previous chapter to foreground nihilism. As well as this, Kosky's nightmarish transitions do not attempt to mimetically reflect reality. Rather, they transgress the Aristotelian emphasis on coherence and the narrative 'whole'. As critics such as Michael Smith have written, in Kosky's work "imagination tak[es] precedence over any intellectual reasoning" (2010). Crucially, in Julian Meyrick's discussion of *The Dybbuk* he writes, "[m]any critics argued that *literal understanding was unnecessary to either its meaning or enjoyment*" (2000, 157: emphasis added).

The scene from *The Dybbuk* that Kosky describes in *On Ecstasy* operated in excess of the possibility of a clear semiotic analysis. The audience not understanding the Yiddish language contributed to this, too. A series of concepts needs to be developed in order to engage with the forces at work that overwhelmed *The Dybbuk*'s intellectual coherence. Performance theorists Laura Cull (2009, 2012) and Denise Varney (2007) provide such a series of concepts, allowing events to be viewed through the prism of infrapersonal affect. They draw on the work of Deleuze, Guattari and Brian Massumi. Cull writes, "[t]he Deleuzian concept of affect and becoming holds great promise for the analysis of how performance impacts upon an audience, offering an alternative to the over-emphasis on interpretation and the construction of meaning that derives from Performance Studies' embrace of semiotics, critical theory and psychoanalysis" (2009, 8). Varney adds, "the theory of affect offers performance analysis a very useful analytical tool for a rethinking of meaning and representation in theatre and the performing arts" (2007, 114). The theoretical framework of infrapersonal affect developed in this chapter, expanding upon the work of Deleuze, Guattari and Massumi, and Cull and Varney after them, draws

attention to the subtleties at work not only in the scene from Kosky's *The Dybbuk*, but more broadly to the rich and underdeveloped relationship between performance analysis and Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy.

First, I will briefly define the key concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's work comprising this chapter – affect, becoming, and becoming-animal – before elaborating upon these terms through a detailed analysis of the scene. In addition, I will provide two surveys of affect theory. The first will consider diverse interpretations of affect across psychoanalytic, psychological and cultural studies discourse. The second will examine how affect has been taken up in theatre and performance studies. An exploration of Deleuze and Guattari's concept becoming-animal in the latter parts of the chapter extends the proposition that affect operates in excess of a human individual. Becoming-animal enables the emphasis to shift from the actor-audience relationship, to a more complex ecology of experience. In doing so, the chapter indirectly contributes to the post-/non-human turn in theatre and performance studies (Remshardt, 2008; Lepage, 2008; Cull, 2012; Wood, 2012; Schweitzer and Zerdy, 2014; Allen and May, 2015). Affect and becoming-animal also open up possibilities to consider how *The Dybbuk* impacted upon the affective architectures that Kosky crafted in his later work, to be examined in subsequent chapters.

Introducing Affect and Becoming(-Animal)

Expanding upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi defines affect as the “intrapersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another” (2004, xvii).⁶⁴ What Massumi suggests by this is that affect is something that pre-exists a body, and yet plays a role in a body's experiential state. Intrapersonal intensity, as Massumi uses it, stands for those atmospheric surges, pulses, or hums that colour experience, or give an encounter texture. These affective intensities are not necessarily intense, but they can be. In theatre performances that correspond to the tragic Aristotelian narrative arc of beginning, middle, and end, for example, dramaturgical strategies are engaged towards the intensification of affect, culminating in catharsis. In *The Dybbuk* scene, an intensification of affect happened non-strategically and in excess of the narrative fiction. It also happened in excess of the actor and the

⁶⁴ While Deleuzean configurations of affect such as Massumi's are foregrounded in my analysis, this approach is not consistent in the field.

spectator. The steam poured copiously through “a freak combination” of elements, resulting in a infrapersonal affective charge in the theatre that led, I suggest, to what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘becoming-animal’.

“Becoming”, Deleuze and Guattari write, “is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something” (263). Becoming is a process whereby “the self is only a threshold, a door...” (275). For Deleuze and Guattari, we have to pass through various stages of becoming in order to reach the becoming of all becomings: “the body without organs” (BwO) (2004, 165-184). Becoming-animal is one becoming they outline in *A Thousand Plateaus* which they define as “an affectability that is no longer that of subjects” (285). “[B]ecoming-animal,” they write, “is affect in itself... and represents nothing” (286). *The Dybbuk* scene activated a becoming-animal not only because the actor-audience subjectivity was transgressed, but also because the actors *became* slaughtered kosher meat: they did not represent it. In a performance context, Cull writes, “what appears as becoming (rather than a reproduction or an imitation) is always contextually determined” (106). This latter point is key to a consideration of becoming-animal in *The Dybbuk* scene. The actors did not reproduce or impersonate themselves *as* dead animals. The becoming-animal emerged as a spontaneous, metamorphic process in the scene where the actors’ selves became thresholds and doors opening out onto what Deleuze would call a ‘plane of immanence’. A plane of immanence is “not something *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject” (Deleuze, 2001: 26).

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari write that they “believe in the existence of very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away” (2004, 237). What Kosky witnessed on that particularly cold night of *The Dybbuk* was a becoming-animal, where the human was swept away, opening out onto an immanent field of potential. The non-human element of steam overwhelmed the edges of the actors’ bodies as characters, as actors, and even as humans. Becoming-animal helps to conceptually dislodge thinking about performance affects in terms of a personal feeling that an audience member experiences, to consider the theatre in ecological terms. I will later consider what performance conditions were created in order for this becoming-animal to occur in *The Dybbuk* scene, as well as its implications for an understanding of Kosky’s work and his approach to staging the body in performance. An elaboration on the relationship between affect and becoming-animal is key to this consideration.

Deleuze and Guattari write, “We know nothing about what a body can do until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are” (2004, 284). For them, affects mark a body’s capacity to act. Crucially, this body is not necessarily a human body. They write, “In the same way we avoided defining a body by its organs and functions, we will avoid defining it by Species or Genus characteristics. Instead we will count its affects” (283). If the body in performance starts to be thought of as a constellation of affects, the ramifications are such that all bodies in the theatre – human and non-human, such as temperature, light, sound – come to impact upon the production and circulation of experience. For studies of reception in theatre and performance scholarship, this facilitates a democratisation between not only the audience and actors, but scenic elements as well. A shaft of light can affect the atmosphere of a performance as much or as little as an actor’s movement or speech. This attention to the impact of subtle scenic dynamics can alter a director’s approach to performance. Kosky’s approach to performance was altered after viewing *The Dybbuk* scene that night. His dramaturgical ‘language’, nestled between gesture and thought began to develop towards a theatre of potent, infrapersonal affects.

Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualisation of affect is one branch of affect theory that has come to play out in the discourse by theatre scholars, most notably by Cull. However, numerous conceptualisations of affect across the disciplines have impacted upon theatre scholarship, where there are multiple uses of the term. A preliminary survey of affect theory below reveals the relevance of infrapersonal configurations to the analysis of *The Dybbuk* scene that this chapter takes as its focus. Performances that operate outside of a representational apparatus, as in post-tragedy, are rich sites for infrapersonal affective analysis because they performatively enact processes of desubjectification, “traversing human beings and sweeping them away”. This ungluing of performer and audience subjectivity opens up an ecological space, or immanent plane, for theatrical critique in excess of the symbolic.

Theories of Affect

Patricia Clough has named the recent scholarly shift towards affect theory ‘the affective turn’ (2007). This ‘turn’ has borne witness to a dizzying amount of contributions across the Humanities and Sciences on theories of affect. ‘The Affect Theory Conference: Worldings, Tensions, Futures’ at Millersville University, Pennsylvania in October, 2015, for example,

included two hundred and twenty-four paper presentations speaking to themes of affect, demonstrating its continued relevance and theoretical currency. Sociology, anthropology, cognitive science, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, psychology and the arts are among the disciplines that have all contributed to this sustained interest in affect. I will now outline select contributions to affect theory before examining how affect has been taken up in theatre and performance studies.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Freud and Breuer's psychoanalytic approach was the most dominant and enduring interpretation of affect. Their work on affect in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) was later taken up and extended by Freud in his solo writings, particularly *Group Psychology* (1922) where he considered affect as that which inhibits a subject's intellectual capacity. He writes, "an intensification of affect creates unfavourable conditions for sound intellectual work" (23). In another instance he suggests that, "liability to affect becomes extraordinarily intensified, while...intellectual ability is markedly reduced" (26). These aspects of Freud's writing reveals that even in the psychoanalytic tradition, affect has always been in excess of sense-making, functioning as an eruption of sensation in excess of subject or object. For Freud, however, this was a dangerous proposition, making the (most often female) subject hysterical.

Freud and Breuer's clinical observations posited affect as an unhealthy, negative, and excessive excitation that needed to be expelled from a patient. André Green points out, "the psychoanalytic conception of the affect is different from any other approach to the phenomena theorised under this term, whether neurobiological, psychological, sociological or philosophical" (1999, 8). For Freud and Breuer, affects would manifest as hysterical symptoms through the repression of trauma.⁶⁵ A 'normal' person would 'abreact' affect by expressing it through words. In psychoanalysis this is commonly referred to as a 'talking cure'. Through verbalising or describing the affect, or by locating and describing the trauma that brought rise to the affect, "[i]n normal people the disturbance is gradually levelled out" (Freud and Breuer, 1895: 202-

⁶⁵ For an alternative approach to a discussion of affect and trauma that takes into consideration intrapersonal perspectives see Atkinson and Richardson, 2013. See in particular Chapter Nine, Jonathan L. Knapp, "Where the Buffalo No Longer Roam: Affect and Allegory in *The Last Hunt* and *The Last Buffalo Hunt*", 213-227.

203). In ‘abnormal’ people, however, ‘unabreacted’ affects would manifest as the long-term negative effects of repressed trauma.⁶⁶

An alternative to Freud and Breuer’s pathologisation of affect is psychologist Silvan Tomkins’ *Affect Imagery Consciousness*; a project that spanned from 1962 to Tomkins’ death in 1991. Eve Kosofsky and Adam Frank compiled Tomkins work on affect in the book *Shame and Its Sisters* published in 1995. Frank notes, “Tomkins’ affect theory... offers greater descriptive and theoretical scope and variety... than the classical psychoanalytic assumptions about repression” (2006, 12). Tomkins overthrew Freud and Breuer’s notion of affect as repressed trauma, in favour of eight (sometimes nine) clusters of affect that could be directly identified on a human face.⁶⁷ For example, he examined how shame can inflame us through blushing, or our eyebrows rise when we are surprised. He also considered affect’s contagiousness; how, in Anna Gibbs’s words, “affect leaps from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting rage, exciting fear” (2001). Rather than affect being a solely negative phenomenon, Tomkins considered affect as positive as well, whereas Freud’s, “model of affect is more often invoked for experiences of displeasure, pain and anxiety, than for states of pleasure” (Green, 1999: 23).

In cultural, feminist, queer and race studies, theories of affect have placed important emphasis on the felt, lived experience of women, queers, immigrants, and people of colour (Ngai, 2005; Ahmed, 2004, 2010; Berlant, 2008, 2011; Cvetovich, 1992, 2003, 2012; Munoz, 1999, 2006, 2009). These contributions have opened up critical analysis to examine the ways in which the political acts upon and against othered bodies. José Esteban Muñoz, for example, has examined Latina affect, depression and performativity to posit what he calls “brown feelings” (2006, 676) or racialised affects. Sara Ahmed also considers affect as culturally inscribed and

⁶⁶ Engaging with Freud’s notion of affect, Teresa Brennan situates herself at the nexus point between psychoanalysis, psychology, neuroscience and sociology. Her book, *The Transmission of Affect* (2004) opens with the provocative question: “Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and “felt the atmosphere?”” (1). Expanding upon this opening sentence, in the book she writes that “[i]t is primarily modern and Western approaches to mental illness that assume that the individual is an energetically self-contained or bound entity, whose affects are his or hers alone” (24). Brennan’s book turns in part to Freud and takes up his communication and drives model of affect, firstly in the clinic (Chapter Two), and then in social groups (Chapter Three). She shows that Freud foregrounded the function of affect as entangled with libidinal drives (34). In light of Freud’s contributions, Brennan, too, ultimately foregrounds affect’s transmission as a transmission that occurs between human subjects, even if she does argue in part for their unboundedness.

⁶⁷ These clusters are interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startle, distress-anguish, anger-rage, fear-terror, shame-humiliation and disgust-dis smell.

constructed, using affect and emotion interchangeably to explore how they “work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies” (2004, 1) and how the intersection of affect and politics can alienate marginal subjects. She points out the political necessity for “emotions not to be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices” (9). She also examines emotional currencies in a late-Capitalist system where emotions function transactionally in what she calls “affective economies” (2004).

While this is far from an exhaustive survey of theories of affect, this preliminary outline makes explicit the difference between psychoanalytic, psychological and cultural studies’ conceptualisations of affect, in comparison to the infrapersonal affects I engage in this chapter.⁶⁸ It also reveals the frequently blurred lines between feeling, affect, and emotion. Yet, as witnessed through the affective dimension of *The Dybbuk* scene, it is important to note that affect is often not regarded as emotion or a personal trait. As Eric Shouse explains, “Although feeling and affect are routinely used interchangeably, it is important not to confuse affect with feelings and emotions” (2005, 2). Crucially, infrapersonal affect is not feeling or emotion. Emotion is affect caught in, and sifted through tropes of the social, the personal, and language. In Shouse’s words, “Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *infrapersonal*” (2). Likewise, although they emphasise the felt, bodily dimension of affect, Allain and Harvie note, “Feelings are recognitions of affects. And emotions are how we understand and interpret affects through social engagement and personal memory, for example, as fear, pity or desire” (2014, 149). Erin Manning similarly differentiates between affect and emotion writing that, “Emotion is affect plus an awareness of that affect” (2007, xxi). Likewise, Massumi writes, “emotion and affect – if affect is intensity – follow different logics and pertain to different orders” (2002, 27). In other words, when affects pass through a veil of indecipherability, they become felt as feeling. Beyond feltness, when affect is labelled, named, or acknowledged, it becomes emotion.

Criticisms of Affect

⁶⁸ While I appreciate that queer and feminist insights in particular would provide fertile ground for an engagement with Kosky’s affective aesthetics and their cultural and social specificity, infrapersonal affect opens up a critical space for those forces at work in Kosky’s productions that spill outside of a representational milieu. This leaky quality of infrapersonal affect resonates strongly with *The Dybbuk* scene because of the alternate affective current it produced in excess of representation through an eruption of the Real.

In comparison to these theorists, however, Imogen Tyler contests the disaggregation of affect from feeling and emotion.⁶⁹ She writes,

It is important to refuse the absolute distinction between affects, feelings, and emotions not only because the purification of affect abjects an entire history of counter-hegemonic scholarship but because affect is by definition unanalyzable and thus critically and politically useless. (2008, 88)

Tyler proposes that the turn towards affect has come at the cost of a turn away from ideological critique, leaving feminist media studies “methodologically fatigued” (85). She suggests that the strand of affect theory of which Massumi is the figurehead is “distinctly “post-political”” (87). She reads Massumi’s notion of affect as “a new inventive joyful approach to the study of media” aiming to liberate itself from the weight of representational paradigms such as feminism and postcolonialism (88). She suggests that Massumi’s work aligns with a post-feminist attitude in media studies, which overlooks the damaging effects of sexism. Tyler reads Massumi’s model of affect as “radically in excess of sociality”. She suggests that Massumi is on a quest “for a concept (of affect) which is purified of power and resistance” (88).

Tyler is one of several voices that contest in particular Massumi’s approach to affect. Most of his critics take issue with the apparent asocial and apolitical aspect of his work on the topic.⁷⁰ Indeed, while Massumi has become somewhat of a ‘pioneer’ of affect theory since the publication of his book *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), his concept of affect has not been met without criticism. In particular, theorists take issue with his notion that affect is autonomous. It is often this that least them to think it is subsequently asocial and apolitical. In *Parables for the Virtual* Massumi writes that affect appears, seemingly autonomously, in a half-second in which it takes situations to become consciously registered and perhaps decisions made. Yet this half-second “is missed not because it is empty, but because it is overfull, in excess of the actually-

⁶⁹ In fact, as one can see from the quotes from Shouse, Allain and Harvie, Manning and Massumi, none of these theorists quite think in terms of the simple disaggregation of affect, feeling and emotion that is sometimes proposed by their critics. The situation is more nuanced.

⁷⁰ Even the titles of many of his books—*First and Last Emperors* (1992), *Politics of Affect* (2015a), *The Power at the End of the Economy* (2015b), *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (2015c) — not to mention many explicit discussions of politics throughout his work – make the claims concerning the asocial and apolitical a little strange.

performed action and its ascribed meaning” (29). In short, affect is not divorced from actions and their meaning. They operate in relation to them, swelling with an excess of potential meanings that have not yet been made.

In Clare Hemmings’ critique of Massumi, she suggests that there are two ‘camps’ of affect theory that dominate cultural studies scholarship (2005). These camps are divided by those that “prefer either Tomkins’ pragmatism” or what she describes as Deleuze’s “imaginative flights” (553). Hemmings provides a critique of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* (2003), as representative of the first camp, whereas Massumi and his work on affect in *Parables of the Virtual* (2002) represents the second camp. Hemmings’ key claim is that both Sedgwick and Massumi overlook the ways in which affect is “a central mechanism of social production” (550-551). She then argues that affect is valuable “precisely to the extent that it is not autonomous” (565). In her critique, Hemmings argues that Massumi’s ‘autonomous affect’ as the harbinger of a “contemporary fascination with affect as outside social meaning” (565).

Sara Ahmed takes up a similar view. Specifically, she argues for the interconnectivity of affect and emotion, rather than separating them from each other. In her book, *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) she writes:

My argument that affect is a form of stickiness contrasts with Brian Massumi’s work, which suggests that affects are autonomous and distinct from emotions... I think that the distinction between affect/emotion can under-describe the work of emotions, which *involve* forms of intensity, bodily orientation, and direction that are not simply about “subjective content” or qualification of intensity... While you can separate an affective response from an emotion that is attributed as such (the bodily sensations from the feeling of being afraid), this does not mean that in practice, or in everyday life, they are separate. In fact, they are contiguous; they slide into each other; they stick, and cohere, even when they are separated.

In fact, there are ways in which Ahmed and Massumi’s thinking of affect, though different, shares various relations between affect and emotion, if with different emphases. Ahmed argues that affect and emotion are contiguous and are always inscribed in the other. Massumi posits affect in the overflow, and in the cracks of lived experience. This is not to suggest, however, that affect for

Massumi cannot seep into the expression of emotion, or play a part in the way emotion may come to be felt. He writes:

So depending on the circumstances, [affect] goes up and down gently like a tide, or maybe storms and crests like a wave, or at times simply bottoms out. It's because this is all attached to the movements of the body that it can't be reduced to emotion. It's not just subjective, which is not to say that there's nothing subjective about it... Emotion is the way the depth of that ongoing experience registers personally at a given moment. (2015, 4).

On the other hand, Ahmed writes:

The “fear affect” can be separated from the self-conscious recognition of being afraid... However, this does not mean the “fear affect” is autonomous. Before we are affected, before something happens that creates an impression on the skin, things are already in place that incline us to be affected in some ways more than others. (230).

Ahmed's reading of affect is not perhaps that useful to an analysis of Kosky's theatre. The “things that are already in place” become rearranged, scrambled, even exploded through Kosky's use of asignificatory excess onstage.

What is also significant in Hemmings, Ahmed, and Tyler's criticism of Massumian affect is that they overlook or misread its political dimension. In *Parables for the Virtual* for example, Massumi writes, that our late-capitalist “condition is characterized by a surfeit” of affect (2002, 27). He explains:

...affect is itself a real condition, an intrinsic variable of the late capitalist system, as infrastructural as a factory. Actually, it is beyond infrastructural, it is everywhere, in effect. Its ability to come second-hand, to switch domains and produce effects across them all, gives it a meta-factorial ubiquity. It is beyond

infrastructural. It is transversal. This fact about affect – this matter-of-factness of affect – needs to be taken seriously into account in cultural and political theory. (2002, 45).

Since the publication of *Parables for the Virtual*, Massumi has produced a number of other books that continue to deal with the affective dimensions of politics and the social, of which intrapersonal dimensions are crucially and intrinsically also part (2011, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). In *Politics of Affect*, for example, Massumi writes that one of the “oft-repeated misconceptions about affect and its political implications” is that “affect is asocial” (2015a, 204). Rather, he argues that affect “is pure sociality, in the sense of the social in the openness of its incipency, ready to become all manner of social forms and contents” (2015a, 205). He continues: “Far from being asocial, affect is the ongoing force of the social taking evolving form. Affect comes to determinate expression through actually occurring encounters” (2015a, 205).

If we return to *Parables for the Virtual* – the very text that Hemmings, Ahmed, and Tyler claim does not account for politics and the social – we find the opposite. Ineed, we find that politics and the social are endemic to Massumi’s concept of affect.

Affect is situational: event- fully ingressive to context. Serially so: affect is *trans-situational*. As processional as it is precessional, affect inhabits the passage. It is pre- and postcontextual, pre- and postpersonal, an excess of continuity invested only in the ongoing: its own. Self-continuity across the gaps. Impersonal affect is the connecting thread of experience. It is the invisible glue that holds the world together. (2002, 217)

Far from being “radically in excess of sociality” as Tyler, Hemmings, and Ahmed attest, Massumi’s concept of affect is the connective tissue of the world; a world that is lived and experienced. What affect highlights, then, is the passage from the pre- to the post-personal; from the pre- to the post-contextual. It illuminates the edges of experience that are never concretely in the middle, but always edging into future-pasts and past-futures *in the present*. This excess of experience and time is political precisely because it can happen insidiously, imperceptibly: in the cracks.

While Hemmings makes an important claim that “some bodies are captured and held by affect’s structured position” (562) for which she gives examples of the black body in public space, this holding-in-place of the body is not what occurs on Kosky’s stage. Affect is not a structuring device in Kosky’s theatre, but a force driven by and towards bodies at the edge of their signifying ‘selves’. Two examples of this have already been observed in chapter one, where Kosky became frustrated with Viennese critics reading his work as ‘multi-culti’ because black actors were cast in his productions, and a variety of languages were spoken onstage. Likewise, Kosky has stated that his casting of aboriginal Australian actor Deborah Mailman as Cordelia in his *King Lear* was not racially motivated. A discussion of affect in relation to Kosky’s work in this thesis, is, of course, inherently social. In this thesis I think through affects *infrapersonally* to show that they *participate* in the circulation of experience in Kosky’s theatre as social phenomena, but also as intensities that push the social to the limit at which it can be (re)thought.

Kosky’s use of nonrepresentational performance modes operates in excess of hegemonic social signifiers. Massumi’s approach to affect – contrary to many of his critics – illuminates aspects of experience that are at once social and in excess of the social as often conceived; encounters that operate at the threshold of thought. This relates to the imaginative limits of Kosky’s dramaturgies because he draws representation and nonrepresentation together. We see situations on Kosky’s stage that signify people, places, and things in the world: and yet the boundaries of these people, places, and things are pushed to the limits of what they signify, or they become something else entirely.

Affects are infrapersonal. This enables an analysis of what operates beneath the surface of theatrical appearances. In turn, our attention can be drawn to aspects of performance that may be overlooked by other critical modes. Kosky’s post-tragedies facilitate modes of attention that operate at the edges of what can be signified. The infrapersonal affects of Kosky’s post-tragedies become political because these modes of attention are taken outside of the theatre and into the world. Kosky primes his audience to attend to the insidious, affective undercurrent of neoliberal politics. By engaging dramaturgies that foreground affect’s infrapersonal dimension, post-tragic spectatorship becomes a critical practice of attending to and reflecting upon what happens in the imperceptible cracks of experience.

While Ahmed is concerned with affects that ‘stick’, I am concerned with affects that leak and spill in Kosky’s post-tragedies. While Ahmed suggests that “things are already in place that

incline us to be affected”, in Kosky’s post-tragedies, this ‘holding in place’ of the subject is exploded, and affects are then leaky, messy, and unbound. A significant portion of theatre and performance studies scholars do, however, situate affect solely in the biological body of the spectator, and conflate it with feeling and/or emotion, rather than an environmental, infrapersonal force. I will now consider how affect has been theorised in theatre and performance studies, before elaborating on infrapersonal approaches in the work of Deleuze and Guattari and others.

