

S K E N È

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

12:1 2026

What About Medea's Children?
Euripidean Issues and Contemporary Transformations

Edited by Anna Chiara Corradino, Massimo Fusillo, and Marta Lietti

SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

Founded by Guido Avezù, Silvia Bigliuzzi, and Alessandro Serpieri

<i>Executive Editor</i>	Sandra Borghini.
<i>General Editors</i>	Silvia Bigliuzzi, Gherardo Ugolini.
<i>Editorial Board</i>	Chiara Battisti, Anton F.H. Bierl, Simona Brunetti, Camilla Caporicci, Sidia Fiorato, Sotera Fornaro, Massimo Fusillo, Felice Gambin, Alessandro Grilli, Chiara Lombardi, Leonardo Mancini, Michele Marrapodi, Stefania Onesti, Nicola Pasqualicchio, Antonietta Provenza, Susan Payne, Cristiano Ragni, Antonio Sánchez Jiménez, Alessandra Squeo, Alessandro Stavru, Emanuel Stelzer, Savina Stevanato, Martina Treu, Gherardo Ugolini, Antonio Ziosi.
<i>Managing Editors</i>	Valentina Adami, Emanuel Stelzer.
<i>Assistant Managing Editor</i>	Marco Duranti.
<i>Editorial Staff</i>	Chiara Battisti, Petra Bjelica, Francesco Dall'Olio, Serena Demichelis, Carina Fernandes, Sidia Fiorato, Beatrice Righetti, Carla Suthren.
<i>Typesetting</i>	Eduard Andar, Elisa Maria Perconti, Giada Preziosi, Cristiano Ragni.
<i>Advisory Board</i>	Anna Maria Belardinelli, Enoch Brater, Jean-Christophe Cavallin, Richard Allen Cave, Rosy Colombo, Claudia Corti, Marco De Marinis, Tobias Döring, Pavel Drábek, Paul Edmondson, Keir Douglas Elam, Ewan Fernie, Patrick Finglass, Enrico Giaccherini, Anna Giust, Mark Griffith, Daniela Guardamagna, Stephen Halliwell, Robert Henke, Pierre Judet de la Combe, Eric Nicholson, Guido Paduano, Franco Perrelli, Didier Plassard, Donna Shalev, Susanne Wofford.

Copyright © 2026 S K E N È.
The Journal is a CC-BY 4.0 publication
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)
SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
<https://skenejournal.skeneproject.it>
info@skeneproject.it

Edizioni ETS
Palazzo Roncioni - Lungarno Mediceo, 16, I-56127 Pisa
info@edizioniets.com
www.edizioniets.com

Distribuzione
Messaggerie Libri SPA
Sede legale: via G. Verdi 8 - 20090 Assago (MI)

Promozione
PDE PROMOZIONE SRL
via Zago 2/2 - 40128 Bologna
ISBN: 9788-8467-7636-5
ISBN (pdf): 9788-8467-7635-8
ISSN 2421-4353

Contents

What About Medea's Children?

Euripidean Issues and Contemporary Transformations

Edited by Anna Chiara Corradino, Massimo Fusillo, and Marta Lietti

ANNA CHIARA CORRADINO, MARTA LIETTI – <i>Introduction</i>	7
GIULIA SISSA – <i>Why the Children? Euripides's Medea in Context</i>	23
SOTERA FORNARO – <i>A Tragic Way of Killing Children: Euripides' Medea</i>	43
BERND MANUWALD – <i>The Silent Children. Their Dramatic Role in Euripides' Medea</i>	63
DANIELA SACCO – <i>Medea's Children: a "Dialogue with the Dead". On Milo Rau's Play</i>	77
RAFFAELLA VICCEI – <i>Medea & Sons: Studio su Medea. Capitolo I, II e III directed by Antonio Latella</i>	97
FRANCESCO MOROSI – <i>Medea am Spinnrade. Federico Tiezzi and Mephistopheles in Siracusa</i>	115
ANNALISA SACCHI – <i>The Child Who Remains: Tragedy, Childhood, and the Refusal of Disappearance in Societas Raffaello Sanzio</i>	139

Miscellany

SILVIA BIGLIAZZI – <i>Male and Female Gazes: Constructing Subjectivity in the Romeo and Juliet Story</i>	157
JANICE VALLS-RUSSELL – <i>Λονδῖνι Κάτοπτρον, that is, Speculum, more plainly, Londons Mirroure': Thomas Heywood's 'Small Greek' Inflections in His Civic Pageants</i>	185
SOFIA PEDRONI – <i>Translating Sophoclean Heroes: Seamus Heaney's What Passed at Colonus and Testimony: The Ajax Incident</i>	207