Along similar lines to what Christine Stoddard writes, I contend that, “Various defined as felt atmosphere, presocial force, emotional quality or intensity, affect signals the aspects of experience that often escape conventional visual representational codes but nonetheless form an integral part of their effects” (2009). These configurations of affect in performance analysis stand out in contrast to the more personal, subjective situatedness of affect in the work of other performance theorists, whose work I touch upon now.

Affect and Theatre and Performance Studies

Shannon Jackson asks, “What are the chestnuts of theatre studies if not mediations on the management of affect?” (2012, 14). Theatre is by definition a space that architects emotion, feeling and affect. Jackson observes that theatre practitioners “around the globe and throughout history have considered themselves in the business of organizing emotion to produce immaterial experience” (14). These immaterial experiences are what we feel in the theatre but have no concrete evidence of: in other words, affects. Jackson continues,

The “affective” coordination that is the history of theatre propelled a fine-tuned vocabulary for stylised feeling. We can jostle between Konstantin Stanislavsky’s reflections on “emotion memory” and the externalized emotions of Brechtian *gestus*. We can think of the state of encounter created amid the *bhava* and *rasa* of Sanskrit theatre or recall the endless differentiations that Western theatre history plots among Elizabethan acting, romantic acting, melodramatic acting, and naturalistic acting. We can remember how many auteur directors and choreographers — from Hijikata to Grotowski to Bausch — place affect and encounter at the very center of their aesthetic inquiries. All we do in our studios, on

our stages, at our conferences, and in our workshops is talk about innovation in affective making, citing a long history of how practitioners and citizens have dealt with its immaterial effects. (15)

Here Jackson shows that what lies at the heart of all theatrical practice is affect. While this is intuitive for theatre practitioners in theory, Cull shows that an explicit examination of affect has been ‘neglected’ in performance studies. Deleuzian conceptualisations have been especially neglected until recently (Cull, 2009: 14). Barbara Kennedy points to this, too, when she writes,

All that is fresh, passionate, scintillating and inspirational about the pleasures of performance has been lost in a theoretical diatribe from semiotics, structuralism, active audience theory, reception theories, postmodernism, psychoanalysis and social constructivist theories, all of which prioritise ideological and political foci to the detriment of affectivity and art. Where was the body and feeling in such debates? Why did none of this theory explain the vital, visceral and electric pulsations of my ‘autonomic’ response to the arts? (2009, 183-84).

For Kennedy, thinking in terms of affective engagements takes into account more spirited spectatorial encounters that bring the body and feeling into an overdue conversation; a conversation that has been previously dominated by semiotics, psychoanalysis, reception theory and social constructivism. Since Cull and Kennedy’s writings in 2009, however, performance studies has witnessed some significant contributions at the intersection of affect theory and theatre analysis worthy of mention here (Hurley, 2010; Welton, 2011; Shaugnessy, 2012, 2013; Allain and Harvie, 2014).

Paul Allain and Jen Harvie point out that affect has “turned attention to and validated audiences responses which are apparently irrational or initially unexplainable, giving authority to such claims as ‘I liked it’ or, ‘It moved me’” (2014, 149). They define affect as “sensory, bodily responses to stimuli which are manifested in such things as goose bumps, blushing and a racing heart. They happen in our bodies but are usually beyond our conscious control” (2014, 149). They continue, “In the context of theatre and performance, a concern with affect raises the importance of the body in meaning-making for both the performer and the audience” (149). The body that

Allain and Harvie situate at the centre of their discussion is a biological spectator body that functions as a container of experience.

In a reading of Erin Hurley's concept of affect in *Theatre and Feeling* (2010), which she develops in contrast to emotion and mood, Ric Knowles writes that, "*Affect* is the thrill that rushes through the body..." (2014, 84). In Hurley's own words, when watching a Cirque de Soleil performance, and a tightrope walker almost slips, she writes, "our hearts race, our pupils dilate and goose pimples rise" (12). For Hurley, this is an instance of an autonomic, affective response in the theatre. Again, affect is something that hits a human spectator in the encounter of viewing performance. These affects are felt palpably through the body. In *The Dybbuk* scene, Kosky did not locate how his body felt as a spectator. He observed that what he saw was beautiful, and gave clues as to what coagulation of scenic dynamics led to the beauty of the scene: the freezing cold, the sweat, the steam.⁷¹

In Martin Welton's book, *Feeling Theatre*, he follows Teresa Brennan's lead using the term feeling "in terms of both affect and perception" (2011, 9). However, he does not engage with theories of affect outside of Brennan's research at any great length. Although Welton posits theatre spectatorship as a "dynamic process" (10) his turn to consider theatre in ecological terms continues to posit the human at the centre. He takes up a phenomenological reading, where he writes, "I am always at the centre of my experience of the theatre, or indeed, of any environment" (11). Such an approach also poses a challenge for a discussion of *The Dybbuk* scene where there was an unravelling of the 'I': the audience was "clothed in each other's horror". This unboundedness of the spectator was exacerbated through the actors' bodies moving through a process of becoming-animal. The performance and audience as dynamic process unhinged the 'I' from the centre of the theatre environment into a circulation of affects.

⁷¹ There is another branch of scholars that straddle performance studies and affect theory through the prism of cognitive science. Peter Meineck, for example, uses mirror neuron theory and cognitive studies of emotion to examine the role of the tragic mask and audience affects (2011). Nicola Shaughnessy's edited collection *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science* draws together contributions from a range of theorists operating from a similar premise, as do Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth Hart in *Performance and Cognition* (2006). Much of this work is propelled by a need to validate Theatre and Performance Studies research through a conversation with 'hard' science, and the human-centeredness of these analyses find their limits for a discussion of Kosky's work. In particular, in *The Dybbuk* scene, its intense, affective tone was birthed from a range of dynamics alongside the presence of the human body: audience, performers, temperature, whispers, steam.

Situating the experience of affect solely in the biological body of the spectator is not what is afforded through *The Dybbuk* scene, or any of Kosky's post-tragedies, as later chapters will show. Those feelings in the body are after-effects of the affects that transpire in the immediacy of the encounter. If feelings are so leaky that they are not felt in the body, how can we attest to their existence at all? This conundrum leads me to consider: What about those affects that are in excess of what can be sensed in the body? What about those imperceptible, undulating, inexplicable affects that impact upon experience and yet are irreducible to it?

Jackson, Allain and Harvie, Hurley, and Welton have made crucial steps towards integrating and validating discussions of feeling and affect into theatre and performance analysis. However, all of these analyses invariably circulate back to a feeling, human subject. I am concerned with those instances in Kosky's work where the self becomes radically unraveled, as occurred in *The Dybbuk* scene.

Intrapersonal Affect

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Cull provides an alternative way of thinking about affect in theatre performance that places emphasis on its intrapersonal force. She considers affect as that which precedes the social and the political, even though they impact upon the way these aspects come into existence. To this end she writes,

...we can say that the work of the performer is not to represent emotion or to represent other bodies of the world, but to devise a procedure to extract the affects of bodies, to somehow reconstruct in performance the power of another body to pierce us like an arrow, force us to think, and enable us to act in new ways. (2012, 193)

Cull's observation here is significant to this chapter's discussion of *The Dybbuk* for two reasons. For one, the scene did not appeal to Kosky emotionally/subjectively. The actor's steaming bodies had no place within the narrative of the play, but contributed affectively to the performance. Second, the fact that the steam was not produced by theatrical artifice but was the actual result of the actors' bodies sweating in a freezing cold room, meant that the representation of character was superseded by the Real. This eruption of the Real splintered signification, allowing for the

proliferation of affects in excess of what the scene meant or represented. This proposition is exacerbated by the fact that majority of *The Dybbuk* was performed in Yiddish, and most audiences did not understand the language. Engaging with contributions that emphasise affect as that which is infrapersonal in the tradition of Deleuze and Guattari help to illuminate those forces preceding the coherent organisation of language, meaning, logic, representation, and personal experience in the theatre as witnessed in the scene.

Those in the Spinozean tradition such as Deleuze, Guattari and Massumi posit affect as an asubjective force in excess of a human individual, where affects and bodies co-concoct a passage where things can happen, moving “from one experiential state of the body to another” (Massumi, 2004: xvi).⁷² For Deleuze and Guattari, “affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel” (2004, 265). Such a notion of affect is pertinent to a discussion of the scene from Kosky’s *The Dybbuk* because the steam coming off the actors dissolved their bodies as selves. The steam and the actor’s corporeal dissolve drew the audience into a charged affective transaction which Kosky described as “one of the most beautiful things [he] had ever seen”. Affect can be seen to have functioned not as a singular audience member being affected, but as a subterranean, molecular shift in the theatrical chemistry drawing performance and audience into relation where the boundaries of the self, quite literally, evaporated.

Infrapersonal affects in this sense are like little machines of feeling: generating, circulating, and redirecting forces. They are the tones created by bodies – human and non-human – moving through space and time as they architect atmospheres. We are not aware of them, yet. Affective tones between bodies can culminate in the creation of events; or lull, fold and remain tucked under conscious perception. In their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth explain,

Affect is in many ways synonymous with force or forces of encounter. The term ‘force’, however, can be a bit of a misnomer, since affect need not be especially forceful (although sometimes, as in psychoanalytic study of trauma, it is). In fact,

⁷² Spinoza writes, “By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections. Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an action; otherwise, a passion.” (1996, 70).

it is quite likely that affect more often transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the miniscule or molecular events of the unnoticed. The ordinary and its extra—” (2010, 2).

As Seigworth and Gregg contend, some affects do not move beyond their incipient stage of imperceptibility, and in chapter six this is considered in terms of what Sianne Ngai calls ‘ugly feelings’ (2005). Drawing attention to that which cannot be immediately perceived in the theatre requires tactics of nuance and subtlety.

In his description of *The Dybbuk* scene, Kosky does not articulate exactly how what he sees is beautiful, and this is precisely why Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of affect is relevant to a discussion of it. Affect, as that which is differentiated from emotion, can be thought of as the way a particular neighbourhood feels; the way an environment is coloured depending on an indecipherable coagulation of smell, sound, light; the way an office space intensifies and lulls depending on deadlines, air conditioning, fluorescent lighting, the day of the week. Affect is the experiential stitching that lines bodies – human and non-human alike – whether woven tightly or loosely. It threads through each moment. It is sometimes like cotton, sometimes like silk, at other times like coarse hessian. Affect is a stitch in the theatre’s fabric, without being necessarily visible to the eye, or localizable on a plane of symbolic discourse. The theatre is a lustrous fabric, saturated with affects.

Attending to the role of affect in Kosky’s *The Dybbuk* helps to illuminate aspects of the performance that concern “a more fundamental movement before representation” (Cull, 2012: 7). This fundamental movement supports an affective account of theatrical experience, as John McCallum describes, that “doesn’t happen on a stage, and [...] doesn’t happen in our heads” but that “happens in the whole room” (2010). This is because infrapersonal affect shifts the perspective from the self-contained spectatorial subject to what Erin Manning calls “a more leaky sense of self” (2013, 1-12). Through the paradigms of affect and relation, Manning proposes an alternative way of thinking about the body and its skin: not as a border or a boundary but “a porous topological surfacing of myriad potential...” (1). The implication of this for a discussion of Kosky’s work is that it gives a way to think about the body in performance as a shuttling of intensities, rather than the actor as a container of experience that produces feelings that are then (re)contained within the viewing subject.

Toward a More Leaky Sense of Self

In her book *Always More Than One* Erin Manning takes Esther Bick's psychoanalytic theory as a point of departure to argue for a more fluid configuration of the human subject. Manning's uses Daniel Stern's notion of 'vitality affects' allows her to elaborate upon the role of affect in establishing a relational milieu between bodies. These bodies are "not a self but the dynamic form of a worlding that refuses categorization" (12). For Manning, Stern's concept of affect "undoes the notion of self as containment" (5), and with regard to *The Dybbuk* scene, Deleuze and Guattari's work on affect and becoming operate similarly. For Manning, and for Stern, affect is "the preacceleration of experience as it acts on the becoming-body". In other words, "Affect moves, constituting the event that, in many cases, becomes-body" (5). Significantly, Manning adds, "[w]e are never without the presence of vitality affects" (6). The omnipresence of affects speaks to its existence in excess of a human subject, even though it can move through, touch and create imprints upon subjective experience.

From this, in order to think about the body of the human subject in more complex terms beyond psychoanalysis' emphasis on "the skin's capacity to serve as a container for experience" (Manning, 1), affect becomes a key concept. Affect allows for Manning to shift the emphasis from the psychoanalytic emphasis on "self-self interactions" (2), to that of relation, which "folds experience into it such that what emerges is always more than the sum of its parts" (2). In thinking this alongside *The Dybbuk* scene, we can see that the leaky, affected-and-affecting performer and spectator bodies are absorbed into the pressures and pleasures of a performance beyond the limits of the skin. Intrapersonal affect in this sense is that which slices across personal experience; too immediate to be caught and sifted through the tropes of language, representation, and the social.⁷³ Here I am concerned with what theatrical tactics Kosky engaged in *The Dybbuk* in order to produce such a slippery spectatorial subject.

⁷³ This is not meant to imply that affect is anterior to the experience of language, representation, and the social. As Brian Massumi writes in *Politics of Affect* (2015), it is a misconception that "[t]he 'autonomy of affect' refers to the separation of the individual from the social. The autonomy of affect refers to the process by which the excess of potential that presses for expression is remaindered after ever determinate taking-form, returning to in-form a next expression. The autonomy is of this process. The autonomy of affect is of the turnover of potential on itself, towards the proliferation of ongoing variations on its expression of socially formative force" (207).

Intrapersonal affect provides performance scholars such as Manning with tools to engage with the inexplicable effects of a performance without the “over-emphasis on interpretation and construction of meaning” that Cull warns against. These concepts, as has been noted, flowered in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari who came out of the Spinozean premise of affect being the body’s capacity to affect and be affected. They write, “A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by organs it possesses or the functions it fills... Nothing but affects and local movements, differential speeds” (2004, 287). Many thinkers have taken up these theories of affect and the body, bringing nuanced perspectives to engagements with aesthetics, culture and politics, of which the work of Cull and Manning are exemplary.

So far this chapter has suggested that the scene that Kosky wrote about in his book *On Ecstasy* from his 1991 production of *The Dybbuk* has been formative in Kosky’s theatrical oeuvre. It has also argued that affect in the tradition of Deleuze and Guattari is most applicable to the scene, and, more broadly, theatre performances that engage nonrepresentational performance modes. This is because affect illuminates the forces at work in performance in excess of meaning and intellectual coherence. This chapter has also shown that the particular impact of *The Dybbuk* scene upon spectators occurred through the uncanny eruption of a non-human phenomenon (steam), and that the steam facilitated a passage that transformed the actors’ bodies to appear as “[s]laughtered kosher meat steaming from glittering butchers hooks”. The chapter will now consider how Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal helps to further illuminate the relationship between affect and the (human and non-human) bodies in the scene. In particular, it will consider what dramaturgical procedures Kosky devised to create the conditions for a becoming-animal to occur.

Becoming-Animal

Becoming-animal is a concept that Deleuze and Guattari explore in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They stress that becoming-animal is not the mimetic impersonation of an animal, but rather a process of becoming that occurs through “a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity” (2004, 264). This becoming multiple enabled through the process of becoming-animal has a political dimension. They write,

There is an entire politics of becoming-animal... which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the State. Instead they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognised institutions, groups all the more secret for being extrinsic, in other words, anomic. (2004, 272)

The “anomic” marginal politics opened up through becoming-animal outside of Oedipal family configurations, such as religion and the State, bring us back to consider the particular performance conditions of *The Dybbuk* and how they may have facilitated a becoming-animal to erupt.

Kosky’s *The Dybbuk* operated at the fringe of mainstage theatre performance. It was site-specific, and was performed in a cold warehouse. It was not staged in a traditional theatre venue. Further, the performance explored the Jewish mythology of *The Dybbuk*, alien to many theatregoing Australians used to the Anglo-Celtic stories that dominated, as already explored at length in chapter one. In addition, the bride and the demon were a romantic pairing outside of the Oedipal paradigm. They made up a body that was both male and female, self and other, lover and loved. All of these aspects of the performance point to contextual elements that may have led to a becoming-animal to occur. Already, the human was disrupted through the embodied multiplicity of the demon/bride; and the cultural conditions were such that the Yiddish language and the Jewish mythology already operated “at the fringe of recognised institutions” upon which the politics of becoming-animal are contingent.

Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow provide an account of a theatrical collaboration that took Deleuze and Guattari’s chapter on becoming-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus* as inspiration (2006). Their explorations into ‘performing’ becoming-animal resulted in the following questions:

How does one choreograph what is defined as an essentially autonomous process?
How does one turn an ongoing process, without beginning, middle or end, into a “show”? How does one rehearse what must be ever-new, emergent, and spontaneous? And, perhaps most troublingly of all: is it possible for a performed becoming to become real? Could our journey into becoming finally extend to

include the audience? Would our becoming-theatre be shared with them, or merely shown to them?

What stands out about this scene, and Kosky's description of it, to a concept of becoming-animal is that the bodies of the actors became something other than what they represented. For Kosky, the actors *became* slaughtered kosher meat. To this end, Deleuze and Guattari write, "Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real." They continue, however, that becoming-animal is not "resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification" (2004, 262). The actors became-animal in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari use the term, not by representing an animal but by mobilising affects that dislodged and obscured the sedimentarity of the human subject.

Conclusion

The affected and affecting becoming-body has skin that is "a porous, topological surfacing of myriad potential strata that field the relation between different milieus, each of them a multiplicity of insides and outsides" (Manning, 2013, 1-2). This multiplicitous, affected and affecting body was the 'beautiful thing' to which Kosky refers in *The Dybbuk* scene. The scene literally, and accidentally, acted out the body's potential to be that which extends and is extended by the environment in performance by the actors body's steaming, and becoming-animal. In light of this scene from Kosky's *The Dybbuk*, affect in the theatre can be considered as the atmospheric intensity that results from the interaction between performance forces creating something inexplicable and in excess of its human actants. The role of the director, particularly the post-tragic auteur, is to orchestrate these forces, to devise a procedure (Cull, 2012: 193), and to position bodies to feel through their inherent excess and relationality.

Kosky's procedures were 1) site-specificity, 2) the freezing cold temperature in the performance space, 3) placing extreme physical demands on the actors and 4) the use of Judaic mythology with other intertextual elements. All of these procedures created the conditions for the eruption of potent infrapersonal affects in the theatre towards a becoming-animal. A discussion of 'becoming-animal' in the chapter has highlighted the intersectionality between the human and the non-human bodies in *The Dybbuk* scene. Becoming-animal gives nuance to thinking around

how intrapersonal affect operates in Kosky's post-tragedies, primarily because they extend the limits of what we think a (theatre) body can do and be. These concepts – affect and becoming-animal – ultimately help to (re)define theatre spectatorship as processual, where human and non-human bodies all play a part in a performance's production of affect.

The next chapters will extrapolate upon and add to these queries by examining spectatorial encounters in Kosky's work that spill over the sides of a self-contained human subject. Chapter four rethinks Aristotle's concept of tragic catharsis through the prism of intrapersonal affect to develop a concept of 'post-tragic affect'. Chapter five examines the encounter of being moved to tears by Kosky's post-tragedies as a material actualisation of this intrapersonal excess. Chapter six shifts gears to examine how a spectator can remediate or block affect in actions that are symptomatic of neoliberal political apathy.

This chapter has shown that theatre performance is very strongly situated to deal with affect in its intrapersonal usage, to draw attention to affect and to work with affect, precisely because of the bodies, relations, atmospheres, and intensities that characterise the encounter of viewing performance. *The Dybbuk* scene in particular highlights how affect is not always something an actor does, that then affects her audience. Intrapersonal affects are those surges, hums, or pulses in the theatre activated by various scenic elements coming into relation. They are those encounters that transpire that overwhelm or evade an intellectual critique or interpretation, and yet are central in the ways in which a performance can come to be theorised and understood. A intrapersonal affective analysis of *The Dybbuk* scene has illuminated aspects of Kosky's practice overlooked through an emphasis on what a scene *means*, shifting the emphasis onto what a scene *does*.

4.

From Tragic Effect to Post-Tragic Affect: Rethinking Catharsis in Barrie Kosky's *Le Grand Macabre* and *The Lost Echo*

Catharsis, it would seem, situates the subject at a dangerous border.

- Elin Diamond (1995, 153).

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I engaged with theories of affect and becoming-animal to examine a scene from Barrie Kosky's *The Dybbuk*. The concepts involved illuminated aspects of the scene that operated in excess of representation. This was not to suggest, however, that an affective analysis is exclusively useful for nonrepresentational performance. A central feature of Kosky's post-tragedies, as chapter two has shown, is that they uphold representational tropes such as character and plot *alongside* what Richard Madelaine has called Kosky's "radical surgery of the text" (2002: 16). The affective dimension made active through the relation between representation and non-representation in Kosky's post-tragedies lies at the heart of this chapter's primary line of enquiry. Specifically, it examines the rub between representation and nonrepresentation in two Kosky productions, *Le Grande Macabre* (2003) and *The Lost Echo* (2006). Analyses of select scenes show that the relation between representational and nonrepresentational performance tropes activates what I call post-tragic affect in Kosky's work.

In certain scenes, post-tragic affects culminate towards a type of post-tragic catharsis, dependent upon a regime of representation quivering and coming unstuck. Expanding on the work done in chapter two on post-tragedy and chapter three on infrapersonal affect, this chapter draws these two concepts together. It draws these concepts together – post-tragedy and infrapersonal affect – to examine what I call the post-tragic affects found in Kosky's work. The

chapter explores what post-tragic affects are, how they are produced, and how/if they can be thought about alongside Aristotelian catharsis. I consider the production of post-tragic affect in Kosky's work as mobilized through the bleed between representation and non-representation. Through this bleed, the boundaries between performance and spectator fold. In certain scenes, this folding happens to such an extent that a sort of post-tragic catharsis is experienced, what the latter parts of the chapter call 'emergency'.

In the encounter of emergency in Kosky's theatre, there is an unraveling of the self-contained viewing subject. This process is different from tragic catharsis, which Aristotle defined as "effecting through pity and fear the purification [*katharsis*] of such emotions" (1996, 10). In contrast, the affective dimension of Kosky's post-tragedies enables the subject to come to know herself as *always already* unraveled. In emergency, the post-tragic spectator is positioned to come into contact with, to use Erin Manning's words, a "more leaky sense of self" (2013, 1-12). Manning writes, "There is no self that is not also emergent, preverbal, affectively oriented..." (2013, 5). In emergency, the spectator is primed to come into contact with not only neoliberal affects as described in chapter two, but this inherently emergent, preverbal, affectively oriented-self. The chapter explores in concrete terms what happens on Kosky's stage to propel these encounters, these post-tragic affects.

The chapter begins with a brief survey of the development of Aristotelian catharsis. This survey provides context for rethinking tragic catharsis in post-tragedy. The chapter then considers how specific performance modalities in Kosky's post-tragedies mobilize a type of post-tragic catharsis or emergency in the theatre. My contention is that the bleed between representational and nonrepresentational performance modes on Kosky's stage causes the rapid collapse of boundaries between performance and audience, which can be considered as a type of catharsis in Kosky's work. This is not an overt collapse of boundaries where the actors and audiences physically intermingle with each other. Such intermingling has been productively discussed at length in accounts of participatory performance and socially engaged art (Bourriaud, 2002; Bishop, 2004, 2006; Thompson, 2009; Jackson, 2011; Shaugnessy, 2012; White, 2013). Rather, I am concerned with how Kosky's post-tragedies unlock infrapersonal affects that highlight the inherent relationality between all elements - human and non-human - in the theatre, and what this unlocking facilitates affectively for the spectator.

While this chapter contributes in part to the already extensive literature on tragic catharsis, it primarily uses it as a springboard to consider catharsis' role in post-tragedy. It asks: Can catharsis exist within a post-tragic milieu? If tragic catharsis is the purification of emotions of pity and fear as Aristotle suggests, what is catharsis in post-tragedy, if post-tragedy foregrounds intrapersonal affect over personal emotion? If post-tragic performance remains in conversation with Aristotelian modes of tragedy, such as completeness, magnitude, unity, and determinate structure as shown in chapter two (Aristotle, 1996: 13-15), yet ultimately calls them into question, does post-tragic catharsis operate similarly? In other words, does post-tragic catharsis extend some elements of what Aristotle, however nebulously, defined catharsis to be, while ultimately transforming it?

A discussion of Aristotelian catharsis helps to contextualise these questions, as well as buttress my claim that Kosky's post-tragedies warrant a rethinking of catharsis through the prism of intrapersonal affect. In doing so, the chapter responds to what Hilaire and Craig Kallendorf have proposed, that theories of catharsis "would clearly benefit from a new line of reasoning to supplement the traditional explanations" (2012, 297). This chapter provides a new line of reasoning informed by theories of intrapersonal affect and Kosky's post-tragedies.

Introducing Catharsis: 'Fetishizing the Abyss'

Following Aristotle's introduction of the term, there have been myriad interpretations of what catharsis means. Numerous thinkers have analysed, discounted, reconfigured, and revived catharsis, what Leon Golden refers to as a "famed but vexed concept" (1969, 152). R. Darren Gobert has pointed to catharsis' 'vexedness', writing that it is "the oldest, hoariest, and yet still one of the most fraught concepts in theatre history" (2012, 109). Ray Morrell has called catharsis "a hackneyed subject" (1965, 202). Despite its vexed, hackneyed, and hoary reputation over centuries, however, catharsis continues to appear in discussions of tragedy to this day. Rachel Zerihan writes, "Fetishizing the abyss at the original site of enquiry, countless theorists, academics, cultural critics and philosophers have perpetuated the intensity behind the mystery of an experience that promises the purification/ purgation of negative emotions" (2010, 39).

Myriad philosophers throughout history from Hume (1987) to Hegel (1962), to name only a couple of key names, have contributed to the fetishisation of catharsis.⁷⁴ Despite these contributions, however, the ‘mystery’ of catharsis to which Zerihan refers prevails. Where Aristotle’s explanations of catharsis are ambiguous, other theorists have readily filled the gaps to the point of overflow.

The ambiguity surrounding Aristotle’s notion of catharsis is further problematised by issues of translation, rousing considerable debate on its meaning and function. Gobert writes that what Aristotle meant, “hinges on a word whose interpretation remains unresolved precisely because its correct translation remains unverifiable” (2012, 109). Aristotelian catharsis as either purification or purgation, coupled with the debatable centrality of feelings of fear and pity in the experience of it, are all recurring points of contention. Despite the slipperiness in defining catharsis, however, four main streams of interpretation can be observed in the literature. These are 1) medical, 2) moral, 3) religious, and 4) psychoanalytic interpretations of catharsis.

For Jacob Bernays (2004) and D. D. Raphael (1965), for example, catharsis is a type of medicinal purging of negative feelings contaminating the human body. They interpret Aristotelian catharsis as the purgation of toxic feelings corresponding to the model of Hippocratic medicine, a position supported in part because Aristotle’s father was a medical doctor (Kallendorf and Kallendorf, 2012: 309). In Raphael’s discussion of catharsis he writes, “[t]here is little doubt that Aristotle was speaking in medical terms” (1965, 187). The medical interpretation of catharsis is often supported by integrating aspects of it as it was discussed in Aristotle’s *Politics*.⁷⁵

However, F. L. Lucas disputes medical interpretations of catharsis, arguing provocatively, “the theatre is not a hospital” (1927, 29). Catharsis as the medicinal purging and purification of the spectator, most famously elaborated upon by Bernays, dominated theories of tragedy until ethical and moral notions of the ‘restoration of man’ came to be considered, by those such as Lucas and Hegel. Moral configurations of catharsis see it as a cognitive cleansing

⁷⁴ For a fuller account of philosophical engagements with theories of tragedy, see Young (2013).

⁷⁵ There are fundamental differences between the contexts of catharsis in *Poetics* and *Politics*, which makes the link between them problematic. The former document explores the term in relation to the intellectual enjoyment and emotional pleasure and purification experienced when viewing tragedy, whereas the latter employs more homeopathic terminology when examining catharsis and its relationship to music. Hence, many theorists have turned to the *Politics* in order to support their medical interpretations. See Golden, 1992: 21.

of ‘bad thoughts’ towards a more ethical way of life (Williams, 1966; House, 1956). Humphry House writes, “the ethical side... concerns the *Poetics* most” (108). He also reminds us that beyond Aristotle’s initial definition of catharsis, he also used the term when discussing the purification of Orestes in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* where catharsis relates to “ceremonial purification from a religious impurity” (1956, 104).

So Hegel, along with House, stressed tragic spectatorship’s role in informing and encouraging an ethical existence. This view emphasises tragedy as morally restoring the viewer by encouraging heroic virtue, considering that Aristotle wrote in *Poetics*, “tragedy is an imitation of people better than we are” (1996, 25). This view challenged the general trend towards a medical understanding of catharsis taken up by Bernays et al. In line with the Hegelian interpretation of catharsis as ethical and moral restoration, some interpretations foreground catharsis’ ethical dimension as the spectator of tragedy returning to society a better citizen for having purged themselves of feelings of pity and fear, feelings which Plato, Aristotle’s teacher, condemned “as disabling the moral strength of the audience” (La Course Muntenau, 2011: 70).

From yet a different angle, under the influence of Frederick Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* (1993) many theorists infer that Aristotle’s concept of catharsis as it appears in the *Poetics* has roots in Dionysian ritual (Seaford, 1994; Kuritz, 1988: 19; Kirby, 2004: 179), while others such as T. J. Scheff take on a neo-Freudian view (1979), focusing on the therapeutic function of catharsis through a psychoanalytic framework inspired primarily by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer’s work in *Studies on Hysteria*.⁷⁶ Scheff posits catharsis as “the re-experiencing of past emotional crises in... the safety of the theatre or the therapist’s office” (23). Here, Scheff is drawing on Freud and Breuer’s configuration of catharsis as the abreaction of affect, which for them, as the previous chapter outlined, is always a negative phenomenon (1895, 42).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ultimately, Freud and Breuer jettisoned their theory of catharsis, as T. J. Scheff points out (1979, 46). In his neo-Freudian study, Scheff proposes that Freud and Breuer’s rejection of catharsis in therapy was premature. In his book he develops a new theory of catharsis in light of his work in Reevaluation Counseling (RC) as a way of examining how certain emotional responses expressed through the body are aligned with certain stimuli or experiences. For example: Scheff’s approach situates catharsis as a process variably occurring in the body of a theatre spectator or a patient of counselling or psychoanalysis where the dynamics outside of them stimulates a memory from their past, which then allows them to release the trauma and its associated symptoms.

⁷⁷ Catharsis as the abreaction of negative affect in the psychoanalytic tradition suggests that there is an emptying out of bad feelings through therapeutic process ultimately leading to the subject/patient feeling more pleasant feelings, and potentially not feeling the bad feelings anymore. For example, in their *Studies of Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer write extensively about how the cathartic method emerged out of working with their patient, Anna O. who they refer to as having the ‘hysterical’ symptoms of

An aspect of Aristotle's discussion of catharsis overlooked by these accounts is that in *The History of Animals* and *The Generation of Animals* he defined it in terms of the expulsion of bodily fluids (Lear, 1988: 298; Yates, 1998: 36). In these books, Aristotle refers to catharsis in terms of bodily discharge: specifically, menstrual and birth fluid, semen and urine (Aristotle, 2014a; 2014b). Philosopher Jonathan Lear writes, "the preponderant use which Aristotle makes of the word 'katharsis' is a term for menstrual discharge" (1988, 298). Classicist Velvet Yates adds, "In his biological works, Aristotle uses the word katharsis fifty-one times to refer to menstrual discharge - a word which occurs only twice in the *Poetics* and five times in the *Politics*" (1998, 36). While the connection between catharsis and bodily fluids was preponderant for Aristotle, many scholars such as those I have cited so far omit this aspect from their analyses. As Lear points out, "no one in the extended debate about tragic katharsis has suggested the model of menstruation" (298), and Elizabeth Belfiore suggests that "[t]his idea deserves more serious consideration than Lear gives it" (1992, 292).

Theatre scholars Fensham (2009) and Zerihan (2010) give this idea some serious consideration in their own research. Following a discussion of Aristotelian catharsis in her book *To Watch Theatre* (2009), Fensham writes,

I wonder if one aspect of a reasonable and emotional response to the theatre ought not therefore to include the expulsion of bodily fluids. The Greeks, for instance, considered all emotions to be fluids, whether identified with tears or laughter, and therefore perhaps the phenomenology of a spectator's body might be urinating by wetting itself with laughter; or menstruating by bleeding from the heart; or weeping by pouring it all out. In becoming fluid with emotion, perhaps the spectator can recover from the sealed up, over-coded, body of a multi-mediated

rigid paralysis, accompanied by a loss of sensation in both extremities on the right side of her body... her eye movements were disturbed... She had difficulties over the posture of her head; she had a severe nervous cough. She had an aversion to taking nourishment, and on one occasion she was for several weeks unable to drink in spite of a tormenting thirst. Her powers of speech were reduced, even to the point of her being unable to speak or understand her native language. (Breuer and Freud, 1910: 4-5).

In their sessions with Anna O., in recalling her memories that brought rise to the trauma, her 'hysterical' symptoms began to dissipate. This was then referred to by Freud and Breuer as the cathartic method.

society. Perhaps watching at the theatre provides an occasion to bring forth an otherwise absent, yet fluid, memory of the bodiliness of life. (2009, 177).

Fensham proposes that the actual wetness of the theatrical spectator is an expression of emotion in viewing performance. Considering the viewer's body in these leaky phenomenological terms allows for the self-contained, over-coded body upheld and enforced by contemporary Western society to unravel. Fensham proposes that the theatre becomes a site where the interconnectivity between emotions and bodily fluids come to the fore, and that this awareness can pierce the body's subjective container.

Zerihan also makes a connection between bodily fluids and catharsis (2010). She rethinks catharsis' ethical dimension through feminist performance art, using the work of Kira O'Reilly as a case study. What Zerihan proposes is "a critical process that dislodges an idea of Aristotelian catharsis from realist representations in the theatre" (32). Zerihan examines intimate one-on-one performance encounters that she experienced with O'Reilly, where the recurring act across the works examined – *My Mother* (2003) and *Untitled Action: NRLA, The Arches, Glasgow* (2005) – was that the performer cut herself or asked the viewer to cut her, making her bleed. Zerihan writes that through these acts, O'Reilly invites the spectator to revisit "the healing function of catharsis in the reestablishment of our collective consciousness and awareness of social responsibility; in short, an ethical catharsis" (39).

While Fensham focuses on the excretion of bodily fluids in the spectator and its connection to emotion, and Zerihan explores the ethical dimension of catharsis in O'Reilly's performance art, this chapter approaches the relation between bodily fluids, catharsis, and performance from a different angle. Rather than the spectator's body becoming leaky in phenomenological terms, or the performer's body becoming an ethical site that is cut and bleeds, Kosky's use of *fake* bodily fluids onstage in *The Lost Echo* and *Le Grand Macabre* will be my focus in the following sections. An emphasis on the fluids' fakeness enables the discussion to reveal how representational and nonrepresentational dynamics intersect in Kosky's theatre, and what they produce. This is because bodily fluids are loaded with the referential; however, Kosky uses them in ways that operate affectively, in excess of the symbolic. I begin to propose a new understanding of catharsis through the prism of affect, with an emphasis on Kosky's use of fake bodily fluids and duration in *The Lost Echo*.

***The Lost Echo's* Agitation and Wonder**

Several critics have noted *The Lost Echo's* affective resonance and theatrical success. Michaela Boland described it as “a gargantuan achievement... a bold, visceral work” (2006). Bryce Hallet concurs in his review, writing that it was “astounding” and that the production’s “course language and nudity... [were] only part of its agitation and wonder” (2006). Elizabeth Hale writes that the production “was epic in artistic and theatrical vision, scope and range of reference, and intellectual rigour” (2010, 103).

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the production consisted of stories from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and included an adaptation of Euripides *Bacchae*. It was performed in two acts and four parts and ran for eight hours in total. The production had a cast of thirty-five actors, including performers from the STC Actors’ Company⁷⁸, second year National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) acting students and guest artist Paul Capsis. McCallum, in his Philip Parson’s memorial lecture spoke specifically about *The Lost Echo's* affective resonance, that “[a]t each of the three intervals in *The Lost Echo*, I walked out physically stunned, *dissociated from my sense of myself*” (2010, 11: emphasis added).

I watched the production first hand in 2006. I then rewatched a recording of it several times at the Sydney Theatre Company archives. The process of rewatching was an attempt to pinpoint what it was that had led to a type of cathartic encounter in the performance. I wondered if the encounter was indeed cathartic in Aristotelian terms, or if it was something else. The transition between classically acted monologues and asignificatory excess played a part in this effect, and these transitions in *The Lost Echo* were not dissimilar to the scene described from Kosky’s *King Lear* in chapter two. In *King Lear*, these transitions functioned to foreground nihilistic themes through a critical refeeling of neoliberal affects. The effects of these contrasts, for some critics, were moving and profound.

⁷⁸ The STC actor’s company was a full-time ensemble put together by then Artistic Director Robyn Nevin. The twelve actors comprising the ensemble included John Gaden, Peter Carroll, Pamela Rabe, Deborah Mailman, Colin Moody, Hayley McElhinney, Amber McMahon, Dan Spielman, Eden Falk, Marta Dusseldorp, Luke Mullins and Marco Chiappi. See Waites, 2010.

McCallum and Tom Hillard observe the effects of these transitions as a type of affect-driven catharsis in *The Lost Echo*. They write,

The show combined classically straightforward narration with scenes of wicked, mischievous excess, or of brutal savagery. The visceral shock that this creates in the theatre is not an Aristotelian catharsis of pity and terror but more a Meyerholdian, even Artaudian, catharsis of psychic trauma and bodily emissions, provoking a kind of horrified ecstasy. (McCallum and Hillard, 2010: 132).

Central to this chapter's discussion, McCallum and Hillard situate catharsis as a result of Kosky's transitions between classically acted narration, and scenes of savage and mischievous excess. This catharsis is not Aristotelian, they note; it is a catharsis of "bodily emissions". They also refer to what they consider in terms of a Meyerholdian or Artaudian catharsis as created 'in the theatre', which is a far cry from expunging pity and fear from an individual spectator. Importantly, McCallum and Hillard locate the cathartic dimension of *The Lost Echo* as a result of the *relation* between contrasts. For McCallum and Hillard, this catharsis provokes a horrified ecstasy, a term they take from my earlier research on Kosky.⁷⁹

In *On Ecstasy* Kosky frequently draws on the writings of Artaud when discussing his own work in the theatre.⁸⁰ Prefacing his discussion of *The Dybbuk*, for instance, Kosky provides the following quote from Artaud's book, *The Theater and Its Double*:

⁷⁹ Following this quote, McCallum and Hillard provide the footnote: "This phrase comes from Charlotte Farrell, 'Barrie Kosky's Theatre of Horror and Ecstasy', Honours thesis. University of New South Wales, 2008" (146).

⁸⁰ Helen Slaney also makes a link between Kosky, Artaud and catharsis in her discussion of Kosky's *Oedipus* performed at Sydney Theatre Company in 2000. She describes feelings of being "shattered, overstimulated, burnt out" in experiencing the work (2009, 62). Slaney refers to the performance as a "postmodern nightmare" in which "Kosky provides Artaudian catharsis, superbly timed, in the most unexpected of places" (Ibid). Philip Auslander explains that Artaud's theory of catharsis "stresses the *effect* of theatre on its audience" (1997, 25: emphasis added). He continues, "The actors' catharsis precedes and causes the audience's; the end of Artaud's theatre is the purgative release of repressed materials in the minds of the spectators" (Ibid). In a startling neo-Aristotelian flourish, Auslander concludes his essay, writing that Artaudian catharsis operates "on its audience at the psychic level, and... is ultimately of a health giving nature" (27). Although Slaney describes the experience of catharsis in Kosky's *Oedipus* as Artaudian, I suggest that Kosky's catharsis is not so easily posited in these terms.

While there are similarities between the demands placed on audiences and performers by Artaud and Kosky, as Scheer and Slaney point out, Artaudian catharsis is still an active force that operates on a passive subject. This is reinforced by Gobert when he writes that, "Artaud, Eisenstein, and theories of Aristotelian "purification" all understand the spectator as a passive body to be acted upon by means of spectacle" (2012, 120). So, although there are aspects of Artaud's work, particularly its physical demands that draw likeness with Kosky, their cathartic

[W]hen we speak of the word “life”, it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but to that fragile, fluctuating centre which forms never reach. (Artaud, 1958: 13).

Rather than the affects being purged or purified, they are brought to the surface and left to hover there, trickling outside the moment that enables them. Catharsis in Kosky’s post-tragedies is not the purification or purgation of emotions taken up by the various Aristotelian readings, but the stirring up of an affective encounter that moves the viewer towards a post-tragic ethics by reminding them of a life that is fragile, fluctuating, and formless: exacerbating themes of nihilism towards utopia. Kosky’s discussion of his own theatre practice in relation to the above quote infers that he, like Artaud, is interested in creating performances whose affects supersede “its surface of fact”. This “fragile, fluctuating centre” of life is in excess of fixed forms, articulating a kind of throbbing vibrancy at the heart of theatrical experience. Performance is used as a conduit, for Artaud, and for Kosky, to reach this trembling, elusive centre.

Through the process of rewatching recorded footage of *The Lost Echo* and critically reflecting on my first hand experience of it, two aspects of the production began to stand out for me in relation to the transitions McCallum and Hillard refer to, and their subsequent affective charge. It was that these scenes invariably involved the expulsion of fake bodily fluids onstage. This led me to consider, how could something as loaded with the symbolic as urine, excrement, blood, and semen ultimately lead to a regime of representation folding? What role did the introduction of bodily fluids play in the performance, and was there any significance in the fact that these fluids were fake, not real? What is the relation between these fluids and the catharsis that I felt and that McCallum and Hillard also refer to?

In a special issue on Kosky’s *The Lost Echo* in *Australasian Drama Studies*, Elizabeth Hale writes, “there is glory in this production: in the sublime blend of tragedy and musicality, of beauty and shock, of classical and Australian, of convention and innovation, of comfort and acute discomfort, of the familiar and the strange” (2010, 106). Here, Hale points to the back-and-

dimension is different to post-tragic catharsis’, primarily because of the latter’s privileging of relation. The particularly potent encounters in Kosky’s work are identified through this collapse, which are the opposite of how Aristotelian and Artaudian catharsis have been defined.

forth between performance aspects of *The Lost Echo* which can also be thought of in terms of representation ('convention', 'comfort', 'familiar') and non-representation ('innovation', 'acute discomfort', 'strange'). It is precisely this affective to-and-froing between zones of comfort and discomfort, the familiar and the strange, the representational and the nonrepresentational - with a liberal dashing of fake bodily fluids - that created the conditions for post-tragic affect in the production. I now turn to a scene from Act One Part II of *The Lost Echo* as an example.

Myrrha and the Masturbating Clowns

Myrrha (Hayley McElhinney) enters the stage dressed in a long black silk evening gown. There is a large glass box centre-stage veiled by venetian blinds. Myrrha begins to tell the story of her desperate sexual attraction to her father. She proceeds to tell of her seduction of him where they have sex each night without the lights on, the identity of his lover remaining concealed. She tells of approaching her father's bedroom for the first time. Her hands grip the sides of the chair that she sits on centre-stage. She spreads her legs open provocatively. Kosky plays the piano throughout, performing in a circular pit in the front of the stage, where his music score is dimly lit, making him visible.

Kosky accompanies Myrrha's ensuing story, playing a piano reprise of Cole Porter's 'I've Got You Under My Skin' underneath her monologue.⁸¹ As Myrrha describes having sex with her father to the soundtrack of Porter's "I've Got You Under My Skin", the scene attempts to create the tone of a romantic comedy, and yet the content of the monologue and the particularly stylised way in which she performs it, coats the scene with a sinister affective glaze.

As Myrrha describes climbing into bed with her father, she stands up in a squatting position above the chair, the piano increasing in volume and pace. She lifts her dress and grabs each side of her underwear with her hands and slowly slides off a brightly coloured pair of briefs. She pushes these down her parted legs, easing them slowly down her calves to her ankles.

Kosky plays "I've Got You under My Skin" at an increasingly loud volume and fast pace. When Myrrha tells of her return to her father's bedroom the next night, she removes another

⁸¹ The music had what Michael Chinon calls an 'anempathetic' function describing "a scene with indifferent music [that] has the effect not of freezing the emotion but rather of intensifying it" (1994, 8). A detailed discussion of anempathetic music in Kosky's *Women of Troy* will feature in chapter six of this thesis.

pair of underwear. Myrrha repeats the action, after saying “and the next night”, removing another pair of brightly coloured underwear. The song continues to build. She then removes another pair of underwear, and another, and another and another. With each pair, she says, “and the next night” and the action becomes faster and faster as she becomes more eager to remove them.

The audiences’ laughter falters as Myrrha continues to remove pairs of underwear from beneath her dress. The music ceases abruptly after she slides off her last pair. All the underwear has gathered around her ankles. After a silence, Myrrha begins to speak again, with the underwear still around her ankles and her legs spread apart.

She explains that her father lit a candle in the room in which they were having sex to see what his lover looked like, despite Myrrha’s desperate plea for him not to. Her father discovered her, threatened her with a knife and she fled into the forest. After crying this out she leans forward, releasing a moan like a dying animal.

Myrrha remains slumped as Kosky begins to play Porter’s majestic ‘Everytime We Say Goodbye’ on the piano. She rises from her chair as if pulled by force, her head thrown back, waddling freakishly around the stage, with the pairs of underwear stretched between her ankles, inhibiting her movement. As she waddles away from the spotlight to stage right, the lights become brighter in the glass box, with venetian blinds hiding what is inside then slowly rise.

The glass box – a small room – is full of roughly twenty shirtless men wearing jeans and neck braces. They wear light blue jeans and large phalluses protrude from their groins. They masturbate vigorously while singing ‘I’ve Got You Under My Skin’ in a beautiful, soaring tone. The box is lit by internal fluorescent globes, so as the blinds rise, the stage is flooded by creepy, green light.

The lighting is reminiscent of a public toilet, and the seating is set up like a classroom. The light colours the men’s skin giving them an alien-like glow. Their faces are painted with terrifying clown makeup. As they are illuminated by the fluorescent light, Myrrha continues to waddle about the stage, disheveled.

She then quietly, calmly speaks of the ‘monster’ growing inside her womb. She recounts giving birth to Adonis, her father’s child until the Gods take pity upon her and transform her into a tree.

At the conclusion of her story, a minor chord sounds and the piano launches back into the lively playing of the chorus of 'I've Got You Under My Skin' where the men in the glass box continue to sing and masturbate. Myrrha dances sexily. Her underwear no longer restricts her movement.

The men who had been seated slowly begin to rise. Once standing, the men in the front row of the glass box spurt blood from their phalluses all over the glass wall in front of them. The deep red liquid dribbles down the glass. Their grand singing continues, as does Myrrha's movement around the space. She exists in apparent unrelation to the action in the glass box, and blind, like the prophet Teiresias, never acknowledges it.

McCallum and Hillard describe the final parts of this scene as "Myrrha [...] dancing slowly, sexually satiated in a style reminiscent of Fellini's 1960 film *La Dolce Vita*, in front of a huge glassed-in box full of masturbating macho clowns" (2010, 132). While McCallum and Hillard use the scene to argue that both the work of Kosky and Ovid is dependent upon "the ongoing and interactive tension between restraint and excess" (2010, 134), I argue that durational performance tropes and the expulsion of bodily fluids generated an affectivity that operated in excess of what the scene represented. Why were the clowns wearing neck braces? Why did they ejaculate blood? Questions such of these were backgrounded by the sheer affective excess unleashed through repetition and the bodily fluids in the scene. What was foregrounded instead was a dynamic encounter in the theatre when representational and nonrepresentational dynamics interpenetrated towards an affective intensity in excess of what the spectatorial subject could contain.

Through the repetition of the action of Myrrha removing her underwear, for example, what the gesture represented became abstracted from its referent. The initially erotic action became stylised through repetition. By pushing the thresholds of duration, the audiences' comfort was also threatened, forcing them to confront the horrific context behind an action that they found initially erotic, then comic and then disconcerting in its extension. This disconnection from the referent intensified the affects of the scene through abstraction. The extended duration of Myrrha removing her underwear was one aspect of the performance that made representation buckle. The affective tone of the scene was infrapersonal precisely because the repetition did not appeal to the spectator's emotions. An emotional response was obfuscated by representation becoming nonrepresentational through repetition.