Special Section and Critical Notes

GIACOMO FERRARI – Philipp Lammers, Juliane Vogel, and Christina Wald (eds), <i>Tragedy as a Travelling Form: Itineraries from Thespis to Today</i> . London: Bloomsbury, 2025	225
VICTORIA BLADEN – Alys Daroy and Paul Prescott, <i>Shakespeare, Ecology and Adaptation</i> . London: Bloomsbury. The Arden Shakespeare, 2025	233
UMBERTO COSTANTINI – William H. Stefen, <i>Anthropocene Theater and the Shakespearean Stage</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023	241

ANNALISA SACCHI*

The Child Who Remains: Tragedy, Childhood, and the Refusal of Disappearance in Societas Raffaello Sanzio

Abstract

This essay examines the structural role of childhood in classical tragedy and its radical reconfiguration in Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Tragedia Endogonia*, focusing in particular on the episode *B.#03 Berlin* (2003). In Greek tragedy, the child occupies a paradoxical position: indispensable to the tragic economy yet deprived of agency, voice, and futurity. Through feminist and ethical readings of *Medea* (Rabinowitz, Foley, Belfiore), the article reconstructs how the elimination of the child functions as a formal mechanism through which tragic time secures closure by extinguishing futurity. Against this background, the article argues that *B.#03 Berlin* intervenes not at the level of narrative or ethical revision, but at the ontological foundations of tragic form. By placing a child at the centre of the stage and refusing her disappearance, Societas suspends the tragic logic of necessary loss. The child's persistence disrupts the compressed temporality of tragedy and introduces a different regime of time, one that resists teleology, sacrifice, and closure. Through close analysis of the performance's scenic dispositifs – auditorium reconfiguration, domestic procedures, fairy-tale resurrection, and the use of Benjamin Britten's *Cuckoo!* – the article shows how *B.#03 Berlin* stages a futurity that is neither symbolic nor redemptive, but ontological. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben's notion of "the time that remains", the article concludes that childhood in Societas's work does not represent the future but exercises it, preventing tragic time from sealing itself into destiny. Ultimately, rather than offering a contemporary rewriting of *Medea*, *B.#03 Berlin* exposes and disables the tragic machine itself, opening a theatrical space in which time no longer knows how to end.

KEYWORDS: Greek tragedy; childhood; tragic time; Societas Raffaello Sanzio; infancy; disappearance

* Iuav University of Venice - asacchi@iuav.it

- Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo
What do you do?

- In April, I open my bill
In May, I sing night and day
In June, I change my tune
In July, far far I fly
In August, away I must...

Benjamin Britten, *Cuckoo*

1.

Tragic time requires, for the work to be accomplished, the disappearance of the child. In Euripides' *Medea*, the children remain resolutely decentered: they never speak, they never intervene, and they die beyond the visible space of the stage. From the offstage *oikos* – that interior par excellence which is unrepresentable – come the cries that mark the limit of what tragedy allows to appear. The entire tragic economy depends on this absence: the children must die so that Medea's singular and terrible power of action may emerge in its full purity; their silence constitutes the negative space within which the mother's voice – and, more broadly, the structures of desire, betrayal, and necessity that govern the adult world – can be articulated.

The work of Societàs Raffaello Sanzio, *Tragedia Endogonia* (2002-2004), begins where tragedy ends. In *B.#03 Berlin* (2003), the third episode of the cycle, a young girl is placed at the center of the stage, fully visible and radically exposed. A body that seems to be abandoned, devoid of life, yet one that we will see return. Her survival interrupts the tragic metabolism that converts loss into meaning. The gesture of Societàs eschews shock and dramatic reversal, instead composing an event that produces an ontological shift, beginning from radical questions: what happens if the child remains? What changes if the future refuses to close?

To grasp the scope of this gesture, I will attempt to reconstruct the hermeneutic framework that has historically naturalized the disappearance of children in tragedy. *B.#03* emerges indeed only against the background of a form that has always required the erasure of the child, a form grounded in a profound asymmetry between the adult voice and infantile silence.

Critical work over the past forty years, from feminist analyses of motherhood and exchange to ethical studies of *philia*, has clarified the structural logic of this asymmetry, showing how the tragic child functions at the very center of the genre's conceptual architecture. Though working from different perspectives – feminist political economy of exchange within the polis, ethical philosophy,

and performance-oriented feminist classical scholarship – Nancy Rabinowitz (1993), Elizabeth Belfiore (2000) and Helene Foley (2001) together map a conceptual terrain in which the child emerges as a pressure point that reveals the ethical, political, and structural logics of tragedy.

As Nancy Rabinowitz has shown, women and children occupy structurally analogous positions within the economy of exchange of the polis, circulating as values through which political relations among adult men are negotiated. In this framework, the child is neither a narrative accessory nor a psychological subject, but a structural operator whose fate is determined in advance by the reproductive and symbolic economies that sustain the city.