On the one hand, rather than explicitly collapsing boundaries between audience and performance, Kosky maintained the theatre's fourth wall by staging a monologue, what McCallum and Hillard refer to in the production as "classically straightforward narration" (2010, 132). On the other, through the muddling of boundaries between performance and audience bodies through duration, post-tragic affect became an urgent "transaction of texture" (Sedgwick, 2003: 22) foregrounding relation, luring the subject towards emergency's 'dangerous border' in the scene. Duration operated to exceed the bounds of representation, to foreground an affective relationship between audience and performance that was infrapersonal. This affective relationship was infrapersonal because the object of recognition (a woman removing her underwear) was repeated so many times, that it became something other than what it represented (Myrrha having sex with her father). It became the action itself through repetition, rather than being what the action represented.

The masturbating clowns similarly served as an abstract affective accent on Myrrha's story. Masturbating clowns were not part of Myrrha's narrative, nor was their appearance onstage acknowledged as part of the stage fiction. However, their singing, vigorous masturbating, and terrifying appearance escalated the affects of the narrative *through* their non-narrative relation to it. In other words, through their abstract relationship to the scene, the affects of the narrative intensified through the clowns' nonrepresentational force. Their force intensified in relation to what the narrative represented (Myrrha's incestuous relationship with her father).

When the clowns ejaculated, they ejaculated copious amounts of blood, not semen. The blood spurted all over the glass in front of them. This was in synchrony with Myrrha's subjectivity slipping away from her as she shuffled about the stage, as well as a climactic moment in the song. The ejaculation of blood also correlated to an ejaculation of subjectivity in the spectator. Meaning, the audience could not locate themselves in the strange and affecting world to which they bore witness. Their *disidentification* with the stage action at the level of the personal opened up a space for a infrapersonal, affective relationship with the work.⁸² There was a subsequent merging - already primed through the durational elements of the scene - of spectator and performance where the boundaries between subject and object became unhinged. The introduction of bodily fluids - as that which lines the body at the same time as being in

⁸² For a discussion on the relationship between disidentification and affect see Muñoz, 1999 and Stoddard, 2009.

excess of it – served as a correlate to this process. In this climax of the scene, post-tragic affects rose and thickened, cresting towards emergency.

Durational Demands

An additional technique Kosky used towards this affective intensification was the durational strain on performers as well as the audience and himself throughout. Kosky played the piano near constantly throughout the eight-hour production. This brought all participants, including the auteur director, into an intimacy of shared affective labour. What resulted was not a sympathy or even empathy for the performer or director on behalf of the spectator, but a shared encounter of post-tragic affect. Placing both audience and performers within a durational performance context meant that the separation between active performer and passive spectator became complexified. As Scheer writes, “Kosky's theatre is physical and demanding for both performers and spectators” (2006, 56). Kosky's visibility onstage in the scene and throughout the production brought the auteur director into the shared duration of the eight-hour theatrical marathon. The delineation between spectator, performer and director collapsed through the dynamics of shared duration.

Kosky's physical demand upon audience and performers (and even himself) do form part of the conditions that facilitate post-tragic affect, leading towards emergency. To summarise my discussion of the Myrrha scene and *The Lost Echo* so far, in addition to the eight-hour running time of the production, there were two key aspects that created the conditions for post-tragic affect – which, as this discussion has so far shown, is the dynamic effect of representation operating in excess of itself in Kosky's post-tragedies. The first of these aspects was that the repetition of Myrrha removing her underwear unglued the signifier from the signified. Through this disjuncture, a infrapersonal affective relationship to the scene was encouraged. The culmination of post-tragic affects through the repetition of this action intensified through the reveal of the masturbating clowns. Their ejaculation, coupled with Myrrha's unraveled subjectivity and the soaring climax of 'Everytime We Say Goodbye' took the nonrepresentational aspects of the scene to a whole new height of affective intensity. The blood signified nothing in the narrative, but made the force of the narrative felt. This feltness was

experienced as a type of post-tragic catharsis, contingent upon 1) durational performance tropes and 2) the expulsion of bodily fluids in the scene.

Similar tropes were used in Kosky's 2003 production of *Le Grand Macabre*. A discussion of a scene from Kosky's *Le Grand Macabre* serves as another example of the relationship between post-tragic affect, bodily fluids, and a type of catharsis in Kosky's work. Crucially, as the discussion will continue to show, post-tragic affect is contingent upon exhausting the symbolic through repetition and the expulsion of fake bodily fluids. The discussion of *Le Grand Macabre* will be followed by a consideration of the relevance of fake fluids in the work of theatre scholar Bryoni Trezise. I then propose a concept of emergency as an alternative to tragic catharsis within a post-tragic milieu. Emergency becomes an alternative way to think catharsis in post-tragedy, in which post-tragic affects culminate in Kosky's theatre.

Le Grand Macabre

Kosky's staging of *Le Grand Macabre* was performed at the Komische Oper in 2003. Gyorgy Ligeti's libretti for *Le Grand Macabre* were written between 1974 and 1977. The opera captures a world on the brink of apocalypse, and pays homage to absurdist and illusionist theatre genres. Kosky's approach to staging his version of the opera is detailed in part through the following scene description. Like *The Dybbuk* discussed in the previous chapter, this scene description is taken from Kosky's autobiographical book, *On Ecstasy* (2008), where he writes:

Many years after my *Dybbuk* production, I staged Ligeti's *Grande Macabre* in Berlin. The climax of the opera occurs when a gigantic meteor crashes into the earth. This has been foretold by a mad prophet, Nekrotzar. In Berlin, he sat on a white plastic toilet while a never ending stream of brown excrement poured out of the toilet and over him. Ligeti's apocalyptically gorgeous music blasted out of the orchestra pit, as behind the toilet, half-dead hermaphroditic mermaids crawled across the stage, their glittering fins sadly flicking in the air as they desperately searched for water, rest or salvation. Many people in the audience found this scene offensive and tasteless. As if taste has anything to do with the theatre. The more radiant the music became, the more he ate and smeared. I was, however,

delighted that many people found this scene not tasteless, shocking or grotesque, but beautiful. As it was intended to be. Mountains of excrement, dying hermaphroditic mermaids and a baritone sitting on a toilet singing Ligeti with shit all over his mouth may not be your average subscriber night at the opera, but something happened in the theatre at this moment. Something emerged. (2008: 51-3)

Although this scene is from one of Kosky's operas rather than his post-tragedies, it is an example of his use of fake bodily fluids onstage and his sustained interest in nihilistic themes. From my own viewing of the scene, the music was dramatic and atonal. It not only contrasted with the volcanic eruption of excrement and Nekrotzar eating his own feces, but also the graceful movement of the hermaphroditic mermaids. The mermaids created ambitiously choreographed Busby-Berkeley-style shapes with their bodies. The smooth, elegant flicking of their tails caught and reflected the blue-green light that flooded the stage. Rather than being perceived as an ironic juxtaposition, the mountains of excrement, the soaring music, the mermaids, led to something happening – 'something emerged'.

At the level of representation, someone eating their own feces is difficult to describe as beautiful, and indeed, for some, the scene was offensive and tasteless. I am concerned, however, with how the offensive and tasteless expulsion of bodily fluids on stage operated in excess of what it represented, becoming beautiful. Indeed, Nekrotzar eating his feces became 'beautiful' for many people who saw it. In *Poetics*, Aristotle contends that tragic catharsis is contingent upon mimesis. He writes,

We take delight in viewing the most accurate possible images of objects which in themselves cause distress when we see them (e.g. the shapes of the lowest species of animal, and corpses). The reason for this is that understanding is extremely pleasant, not just for philosophers but for others too in the same way, despite their limited capacity for it. This is the reason why people take delight in seeing images; what happens is that as they view them they come to understand and work out what each thing is (e.g. 'This is so-and-so'). If one happens not to have

seen the thing before, it will not give pleasure as an imitation, but because of its execution of colour, or for some other reason. (Aristotle, 1996: 7)

The scene from *Le Grand Macabre* operated outside of a mimetic paradigm. Mimesis was not the foundation for the scene leading to the audience being intensely affected, or experiencing a catharsis of some kind. The pleasure was found in the encounter of the referential operating in excess of itself. While Golden concludes, “for both Plato and Aristotle artistic mimesis, when pursued properly, is an important learning experience which reaches its climax in an insight into aspects of reality itself” (1969, 152), the upending of a mimetic foundation in *Le Grand Macabre*, and *The Lost Echo* too, did not provide the audience with insights into reality. As the introduction to this thesis showed, Kosky is interested in a theatre “where the imagination runs riot” (Kosky in Conrad, 2010). Post-tragic affects open up the potential for new realities to be thought.

Post-tragic affect opens up this potential because an audience’s relationship to what they see is not dependent upon what they recognize. By cutting ties between the signifier and the signified, Kosky’s audiences come to know things they recognise not in terms of what they symbolise, but what their affects are. By foregrounding the affective rather than representational dimension of things in the theatre, the potential in things to be more than what they symbolize imbues these spectatorial encounters with creative and imaginative potential. The potential in these encounters would not have been as powerful if the bodily fluids in the scenes were real. They were clearly fake and gratuitously theatricalised. In this way, Kosky’s use of bodily fluids in *Le Grand Macabre* was not intended to function as a distancing device. The very fakeness of the excrement created affective excess through its fakeness. Rather than using the fake as a meta-theatrical device, or something that ironically drew attention to the performance as a performance, it operated to open up the potential for thinking difference as potential.

Affect’s Spill

The expulsion of fake bodily fluids onstage has become an increasing phenomenon in postdramatic theatre, particularly in postdramatic adaptations of ancient and classical tragedies in Australia (Kiernander, 2010: 111; Van der Dries and Combres, 2010: 429; Griffiths, 2014). This

has also been witnessed on the contemporary German stage where fake “[b]odily fluids spew forth liberally” (Young, 2010: 69). While much analysis in theatre and performance studies has been spent on the discussion on the inflicted excretion of *real* bodily fluids in performance, with a particular focus on feminist and queer performance art (Schneider, 1997; Jones, 1998; Harradine, 2000; Çakırlar, 2011), there is a gap in discussions of *fake* bodily fluids on the theatrical stage, particularly in contemporary adaptations of tragedy.

Bryoni Trezise is an exception where she writes about “affect’s spill” in her analysis of a scene from Societas Raffaello Sanzio’s *BR.#04 Bruxelles* (2005) (2014, 136-157). In light of the scene, she defines affect’s spill in the theatre as “those rare aesthetic moments... which use feeling to undo itself” (2014, 5). The scene of interest to Trezise’s study is the bashing of a man by actors dressed up as police. First, the police covered the half-naked man in (fake) blood poured from plastic water bottles. They proceeded to beat him repeatedly, brutally; “a scene which, it seems, had no place in the theatre at all” (137). The beating resulted in a majority of the audience walking out “clumsily, loudly, in rebuke of having to see something that they had not come for” (137).

Trezise writes that this scene from Societas Raffaello Sanzio’s *BR.#04 Bruxelles* has become “an emblematic example of how a radical theatre aesthetics creates a postmodern ethics and politics, arresting as it does the spectator’s embodied relationship to a certain ‘fake’ real established by its spectacular *mise-en-scène*” (2014, 137). She places emphasis on the spectators’ embodied relationship to a radical theatre aesthetics, and how this generates a particularly charged affectivity between spectators and the stage action. The ‘fake’ real that she touches upon relates to the bodily fluids that were used in the scene that were, importantly, not real. However, the beating seemed to be. From this she argues that “the very inversion of a mechanics of representation generates a particular dimension of affect through its process of theatrical self-negation” (138).

A mechanics of representation was inverted in two key ways in the scene. First, the blood was clearly fake (it came from plastic water bottles, not the body). Second, the beating seemed real. The man was hit repeatedly by the baton-wielding police. The very fakeness of the fluids operated in excess of a regime of representation through their fakeness, whereas the reality of the beating was in excess of representation because it seemed real. In light of these two aspects – the fakeness of the fluids, and the reality of the beating – the scene “construct[ed] a meta-affective

state for the spectator that [was] built out of a continuous collapse and rebuilding of relations between real and fake, sensation and spectacle” (Trezise, 140). Through the relation between the real and fake in the scene, Trezise argues a certain affective dimension was discharged in the theatre.

Kosky’s own use of fake bodily fluids in *The Lost Echo* and *Le Grand Macabre* also inverted a mechanics of representation. He did this to activate an affective dimension specific to post-tragedy. The very fakeness of the bodily fluids in the scenes from *The Lost Echo* and *Grand Macabre* allowed for the both/and of representation and nonrepresentation and the bleed between them to come into effect. In *The Lost Echo*, for example, this was because the blood is obviously fake, and the men in the glass box and their collective ejaculation was not part of the narrative but an affective accent upon the narrative’s horror. Post-tragic affects in Kosky’s work are produced through scenes whose performance modes spill over the sides of representation’s container in this way. This spill was made literal through the use of bodily fluids onstage in *The Lost Echo*. The fourth wall was maintained and the bodily fluids were not real. Yet something indelibly real was produced by troubling the boundaries between the performative real and the theatrical fake.

Although the fake bodily fluids on Kosky’s stage invariably spill from a character/actor’s body, their fakeness operated similarly to that Trezise accounts for in the work of Societas Raffaello Sanzio. In Kosky’s use of bodily fluids onstage, there is an “irruption of the Real” (Lehmann, 2006: 86), where the fluids were not real, however, the physical endurance required of the audience and performers was. This ‘fake’ real meant that these eruptions overflow the production’s representational limits, in turn generating particular (post-tragic) affects. Crucially, in these moments, the experience of watching bodily fluids being excreted on stage ultimately does not disgust, or repulse, as it would, perhaps, in a theatre of representation. Rather, it creates what Deleuze would call “a theatre of repetition, [where] we experience pure forces [...] with a language which speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organised bodies [...]” (2004, 12). These fake bodily fluids *represent* blood, excrement, or vomit, *at the same time* as they are abstracted from the narrative. The subsequent catharsis felt in Kosky’s post-tragedies does not stir up emotions of pity and fear in the self-contained spectatorial subject: they mobilise affects that foreground a catharsis in excess of the self. The bodily fluids provoke an intensely affective dimension precisely because they are in excess of representation.

Introducing Emergency

I introduce the term emergency here in an attempt to articulate the subjective excess of post-tragic affects in the process of their intensification. My use of the term emergency is inspired by Kosky's comment that "something emerged" in his description of the scene from *Le Grand Macabre*. Additionally, the word emergency is particularly relevant to this context because it evokes an urgent emergence. It also doesn't carry the long and contested history of Aristotelian catharsis, even though emergency can be thought about as synonymous with post-tragic catharsis. It does, however, inadvertently tie in with Aristotle's discussion of catharsis as discharge in *The History of Animals* and *The Generation of Animals*. The verb 'emerge' comes from the Latin *ēmergere* meaning "to rise up or out" and is often etymologically defined as coming out of liquid (Hoad, 1996: 146). Further, in his book *Parables for the Virtual* where a concept of infrapersonal affect figures strongly throughout, Brian Massumi writes of emergence as a concept where "the edge of the virtual...leaks into actual" and this "seeping edge" of emergence "is where potential, actually, is found" (2002, 43).

Emergence as a "seeping edge" articulates that very process in Kosky's theatre where boundaries liquefy between inside and outside, subject and object, viewer and viewed. As demonstrated through discussions of scenes from *The Lost Echo* and *Grand Macabre* in this chapter, there is both a suddenness to these moments of seepage in Kosky's work; a violence to post-tragic affect's 'spill'. If this is post-tragic catharsis, then, it is a catharsis as an urgent emergence that rises "up or out" of the performance and enables the spectator to come into contact with the relational dynamic of the theatre. McCallum's subjectivity slipped his grasp and Kosky's 'me' was taken hold of. Subsequently, emergency comes to mark those moments in Kosky's theatre where affect's elasticity stretches itself to breaking point in Kosky's theatre. Discursive skins burst, epistemological bones crack and textual adaptations are boiled down to an apparitional concentrate – performing a textual ghosting that becomes more concerned with bodies at the borders of themselves than with a true-to-the-original textual resurrection.

Crucially, emergency cannot occur through coming into contact with anything familiar. Rather, something recognizable becomes estranged; changed; altered. This was seen in *The Lost Echo* through the repetition of Myrrha removing her underwear, and the introduction of the

masturbating clowns. The erotic action of a woman removing her underwear was not recognizable in terms of what it would represent in another context. Clowns, as figures evoking either a children's party or a horror movie, do not typically masturbate, and ejaculate blood while singing Cole Porter. These uncanny incongruities, all within the context of classical texts or forms such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or an opera, produce an affective dimension that this chapter has called post-tragic affects. When these incongruities interpenetrate towards a climax, what results is an affective, post-tragic catharsis: emergency.

Aristotelian catharsis as the effect of tragedy in Page duBois' reading concerns "the individual member of the audience, who experiences a catharsis of pity and fear" (2008, 132). Likewise, for Raphael, "[i]t does not need much argument to refute the view that Tragedy is intended to arouse emotions concerning oneself" (1965, 189). Catharsis in these terms describes an individual spectatorial subject whose emotions are aroused in watching tragedy. These emotions, they suggest, are particular to that viewing subject's personal experience, and how this personal experience is appealed to emotionally by the performance. Post-tragedy, however, as the previous chapter showed, activates infrapersonal affect in order to draw the audience into a collective experience that is far more leaky and unbound than this.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that leaky, cathartic encounters in Kosky's theatre are best thought in terms of emergency. I have developed emergency here as a way to rethink catharsis not only because it semantically lightens the root word of its heavy conceptual baggage, but also because it is an intuitive articulation of those experiences in the theatre that are urgent, incomprehensible, fluid, and intense. A discussion of scenes from *The Lost Echo* and *Le Grand Macabre* have shown that Kosky's use of bodily fluids and durational performance tropes are concrete aspects of his work that lead towards emergency. These analyses have shown that emergency is first contingent upon post-tragic affects. Trezise's findings parallel my claim that the sheer theatricality of Kosky's fake bodily fluids onstage are central to these processes.

Post-tragedy speaks to a mode of spectatorship that does not match a model of action, and therefore activity on the side of the performers; versus inaction, and therefore docility on the side of the audience. Aristotelian models of catharsis uphold this premise of tragic spectatorship,

suggesting that catharsis is something that is *done* to the spectator *by* the performance. Hilaire and Craig Kallendorf demonstrate this by drawing on the etymology of *pathos* in their discussion of catharsis as exorcism. They write,

Indeed, the word *pathos* itself, like its Latin equivalent *passio*, suggests something that happens to people, something of which they are passive victims, which reinforces the idea that a person in the throes of a great passion is being taken over by an external force that is ultimately beyond his or her control. (302).

Post-tragedy, on the other hand, takes into account that all bodies in the theatre have “an ability to affect and be affected” (Massumi, 2004: vii). Rather than the spectator giving herself over in a suspension of agency, post-tragic catharsis is an energetic generosity; a non-conscious reciprocity; a ‘transaction of texture’ where affect democratises the exchange between bodies, where theatre happens “in the whole room” (McCallum, 2010).

In *What Animals Teach Us About Politics* Massumi elaborates upon spectatorship’s affective transactions in relational terms, relevant to a discussion of post-tragic affect and emergency when he writes,

Rather than a one-way street, spectatorship has to be understood in terms of relation. The relation must be understood as reciprocal, as a bidirectional *activity* straddling the differential between the roles that come together in counterpoint. This means that all involved are some way active participants, in spite of the ostensible monopoly of activity on one side or another (in theater, the side of the performers...). There is no passive player. Play is a dynamic complex, an integral field of differential action, diversely cohering in mutual inclusion. (2014, 75-76: emphasis original).⁸³

In Kosky’s post-tragedies, atmospheric textures of extreme feeling coalesce, deterritorialising notions of subjectivity and objectivity upon which Aristotelian tragedy and catharsis depend. In moments of particularly rapid collapse in post-tragedy marked by the

⁸³ For more on mutual inclusion see Massumi, 2014: 33, 34-6, 40, 45-52.

expulsion of fake bodily fluids onstage and durational performance tropes, a reciprocal relation between performance and audience becomes potently felt. While this relational dynamic is active in all performance as Massumi suggests, it is the abruptness and extremity of making this relation felt through bodily fluids and duration that collapses the boundary between viewer and viewed in Kosky's post-tragedies.

In Kosky's work, catharsis is not what *results* from the Aristotelian tragic structure or a psychoanalytic process of purgation. Rather, it becomes a peak, or series of peaks, in post-tragedy's affective tone. In this, emergency as a type of post-tragic catharsis is considered an affect of Kosky's performances rather than its effect. This view is supported in part because Kosky's post-tragedies are not predicated solely upon a framework of mimesis. If catharsis for Aristotle is that which results through recognition, such a conception of catharsis finds its limits in Kosky's post-tragedies.

Catharsis for Aristotle is the outcome of the Aristotelian tragic structure. Yet I have rethought catharsis in this chapter. In an analysis of Kosky's post-tragedies, and even postdramatic theatres such as Società Raffaello Sanzio, I have shown that catharsis cannot continue to be understood in ways that theorists have previously conceptualised it in either ethical, medical, cognitive, or psychoanalytic terms. This is because post-tragedy and postdramatic theatre "begins precisely with the fading away of this trinity of drama, imitation, and action" (Lehmann, 2006: 37). Kosky's post-tragedies mobilize a type of catharsis that Helen Slaney describes in relation to Kosky's work as, "superbly timed, in the most unexpected of places" (2009, 62). It is precisely this unexpectedness, as seen through the masturbating clowns ejaculating blood in *The Lost Echo*, or Nekrotzar eating excrement in *Grand Macabre*, that makes representation and nonrepresentation in the scenes bleed.

While this chapter has focused on the literal expulsion of bodily fluids onstage and its role in activating post-tragic affects and emergency in Kosky's theatre, the following chapter shifts the focus from the fake fluids excreted on Kosky's stage, to his audiences' tears. The chapter returns to consider Fensham's proposition, that "[p]erhaps watching at the theatre provides an occasion to bring forth an otherwise absent, yet fluid, memory of the bodiliness of life" (2009, 177), to suggest that crying in post-tragedy is an embodied response to emergency. This chapter has shown that post-tragic affect and emergency operate in excess of a self-

contained subject. This is not to overlook, however, the fact that embodied experiences can also be infrapersonal, as the following chapter will show.

5.

Post-Tragedy's Tears: Crying and the Body without Organs

In listening to poetry, drama, or heroic narrative we are often surprised at the cutaneous shiver which like a sudden wave flows over us, and at the heart swelling and the lachrymal effusion that unexpectedly catches us at intervals.

(James, 2010: 10)

Introduction

When it comes to discussions of theatre spectatorship, audience's tears figure prominently. In *A Lover's Discourse* Roland Barthes observes, "the Greeks as well as our audiences of the seventeenth century cried a great deal at the theater" (2002, 181). Tom Lutz notes that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "inducing abundant and pleasurable tears was the primary goal" of European stage performance. Theatre audiences and critics alike "praised those productions that drew the most tears" (2001, 39). In Robert Cohen's discussion of

crying in Elizabethan and Jacobean stagings of Shakespeare's plays, he writes, "[e]vidence that Shakespeare's actors also cried, and stimulated members of the audience to cry with them, is in fact overwhelming" (2016, 41). According to Cohen, actors' tears "provoked reciprocal tearing on the stage, and probably reciprocal tearing in the audience" (43).

Yet if Cohen touches upon the mimetic relationship between actors crying on stage and their 'reciprocal tearing' in the audience, as previous chapters have shown, Kosky's post-tragedies are contingent upon such a mimetic paradigm becoming destabilised. For Cohen, rather, what the scene represents is what then leads the audience to cry.⁸⁴ My tears in the Philomela scene from *The Lost Echo*, however, were not propelled through the type of tear-filled contagion that Cohen observes in his account. Tears were not part of narrative, nor did the actors or characters shed them. This chapter therefore approaches what happened in the Philomela scene in both representational and nonrepresentational terms, to examine what William James would call a "cutaneous shiver" and "lachrymal effusion" that flowed over me "like a sudden wave" (2010, 10).