Helene Foley's reading of *Medea* sharpens this insight by foregrounding maternity as the point at which domestic affect and civic constraint collide. The children function here as what Foley terms "moral indices" of the *oikos*: their presence registers the fracture of the household – the rupture of domestic bonds that occurs when maternal affect and civic necessity enter into irreconcilable conflict – without ever possessing the power to redirect its course. What Foley makes visible at the level of performance and affect thus articulates, from within the dramatic action, the same mechanism – the subordination of the child's body to the structural requirements of the polis, whereby maternity is produced as the site of political control rather than autonomous relation – that Rabinowitz identifies at the level of political economy.

This logic reaches its most radical formulation in Elizabeth Belfiore's analysis of *philia*, where the killing of a kinsperson – particularly a very young one – emerges as tragedy's limit case. Infanticide marks the point at which narrative surplus is eliminated and tragic form reveals its fundamental logic of rupture, the logic by which tragedy resolves its internal tensions through sacrifice rather than reconciliation or transformation, extinguishing the future so that the tragic present may assert itself as necessity.

Read as a field of forces, these studies converge and reinforce one another. What emerges is not a linear genealogy but a structural constellation in which the child appears as the site upon which domestic affect, political economy, and ethical collapse intersect. Childhood thus functions as a structural operator: the mechanism through which tragedy secures its intelligibility by sacrificing futurity, extinguishing the promise of continuation so that the tragic present may come into view.

It is precisely this structural function – domestic, civic, and ethical at once – that certain contemporary works have begun to interrogate and, in some cases, to destabilize. Directors and playwrights such as Simon Stone, Kate Mulvany, Anne-Louise Sarks, and Milo Rau (see Stone, *Medea*, Toneelgroep Amsterdam, 2014; Mulvany and Sarks, *Medea*, Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, 2012; Rau, *Medea's Children*, NTGent, 2023) have brought children to the foreground, given them voice, or placed them at the center of the stage. In

some cases, the child's perspective becomes the axis of the dramaturgy; in others, the scenic architecture is reorganized around them. Medea's children thus move from the margins of representation to its core, at times literally occupying the center of the stage, or functioning as narrators, or becoming the plastic measure of contemporary discourses around care, vulnerability, and violence.

Within this broader movement, the work of Societas Raffaello Sanzio stands apart decisively. While directors such as Stone, Sarks, and Rau reposition the child within the narrative and ethical economy of tragedy – amplifying the children's voice, shifting dramatic perspective, or relocating the tragic action in contemporary contexts – their interventions remain, in formal terms, revisions of the tragic structure rather than a challenge to its foundations. Castellucci has never staged *Medea*, nor does *B.#03* offer a narrative or symbolic rewriting of Euripides' plot. Instead, the company undertakes a more radical operation: it touches the very structure of *Medea*, the ontological foundations of the tragic machine. By inserting a child whose presence is irreducible – non-linguistic, non-psychological, non-narrative – Societas overturns the tragic axiom that the child must disappear. In *B.#03*, the child persists. Her body remains where tragedy demands absence, withdrawing from any diegesis or recognizability and configuring itself as the force that disarms the tragic logic of necessary loss. The child thus exercises the possibility of a future, thickening the present and refusing closure.

Before arriving at *B.#03*, however, we must return to what tragedy does – and undoes – to the child.

2. The Tragic Paradigm of the Death of the Child

Within the architecture of Greek tragedy, the child occupies a paradoxical position: indispensable to the dramatic economy and yet deprived of ontological weight. The child's exclusion from agency constitutes one of the formal conditions through which tragedy operates. Positioned on the threshold between *oikos* and *polis*, children absorb the consequences of adult actions without ever being authorized to redirect them. They register the effects of conflict, betrayal, and rupture, but they cannot intervene in their course. Their dispossession is the mechanism through which tragic necessity asserts itself.

It is necessary to specify that the *oikos* in Greek tragedy never designates merely a material space nor exclusively a symbolic structure. The *oikos* is at once the house as a physical place – the domestic interior that remains invisible to the stage – and the house as lineage, as genealogical and reproductive continuity.

For this reason, the removal of children into the space of the *oikos* does not concern merely a scenic choice or a convention of representation, but an operation that acts simultaneously upon space and time. The domestic interior is the place where the child's body disappears from view, but it is also the place where lineage is severed. Medea's infanticide, relegated offstage, does not eliminate only a corporeal presence: it interrupts the temporal continuity of the *oikos*, closing off the very possibility of an after.

The child embodies that which has not yet entered the social order: a life not fully inscribed within law, language, or exchange. By eliminating the child, tragedy resolves its own internal contradiction. The future is extinguished so that the present may appear as the configuration of necessity.

Tragic closure is accomplished through a specific operation over time. In Paul Ricoeur's analysis of Aristotelian *mythos* (1984), time becomes intelligible only through «*emplotment*»: an act of configuration that gathers dispersed events into a meaningful whole. Tragic time, in this sense, is not measured but produced. It emerges from a sequence that advances inexorably toward necessity, excluding everything that cannot be integrated into its form.

The logic of this configuration, in turn, is inseparable from crisis. Tragedy stages moments in which social, ethical, and symbolic orders enter into contradiction, producing an excess that cannot be resolved through deliberation or reform – a crisis that demands sacrifice. The child marks the point at which this excess becomes irreducible: a figure of futurity that cannot be assimilated into the present order without undoing it. Infanticide thus appears not as an aberration, but as a tragic solution – an act that resolves the crisis by eliminating the future it threatens to open. Through the child's sacrifice, tragic time restores coherence to the present and seals itself against what might come after.

The spatial organization mirrors this temporal compression. Just as tragic time excludes duration, repair, and consequence, so tragic space excludes exposure, persistence, and corporeal residue. Time must end, and the body – through which time might continue – must vanish from view. This double operation concerns the very way in which time itself is produced as intelligible. Everything that exceeds this configuration – everything that cannot be reduced to end, fulfillment, or catastrophe – must be eliminated if time is to appear as such.

3. Childhood as Ontology: Children, Animals, and Becoming-Minor in Societas Raffaello Sanzio

Within the landscape of European experimental theatre, Societas Raffaello Sanzio occupies a position that is at once central and oblique, precisely because

of the way it has treated childhood as a generative condition of theatrical existence. The child appears neither as a character nor as a symbol, but rather as a presence that precedes language, resists psychological legibility, and destabilizes the hierarchies through which adult theatre generally organizes meaning. Childhood functions here as a hermeneutic disturbance: a force that interrupts narrative continuity, mastery, and interpretive control.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Societas developed a sustained engagement with childhood through performances, schools, and workshops – including the Scuola Sperimentale di Teatro infantile and productions such as *Buchettino* (1995) and *Pelle d'Asino* (1996). These practices constitute a continuous field of experimentation in which theatrical form is recalibrated through exposure, contingency, and non-mastery, and in which childhood shapes rehearsal processes, alters perceptual economies, and deterritorializes professional norms.

Societas' attention to childhood constantly intersects with a parallel vocation toward the non-human, the machinic, and in particular the animal, understood as presences and powers capable of destabilizing the Western apparatus of representation. Children and animals (and, to a different extent, machines) in fact share a pre-symbolic position: bodies that appear without representing, that act without performing, that affect space without producing intentional meaning. In works such as *Le favole di Esopo* (1992), *Buchettino* (1995), and *Pelle d'Asino* (1996), this proximity becomes a dramaturgical resource, insofar as it operates beneath the symbolic, suspending the interpretive reflexes of the adult spectator.

What is thus at work is a theatre of becoming-minor. Minor, here, does not designate immaturity or marginality, but rather a mode of existence that withdraws from mastery, representation, and teleological development. The presence of the child and the animal opens a line of flight through which the stage slips out of the dominant regimes of representation, virtuosity, and narrative coherence. What emerges is not an alternative discourse, but subtraction itself: a theatre that refuses mastery and exposes itself to what cannot be governed.

The absence of language is crucial in this regard. *Infans* – literally “the one who does not speak” – names a position outside the symbolic order through which theatre typically distributes agency and meaning. Residing beyond language, the child blocks the mechanisms that organize hierarchies and psychological legibility on stage. The theatrical machine is thus forced to recalibrate itself around presence, duration, and materiality, rather than meaning.

Societas's prolonged engagement with the fairy tale provides a concrete model for this operation. In works such as *Buchettino*, fairy tales are treated as architectures of literalness, in which objects signify nothing beyond their

bare factuality, and actions produce states rather than meanings. The scale of perception shifts, and interpretation yields to exposure. One may think, in this sense, of *Buchettino* (1995), a performance based on Charles Perrault's fairy tale *Le Petit Poucet*, in which Societas Raffaello Sanzio constructed a theatrical dispositif grounded in the radical subtraction of visibility. The spectator, lying in a small bed inside a darkened wooden structure, was exposed to an entirely acoustic dramaturgy that suspended representation and reactivated childhood as a perceptual regime. The fairy tale was inhabited as an experience of vulnerability and dependency, while childhood emerged as the condition through which theatre reorganizes itself, anticipating that logic of presence, literalness, and non-mastery that will reappear, in radical form, in *Tragedia Endogonia*, where Societas challenged the very structure of tragic necessity.

4. *Endogonia* Against Tragedy: Persistence Without Teleology

Tragedia Endogonia occupies a crucial position in the artistic trajectory of Societas Raffaello Sanzio because it approaches tragedy not as a historical genre, but as a formal logic. Conceived as a cycle of eleven works created in ten European cities, the project produces a system of internal mutations in which each episode begins from the residue of the previous one. Yet, no episode resolves, completes, or fulfills what precedes it.

The term *endogonia*, borrowed from microbiology, refers to organisms that reproduce by internal division rather than by external fertilization. This biological model is used structurally to organize a form of generation without genealogy, a proliferation without origin, a continuity without inheritance. Applied to theatre, it displaces the teleological logic that governs classical tragedy, in which events unfold toward recognition, catastrophe, and closure.