In 1884, James wrote the article 'What is Emotion?' from which this chapter takes its opening quote. In the article, James puts forward a famous and much-contested theory. He proposes that bodily expressions of feeling are not caused by emotion, but that they are the beginnings of emotion in and of themselves.⁸⁵ What James describes as the initial condition for emotion could be seen as what some performance theorists define as autonomic affective experiences in the theatre (Hurley, 2010: 12; Allain and Harvie, 2014: 149). However, crying, for

⁸⁴ Cohen provides a survey of crying in Shakespeare:

The words "weep" and "tears" appear more than 600 times in the plays, almost always in reference to someone sobbing in front of someone else: Othello, for example, weeps when he confronts Desdemona ("Am I the motive of these tears, my Lord?" she asks [4.1.43]); Menenius sobs before Coriolanus ("Thy tears are saltier than a younger man's," says Marcius [4.1.22]); and Romeo wails in the Friar's cell ("There on the ground, with his own tears made drunk" complains the Friar [3.3.83]). Often the sobbing is before a larger public: Claudio has "wash'd" Hero's foulness "with tears" in front of the whole wedding party (Ado 4.1.153-54); and Enobarbus weeps openly amidst Antony's brigade of also-sobbing soldiers ("Look, they weep, And I, an ass, am onion-eyed" [A&C 4.2.34]). (Cohen, 1995: 1).

⁸⁵ James was a key figure in the emergence of psychology in the nineteenth century (Brinkema, 2014: 10), and in 1884 he famously, and contentiously, argued that the physical manifestation of crying comes *before* the feeling that necessitates it, suggesting that, "we feel sorry *because* we cry, angry *because* we strike, afraid *because* we tremble" (2010, 4: emphasis added). Numerous critics have simplified James' claims. Phoebe Ellsworth writes, "James's actual claim—that the sensation of bodily changes is a *necessary condition* of emotion—was simplified and quickly crystallized into the idea that emotions are *nothing but* the sensation of bodily changes" (1994, 222). While this chapter takes James' quote on crying from 'What is Emotion?' as a launchpad into a discussion of being moved to tears in Kosky's *The Lost Echo*, it is beyond the limits of its scope to give full weight to the complexities of his argument.

James, is more than this. Crying is experienced both in the body and in excess of it. Tears are both in the subject's body and in excess of the body, and the subject that cries. This speaks to post-tragedy's tears in Kosky's theatre, as this chapter will explore.⁸⁶

For James, tears are "like a sudden wave" that "flows over us", unexpectedly taking hold in an instant. In fact, more instantaneous than an instant, tears arise in the interval. The very unexpectedness of the interval through which tears appear speaks to what Manning describes when she writes, "I can't think fast enough to catch the interval in the making. The interval is the production of movement... I cannot name it or locate it exactly. I feel it only momentarily in the instant" (2009, 18). The intervals out of which these tears erupt are surprising and unexpected: they catch us momentarily. It is through these intervals, these germinations of movement towards being moved, that a particular type of crying emerges that correlates to my experience of post-tragedy's tears.

The Philomela scene was based on the Ovidian myths of Tereus and Philomela, and Procne's revenge (Ovid, 2001: 190-199). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Philomela is violently raped by her sister's husband, Tereus. Tereus cuts out Philomela's tongue so she cannot tell her sister, Procne, what he had done to her. To defy him, Philomela weaves a tapestry depicting the rape and sends it to Procne, her sister. As revenge against Tereus, the sisters kill his son. They cook him up and serve him to Tereus in an elaborate gesture of culinary cannibalism. He eats the meal, unaware that he is eating his own son. Once Philomela and Procne reveal this to him, Tereus tries to kill the sisters, but the gods transform the women into nightingales before he succeeds.

I found Philomela's story heartbreaking. In the literature on crying, tears are frequently invoked solely as a personal emotional response (Jerome Neu, 2000; Vingerhoets, 2013). However, the tears I cried in the Philomela scene were propelled both by the scene's (post-tragic) affective dimension *and* its personal, emotional content. Significantly, this does not quite fit with most theories of the crying spectator (Scheff, 1979; Barthes, 1982; Stanford, 1983; Lutz, 2000; Cohen, 2016). Rather, as with the interaction between representation and nonrepresentation discussed in chapter four, my encounter of being moved to tears in the Philomela scene was spurred by the interrelation between the narrative content and the affective force of Kosky's auteur

⁸⁶ James' proposition, despite its contentiousness, relates to the previous chapter's rethinking of Aristotelian catharsis through the prism of intrapersonal affect.

dramaturgies. In examining these interrelations, it will become apparent that post-tragedy's tears stand out in contrast to tragedy's cathartic tears.

The previous chapter developed theories of post-tragic affect and emergency to rethink Aristotelian catharsis for a post-tragic milieu. As chapter four showed, Aristotelian catharsis and its numerous medical, ethical, religious and psychoanalytic interpretations are dependent upon a spectator's mimetic relationship to tragedy. Post-tragedy disrupts this. A similar disruption arises in post-tragedy with regard to cathartic tears.

Tom Lutz suggests cathartic tears are a pipeline through which negative emotions drain away. He writes, "Cathartic tears drain our bodies of the anxiety and negativity that gather there in our daily lives" (2009, 119). T. J. Scheff's neo-Freudian interpretation posits cathartic crying and laughing in the theatre as symptomatic of a spectator's internal emotional distress. He writes,

[I]n most cathartic laughing and crying, the individual is unaware of the unconscious source of the distress, as in the case of the cathartic processes that take place in the audience in the theatre. Most of the members of the audience, most of the time, do not make any connection between the powerful emotional experiences they undergo and events in their own lives. They usually think of their reaction as caused by the events in the drama. This kind of unaware catharsis is therapeutic in that it can be likened to a slow chipping away at unconscious emotional distress. (1979, 68-9)

Scheff suggests that responses such as laughing and crying in the theatre are related to the spectator's internal, psychic world. Such reactions to performance are therapeutic, Scheff contends, because the situations represented onstage subconsciously remind the viewer of experiences in their own lives. Thus, their laughter or tears are cathartic because the theatre opens up a space for the spectator to relieve herself of internalised emotional discomfort. Along similar lines, Bruce McConachie writes, "crying as a means of helping modulate our physiological thermostats may be the closest that cognitive science can come to the Aristotelian notion of catharsis [...] [T]ragedy's ability to purge 'pity and fear' is somewhat similar to what may occur from the relief that crying can bring" (2008, 111).

Through these prisms, cathartic tears are seen to be provoked through a spectator's emotional identification with the events in the drama, consciously or subconsciously. In contrast, this chapter explores ways to think about crying in post-tragedy beyond cathartic tears, because in post-tragedy, tragedy's mimetic foundation is troubled. Hence, my tears in the Philomela scene did not emerge solely through what the scene represented, but were an embodied response to both the representational and nonrepresentational dynamics and their interrelation in the scene. My tears were an embodied response to post-tragic affect and emergency.

This thesis has shown that Kosky employs specific performance tropes to enact processes of desubjectification on and off stage. These desubjectifications are not so much deconstructions of the human subject, but rather highlight the numinous relations between forces in Kosky's work and in the world. These forces culminate at times in an intensity felt by the spectator that could, at first glance, be described as an overwhelmingly emotional, personal experience. This especially becomes the case when a spectator is moved to tears. However, in light of my discussion of post-tragic affect and emergency in chapter four, the encounter of being moved to tears in Kosky's post-tragedies is considered differently here. The chapter orbits around the experience of "lachrymal effusion" James describes, and my own experience of being moved to tears in Kosky's *The Lost Echo*. I use James description and my own experience to argue that *both* the story *and* the post-tragic affects of Kosky's abstract dramaturgies coagulated to produce tears. My reading of the scene is illuminated in part through a continued engagement with theories of post-tragic affect and emergency developed in chapter four, and also by introducing Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the body without organs.

The Body without Organs

The body without organs is a concept with theatrical roots in the writings of Artaud.⁸⁷ Artaud proposed that in a Theatre of Cruelty the body needs to be considered outside of stratifying tendencies, liberated from institutions that attempt to contain it. Artaud proposed techniques of cruelty in the theatre towards making a body without organs in performance. Deleuze and Guattari explore and develop this concept in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004, 165-184).

⁸⁷ In his essay, 'To Have Done with the Judgement of God' Artaud writes, "The body is the body / it stands alone / it has no need of organs / the body is never an organism / organisms are the enemies of bodies" (1977, 38-9).

They write that when the body becomes a body without organs it is “populated only by intensities [...] It is non-stratified, unformed, intense matter...” (2004, 169). Deleuze first used the concept in his own book, *The Logic of Sense* in 1969 where he describes “the glorious body without organs” as “without limbs, with neither voice nor sex” (1990, 129); “an organism without parts, a body without organs, with neither mouth nor anus” (188). The post-tragic crying body can similarly be thought of as a body without organs.

Crucially, the body without organs is not a human body emptied of its stomach, heart, brain, liver, kidneys, or lungs. Rather, it is a body without *organisation*. Deleuze writes, “The body without organs is opposed less to organs than to that organization of organs we call an organism” (2003, 44). The body without organs opens up ways to consider the transaction between the stage action and the crying spectator in post-tragedy as relational, coextensive, and intense because on the body without organs “intensities pass, self and other... by virtue of singularities that can no longer be said to be personal” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 173). The transaction between audience and performance is no longer personal and subjective. It is affective. In Deleuze and Guattari’s words, on the body without organs “[t]here is no longer a Self [*Moi*] that feels, acts, and recalls; there is ‘a glowing fog, a dark yellow mist’ that has affects and experiences, movements, speeds” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 180).

The appeal of thinking a body without organs in the theatre has been noted by other scholars who have used the concept in their own analyses. Building upon Deleuze and Guattari’s theory, Cull proposes a concept of a ‘theatre without organs’. For Cull, a theatre without organs is a theatre of endless variation that is “equally an already-existing – and yet also waiting-to-be-constructed – plane, produced by performance-makers and their audiences” (2009, 247). The concept also figures prominently in Cull’s edited collection, *Deleuze and Performance* (2009).⁸⁸ In *To Watch Theatre* (2009) Fensham emphasises the political dimension of bodies without organs in her analysis of Società Raffaello Sanzio *Genesi: The Museum of Sleep* (2002). She argues that “the liberation of the body from hierarchical systems in the theatre can only begin with a process that disarticulates the organism’s obligation to represent social norms while simultaneously intensifying the effects of the nervous system in the sinews of the organic body”

⁸⁸ See in particular chapters by Daniel Watt (91-105), Barbara Kennedy (183-199), and Timothy Murray (203-220)

(2009, 145).⁸⁹ Freddy Decreus also uses Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs in a discussion of Societas Raffaello Sanzio work (2010, 123-136). Christel Stalpaert, in her critical engagement with Jan Fabre's *As Long As the World Needs a Warrior's Soul* (2000), argues that body without organs is one concept from Deleuze that attests to "deterritorializing processes that force the spectator to think the yet unthought" (2005, 179).

As noted throughout these contributions, the body without organs has been an illuminating concept for the analysis of postdramatic theatres such as Societas Raffaello Sanzio and Belgian director Jan Fabre. The body without organs is a particularly attractive concept to the analyses of postdramatic performance because "from this viewpoint, the human body is no longer considered the bipolar construction created and worshipped by Cartesian rationality, but a continuous and heterogeneous series of intensive processes" (Decreus, 2010, 127). As Lehmann shows, postdramatic theatre is a theatre of heterogeneity (2006, 132-33) where the body "becomes ambiguous in its signifying character" (2006, 96). In post-tragedy, the body oscillates between the Apollonian classical body of the Greek tragic tradition and the seething Dionysian collective. Its signifying character is ambiguous at times, yet is constantly folding between representational capture and its unraveling.

Deleuze and Guattari write that the body without organs is not "a dreary parade of sucked-dry, catatonicized, vitrified, sewn-up bodies"; it is "full of gaiety, ecstasy, and dance" (2004, 167). Deleuze and Guattari's description of the body without organs as at once asignifying and full of energy recalls the ecstatic body that haunts Kosky's autobiographical book, *On Ecstasy* (2008), appearing in examples from *The Dybbuk* in chapter three and *Le Grand Macabre* in chapter four. For Kosky, ecstasy brings the subject to the brink through "an erotic weaving together of desire, transfiguration, obliteration, darkness, and death" (83). This cocktail of contrasting intensities – desire and death, transfiguration and obliteration – recur in Kosky's theatrical practice. The body without organs is also an accumulation of opposites, constantly folding and twisting between territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

Central to a theory of post-tragic affect has been the relation between representation and nonrepresentation, and the results of their interpenetration. In Kosky's work we see classically acted monologues alongside asignificatory excesses. Staging the body emptied of subjectivity and

⁸⁹ Fensham continues, "This body without organs involves recognising the activities of power in the body as well as searching for a heightened phenomenology of corporeal sensation" (2009, 145).

signification, even if it folds back into signification and subjectivity at times, is precisely how Deleuze and Guattari define the body without organs. They explain that the body without organs is, crucially, not a complete eradication of the self, but is produced through the folding of stratifying and destratifying tendencies: what they call deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.⁹⁰ We see this folding, and the subsequent emergence of the body without organs in the Philomela scene. While first person pronouns will always fail in crucial ways to capture the subjective excess of the tears involved, I use them here to mark the movement between a type of subjective stratification and its coming undone.

The Rape of Philomela

The Lost Echo has already been running for three hours and forty-five minutes, and I am fast approaching exalted exhaustion. The eight-hour production is only half way through. I am hungry. Two women in simple, black dresses enter holding hands and stand centre-stage. One of the women gesticulates to the other, and the other responds with a nod, as if granting her permission to proceed. The woman who made the gesture introduces herself as Procne (Amber McMahon), and the other woman as her sister, Philomela (Deborah Mailman). Philomela starts signing and Procne, attentively watching her sister's gestures, translates, suggesting that Philomela is deaf.

Philomela refers to a particular occasion where she felt uneasy at a night of dancing. While she danced, she could feel the sharpness of Tereus' – Procne's husband – eyes upon her. There is then a long pause, a silence. These silences recur throughout the monologue and punctuate the scene's rhythm. The silences are longer than necessary for the communication of the story, and create jolts in the scene's tempo. Such silences are uncomfortable, even awkward, and make me feel uneasy. This uneasiness sprouts from suspecting something has gone awry in the performance: a line forgotten, a music cue missed, a lighting change not happening when it was supposed to. These silences have the potential to self-reflexively position the audience to wonder if something had fallen through the cracks of the theatre's fourth wall, breaking its veneer of verisimilitude. The silences thus create an uneasy relation between what the scene

⁹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari write, "Deterritorialization must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds (epistrata), is always relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or compliment" (2004, 60).

represents, and the affective tone it mobilises. Did Mailman miss a cue? Did McMahon forget a line? These questions, as well as the exhaustion, hunger, and even boredom I feel after watching the performance for nearly four hours, keep me at a remove from the scene.

As the silences recur in the scene, however, they create a rhythm; an atonal syncopation in the story delivered by the sisters. The scene's rhythmic atonality through this crafting of silence creates an atmospheric tension by allowing for the potential of a regime of representation to collapse in on itself. At the same time, the scene uses this tension to position the audience in an uneasy, unpredictable relation to the possibilities of the scene. The silences trouble the clear delineation between performance and audience, and what is real and what is part of the performance fiction.

Philomela continues to sign as Procne verbally narrates, telling how her brother in law – Procne's husband – raped her. Philomela's actions become panicked, staccato. Procne's voice correlates the anxiety of her sister's movement through her narration. I wonder, is the anxiety in Procne's voice a translation of Philomela's feelings, or an expression of her own? Already the clear delineation of character subjectivity is complicated. As Procne narrates, Philomela signs that Tereus raped her repeatedly. She is panicked; her hands are stuck in one gesture, her face mortified, repeating the description of the rape. The words are disgusting in Procne's mouth as she spits them out. Procne narrates that Tereus kidnapped, blindfolded, and locked Philomela in a windowless room deep in the woods from where she cried, "Where is my sister?!" There is then another extended pause, a silence. This pause underscores the dual trauma of the sisters by allowing for the double meaning of the question, "where is my sister?" to apply to both sisters' narrations while moving against the successive progression of the narrative. While the silence could have served to bring me closer to the severity of the narrative by building suspense, it brings a stylization to the scene that adds a distinctly 'theatrical' texture to it.

The performance's liveness is used as a type of material to distance me from emotionally identifying with the characters, while becoming affectively ensconced through its syncopated rhythms. The materiality of liveness is highlighted so far in the Philomela scene through these extended moments of silence, devoid of action or narrative alongside performance traditions of monologue and character. The relation between these aspects not only creates an affective density through their contrast, but rhythmically articulates the content affectively through its abstraction. It is the absence of content in these quiet moments that allows for something in

excess of story to emerge, at the same time as existing in relation to it. What emerges is a space in the performance emptied of the referential, yet brimming with affect.

Philomela continues to sign, describing how Tereus had pried her jaw open and hacked off her tongue with a knife. Philomela is caught in a loop of action, playing over and over the words with her hands like intolerable plasticine. Her mouth gapes open in terror as she lets out a terrifying, silent scream, opening and closing her mouth like a dying fish, gulping for air. Exacerbated through the long-held silence in which Philomela continues to silently scream, the theatre is suspended in a thickness of feeling as her gaping mouth continues to open and close, open and close. The partition erected between performance and audience, already punctured in part through the scene's silences, rapidly begins to fold...

Screaming Silence

Through Philomela's silent scream, the performance moves beyond the narrative content of what her gaping mouth represents - that her tongue had been cut off by her rapist - to become an abstract, grotesque repetition laden with affective density. In this way, Philomela's silent scream produces a body without organs. The body without organs, Deleuze and Guattari write, is "what remains when you take everything away" (2004, 168). It is "populated only by intensities" (169). Deleuze and Guattari specify that what is taken away from the body to make it a body without organs is "phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole" (168). Philomela's mouth's 'hole' makes way for subject's 'whole' to be screamed out, relinquishing phantasy, signification and subjectification, emptying the body of itself, emptying the body of language and speech, becoming a body without organs.

In Deleuze's book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2003) he writes,

the body without organs is flesh and nerve; a wave flows through it and traces levels upon it; a sensation is produced when the wave encounters the forces acting on the body, an "affective athleticism," a scream-breath. When sensation is linked to the body in this way, it ceases to be representative and becomes real; and *cruelty* will be linked less and less to the representation of something horrible, and

will become nothing other than the action of forces upon the body, or sensation (the opposite of the sensational). (2002, 45)⁹¹

Philomela's scream, "ceases to be representative and becomes real". It ceases to be "the representation of something horrible" and becomes horrible in terms of the forces it makes felt through repetition. Philomela's durational scream, at once articulating the narrative, and abstracting the narrative through repetition, was an "affective athleticism" marking the emergence of the body without organs, flesh and nerve.

Although Philomela's scream enacts her response to having her tongue severed, she does not reenact the scene representationally. The scream – the scream-breath – goes on a little too long, ungluing the scream from its narrative referent.⁹² The duration of the scream allows for the classical body of the tragic figure to seep out of the silence, towards becoming a body without organs. Philomela's subjectivity, as well as the audience's, is swallowed up and severed by the silent scream (and the silence that screamed), as her contorted face continues to rip the tear in the performance's verisimilitude, a tear already created by the scene's extended silences. While the horror of the story is communicated through the narration, there is an affective spill in excess of the story, yet directly related to it, through Philomela's opening and closing mouth. Through the length of the time that I sit in silence, watching Philomela's mouth open and close, open and close, I sit inside the horror of the story and of the asignifying hole opened up by the scream.

Atmospheric Lacerations

Philomela continues to tell her story with smoother actions, describing how after sending the tapestry depicting the rape to Procne, the sisters plotted revenge against Tereus. Philomela tells of how she walked into the room where the banquet was served, half of it already devoured greedily by Tereus. She revealed to him that he had devoured his own son. She threw a platter at him with the boy's severed head on it. Mailman mimes his head being thrown, at the same time giving a hideous, nightmarish scream, her gaze directly focused ahead, as if conjuring Tereus'

⁹¹ The NIDA students who made up *The Lost Echo* ensemble had to prepare for the production by reading Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double* at Kosky's request (Scheer, 2006: 58).

⁹² A similar effect has already been witnessed in this thesis through chapter four's discussion of the Myrrha scene and the repetition and duration of her removing her underwear.

presence before her. Philomela's terrifying moan is the first audible sound she makes, creating a laceration in the atmosphere. The reverberating effects of this atmospheric slicing are underscored by a long silence that follows. The audible scream, followed by the extended silence, operates similarly in the scene to the silent scream, in that the effect of the story was felt at the same time as affects were unleashed in excess of its content *through* contrast.

This affective excess that spills outside of what the scene represents, also creates the conditions for a body without organs to emerge in the scene. An emotional identification with Philomela is obstructed through the duration of both screams, silent and audible. Instead, a series of infrapersonal intensities proliferate. Momentarily, Philomela's body "ceases to be representative and becomes real" (Deleuze, 2003: 45). She becomes a body without organs.

Philomela is exhausted and disoriented; signing that Tereus had eaten his own son, his own flesh and blood. Procne's voice is quieter now. She takes her time in telling this part of the story, before the pace of the scene's rhythms escalates again. The sisters tell how Tereus tried to vomit what he had consumed. Procne continues telling the story, louder, whilst Philomela makes animal-like grunts, motioning as if to make herself vomit as Tereus had when trying to purge his own son out of him, mortified at what he had consumed. Tereus' presence appears onstage through Philomela's embodiment. Philomela stomps and growls like a bull, enacting Tereus' violent charge towards them. This goes on for some time. Procne narrates the story without Philomela signing. There is a scattering of confused subjectivities on stage – Tereus becoming-bull; Philomela becoming-Tereus, becoming-bull; and Procne, no longer translating Philomela's sign, narrating the scene herself.

Transformations

Procne stands up out of the chair where she was seated, and the two sisters, in unison, sign the rest of the story together standing side by side. Procne continues to narrate, whilst signing with Philomela. They recount how they were transformed into nightingales as they ran through the forest, being chased by Tereus, where their mouths suddenly became beaks, and wings sprouted from their backs. Both Philomela and Procne sign this, and Procne pronounces it triumphantly. Suddenly, a curtain veiling the back half of the stage lifts swiftly, smoothly, silently, revealing a mass of bodies - over thirty figures - in three horizontal lines across the stage. A sea of colour and

texture is hurled into the space. There is a nauseating overflow of brightness, and shimmering, feathery excess in contrast to the stark minimalism of the set and the women's black dresses.

The dresses the figures wear sparkle, and the colours – black, green, pink, orange – fill the stage. Their gowns and headdresses are lined with feathers of the same colour. And yet, the bodies cannot be individualised: they are a mass of anonymity, a vibrant collectivity, where gender identity folds into the machinic assemblage of the collective shape. Although the figures could be interpreted as a metaphor for the women's transformation into nightingales, suggested in part by the feathers that adorn their costumes, Kosky's rupture of representation in the scene only allows for this interpretation in retrospect. What strikes me is that the bodies onstage are emptied of subjectivity and signification, and yet the scene is rich with force. The collective, machinic choreography is an extension of Philomela and Pronce's duality becoming an elaborate multiplicity, affectively communicating a story of trauma, revenge and transformation through the introduction of the chorus onstage.

The force of the texture and colours, this gaudy, amorphous body, is an accent on the cumulative force of the story; an extension of the tragic tale of the rape of Philomela, the horrible murder of Procne's son, and their transformation into nightingales. The forces of the theatre field are already intensified through the undulating rhythms of the story and Mailman and McMahon's performance of it. The chorus line extends this force to its unbearable limit. Emergency emerged through Kosky's diverse rhythmic contrast, dismemberment and glitter, a body – or theatre – without organs.

Moved to Tears

After the garish reveal of the chorus line, they walk forward and down towards the front of the stage, erupting into singing Henry Purcell's sorrowful and triumphant "When I am Laid in Earth" from Dido's Lament, accompanied by Kosky on the piano.⁹³ While the chorus continues to sing, Procne and Philomela remain standing at the front of the stage, signing the haunting song lyrics. The showgirls walk out of the lines into a v shape, with the apex at the rear of the stage. They maintain their stylised movement, striding in time with the music. Four naked figures seem

⁹³ Kosky is located at the front of the stage for the entirety of the eight hours of the production, playing the piano. Please refer to my elaboration of this in relation to the Myrrha scene earlier in this thesis.

to emerge out of nowhere and stand, spread out in the line at the rear of the stage. Two other naked figures stand in the middle of the v shape, starkly contrasted by the flamboyantly dressed showgirls. While these naked figures have no representational traction, they underscore the abject vulnerability of Philomela, extending her subjectivity across all bodies on stage.

Suddenly, a surging sensation sweeps across me. There are goose bumps and chills all over my body. Tingles creep and spread all over my right arm then my left, sliding up the right side of my face and trickle down my legs. Tears pour down my cheeks. Recalling James, in the interval, a “cutaneous shiver ... like a sudden wave” flows over me, moving me to tears. This all happens in an instant before I have a moment to realise what is happening. Emergency in the interval. Post-tragedies tears. The crying of a body without organs.

All performers onstage begin signing the haunting lyrics “remember me, remember me” in unison, except for Philomela. She continues to sign moments of her horrific story down stage, stuck in a loop with her hands chaotically flailing about. She stands out against the unified movements of the rest of the cast. Her movements are crazed and frightened, fighting against the overpowering thickness of the gaudy extravagance surrounding her. The chaos of her sign language escalates as the song builds to a crescendo and the performers chant, ‘Remember me, remember me, remember me.’ The crescendo stops abruptly as Philomela screams an ear-piercing and disturbing cry. The rest of the cast remain still, staring straight ahead, with their hands across their hearts. Philomela continues to scream, and scream and scream. The lights sharply darkened to a complete blackout and her screaming continues reverberating through the darkness. She then stops screaming, abruptly drawing Part 1, Act II of *The Lost Echo* to a close.

Tremulous Lines

Tim Etchells, artistic director of the performance collective Forced Entertainment, wrote an opinion piece for the Guardian newspaper on the phenomenon of crying in the theatre relevant to a discussion of the Philomela scene. He writes,

I've seen this many times in performances by the brilliant French choreographer Jerome Bel and by the Belgian avant-gardist Jan Fabre. Both excel in creating a space of confounding contradiction which can produce extraordinary reactions.

[...] The best tears always come unbidden. No one wants to see actors with quivering lips and doe eyes making important and emotional speeches about anything. (2009).

Etchells points to the “confounding contradictions” in the work of postdramatic performance makers Bel and Fabre to demonstrate the potential in producing “extraordinary reactions” in audiences. For Etchells these confounding contradictions are far more effective – and affecting – than traditional monologues where a character cries. In the Philomela scene, we witnessed the contradiction of a traditional monologue performed in sign language and intercepted by extended silences. These contradictions were compounded by the introduction of the extravagant chorus line and the naked figures dotting the stage. Somehow, the relation between all of these elements – the story and Kosky’s auteur rendering of it – made me cry.

There are similarities in this scene and the Myrrha scene described in the previous chapter. Themes of transformation, deception, and violence figure prominently in both. Further, Kosky’s post-tragic staging of both scenes elasticised the boundaries between the Real and abstraction, nonrepresentation and representation, unlocking post-tragic affects. While in the Myrrha scene Kosky used the expulsion of fake bodily fluids in part to achieve this, in the Philomela scene he employed contrasts in rhythm and colour. Constrasting rhythms were created through the relation between the extended silences and the introduction of the music, and the colour of the extravagant, chorus line’s costumes in relation to Philomela and Procne’s black dresses. The naked bodies that dotted the stage were another contrast, as was Philomela’s signing towards the end while everyone else onstage moved through choreographic gestures while singing the song.

Massumi speaks to the affective intensity of contrasts applicable to the Philomela scene. Drawing on the work of philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, Massumi writes,

It is the packing into the event of a greater array of compossible tendential unfoldings that intensifies it. Simply put, the more contrasts are held in readiness potential, the more full of life the experience is—the more bracingly bare-active it is, the more lively, the more vital. The more surplus value of life it produces. The more ample its affective wave packet.

He continues,

It was asserted earlier that a politics of affect would be a political art [...] Art would then be the practice of packing an experience with contrasts and holding them in suspense in a composition of signs: contriving for the affective wave packet not to collapse, for an *intensive interval* (Massumi, 2015: 69-70, emphasis added).

In the Philomela scene, a correlation emerged between bodies without organs onstage and emergency's tears in the spectator. Kosky's rupture of representation through asignifying performance strategies witnessed through the silences, the screams, and the introduction of the chorus line, created the conditions for a reciprocal desubjectification in the audience to occur. The Philomela scene robbed the signifier of its power, treading the tremulous line between territorialisation and reterritorialisation through contrasts, producing an intensive interval where lachrymal effusion unexpectedly caught me. Philomela's audible scream replaced the emotive function of the music's climax, redirecting the affects of the scene to that black hole of abstraction pared open by the silences, and the silent scream, and out of the interval, emergency emerged.

The interval is a sudden emergent quality of time and space made palpable, a texture of time, a curve of the instant. If emergency does not hit you fast enough, the welling slows and stops, getting stuck in your throat. You then become aware of the feeling before it has had the chance to wash over you and you start to be conscious of your tears, or you become emotional by narrativising their meaning. You may even try to force them out. Yet the interval out of which emergency emerges has no space or time for a 'you' or an 'I'. In the lightning-fast instant of emergency's interval, the sutures of a precomposed body are quite literally sliced open and the world comes flooding in, as much as you come flooding out.

The body as self-contained and precomposed is an illusion. Post-tragedy's tears brings this illusion to the fore, birthing the body without organs. The depersonalised, desubjectified body without organs is "nothing more than a set of valves, locks, floodgates, bowls, or communicating vessels" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 169). This is also an apt descriptor of emergency's crying body in post-tragedy. The crying spectator in post-tragedy embodies the

double entendre of ‘tear’ as both 1) “[a] drop of limpid liquid secreted by the lachrymal gland” and 2) “an act of tearing or rending; the action of tearing; hence, damage caused by tearing (or similar violent action)”.⁹⁴ The crying spectator in Kosky’s theatre is produced through ruptures in representation and the tragic genre, manifest through the material rupture of the body in being moved to tears. The double entendre of tear/tear evokes those infrapersonal fissures in the fabric of spectatorial subjectivity mobilised by being moved to tears in post-tragedy.

Conclusion: The Dim Twilight of Tears

James’ conceptualisation of crying quoted at the outset of this chapter evokes infrapersonal affect in crucial ways, and operates here in stark contrast to cathartic interpretations of theatre audience’s tears by Lutz, Scheff, and McConachie, as well as historical accounts by Barthes and Cohen. The chapter has shown that the interval that James suggests tears emerge out from can be read alongside Massumi’s description of an intensive interval, where contrasts are held together artfully. The relation between representational and nonrepresentational contrasts in the Philomela scene moved me to tears. These tears were not the expression of an emotion, but the foregrounding of the post-tragic spectator as an affective constellation in ecological reciprocity with performance and the world. Kosky’s performance modalities do not operate within a solely representational milieu, and therefore, a personal identification with the story becomes disrupted. In consequence, my being moved to tears in *The Lost Echo* did not result from a mimetic relationship to the production, or an emotional connection to the story through feeling compassion for the characters. They emerged from what James Elkins describes in his book *Pictures and Tears* as “a twilight tribe of thoughts and feelings so dim we hardly know them” (2001a, 29).

Being moved to tears in post-tragedy also shows that my body is coextensive with its environment. Its layers are confused because tears are simultaneously inside and outside; they are in my eyes, on my skin, and falling to the floor. It is no coincidence that Elkins, the author of the book *Pictures and Tears*, wrote an article in the same year entitled ‘What is the Difference Between the Body’s Inside and Its Outside?’ in which he concludes: ‘The inside *is* the outside’ (2001b, 16). Being moved to tears is an erudite articulation of the body’s inside and outside

⁹⁴ ‘Tear, n. 1 and n. 2.’ *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2016.

being continuous with atmospheric dynamics. The materiality of tears implicates both the inside and the outside of the body at once. At its peak, emergency intensively, and with a little violence, propels the body to become by ‘bursting into’ tears. It is not a pleasurable release, nor is the body expunged of its contaminants as in the Ancient Greek understanding of weeping in relation to catharsis. Rather, in the Philomela scene, I experienced the “[t]he preverbal, unbound, body-oriented energy of tears” (Kramer, 2002: 69).

Post-tragedy’s tears are propelled by the intrapersonal affective excess mobilised through a breach in representation, while also being a physical bodily ‘spill’ that occurs on and through the subject’s corporeality. While the fake excretion of bodily fluids on Kosky’s stage discussed in the previous chapter served to highlight how representation buckles under post-tragic affect’s force, this chapter has considered the ‘real’ tears of the audience as another symptom of this buckling. The crying I am interested in audiences of post-tragedy is not a question of emotional tears motivated by a sympathy for a character, or tears of plight for how the scenario onstage reflects their own personal experience. Kosky disrupts the possibility of these tears occurring through performance techniques that destabilise representation and successive narrative time.

However, central to these tears’ eruption was the both/and of representation and nonrepresentation and the bleed between them. The story was unbearably moving and affecting in itself, as was Kosky’s rendering of it. His staging did not enact the rape, or the murder of Tereus and Procne’s son in representational terms. Instead, a chorus line dressed in gaudy outfits sang Dido’s Lament while moving about the stage performing stylised and synchronised choreography. Through this, I encountered the tipping point of emergency where the floodgates of subjectivity are suddenly opened and the self comes pouring out. This crying spectatorial body without organs that emerged in post-tragedy is a consequence of Kosky’s dramaturgical strategies, particularly his rupture of representation alongside representational modes. This chapter has continued to explore the relationship between a breach in representation, and the correlative breach of the self that this thesis has taken as its focus.

I do not seek to understand the significatory function of the tears I cried, although I am interested in thinking a body as sensitive, viscous translucence. My body is not a surface or a boundary; it is always coextensive with its environment. Manning writes, “The self is not contained. It is a fold of immanent expressibility” (2009, 3). The crying body oils the thin, yet persistent, discursive veil between inside and outside, muddying the premise of a spectator’s

self-contained subjectivity. It is the movement of the atmospheric conditions that these performances generate, propelling the crying body to become through emergency. This movement is contingent upon the body's insides and outsides becoming creased and folded by post-tragic affect, becoming a body without organs.

Emergency unravels perceptions of the body's containment and pre-composition. These preconceptions are more easily punctured than expected when it becomes leaky with emergency's tears. Though you may not cry, the surge of emergency carries you towards it. You may feel a lump in my throat, or a wrenching feeling in your stomach. Your eyes may water, you may feel chills on your skin. Regardless, the crying that may or may not result from emergency in a performance context complicates dichotomous notions of a body's inside and outside. The blurring of boundaries between subject/object, inside/outside occurs through being moved to(wards) tears. Shedding tears is the most excessive response to, and erudite articulation of, emergency's excess of an 'I'. The body as a smooth and contained surface bursts, quite literally bringing forth a flood. This can only happen by participating in a performance where becoming bodies – bodies without organs – are staged. Distinctions between inside and outside become foggy, where mists gather at the boundaries between body and world.

The next and final chapter of this thesis, "'I Just Closed My Eyes': Apathy, Allegory and Violence in *Women of Troy*" takes a closer look at the role of violence in Kosky's post-tragedies. Violent narratives, such as the Myrrha and Philomela myths, recur in Kosky's work, and so, too, do violent performance affects. Chapter six shows how Kosky's use of allegory and performative violence in *Women of Troy* dislodged representational performance tropes, raising the question of the relationship between an excess of affect, the rupturing of representation, and feeling apathetic in the post-tragic. It serves to show the range of responses to post-tragic affects, and how, even though I was moved to tears in the Philomela scene, other spectators may refuse to be moved by the relation between contrasts in Kosky's work. It requires a certain letting go to hover in the bleed.

6.

‘I Just Closed My Eyes’:

Apathy, Allegory, and Violence in Barrie Kosky’s *Women of Troy*

This chapter concerns how audiences in Barrie Kosky’s *Women of Troy* negotiated its images of political violence, particularly the performance’s reference to Abu Ghraib. It includes a focus on instances where spectators chose not to look at the performance. In doing so, the chapter considers the political implications of the production, and post-tragedy more broadly, with a focus on questions of ethical spectatorship. The performance, already discussed in chapter two, is returned to here in order to tie several themes together from throughout the thesis. These are 1) the relationship between representation and nonrepresentation in Kosky’s post-tragedies, 2) the role of violence and bodily excess in making representation become radically unstuck and 3) the audience’s relationship to post-tragic affects. I open the discussion with a lengthy quote from John McCallum’s Phillip Parsons Memorial Lecture delivered at Belvoir Street Theatre in November, 2010 in order to highlight the cultural politics of spectatorship in post-tragedy in an Australian theatre context.

In the lecture, McCallum raises several issues that provide context for a discussion of the politics of spectatorship in reference to Kosky's work. Situating my discussion within this broader context provides a basis for the discussion of apathy, allegory and violence in *Women of Troy* to follow. I quote from McCallum's lecture to foreground the spectatorial politics at work in Kosky's *Women of Troy*, and to consider how post-tragic affects can, at times, be blocked or remediated by spectators. Not all viewers enter into an ecology of post-tragic affects leading towards emergency; or, towards being moved to tears. In this chapter I consider the implications of these blocks or remediations in Kosky's work to explore the politics of post-tragic affect. To this end, I now quote at length from McCallum's speech:

Barrie Kosky's 2008 production of Euripides' *The Women of Troy* was one of the most harrowing nights in the theatre I have ever spent. The performance at Sydney Theatre Company was too harrowing for many: some people I love and respect refused to see it and there were apparently many walkouts every night. We're talking about a show with no interval, so walking out is a big statement.

The play is about grieving women after the fall of Troy waiting for their enslavement by the Greeks, led by their fallen queen, Hecuba. The story inspired Shakespeare in one of his most famous tributes to the power of the theatre, when Hamlet is so astonished by the Player King's performance that he exclaims, "What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba that he should weep for her?"

Kosky revisioned this great classic in brutally confronting terms, with references to the war in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay. His Chorus was a trio of bruised, bloodied and abused women, but he cut the speeches that Euripides had written for them and replaced them with beautiful music.

They were singing sublimely in the face of all this savagery, and then he had them shot.

At the end of the performance a sullenly professional prison guard, who has been packaging up the raped women into cardboard boxes and shipping them off for the Greeks' pleasure back home, takes out a gun and shoots the Chorus which has been the only source of beauty in the production. You don't kill the Chorus! You kill the protagonists, the leaders, the individuals, but in classical Greek tragedy you don't kill ordinary people.

It was a deeply shocking moment for me, because it rang so true. That's what happens in modern warfare.

I went to see it again. I took my daughter and her partner. I wanted to put people I loved through this terrible and cathartic experience, and they felt it.

And this is the point for theatre-makers. If you challenge and confront your audience in the visceral space of live theatre, if you refuse to pander to their desire to be merely entertained, then some won't come, and some will walk out, but some will be changed forever. (2010, 9-10)

As McCallum notes, there were walkouts during Kosky's *Women of Troy*. These walkouts were also observed by theatre commentators such as James Waites who wrote that about twenty people left in "dribs and drabs" throughout the performance the night that he saw it (2008). During the first of the three times I saw the performance, I do not recall people walking out. However, after I left the Wharf Two Theatre where the play was staged and walked onto the Sydney Theatre Company balcony looking out over the harbour, an impassioned discussion erupted between the people standing next to me. "That was just awful," one woman said, while another responded, "Oh, I know. I just closed my eyes and listened to the beautiful music." These comments will serve as refrains throughout the chapter, providing a springboard to discuss the complex implications of choosing not to look – whether actually or figuratively – at Kosky's *Women of Troy*, and what this suggests about the remediation of post-tragic affect in his performances.

First I will elaborate on the performance's reference to Abu Ghraib and Kosky's particular use of music and sound in order to consider why audience members may have responded to the performance in this way. This will be followed by a discussion of apathy, allegory and violence. Apathy will be theorised as a meta-feeling via the work of Sianne Ngai on 'ugly feelings' (2006) and Susan Faegin on 'meta responses' (1983). Apathy will be shown to have been socially and culturally contingent within its Australian context, where *Women of Troy* became a site through which some spectators resisted post-tragic affect and its intrapersonal potency. Instead, post-tragic affect was blocked, remediated and became a (meta)feeling, apathy. Kosky's use of allegory and violence will be shown to have contributed to this impact, while

serving to highlight the range of responses spectators can have to post-tragic affects: from being moved to tears by emergency, to closing their eyes in apathy.

When You're Smiling in Abu Ghraib

The women of Troy in Kosky's 2008 production reminded audiences of torture victims at Abu Ghraib, the military-run prison where Iraqi detainees were horrifically tortured, raped and murdered in 2003. Disturbing photographs of these events, taken by the American soldiers themselves, were leaked to the media in 2004. In *The Abu Ghraib Effect* Stephen F. Eisenman recounts how "men and women from the military treated fellow human beings with contempt and cruelty, stripping them naked, binding them, sexually abusing them, beating their bodies with fists and sticks, menacing and attacking them with dogs, killing them" (2007, 7). The wide circulation of these images in the media, over two-thousand of which still remain unreleased (Ackerman, 2014), meant that it would have been near impossible for the audience not to recognise the performance's allegorical use of the horrific events that happened there.

Like the Abu Ghraib detainees, some of the characters in *Women of Troy* stood on cardboard boxes, wore hoods, had wires tied around their ankles, and were stripped down to their underwear. Masked guards coerced the women, taking photos of them with their mobile phones, emulating the American soldiers who had done the same at Abu Ghraib. Accompanying this visual recollection were excruciating auditory elements. The soundscape was densely layered and erratic. The women sang beautifully throughout, accompanied by a pianist.⁹⁵ Sometimes they sang mournful lamentations; at other times they sang in a key that was at odds with what was happening on stage. For example, towards the end of the performance, those who had not been killed sang in a bright, major key while the sound of gunshots blasted all around them. The gunshots were so loud that the auditorium seats rattled. Although the audience member who closed her eyes referred to "beautiful music", it was rare that the beautiful parts were unaccompanied by unsettling noises, or the physical jolt created by the seat-rattling gunshots.

The tensions involved were made particularly apparent in a scene nearing the end of the performance, where the chorus (Natalie Gamsu, Queenie Van De Zandt and Jennifer Vuletic)

⁹⁵ The pianist in Kosky's *Women of Troy* was Daryl Wallace. Like Kosky in *The Lost Echo*, Wallace performed onstage throughout the production.

and Hecuba (Robin Nevin) sang ‘When You’re Smiling’, a song made famous by Louis Armstrong in the 1920s. Preceding this, Menelaus (Arthur Dignam), King of Sparta and husband to Helen, entered. Dignam portrayed Menelaus as an embittered and spiteful elderly man in an electric wheelchair. Kiernander described Dignam’s performance of Menaleus as “like Dick Cheney at the Obama Inauguration, impaired both physically and morally” (2010, 113). Upon Menaleus’ entrance, he declared that he would kill Helen “on the floor of the family home” (Euripides, 2008: 26). Following Menaleus’ declaration, the women began to sing ‘When You’re Smiling’ at the prompt of the piano. They sang the lyrics desperately, as if they were quite literally singing for their lives as a cacophony of gunshots erupted all around them.

Oh when you're smilin'
When you're smilin'
The whole world smiles with you
Yes, when you're laughin'
when you're laughin'
Yes the sun comes shinin' through
But when you're cryin'
You bring on the rain
So stop you're sighin'
And be happy again
Yes keep on smilin'
Keep on smilin'
And the whole world smiles with you

Obviously, the lyrics to ‘When You’re Smiling’ in the context of the scene were incompatible with the performance narrative. However, at the level of affect, the dissonance created by the major key, and the insistent lyrics to ‘keep on smiling’ made the women’s turmoil, witnessed throughout the production, intensify. The piano playing recalled a manic vaudeville performance, while the women continued to repeat several times over, ‘keeping on smiling, keep on smiling’ to a point where they were screaming the words. The sad irony of the women singing/screaming

these lyrics further enforced the injustice and brutality of their situation. They were like puppets being made to perform emotion in a way that pleased their captors.

The repetition of the women singing ‘When You’re Smiling’ in this scene became a cruel affirmation of the impossible. There was no way the women could smile with gunshots erupting around them and wounds all over their bodies still wet with blood. The seemingly endless reprise of the lyrics ‘keep on smiling’ was an additional aspect of their torture, where they had to keep on singing, and keep on smiling, so that they would not be shot. This repetition, this endless reprise, drew likeness with Myrrha removing her underwear in *The Lost Echo* discussed in chapter four, and Philomela’s ongoing silent scream examined in chapter five. In *Women of Troy*, the actors strained and exhausted their voices to compete with the gunshots. They sang the song loudly, over and over again. The dissonance created through contrast – in the case of *Women of Troy* through the jubilant music and the women’s turmoil – activated an affective dimension in excess of what the scene represented, albeit directly related to it.

Most cruelly of all, after all of this, the women of Troy were shot, anyway. The masked guard spared Hecuba for a fate worse than death. She was left to cradle the blood soaked body of her murdered son delivered to her in a wooden casket. As McCallum observed in his Philip Parson’s lecture, the chorus had “been the only source of beauty in the production” (10) and in killing them, the audience, along with Hecuba, was left without hope or salvation. As chapter two of this thesis showed, killing the chorus in Kosky’s *Women of Troy* underscored the nihilistic themes of the play, while exacerbating these themes within their contemporary, neoliberal performance context. This is a defining characteristic of post-tragedy. Post-tragic affects are mobilised when representation and nonrepresentation congeal, or when the gaps between them become smoothed or sutured. This was enacted in the ‘When You’re Smiling’ scene in part through Kosky’s use of anempathetic sound (Chion, 1994: 8) and acoustic violence (Schrödl, 2012).

Anempathetic Sound

As in the ‘When You’re Smiling’ scene described here, the music throughout Kosky’s *Women of Troy* provided a tense accent on the excessive violence performed on stage. This in turn complicates the chapter’s discussion of the woman who closed her eyes, and yet continued to listen to the music. In the scene, the ‘beautiful’ music added to the cruelty of the performance,

both in what was represented and how it felt. This trope has been more commonly discussed in relation to film, where it has been described by theorist Michel Chion as ‘anempathetic sound’ denoting “a scene with indifferent music [that] has the effect not of freezing the emotion but rather of intensifying it” (1994, 8). Other film theorists such as Peter Larsen (2005, 81-89) and James Monaco (2009, 238) refer to this technique as ‘contrapuntal’ music, which is “commentative, asynchronous, and opposed to or in counterpoint with the image” (Monaco, 238). Film directors notorious for their use of anempathetic or contrapuntal sound are Stanley Kubrick, Quentin Tarantino, and David Lynch (Reyland, 2009; Donnelly, 2014).

Music theorist Michael Halliwell draws a connection between Kubrick and Kosky in reference to the ‘When You’re Smiling’ scene when he writes,

the incongruity of the music and the context in which it occurs is most deliberately acute. It is reminiscent of the use of songs in Kubrick’s film *A Clockwork Orange*... and is a self-consciously estranging moment emphasizing the trope which runs through the production: the absolute banality of evil (2011, 55).⁹⁶

While for Halliwell the effect of the ‘When You’re Smiling’ scene was self-conscious and estranging, I suggest that Kosky’s anempathetic use of music and sound was an instance of representational and nonrepresentational performance modes coagulating, producing post-tragic affects. In correlation to the aforementioned Myrrha and Philomela scenes from *The Lost Echo*, music also functioned in those scenes so as not to create an estranged distance between spectator and performance. Rather, it served to foreground their affective dimensions through contrast. These post-tragic affects collapsed boundaries between representation and nonrepresentation through their relation, in turn collapsing boundaries between audience and performance, too.

Music becomes a particularly useful modality for Kosky in this respect. In the Myrrha scene, we saw masturbating clowns sing Cole Porter’s ‘I’ve Got You Under My Skin’ ejaculating blood. In the Philomela scene, a colourfully dressed chorus line erupted singing

⁹⁶ In Stanley Kubrick’s 1971 film adaptation of Anthony Burgess’ 1962 dystopian novel, there is a notoriously violent scene where the protagonist, Alex rapes the wife of a writer, F. Alexander in front of him. While he rapes her, Alex sings ‘Singin’ in the Rain’. See Eder, 2008.

‘Dido’s Lament’ while Philomela continued to sign the horrific story of her rape downstage. In *Grand Macabre* Ligeti’s “apocalyptically gorgeous” (Kosky, 2008: 52) music score was sung by the mad prophet, Nekrotzar, while he smeared (fake) feces all over his face. In *Women of Troy*, Hecuba and the chorus sang Louis Armstrong’s ‘When You’re Smiling’ in what resembled an Abu Ghraib prison. In each example from Kosky’s oeuvre mentioned here, music has had an anempathetic function. Music increases the post-tragic affects of Kosky’s performances through incongruous contrast by not logically corresponding to the narrative or what the scene represents.