The tragic form, in its canonical configuration, depends on necessity. It advances toward an outcome in which meaning crystallizes through loss: someone – generally the hero – must be eliminated for the tragic present to stabilize. *Tragedia Endogonia* rejects this economy. To tragic progression, it opposes mutation; in place of resolution, it affirms persistence; instead of sacrifice, variation. What matters is what continues to transform, the force that circulates among things and figures, among images and sounds, between stage and auditorium.

This reconfiguration of tragic logic does not remain confined to dramaturgical structure. It immediately affects the conditions of spectatorship. In *B.#03*, the displacement of tragic necessity is enacted even before any action unfolds on stage, through a radical reorganization of the theatrical gaze itself.

The episode was initially created for the Hebbel-Theater in Berlin, whose auditorium was radically reconfigured for the performance. The stalls were entirely occupied by rows of anthropomorphic plush rabbits at life size, seated where the audience would typically be. Human spectators were displaced from the center of the hall and relegated to the balconies, forced into a peripheral and elevated position.

This redistribution of bodies did not serve a narrative or allegorical function. The rabbits did not 'represent' innocence, childhood, or sacrifice. Instead, they operated as a dispositif of vision: by replacing the human audience with animal figures of comparable scale and posture, the performance installed a mode of seeing detached from interpretation, judgment, and response. The auditorium itself became an extension of the stage – a space populated by silent, non-human witnesses whose fixed gaze mirrored and displaced that of the actual spectators.

The human spectator, expelled from the central axis of vision, became acutely aware of their own position as observer: the gaze no longer occupied the normative center from which meaning is produced and judgment issued; it was marginalized, decentered, rendered secondary. Within this reconfigured auditorium, the presence of the animals, though openly fictional and even anthropomorphic, altered the management of tragic violence. The animal-spectators diverted the regime of circulation of violence without absorbing or justifying it, thereby creating a zone in which intensity was no longer oriented toward recognition or resolution. The stage thus ceased to organize itself around a process of comprehension and redefined itself as a space of exposure. What appeared was offered as a presence to be endured, in its resistance to any narrative or symbolic integration. The opening image of *B.#03* presented a domestic interior reduced to its most elementary configuration: a room, a bed, and the body of a young girl lying motionless, fully visible, exposed without mediation to the spectator's gaze. The child did not perform death; instead, she occupied a state of suspension between life and inertia, anchoring the entire visual field. From the outset, the scene established an imbalance of forces: a radically vulnerable body placed at the center of a space governed by adult procedures.

A woman entered the room; as spectators, we assumed that her evident familiarity with the space and with the child designated her as the mother. She wore thick rubber kitchen gloves, the kind associated with labor and the domestic maintenance repertoire. Her gestures were devoid of pathos and appeared instead methodical, repetitive, and affectively opaque. The scene unfolded without escalation, without emotional cues, without narrative justification.

The presence of the gloves was decisive. Unlike forensic latex gloves – which would have situated the action within a framework of crime or investigation –

the kitchen glove, designed to protect the hand while handling heat, dirt, and risk, interposed itself between skin and skin, staging a radical transformation of maternal contact. The mother did not touch the child; she handled her as the glove converted proximity into procedure, relation into operation.

At times, the child's body was dragged by the legs by the mother across the floor, always mediated by the gloves. The action was disturbingly ordinary: its violence did not lie in excess, but in neutrality. Care and harm appeared as contiguous gestures within the same domestic logic, where the scene rendered visible a form of operational detachment in which the child's body was treated as something to be managed – perhaps concealed – rather than cared for.

This configuration resonates with feminist readings of Greek tragedy that have exposed the domestic sphere as a site of obligation rather than intimacy. In these analyses, the maternal body is never purely private or affective, but already embedded in systems of function, exchange, and ethical demand. In *B.#03*, this inscription is stripped of narrative frames and moral explanations. What appears is not a fall from maternal love into violence, but their unsettling continuity. The glove formalizes the guilt, marking the point at which care becomes indistinguishable from procedure.

The presence of a hammer further destabilized the scene. The object was neither used nor its function explained. It remained suspended within the domestic space as a mute index of potential violence, an intrusion that contaminated the ordinary with the threat of irreversibility. Meaning was produced less through action than through exposure, as the hammer did not strike, yet it reorganized the perceptual field by introducing a dimension of irrevocability.

In classical tragedy, as we have seen, the killing of children acquires its force through removal. Infanticide takes place offstage, beyond representation, marking the point at which *philia* collapses into an unrepresentable rupture. Castellucci inverts this structure. Violence is no longer hidden; what remains opaque is its meaning. The rupture of *philia* is displaced from the act of killing to the persistence of a gesture that cannot be reduced either to care or to hatred. No psychology is offered, no motivation. What takes shape is a cruelty without spectacle: a physical operation performed upon a body, emptied of symbolic redemption and moral framing. The scene exposes the tragic paradigm's mechanism by refusing its primary condition: disappearance.

5. After Tragedy: Futurity Without Closure

The final movement of *B.#03* unfolds behind a white gauze curtain that suspends the scene in a condition of distance and temporal delay. Space

appears filtered, as though held in abeyance, no longer fully accessible to the logic of the preceding domestic scene. Beyond this membrane, a procession of fairy-tale figures enters the stage: large, shaggy, benevolent creatures carrying a small white coffin. The transformation of the environment is abrupt, yet not narrative.

From a side wing, a tree branch enters the visual field, upon which a crow is perched, holding a wedge of cheese in its beak. The reference to the fable of the crow and the fox introduces an additional layer of narrative debris, as though the scene were assembling incompatible textual genealogies: the Grimm corpus, Aesop, North European animism.

The coffin is placed at the center of a small, fenced enclosure, a toy-like clearing that simultaneously evokes multiple fairy-tale strata: Snow White's glass coffin, the enchanted forest of *Sleeping Beauty*, the protective architectures of children's tales in which death is both present and indefinitely deferred. The landscape is almost entirely white – snow, wood, horizon – except a single black crescent moon suspended above and, at the back of the stage, a tall hooded figure seen only from behind, holding a staff. This figure does not intervene, judge, or console. It establishes a vertical axis within the composition: a mute transcendence, indifferent to the destiny unfolding below.

At first, the coffin remains inert, a white mass amid a white surround. Then a faint phosphorescent glow gathers along its edges. The lid is lifted from within, and the child slowly emerges – not in response to a rite or a command, but with the hesitant gestures of someone waking. She remains seated for a while, suspended in silence, still wearing the white nightgown from the previous scene. The image lingers. Time does not advance; it hesitates.

Only after this interval does sound return to the stage. Benjamin Britten's *Cuckoo!* begins, a delayed response that does not bring the child back to life, but arrives late, as though the world of sound were resuming after a pause, recalibrating itself to a presence that precedes it.

Cuckoo! is part of *Friday Afternoons* (1933-1935), the cycle Britten composed explicitly for children's voices within a pedagogical context: these pieces privilege repetition, collective participation, and recurrence over development or virtuosity. *Cuckoo!* in particular draws on a traditional children's rhyme that follows the cuckoo's call through the months of the year, tracing a simple seasonal cycle of appearance, variation, and disappearance. Its temporality is rhythmic rather than progressive, cyclical rather than teleological.

This temporal logic stands in stark contrast to tragic time. Where tragedy advances toward an irreversible catastrophe and closure, the temporality evoked by Britten's piece marks a return, coiling into a cycle. The cuckoo appears, alters its call, departs, and returns again. In *B.#03*, this rhythm finds a precise scenic analogue. The child's emergence from the coffin neither

denies death nor resolves the violence that preceded it. Instead, it suspends finality by introducing another temporal regime into the scene.

The child stands, dances lightly atop the coffin, then crosses beyond the enclosure. Approaching the gauze curtain, she gestures toward the crow perched on the branch; the bird opens its beak and drops the cheese. The fable of the crow seduced into relinquishing its prey further insists that this is a world governed not by tragic necessity, but by arbitrary rules, deceptions, and exchanges. Yet unlike classical fairy tales, in which such rules ultimately restore moral order, Castellucci's fable refuses any closure: the child does not retrieve the cheese, daylight breaks, snow falls, but nothing is recomposed. The mother remains exiled in grief; the daughter's survival does not annul the crime that precedes it. The child then returns to the coffin and closes the lid over herself as one would pull up a blanket, with a domestic gesture devoid of emphasis or funerary reference.

Behind her, the hooded figure has changed: the cloak is now white, blending into the snow that begins to accumulate onstage. The transformation does not announce redemption or transcendence. It marks a shift of state, not an ending.

The sequence accumulates multiple forms of resurrection – fairy-tale, liturgical, theatrical – without stabilizing any of them, thus allowing the child's persistence to be neither symbolic nor sentimental, but ontological, a form of exercising futurity. Her presence thickens the present, refusing the tragic demand for closure, with a final image that neither resolves the preceding scene of domestic violence nor redeems it.

What *B.#03* accomplishes can thus be fully understood only at the end of the trajectory traced thus far. The performance does not intervene in tragedy by correcting its ethical orientation, amplifying its emotional registers, or redistributing narrative agency. Castellucci does not 'respond' to *Medea*, nor does he rewrite the Euripidean plot. *B.#03* instead operates on the conditions that make tragedy possible in the first place. It intervenes where tragic logic is most rigid, at the point where time must close, space must withdraw the vulnerable body from view, and the child must disappear for necessity to crystallize.

In *The Time That Remains* (2006), Giorgio Agamben describes a temporality that is neither chronological succession nor eschatological fulfillment, but a time that persists alongside fulfillment without coinciding with it. It is not the time that comes after the end, but the time that interrupts the logic of the end itself. Such a temporality does not orient action toward a future goal; it suspends the relation between time and teleology. Read through this lens, the child of *B.#03* inhabits a time that remains. Her presence does not deny death, nor does it restore what has been lost. Instead, it prevents time from closing. The child thus remains not as promise but as pressure: a force that

dislocates the present from its claim to necessity. Tragic time seeks to harden the present into destiny by extinguishing what exceeds it; *B.#03* shows what happens when this extinguishing fails.