In addition to Kosky’s use of music, in *Women of Troy* there was an additional aspect which, drawing on the work of German performance scholar Jenny Schrödl could be called acoustic violence (2012). Throughout the performance, gunshots seemed to erupt from every angle of the theatre without being able to locate exactly where they were coming from. This use of sound – in an award-winning design by David Gilfillan⁹⁷ – had a dissociating and startling effect. The spectator’s bodies were inevitably affected by loud noises, involuntarily jumping from the loud and abrupt blasts, shaking the seats. Hence, the audience felt the violence aurally. This use of aural violence, or what Schrödl calls acoustic violence, also played a significant part in *Women of Troy*’s post-tragic affects – and, potentially, their remediation – as I will now show.

Acoustic Violence

Schrödl defines acoustic phenomena as “music, voices, noises, and silence, or not-speaking” (2012, 80). With acoustic phenomena spanning noise and silence, Schrödl discusses the violence enacted through myriad auditory elements in postdramatic German theatre. She writes, “Because these phenomena have the quality of spreading across space and the capacity to affect and involve people physically and emotionally, they seem particularly fitted not only to representing violence but also, or especially, to producing it and making it productive as a factor of affect” (2012, 80). What Schrödl describes here is the unbound, atmospheric potential of sounds (or silence) to fill a space affectively, or rob it of its breath. Sound, she suggests, is a

⁹⁷ Gilfillan won ‘Best Score or Sound Design’ at the Sydney Theatre Awards in 2008 for *Women of Troy*. Other awards the production received included ‘Best Mainstage Production,’ ‘Best Direction,’ and ‘Best Actress’ which was awarded to Robin Nevin for her role as Hecuba.

particularly useful tool in bringing representation into question through foregrounding a performance's affective dimension.

Schrödl uses the theatre of controversial German director Einar Schleef as an example of acoustic violence. Schrödl focusses on Schleef's particularly violent use of sound in *Verratenes Volk* performed in Berlin in 2000. She writes that, "the use of arias of shouting and shrieking... often exhaust and endanger the actors" (81). In *Verratenes Volk*, Schrödl writes,

The acoustic events... seemed highly dynamic and erratic, the breaks and shifts coming on the audience as sudden and unexpected. They did not follow a logical line of development, a coherent arc or meaningful context, although neither were they spontaneous: they appeared rehearsed and artificial. This abrupt and erratic quality of the sound events effected a physical agitation among the auditors, who felt pulled to and fro between the different acoustic happenings and subjected to constant changes. (86)

Schrödl discussion of the sound's 'sudden and unexpected' quality draws likeness with the gunshots in Kosky's *Women of Troy*. Their unpredictable eruption throughout the performance were not foreshadowed by the narrative. They served as intensely affective punctuation marks. And yet it was not unlikely that guns would be blasting in the war-torn terrain to which the audience bore witness. Similarly, the sounds in *Verratenes Volk* did not progress along 'a coherent arc' because they were not directly part of the performance narrative, but contributed to its atmosphere. That the auditors 'felt pulled to and fro' also evokes the use of sound in *Women of Troy*, where the gunshots pulled the spectators awareness beyond the stage, while the action onstage also demanded their attention.

Schrödl has demonstrated that loud noises in theatre performance can cause immense discomfort for the listener (92). The ways in which the gunshots in *Women of Troy* seemed to erupt from all directions of the theatre, including beneath the raked seating of the auditorium, implicated the audience physically in the violence, too. One blogger went so far as to say the gunshots were 'deafening', describing the performance as, "a catalogue of horrors and a sensory assault on the audience" with "gunshots going off around the audience unexpectedly" (Bailey, 2008). Some commentators have noted that the performance's gratuitous use of sound distanced

them from what was represented, while others were deeply affected by what they saw (Perkovic, 2008). The affective violence of the soundscape was a crucial element in provoking either response, as traced through its affective undulations here.

Post-tragedy, as this thesis has shown, subscribes to a vision that tragedy, pain, and loss is inevitable, and that human suffering is caused by humans, not the gods. If post-tragedy highlights that this suffering has occurred ubiquitously to a point that it has reached banality, where, as McCallum describes, in modern warfare ordinary people are killed, what sort of politics is inferred by foregrounding this in the performance? And what does it mean to close your eyes in the face of it? In light of my discussion of the sound in Kosky's *Women of Troy*, what was it, exactly, that propelled some spectators to turn away?

Cultural theorist Sianne Ngai's work on ugly feelings and Susan Feagin's writing on meta responses provide some possible answers to how post-tragic affect was remediated by audiences in Kosky's *Women of Troy*. In turning to Ngai and Feagin's work in brief, I expand upon my discussion of anempathetic sound and acoustic violence. I question how elements in Kosky's work could be divorced from each other by the spectators, such that one woman chose to listen to the music but not look at the scene. As this thesis has shown, it is the *relation* between representational and nonrepresentational performance modalities through which post-tragic affects come alive. If the anempathetic function of the music and the acoustic violence in *Women of Troy* was geared towards the activation of post-tragic affects, how and why did the spectator circumvent them, and what was produced instead?

Ugly, Meta-Feelings

We recall from chapter four that post-tragic affects do not revolve around moral questions, nor are they therapeutic in medical terms like some interpretations of Aristotelian catharsis. Similarly, Ngai writes that ugly feelings offer “no satisfactions of virtue... nor any therapeutic or purifying release” (6). For Ngai, ugly feelings are amoral and noncathartic. They are “more likely to produce political and aesthetic ambiguities, than the passions in the philosophical canon” (20). For example, one of Ngai's ugly feelings, ‘animatedness’, she writes, is “a complex meta-feeling” (31) through which “involuntary corporeal expressions of feeling

come to exert a politicizing force” (96).⁹⁸ There was a politicising force to the woman closing her eyes in *Women of Troy*, too, and as such could be read as ‘a complex meta-feeling’ as a *response* to post-tragic affect. The woman who closed her eyes in *Women of Troy*, and her companion who thought it was awful, speak to the range of responses spectators may have to Kosky’s theatre of post-tragic affects. Through their responses, we see the passage from the infrapersonal to the personal actualising through meta-feelings; a feeling *in response to* post-tragic affect.

Witnessed through the ‘When You’re Smiling’ scene, as well as in scenes from his *King Lear* and *The Lost Echo* discussed throughout this thesis, Kosky produces aesthetic and political ambiguities through his activation of post-tragic affects. Post-tragic affects do not neatly fit within the philosophical cannon of grand passions, and neither can they be recognised and described in terms of emotion or feeling. Instead, post-tragic affects carve a infrapersonal passageway through which feeling may or may not become felt. In previous chapters, emergency was introduced to describe the intensification of post-tragic affects towards the spectator coming to know herself as a relational force in the theatre. Comparatively, the current chapter is concerned with how post-tragic affects can be remediated, stifling emergency, towards a new type of encounter that can be read alongside what Ngai calls ugly feelings, where “the morally degraded and seemingly unjustifiable status of these feelings tends to produce an unpleasurable feeling *about* the feeling” (10).

Women of Troy’s aesthetic dimension was marked by its co-existence of contrasting elements. This was found in the counterpoint between, for example, the vaudevillian theatricality of ‘When You’re Smiling’, and the overwhelming violence of the singing/screaming with the cacophonous gunshots. ‘When You’re Smiling’ is a light, entertaining song. It is not geared towards an intense emotional response, as is a ballad, or an aria in a minor key. However, when accompanying the violence of the scene, its anempathetic function produced, for some, the “ambivalent or even explicitly contradictory” (Ngai, 2011: 3) quality particular to what Ngai calls ugly feelings; or what Feagin calls ‘meta-responses’ (1983); or what could also be read alongside what Greg Urban calls ‘meta-affects’ (1988).

On meta responses, Feagin writes,

⁹⁸ The other ugly feelings that Ngai lists are envy, irritation, anxiety, stuplidity, paranoia and disgust.

pleasures from tragedy are meta responses. They are responses to direct responses to works of art, which are themselves painful or unpleasant. But given the basis for the direct response, sympathy, it gives us pleasure to find ourselves responding in such a manner. That is, it is a recognition that there can be a unity of feeling among members of humanity, that we are not alone, and that these feelings are at the heart of morality itself. (103).

Here, Feagin explains that in the context of tragedy, if we feel pleasure in response to feeling sympathy in viewing tragedy, the pleasure is an example of a meta response. Feagin's concept of meta responses in viewing tragedy is premised upon feeling sympathy which gives us pleasure as we are reminded that humanity is unified through compassion. The feeling of sympathy is not foregrounded in the encounter of post-tragedy. Subsequently, Feagin's notion of a meta response finds its limits for a discussion of Kosky's work. What it does show, however, is that tragedy has been predicated upon feelings that double or comment upon each other, relevant to a discussion of post-tragic affects and their associated meta-feelings in Kosky's *Women of Troy*.

Meta-affect, for ethnographer Greg Urban, is where "one emotion [...] points to or "comments upon" another emotion" (1988, 386). While Urban uses affect and emotion interchangeably, which, as noted in chapter three requires differentiation, his definition is useful for the context of this chapter. In Kosky's *Women of Troy*, post-tragic affect was sensed through, in this case, the anempathetic use of sound, and became a feeling for the woman who closed her eyes. Urban refers to this process as "the alchemy whereby affect becomes 'meta-affect'" (392). In *Women of Troy* I suggest this meta-feeling, rather, was a type of apathy, produced through the active blocking of post-tragic affect in the scene.

If the Aristotelian catharsis discussed at length in chapter four is the release of pathos, requiring one to pass through a peaking intensity, post-tragic affects never reach a singular, cathartic peak. Kosky's reorganisation of the Aristotelian arc splinters this narrative progression towards catharsis. So far this chapter has proposed that in light of *Women of Troy* and its use of music and sound, there can be meta-feelings in response to post-tragic affects. In the next section I propose that the stymied post-tragic affects in *Women of Troy* became a meta-feeling which was a type of political apathy. I suggest that this apathy was a doubling of apathy already felt in

response to images from Abu Ghraib. This discussion will show that post-tragic affect can be blocked when the spectator errs on the side of the representational aspects of the scene.

Apathy

For some spectators in Kosky's *Women of Troy* there may have been a *doubling* of apathy, where apathy felt in relation to the images of Abu Ghraib when they were first released was then doubly felt through the performance. Margueritte Johnson wrote in her article on the production that the "increasing unease in the minds of some audience members... were most likely replaying (like myself) the photographic documentation" (2010, 67-68). Johnson did not feel apathetic in her relationship to this replay. Rather, in contrast, she writes "[t]he reconstruction of the imagery of Abu Ghraib by Kosky took Euripides' play to another level, a level of postmodern anxiety and relevance" (2011, 67). However, for the woman who closed her eyes, apathy was a different kind of meta-feeling in response to post-tragic affect as I will show here.

Of significant relevance to this proposition is that apathy is the opposite of Greek tragic pathos. Pathos was the intended response to performances of classic tragedy, whereas apathy literally translates to mean 'without pathos' (Hoad, 1996: 19). In Paul Formosa's summary of Kant's notion of apathy, he writes, "we have a duty of apathy, a duty to strive to be without affects" (2011, 103). In his article, 'A Life without Affects and Passions: Kant on the Duty of Apathy' (2011) Formosa highlights that, for Kant, it is a moral imperative that affects sometimes be avoided. In order to avoid being affected, he observes, "we can gain some control over our affects through practices of habituation and reinforcement" and that "habituation is a matter of will" (99).

While what Formosa proposes sounds much like affective management boot camp, he provides some practical solutions for exercising this control. It involves "drawing our attention away from the offending feeling [...] to divert "attention from" some sensation, which has the result of dulling the force of that sensation" (100). It could be said that this is what the audience member did when she closed her eyes in Kosky's *Women of Troy*. She drew her attention away from the 'offending feeling', dulling the force of it. Other people chose to walk out, and others,

such as McCallum and myself saw it multiple times. This indicates the range of reactions to Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects.

Further, apathy in Kosky's *Women of Troy* has political implications for the Australian context in which it was staged. In Australia, to choose not to look has been metaphorically and actually rehearsed and reenacted throughout political history, with devastating effects. For example, it was not until February 2008, the same year of Kosky's *Women of Troy* performance that indigenous Australians were officially apologised to on behalf of the Australian Government (Rogers, 2011). The then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologised to the stolen generations, those indigenous children that had been taken from their families by Australian Federal and State agencies and put in foster care between 1909 and 1969 (Moses, 2011). During John Howard's eleven-year leadership from 1996-2007, the discussion around making an apology was ongoing. However, Howard vehemently refused to make one (Davies, 2008; Davidson, 2014).

Howard's eleven-year refusal to make an apology to indigenous Australians is one significant example of Australia's culture of avoidance. Kosky - demonstrating his awareness of these issues and perhaps pointing to their impact on his work – has said:

Germany has been through, without doubt, the biggest national catharsis - national therapy programme - that any country has been through in the last sixty years. Subsequently what's happened is that the Germans of my generation, or even a generation older, are very open, very knowledgeable, have been through sixty years of extraordinary guilt, pain, and very difficult things have emerged. And what has happened now is it's actually paid off, because people can talk about it openly and honestly; they don't blush when you mention the war; people can talk without shame about their grandparents who were in the Nazi Party; and people can react normally, which is, of course, what we aim for. And a perfect example of why, if you repress history in a country, you end up with what's happened here in Australia. (2004, 26).

What Kosky is referring to in this last sentence is the lack of acknowledgment of the suffering indigenous populations have undergone at the hand of the Australian Government. Taking into consideration this lack of acknowledgement by the country's second longest standing Prime

Minister, it is not unreasonable to consider Australia's culture of avoidance, or political apathy, impacting upon audiences of Kosky's post-tragedies and his dramaturgies.

If, in contrast to Johnson, the woman who closed eyes refused to look at the images of Abu Ghraib when they were first released, how does this complicate her refusal to look at Kosky's *Women of Troy*? If she did look at the images, what was it about Kosky's particular staging that made her not want to look? In turn, how does one's experience of an already mediated political event come to be remediated through seeing it in the "visceral space of live theatre" (McCallum, 2010: 10)? Could this particular spectatorial context correspond to feeling apathetic? Or was she re-experiencing apathy already felt, coming to be refelt through watching the performance? In order to approach these knotty hypotheticals, I turn to a discussion of how the Trojan War was used as an allegory for the War in Iraq in Kosky's *Women of Troy*.

To summarise the discussion so far, rather than an absence of affect, closing your eyes marks a negation of affect that *by way of its very negation* produces a meta-feeling, apathy. It also points to a possible double-feeling where apathy became twice felt in response to the images of Abu Ghraib, first in the media, and then in the live performance of Kosky's *Women of Troy*. Feeling apathetic in Kosky's *Women of Troy* has distinct political implications. These political implications are linked to Australia's culture of avoidance. Post-tragedy sometimes restages political violence allegorically, in turn restaging (apathetic) responses to political violence as a platform for critique; as propositions for future participation, and for future feeling. Walking out, or choosing to stay, are all, as performance theorist Diana Taylor suggests, their own form of intervention. She writes "'looking' is always an intervention, whether we like it, accept it, or not. Not intervening, turning away, is its own form of intervention... Our choice is how, not whether, to participate..." (1997, 264).

The next part of the chapter will examine how Kosky used allegory in the performance to think about how the past can inform perceptions in the present, and in turn impact upon future (re)actions in post-tragedy and the world. Allegory, which comes from the Greek *allēgoriā* meaning "speaking otherwise" (Hoad, 11) is endemic to classical tragedies and their reincarnations in contemporary performance. A discussion of Kosky's use of allegory in *Women of Troy* is another facet of post-tragedy that is in conversation with classical tragedy, but from which it frequently departs.

Allegory

Numerous scholars have taken up the concept of allegory in myriad ways (Copeland and Struck, 2010). In general terms it can be defined as a symbolic extension or ‘double’ of something that is not directly represented, but alluded to. Etymologically, it stems from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agoreuein* (to speak in public) (Hoad, 1996: 11), which also suggests its inherent performativity. Many theorists have emphasised allegory as an interpretive strategy (Copeland and Struck, 2010: 2). In the context of ancient tragedy, however, allegory was used as a tool to discuss politics, and for playwrights to express their (often pacifist) political views (Altena, 2005: 476; Hall, 2006). Through allegory, the past was used as a means to critique the present. Kosky engaged with allegory in similar ways in his post-tragic adaptation of Euripides’ *Women of Troy*, as will be examined here.

The use of allegory is another characteristic of Kosky’s post-tragedies that demonstrates their relationship to their classical tragic origins, along with his engagement with character, monologue and dialogue outlined in chapter two. Specifically, in *Women of Troy*, Kosky reframed Euripides’ play for a contemporary theatre audience using the Trojan War, which Euripides used as allegory for the Peloponnesian War, as an allegory for the War in Iraq. This allegorical palimpsest demonstrates Kosky’s attention to the history of tragedy’s function as a mirror to the *polis*. As Barbara Goff writes, “tragedy regularly used the Trojan War to think through the Peloponnesian War” (2009, 30). Similarly, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz notes, “Plays on the Trojan War themes that were produced during the Peloponnesian War would have gained additional meaning from the contemporary context” (2008, 59). Kosky continued this trend through his reference to the War in Iraq in his *Women of Troy*.

Martin Revermann has argued that radically transposing classical tragedies to approach contemporary concerns misreads the play, in an effort to “construct it as relevant to our emotional, intellectual and political needs” (2008, 97). Kosky’s post-tragedies, rather, locate themselves within the trajectory of the tragic tradition by expanding upon techniques originating in the source material, such as allegory. While Kosky made radical changes to the play through his auteur approach to the performance, and, as Ewans has observed Kosky and Tom Wright’s adaptation of the text was “clipped and elliptical” where “the measured cadence of Euripides’ iambics had been replaced by short sharp lines” (2011, 58), the production carried on the tragic

tradition of allegory through its reference to Abu Ghraib. Critics such as Revermann overlook the long history of allegory in tragedy used for an interrogation of contemporary political concerns. Often the plays were set within the context of wars from the past to show up the futility of wars being fought in the present. Kosky's reference to the Iraq War functioned similarly.

Over the last decade theatre and performance has witnessed a turn towards the allegorical use of classic tragedies to reference the Iraq War (Wilmer and Dillon, 2005: 22). This influx, along with Kosky's reference to the war (specifically Abu Ghraib) in *Women of Troy* raises questions about the impact of bringing a 'real life' political event into the theatre. Questions regarding the ethics of bringing the real world onto the stage have been examined at length through the work of theorists working at the intersection of trauma studies and theatre and performance studies (Carlson, 2003; Stoddard, 2009, 2013; Gluhovic, 2013; Trezise and Wake, 2013; Willis, 2014). These questions have focused on blurring distinctions between the representational and 'the Real' on stage, what Carol Martin has called a 'Theatre of the Real' that "identifies a wide range of theatre practices and styles that recycle reality, whether that reality is personal, social, political or historical" (2013, 5).

Crucially, Kosky did not restage events from the Iraq War within a representational narrative world, or use verbatim theatre. Nor did he completely overthrow the representational apparatus. He used allegory, rather, as a means to unglue time from preexisting linear succession. He complicated time by bring the past dynamically into the present through allegory, as in Phelan's conceptualisation of afterwardness discussed in chapter two. By complicating time, Kosky's use of allegory could be considered in the terms Theresa M. Kelley considers it: as "inventive, endlessly adaptive, and open to a calculus of time and change as more stable systems of representation are not" (1997, 269). Time thickened in Kosky's *Women of Troy*; it doubled by bringing reference to a political event from the mediated past into the live performance present. The contemporary double of the Trojan war flashed up again and again in Kosky's *Women of Troy*.

Through Kosky's use of allegory, a dynamic sense of time made memory returns affectively into the performance present.⁹⁹ This is best articulated by Jill Bennett when she

⁹⁹ There is a significant body of work at the intersection of theatre and performance studies and memory studies. While a detailed engagement with these contributions are beyond the scope of this thesis, the following are notable

writes, “Memory [...] is neither that possessed by the individual, or that which resides inside [...], nor that which is representational or representable (the outside); it is rather the dynamic of contact” (2005, 44). She continues to explain that that this dynamic contact between memory’s ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ “is felt like a skin”, “gnawing at the present” which creates a new encounter of that memory. One’s memory of Abu Ghraib as it came to be experienced in the performance was neither about the individual, nor the representation of it, but the dynamic relationship between all elements as they appeared. This new encounter of memory in the performance was a vital point of contact between the past and the present as a kind of affective double. The use of imagery from Abu Ghraib in Kosky’s *Women of Troy* performed this ‘gnawing,’ this tense doubling, this afterwardness, where past and present came to affectively interpolate, in turn impacting upon the audience’s relationship to the work.

The performance’s particular (post-tragic) affective intensity was in part a result of this temporal doubling, in addition to Kosky’s use of anempathetic sound and acoustic violence. Allegory complicated successive linear time, where the performance affects, and affects from the (political) past coagulated. Through this affective, cross-temporal linking, the spectator in *Women of Troy* was demanded to revisit her relationship with Abu Ghraib’s initial ‘performance’ in the media. Bringing reference to Abu Ghraib into the performance present using allegory created an uncomfortable revisiting of seeing something she never wanted to see; or, perhaps, seeing something she had already refused to look at. Allegory served as a technique to redouble feelings felt, in this case, apathy, as an affective performance politics.

Questions of allegory in contemporary performance need to consider an added dimension that would not have been of concern to Euripides. By existing in what Rebecca Schneider has called “times of theatrical reenactment” (2011) the layers of referentiality in the performance of allegory highlight that what is referenced, for example, Abu Ghraib, was always already a reenactment. What I mean by this is that for most people, when viewing images of torture and degradation such as those from Abu Ghraib, the viewer is at a twice remove from the reality of them. First, the torture was photographed by the American soldiers who enacted the violence against the Iraqi prisoners. Second, the photos circulated through other media such as

contributions on the topic: Phelan, 1997; Carlson, 2003; Taylor, 2003; Trezise and Wake, 2013; Trezise, 2014; Goodall and Lee, 2015. There are also significant contributions that make a connection between affect and memory in performance. While I take up Bryoni Trezise’s work in this area, other perspectives coming out of neuroscientific research would glean different outcomes. See Falletti, Sofia and Jacono, 2016.

newspapers, television, and the internet. Therefore, a sense of ambivalence was always inherent in these images, because they were taken for private pleasure and released to public dismay. This doubling of pleasure and pain in the reception of the images from Abu Ghraib, potentially, was also re-doubled in *Women of Troy* where there was what Lehmann has described in postdramatic theatre as “the represented pain... [and] the playful, joyful act of its representation” (2006, 166). It follows that tropes such as anempathetic sound, acoustic violence, and allegory would be employed to evoke this conflict and collision in the performance.

Expanding upon this, in her discussion of Civil War reenactments, Schneider says reenactments – particularly political reenactments – in performance “are more than ‘mere’ remembering but are in fact the ongoing event itself, negotiated through sometimes radically shifting affiliation with the past *as* the present” (2011, 32). Similarly, in theatrical allegory in post-tragedy, the past is implicated in the present and both come to be (re)experienced through the prism of the other. In Kosky’s production, the audience did not ‘merely’ remember Abu Ghraib. Its transposition into the present of the performance, *through* the ancient past of Euripides’ play demanded that the audience renegotiate their relationship with the event as “an ongoing event itself”.

This section of the chapter has turned to a discussion of allegory to consider how the Trojan War, as an allegory for the War in Iraq, functioned in Kosky’s *Women of Troy*. It has asked what allegory’s impact was and how the performance made this impact felt. While there is no definitive answer as to why people turned away from Kosky’s *Women of Troy*, this chapter considers allegory’s role as central to the mobilisation of a meta-feeling (apathy) as a remediation of post-tragic affect. Allegory’s reference to contemporary political events within the context of a classical tragic play creates particular tensions for its reception, which may lead some audiences to close their eyes, walk out, applaud, cry, etc. All of these responses have different implications for questions of post-tragedy’s politics, as I have shown here and throughout this thesis.

By turning to a discussion of allegory, this chapter has also considered how one’s relationship to a mediatised political event becomes complicated through its live theatrical reenactment, a challenge that would not have faced Euripides. Reference to Abu Ghraib in *Women of Troy* was something that was always already ‘performed’ in the media, which in turn raises additional challenges for post-tragedy’s use of allegory, as well as an audience’s response

to it. Hana Worthen and W. B. Worthen write that compared to other approaches “a more dynamic sense of the violence of allegory itself would be considerably more challenging” (2006, 157): a challenge Kosky enacted in his *Women of Troy*. Allegory is in itself violent, particularly in the instance of *Women of Troy* because it stages the act of - often painful - recollections of trauma. Memory brings the past into the present, demanding the present to continue to define itself through its (traumatic) past. As innumerable scholars have argued, trauma is by nature unrepresentable, and there are complex ethical issues in representing trauma on stage. In Phelan’s words, “trauma... is untouchable... it cannot be represented... [it] makes a tear in the symbolic” (1997, 5). Allegory does violence to the act of remembering, because we can never fully remember. Likewise, it can never do justice to the past, as the past’s affects are experienced in the present as new affects contingent upon the conditions of the new encounter.

As it has been argued so far, allegory played a significant part in calling representational performance strategies into question in Kosky’s *Women of Troy*, particularly linear constructions of time. In addition, violence in the performance also punctured the representational apparatus. Violence was at once part of the content of the play, where war and violence were central themes, and made up performance dynamics which themselves were violent in their effect. To expand upon this, I now examine how violence functioned in Kosky’s production with a focus on it being at once 1) representational and 2) that which enacted violence to the representational apparatus. I consider how violence was both part of the narrative fiction of the play, and the materiality of the performance. Such an analysis serves to suggest that Kosky used violence performatively to stretch the edges of representation by enacting *actual* violence to the bodies in the theatre, and a kind of violence in the act of remembering, as outlined in previous paragraphs. Here I explore the connection between performative violence and representation’s unstitching in Kosky’s *Women of Troy*.

Performative Violence

Theatre critic Michaela Boland described Kosky’s *Women of Troy* as “brutal, even painful” (2008). I am concerned with how performative violence functioned in the performance through it on the one hand being represented violence, and on the other performative violence, making representation quiver. Such a use of violence is best articulated using Brechtje Beuker’s

notion of ‘performative violence’ which she defines as “a form of violence that is both theatrical and real” (2007, 8). Her use of the term ‘performative’ comes from contributions to theories of performative aesthetics which are “based on the assumption that contemporary art can no longer be adequately understood by means of a hermeneutic approach and seeks to account for those dimensions that defy the symbolic order” (6). Performative aesthetics, she writes, foreground “the notion of art as an event rather than a text or finished product” (7). Beuker considers performative violence in the theatre as a process that brings the symbolic order into question. She, like Schrödl, draws on examples from contemporary German postdramatic theatre to demonstrate the function of performative violence and its defiance of the symbolic. However, the part of her definition most crucial to a discussion of how violence functions in Kosky’s post-tragic *Women of Troy* is that it is ‘both theatrical and real’.

Among the examples that demonstrate performative violence in German postdramatic theatre, Beuker, like Schrödl, also refers to Einar Schleeß’s work. She examines his 1998 staging of Elfriede Jelinek’s play, *Ein Sportstück*. She discusses how the performance both “presents and produces” violence. The scene she focuses on to explain this was a tightly choreographed ‘drill’ that included forty-two actors and lasted for more than half an hour (107). The performers repeatedly kicked and punched the air for the length of the scene. In its German context, “the performance of the athletic, healthy and white body” recalled the country’s fascist history (Beuker, 111). The scene demanded endurance from the performers and spectators alike, exhausting them through the length and repetition of the scene. This scene from Schleeß’s *Ein Sportstück* would have exhausted the performers by stretching their bodies to their limits. Likewise, the audience would have felt uncomfortable, having to endure the performers’ exhaustion, and becoming exhausted themselves from watching it. Therefore, violence was *presented* in the scene through the gestures of kicking and punching, and allusions to the Nazi regime; while it was *produced* through the exhaustion felt across bodies in the performance space. The representation of violent acts in turn became violent affects.

A similar use of performative violence with a production of violent affect can be seen in Kosky’s *Women of Troy* where violence was at once theatrical and real, presented and produced. In terms of theatrical/presented violence, the women on stage, as mentioned, had bruises and bleeding wounds all over their bodies. Presumably, these wounds were not real. Instead, the blood signified violence against the women, rather than the actor’s bodies actually bleeding. In

another instance, when Cassandra was raped by one of the prison guards, this scene was ‘theatrical’ in that she was not, of course, *actually* raped. To this end, Beuker points out that “most acts of theatrical violence are merely an illusion [...] confined to the realm of pretense” (72) for innumerable reasons, not least for ethical and legal concerns.¹⁰⁰ Instead, performative violence disturbs the clear separation between what is theatrical and what is real by being, as Beuker puts it, ‘a form of violence that is both’.

Real violence, such as that in Schleeß’s *Ein Sportstück*, was also enacted to the bodies of the spectators and the actors in *Women of Troy*. Violence to the audience occurred predominantly through the soundscape designed by Gilfillan. The sheer volume of the gunshots erupting in the theatre made the audiences’ bodies, quite literally, jump. In my experience of viewing the performance, some audience members blocked their ears. In terms of the violence endured by the actors, extreme physical demands were placed on them, too. The actors’ physical endurance drew likeness with Schleeß’s ‘drill’ scene in *Ein Sportstück*, where “the semiotic dimension of theater [gave] way to the performance of presence” (Beuker, 108). What Beuker means by this is that, “Instead of having his actors imitate pain and distress, Schleeß subjects them to these feelings” through “extreme physical and vocal efforts” (Ibid). Kosky did this in specific ways, too, one aspect of which has already been mentioned in this chapter, where the women screamed the lyrics to ‘When You’re Smiling’ in competition with the cacophonous gunshots. I will now examine other instances of violence experienced by the actors in *Women of Troy* to examine the part it plays in post-tragic affect and its potential remediation as apathy.

Packed up and Shipped Off

Performative violence and the haze it casts across the real and the representational became most acute in scenes when Jurisic, who played Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen respectively, was ‘packed up and shipped off’ to the island of Melos to be a slave to the Greeks. Each time Jurisic was packed up in cardboard boxes, whether playing Cassandra, Anromache, or Helen, she was taped tightly shut by the masked guards. These scenes stood out for McCallum,

¹⁰⁰ Beuker provides a detailed discussion of whether the ethical and legal restrictions in society apply when under the rubric of art. She turns to examples of performance from the work of Christoph Schlingensiefel, Joe Coleman and Chris Burden to elaborate.

too, recounting in his lecture that throughout the performance the guards were “packaging up the raped women into cardboard boxes and shipping them off for the Greeks' pleasure back home” (2010, 9). In the instance that Helen was packed away, the guards wrapped so much tape around the seals of the small box that it was hard to imagine how she – at once Jurisic playing Helen, and Jurisic, the actor – would be able to get out, or be able to breathe. The guards did not hurry to remove her from the stage, either, further adding to the anxiety felt for her wellbeing both as the character, Helen, and the actor, Jurisic. This both/and of the theatrical and the real foregrounded Kosky's use of violence as performative as Beuker defines it as being ‘both theatrical and real’.

Jurisic's endurance while cramped inside the boxes brought attention to the materiality of the actor's body *as well as* the character Helen within the fictional violence of the narrative. Violence in the postdramatic predominantly works against theatricality. At the other extreme, representational performance upholds it. In this sense, *Women of Troy* was not decisively on one side or the other. It was both at the same time. The post-tragic performative violence seen in Kosky's *Women of Troy* was produced by this indecipherability between the real and the representational *through* their very co-existence. It is slightly different from performative violence in the postdramatic in this sense because post-tragedy maintains representational strategies such as character, where postdramatic theatre, for the most part, does not. However, paradoxically, by maintaining these signifiatory strategies, violence was enacted to the representational apparatus. Performative violence stretched the representational paradigm in unexpected ways by bringing the ‘real’ into contact with mimetic performance tropes.

Similar emphasis was placed on the corporeality of the performer in performance art evolving out of the 1970s, bringing attention to their live presence.¹⁰¹ The physical challenge for

¹⁰¹ Certain performance artists from the 1960s and 1970s onwards excavated the slippery territory between the real and the representational by self-inflicting violence to their bodies in front of a live audience (O'Dell, 1998). These acts brought attention to the pretense of representation, overthrowing theatre's fourth wall, character, text, and other mimetic tropes to investigate the limits of the body. Such performances raised, and continue to raise, questions about the real, the representational, and the body in pain in performance. Many of these investigations into the live presence of the body in performance art in the West have roots in radical feminisms of the 1970s. Feminist performance art luminaries such as Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramovic, Yoko Ono, Orlan and Gina Pane all sought to pierce the surface of their skin – some literally, others not – to question social constructions of the female body. In an Australian context, most famously, performance artist Mike Parr has used his body as his experimental material, literally elasticizing his own flesh, with performances that have had their own set of political implications (Cox, 2015: 109-138). In 1972, Parr created a series of performance-based ‘instructions’, one titled *Let a friend bite into your shoulder until blood appears* which he performed with his friend Peter Kennedy (Marsh, 2003: 197-198). In his 2003 performance, ‘Democratic Torture,’ Parr broadcast himself sewing his lips shut over a webcam, and

Jurisc in the scene draws correlation with these modes. In sum, as I have suggested, *Women of Troy*'s violence was at once fictional and actual; theatrical and real; fake and authentic. This stresses the both/and of performative violence in the post-tragic. It does not stress presentation over representation, or vice versa, though it straddles both. The actual violence against the spectators and the actors' bodies in Kosky's *Women of Troy* brought 'the Real' into the swell of the narrative fiction which in turn loosened the strictures of its representational enclosure.

The tightrope walk between the real and the representational, in comparison to its complete nullification in performance art, is closer to the way performative violence functioned in Kosky's *Women of Troy*, and post-tragedy more broadly.¹⁰² Through the *actual* violence to the actors' and the spectators' bodies through sound and physical endurance in *Women of Troy*, the audience's role was subsequently destabilised. This spectatorial destabilisation could have led

allowed spectators to perform electric shocks to his body over the internet (Cox, 2015: 123). These performances by Parr partially served to highlight the role of the spectator, and question whether audiences were complicit in the violence performed, or actively critical of it. Along similar lines, Beuker uses the example of a 1981 performance by Joe Coleman "in which he broke a bottle on his forehead, ignited explosives attached to his body, bit the heads of mice, threw snakes at the audience, and finally threatened the audience members with a shotgun, making them flee from the theater hall" (76). In Coleman's performance, the violence transgressed the bounds of any falsity, becoming frighteningly real to the point where the audience felt their lives were threatened. The performative violence in Kosky's *Women of Troy*, however, muddled clear distinctions between what was real and what was fake in the performance. In the performance art examples, the 'real' completely disavowed representation and 'imitations' of violence. The blood drawn from Parr's friend's shoulder was also real. Violence in performance art can cause actual damage to the body, where scars can remain as corporeal traces on the skin of the performer; fleshy reminders: an embodied archive of sorts (Küppers, 2007). Performative violence in post-tragedy treads the line between the real and the representational more delicately than in the examples from Coleman and Parr

¹⁰² For instance, in Kosky's *The Lost Echo* some performers were required to be onstage performing scenes that required significant endurance for the length of the eight-hour production. Tiresias played by John Gaden was on stage for the entire performance, and was one of the older actors cast. He demonstrates this casting and subsequent endurance required of his actors as a trend across Kosky's oeuvre. He writes,

the presence... of highly respected veteran actors, most of them well into their sixties or older [...] were a series of actors who had first made names for themselves in the theatre profession in the 1960s: John Gaden and Peter Carroll in *The Lost Echo* [...]. [T]he older actors were required to endure onstage situations which might be regarded as humiliating: John Bell as King Lear shuffling around a barren waiting room in a pink nightie holding a large carpet bag from which he distributed rubber dildos; John Gaden and Peter Carroll cavorting in the toilets cross-dressed in satin ball gowns with huge skirts in Act Three of *The Lost Echo*, and in Act Four stripped to their underpants and wandering aimlessly around a stage almost empty of coherent reference... All these are appropriate images for the worlds in which the productions were set, and they are startlingly original and powerful examples of theatrical action closely related to their dramatic situations, but at the same time the image of humiliation feels alarmingly disrespectful when practised by and on the bodies of some of the living national treasures of the Australian theatre. (Kiernander, 2010: 112-113).

Here Kiernander expresses the tension between the both/and of the performance violence where he observed the theatrical validity of Kosky's casting choices, while feeling alarmed at the apparent disrespect to the actors' bodies and reputations outside of the performance.

some audience members to think it was ‘awful’, and caused others to walk out, or close their eyes. In *Women of Troy*, their role as an audience within the context of a fourth-wall theatre performance was made unclear through the both/and of performative violence: by being at once theatrical and real.

The bleed between the real and the representational through post-tragic performative violence, and the subsequent destabilisation of the role of the spectator, is discussed in a different context by theatre scholar Erika Fische-Lichte. In her book *The Transformative Power of Performance* (2008) she describes the process of similar transitions between modes of spectatorship as “perceptual shifts between the order of representation and the order of presence” (157). She continues, “The aesthetic experience here is largely characterized by the experience of destabilization, which suspends the perceiving subject betwixt and between two perceptual orders” (Ibid). Performative violence, belonging at once to regimes of ‘representation’ and ‘presence’, or in Beuker’s terms, the ‘theatrical’ and the ‘real’, brings the spectator ‘betwixt and between’ two different ‘orders’ of perception: one pertaining to actuality, the other to dramatic fiction. These two perceptual orders interpolated in Kosky’s *Women of Troy* already demonstrated through the Helen/Jurisc scene, and the ‘When You’re Smiling’ scene.

Conclusion

The use of allegory and performative violence in *Women of Troy* dislodged representational performance tropes, raising the question of the relationship between an excess of affect, the rupturing of representation, and feeling apathetic in the post-tragic. *Women of Troy*’s use of violent allegory not only highlighted the audience’s complex complicity in watching performed violence violently performed but also reminded the viewer that they have seen these scenes before and are looking at them again, anew, meta-affectively. As noted by Johnson, the scenes from Abu Ghraib were being allegorically replayed, where, upon Hecuba’s entrance the audience saw “a photograph that metamorphosed into a moving image” (67). Likewise, the anempathetic music and acoustic violence functioned to create a rupture between signficatory elements in the production.

This chapter has proposed that in Kosky’s *Women of Troy*, affect once felt came to be refelt through political allegory and performative violence. These affects were communicable

through those spectators who turned away from it. As I have argued, the refeeling of apathy already felt in response to images of torture from Abu Ghraib was restaged as a meta-feeling through the performance. These responses were physically articulated through the walk outs, and the woman who closed her eyes. Apathy in these instances was a meta-feeling in response to post-tragic affect because it marked a response to apathy already felt, that came to be refelt as an affective double.

Kosky's use of allegory emphasised this minor affective doubling, where the past and the present came to potentially intersect. This potent intersection provided grounds upon which events of political violence could be considered, in Schneider's terms, as ongoing events in and of themselves. The ongoingness of the past in the performance present, and the after-affects of these events, carry with them the potential for a refeeling/thinking of our role as spectators in witnessing images of political violence and our responses to them; images which we are always already implicated in through the act of looking.

This chapter has also argued that remediating post-tragic affect as a meta-feeling, apathy, is symptomatic of wider apathetic practices in the Australian political landscape. However, Kosky's particular staging of Euripides' *Women of Troy* created a forum for the restaging of affective responses to images of political violence in a variety of ways through his use of performative violence and allegory. These tropes, including his use of anempathetic sound, worked towards a self-reflexive spectatorship and a platform for socio-political critique. McCallum pointed to this in his lecture when he said, "some will walk out, but some will be changed forever." This change, I suggest, is towards a more critical engagement with our responses to images of political violence in the social, where reactions are no longer apathetic, but suffused with an urgency to act.

This chapter has shown that post-tragic affect becomes remediated when the representational aspects of a scene outweigh, for the spectator, their nonrepresentational counterparts. This marks the process of post-tragic affect's infrapersonal intensity becoming enveloped by a spectatorial subject through feeling as a meta-response. In this chapter, such feeling was observed as a kind of apathy in *Women of Troy*, though other examples may be

infinite.¹⁰³ The political potential in post-tragic affects, and in allowing the nonrepresentational and representational to bleed, is what enables the spectator to feel the future as difference, rather than blocking post-tragic affect's infinitesimal multiplicity. In blocking post-tragic affect, its political impact is stymied. The spectator forecloses the possibility to critically (re)feel neoliberal apathy as a proposition for social change.

CONCLUSION

The Politics of Barrie Kosky's Theatre of Post-Tragic Affects

This thesis has taken as its focus the work of Australian-born theatre director Barrie Kosky. It has focussed on Kosky's radical adaptations of classical tragedy staged in Australia in

¹⁰³ For one, a spectator I spoke to said that his mother cried during the Philomela scene. She said she was enormously impacted by the scene because 'Everytime We Say Goodbye' was the wedding song of her and her late husband. In this instance, the remediation of post-tragic affect may have transduced to become personal grief.

the 1990s and 2000s, to develop a theory of post-tragedy. The thesis has shown that post-tragedy is influenced by postdramatic theatre. More specifically, post-tragedy foregrounds themes of nihilism, splintering tragedy's successive progression towards the catharsis of pity and fear in the spectator. Rather than feelings of pity and fear, I have introduced post-tragic affects as a way to think about how the boundary between audience and performance unravels in Kosky's work. Drawing representational and nonrepresentational performance tropes into relation is what activates post-tragic affects in Kosky's theatre, agitating the boundaries between self/other, inside/outside, body/world. I have proposed that the various foldings, smoothings-over, or explosions of these dualities in Kosky's theatre enact a radical critique of neoliberal subjectivity. I elaborate upon this aspect of Kosky's work here, to more explicitly unpack the political dimensions of his theatre.

In chapter two I posed some key questions that have been explored throughout this thesis. I return to these questions here in order to frame a discussion of the politics of post-tragedy. These questions were: What was the purpose of Kosky's adapting tragedy during the 1990s and 2000s? What propelled Kosky's particular dramaturgical decisions in adapting these plays and how did these decisions take shape? How did Kosky's socio-political and theatrical concerns manifest through the contemporary adaptation of classical tragedy, and why were the plays' nihilistic themes pertinent to their contemporary socio-political context? In returning to these questions here, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the socio-political dimensions of Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects.

In Australia, John Howard's prime ministership from 1996-2007 set in motion a defiantly neoliberal climate. Kosky's productions emerged at a time where there were increasing tensions in Australian society related to neoliberal ideology. Stratton points out in his book, *Uncertain lives: Culture, Race and Neoliberalism in Australia*, that one aspect of this was the (re)emergence of a white nationalism. He writes, "the exclusionary order generated by neoliberal nationalism, based in Australia's traditional and overlapping heritages of Britishness and whiteness, became the recourse of a dominant group, identified during the era of multiculturalism as Anglo-Celtic" (5). As Chapter One of this thesis makes explicit, Kosky did not situate himself within an Anglo-Celtic frame of performance in Australia. This in part led to the diverse cultural references employed in his work with his Jewish-Australian theatre company, the Gilgul. These cultural references were carried across in his later productions.

Refusing to participate in narratives and economies of Anglo-Celticism and whiteness in Australian theatre is part of the politics of Kosky's post-tragedies. Chapter Two of this thesis shows that Kosky employs modes such as intertextuality in his post-tragedies to trouble a definition of his work in terms of nationalist discourse. These dramaturgical strategies resisted the nationalism of Australia's neoliberal policy, such as the closing of borders to refugees.

Further, and perhaps more significantly, Kosky's post-tragedies resist representational hegemonies. In this sense, they draw likeness with the political dimension of postdramatic theatre, discussed by Lehmann in the final chapter of his book. By operating outside of a representational paradigm, the politics of post-tragedy, like the politics of postdramatic theatre, is apparent through its "*suspension* of normative, legal and political modes of behaviour" (Lehmann, 2006: 175). In other words, it becomes political "precisely to the degree in which it interrupts categories of the political itself" (Lehmann, 2006: 179). In Kosky's post-tragedies, we bear witness to scenes that operate in excess of representation. It is through this excess that there is a proliferation of post-tragic affects. When these post-tragic affects intensify, we encounter emergency. Emergency infrapersonally primes us to imagine a world different to that we already know by enabling a rethinking of our subjectivity as not self-contained but relational.

By encountering a theatre that is radically different from, and yet still in conversation with contemporary culture and politics, a "politics of perception", or "aesthetics of response-ability" (Lehmann, 2006: 185) can emerge. Lehmann explains postdramatic theatre's politics of perception and aesthetics of response-ability in the following terms:

Instead of the comforting duality of here and there, inside and outside, it can move *the mutual implication of actors and spectators in the theatrical production of images...* (2006, 186: emphasis original)

Thus, a theatre of post-tragic affects is political precisely because it can break down the boundaries between spectator/stage, inside/outside, subject/object. Through this breakdown - this emergency - the world can be reimaged and rethought. In representational paradigms of performance, we are exclusively glued to a grid of pre-existing subjectivities, pre-existing injustices, and pre-existing ways of knowing the world. In Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects, representational performance strategies co-compose with non-representational ones. In turn,

cracks are made in our perceptions. Through these cracks, new ways of thinking, feeling, living and knowing can shine through.

Informed by an analysis of Kosky's theatrical practice, the thesis has shown that post-tragedy foregrounds themes of nihilism. These themes are inherent in the play texts, and are exacerbated through Kosky's post-tragic dramaturgies. Kosky's dramaturgical procedures have been observed across select productions, beginning with *King Lear* and *Women of Troy* in chapter two. Both productions reveal Kosky's interest in tragic plays that already call into question Aristotle's tragic narrative arc. Kosky extends these ruptures through his auteur dramaturgies, such as omitting certain characters from the production, and having violent murders and rapes performed onstage accompanied by the incongruous soundtrack of classical and pop music.

Scene's from Kosky's *The Lost Echo* examined in Chapter Four and Five also reveal the violence of Kosky's dramaturgies: a violence that is at once representational in narrative terms, and nonrepresentational in terms of its force. The stories of Philomela and Myrrha taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are violent and sinister, and Kosky's approach to staging them highlights post-tragedy's propensity to stage ruptured bodies, or, drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, bodies without organs. These corporeal ruptures are part of the narrative *and* enacted through the performances. Character's bodies leak, explode, and pare themselves open, emptying the body of significations towards becoming bodies without organs. These leaky, asignificatory bodies without organs impact upon the post-tragic spectator in specific ways: in ways that I suggest are markedly political.

In emptying character's bodies, however momentarily, of their signifiers, the spectator enters into a dynamic reciprocity with the action on stage. Through this exchange, the body is experienced as something beyond a self-contained human subject. This unboundedness of the spectatorial subject in post-tragedy reaches its peak in emergency. The apotheosis of emergency in post-tragedy, Chapter Five argued, is being moved to tears, where affect's intrapersonal half-second comes to materialise on and through the spectator's body. This material troubling of bodily boundaries becomes literal in this encounter of emergency's tears, where tears at once come from inside my body and drip outside of it. Stirred by intrapersonal affect, rather than emotions evoked through identifying with the onstage characters upon which classical tragedy is

predicated, post-tragedy creates the conditions for an experience of performance that is in excess of personal identification, and does so as a type of politics.

Again, how is this political? Chapter five showed that emergency can culminate in the experience of being moved to tears, whereas chapter six showed how post-tragic affects and their intensification in emergency can be stifled through their remediation, becoming meta-feelings. I have proposed that the affective-political dimension of post-tragedy in performance promotes intense, incongruous feelings of ambivalence. You are touched or moved by the performance's ability to refract the affects of the contemporary moment through the classical tragic past and confronted with the timeliness of nihilism.

Chapter six argued that emergency's flipside is apathy, operating through embodied responses to post-tragedy that have already – nonconsciously – been rehearsed in the social. This dialogue between post-tragedy's politics, and politics in the world, articulates the potential for post-tragedy to operate, paradoxically, as a type of utopia. In Jill Dolan's words, "live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world" (2005, 2). The meta-affective re-rehearsal of political affect enables spectators to examine the role of affect in our daily lives within a neoliberal climate. These propositions open up a critical space for the theorisation of adaptations of classical tragedy in contemporary performance outside of traditional reception theories.

Kosky's work serves as a benchmark in Australian theatre that introduced radical, auteur adaptations of tragedy to the contemporary stage. This thesis has shown that Kosky's post-tragedies responded to certain political dynamics in Australia. They created ruptures not only in the fabric of the Australian theatre milieu, but also in the ways bodies come to feel-through the world, and to refeel the world through the theatre. This politics was at once at the level of representation and nonrepresentation in the Kosky productions examined in this thesis. For example, his dramaturgical approach to *Women of Troy* was clearly a scathing critique of war, contemporary refugee politics, and the oppressive hegemonies that accompany them. However, what I have been concerned with throughout this thesis is how these signifiers signify, at the same time as they are used to produce an affective spectatorial experience in excess of signification. Kosky engages specific dramaturgical procedures to achieve this: what I have called Barrie Kosky's theatre of post-tragic affects.

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