This remainder is irreducible to representation. It cannot be converted into a narrative repair, an ethical lesson, or a symbolic reconciliation. The child does not ‘signify’ futurity; she exercises it by refusing to disappear. In this sense, childhood appears not as a metaphor for what is to come, but as a mode of temporal resistance. It is the site where time survives its own closure. What remains is neither tragedy nor its negation, but a theatre in which time no longer knows how to end.

6. Conversation with Romeo Castellucci

The following conversation with Romeo Castellucci accompanies the preceding analysis as a parallel line of inquiry rather than as evidentiary support. Conceived as a critical dialogue, the interview revisits key questions raised by *B.#03* Berlin – infancy, exposure, silence, and the suspension of tragic time – from within the artist’s own conceptual lexicon. Rather than offering interpretive confirmation, Castellucci’s responses reopen the problem of tragedy at the level of form, presence, and gaze, allowing theory and practice to intersect without converging. The interview thus functions as a second register of thought, in which the ontological stakes of infancy are articulated through the material logic of the stage.

ANNALISA SACCHI I would like to begin by situating historically the way in which the question of childhood runs through your work. This is evidently not a ‘theatre for children’, but rather a theatre that has interrogated childhood as a problem of the stage, of language, and of presence. In this sense, it seems important to exclude from the outset any autobiographical reading, even in those cases in which your own children appeared on stage. One example is the second act of *Genesi*. *From the Museum of Sleep* (2000), entitled *Auschwitz*, where six children are present on stage.

ROMEO CASTELLUCCI The fact that my children were there has nothing to do with autobiography. I deeply distrust biography, and even more so autobiography. In that case, however, it was truly the only possible way to confront that word: *Auschwitz*. I could do so only with my own children. I would never have had the courage to ask someone else’s children to stand on stage beneath the radioactive light of that name.

In *Genesi*, the children were not there to represent the young Jewish deportees. There was no intention of illustration or historical

reconstruction. The children were not characters – nor are they ever in my work. There is always a gap, and their presence is grounded precisely in that gap. The stage was white, their costumes white, their skin whitened with greasepaint: the white did not signify an absence of vision, but rather the sclera, and their bodies as larval bodies.

AS ...the part of the eye that does not see – so a white connected to blinding, rather than to absence.

RC Exactly. The children were tone-on-tone with the background, completely one with it; they were themselves the background. A sclera that does not see representation yet is capable of signifying the unrepresentable. Their presence made visible the very limit of seeing. Too much light. In that context, childhood introduced a threshold beyond which language could no longer speak.

AS And yet childhood enters your theatre before *Genesi*. I would like to return to the early phases of the work of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio, not in order to read the presence of childhood retrospectively as a conscious anticipation, but to understand what it meant, at the outset, to introduce a child's body on stage: what kind of presence it was, and what kind of disturbance it produced within representation.

RC Yes, it enters earlier. Looking back, I believe the first appearance of a child on our stage was in *Santa Sofia*. It was a girl of five or six years old, my niece Elisa. It was a scene of extreme violence – needless to say, simulated – in which Elisa was beaten by Claudia Castellucci, who played Leo III the Isaurian, the Byzantine emperor and iconoclast who ordered the destruction of all icons. In this drastic scene, Leo struck the child because, according to him, she represented the body of the West. Probably, on another level, the child was struck because she represented what she was: the threat posed by infancy itself.

A child on stage is, first and foremost, a child, not a character. The child remains a child, despite the script. A fundamental anthropological gap. A wrong body that disrupts discourse. It is an obstacle, and for this reason, in *Santa Sofia*, the child was sacrificed on a truck tire. This is a constant: the child is never a character, but neither does the child represent innocence, although, by definition, the child is always innocent. The function is different. The child is the apostle who speaks the power of not-speaking: a presence that produces a collapse through which language spins in place and reveals itself for what it is – the law of a nation.

AS Starting from these early appearances of childhood, I would now like to turn to *Tragedia Endogonia*, a project that approaches tragedy not as a repertoire of texts, but as a historical form and a structural logic. Within the cycle, many canonical elements of classical tragedy are

clearly recognizable – the city, the chorus, language, unity, the relationship between stage and polis – yet at the same time the work seems to move against tragedy, rather than within it. In this sense, I wonder whether the entrance of childhood into *Tragedia Endogonia* is tied to the history of the Societas, or rather to the fact that the child is precisely what classical tragedy excludes.

RC The two things overlap. *Tragedia Endogonia* was never conceived as a revision or a restoration of classical tragedy. There was no philological intention whatsoever. I would say that it was, instead, a critique of tragedy. Such an operation is possible only by assuming a barbaric form of thought, a loss of memory. The idea of reconstructing the ‘true spirit’ of tragedy is an immense folly; and yet Attic tragedy has handed down to us an invincible form – the canon of the canon, so to speak.

The Greek matrix (here, evidently, I am speaking for us as Westerners) succeeded in duplicating life by giving verbal form to the abyss of silence over which the hero leans. The tragic, in fact, precedes tragedy itself. It is a source that continues to pour forth, and around which one can work only through the prism of deconstruction.

AS In this work of critique – or ‘denaturalisation’ – of what we know and expect from tragedy, two presences come into play that the tragic tradition has historically expelled from the stage: the child and the animal. I would like to ask you to dwell on this point, not in symbolic terms, but in relation to the function these figures perform in destabilising the tragic dispositif and the institution of representation itself.

RC I have worked with what the tradition excluded from the outset: the animal and the child. The animal disappeared from the tragic stage because tragedy itself arose precisely on the ashes of sacrifice. Attic tragedy was born as a radical critique of sacrifice once it had become incomprehensible, and ultimately as a critique of the gods themselves. One could therefore say that the animal returns to the stage, alive, in order to reclaim what belongs to it: being what it is. Being.

The child, in the same way, is an element of contradiction. The child bursts onto the stage as one who cannot speak, and is therefore alien to the terror of the tragic. It is no coincidence that, in the Western theatrical tradition, one is warned against bringing a child or an animal on stage, because they would inevitably overshadow the actor. Rightly so.

They are monarchic figures that return to the stage – frenzied presences capable of awakening what is proper to theatre through a gap, capable of subtracting ground from tragic representation in order to reveal its essence, which – paraphrasing Franz Rosenzweig – is an abyssal silence. Children and animals, far from being trained, cause the

institution of tragedy to spin in place, precisely where it would like to present itself as the 'reason of the Chorus', as the confirmation of civilisation.

AS Over the course of *Tragedia Endogonidia*, the introduction of the animal makes particularly visible a dimension of unpredictability and risk that runs through your work, in which the stage seems to open itself to what cannot be governed. What role does this openness to chaos play in your understanding of the tragic stage?

RC When one decides to welcome an animal onto the stage – since it would be incorrect to say 'to work with' an animal – one does not ask it to perform a number, or to do something specific. One asks nothing. Only that it 'enter', if it so wishes. One accepts that something may not happen at all, or may happen in a way entirely different from what had been anticipated. In this sense, the animal represents an access to chaos, or even its occasion.

It is a threat to representation, a breach that opens in the fabric of fiction. Through that rupture, the representational function discharges itself, collapses. The animal looks at the stage, but its gaze does not belong to our world. Its gaze judges ours.

AS This collapse, in fact, seems to concern not only the stage, but also the spectator's gaze. On several occasions you have said that tragedy is not something to be seen, but a way of seeing. I would like to ask you to clarify this point, also in relation to the presence of the child and the animal.

RC The tragic is not a catastrophic event or a misfortune, but a way of seeing all things. Tragedy, understood as an aesthetic discipline, is a technique for bending the gaze, and it does so as if with an iron bar. With the entrance of the animal and the child, this condition becomes evident. Theatre is revealed as a place devoid of message, devoid of discourse, even devoid of meaning. There is no pedagogy, no 'right thing' to say. Theatre is necessary precisely because it is useless. It is mute form, where form is the only possible discipline. Everything else – content, political message, the compensation of victims – is, for me, entirely without interest, insofar as it is condescending toward an audience that is already in agreement.

AS Within this dispositif, the entrance of childhood produces a further collapse. For example, in the fourth episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia*, created in Brussels, the stage is a white marble room, at the centre of which stands an infant, a very young child who has not yet learned to speak. I would like to ask you to dwell on this presence in terms of a scenic event: what happens to the spectator when childhood enters the stage in this way?

RC The child is the absolute monarch – irreducible, indifferent. In *BR.#04 Brussels*, the child is there, exposed, doing nothing. He inaugurates his own time – which is new – and his own space – which is new. A mute presence, an unconscious judging judge. Powerful in impotence. Eloquent in the obstinacy of his silence.

AS This impotence becomes particularly acute when the child enters a state of distress. I ask you this because, on the occasions when I have seen and re-seen the work, at a certain point the child – alone and exposed – begins to show signs of discomfort, even to cry, and the audience falls into a condition of growing embarrassment. The child is there, very close; we could do something to interrupt that distress, but we remain glued to our seats, or we leave the theatre irritated. The spectator knows that intervention would be possible – one step would suffice – but all space and all time are occupied by the form of the scene. This contradiction produces a sensation of radical impotence.

RC I received very harsh accusations, even from friends. Many spectators described that scene as unbearable, and there was no shortage of rejection or insults. I understand these reactions, even though they cause me pain. But I believe that if a scene produces discomfort, it means that shame is at work. The shame of looking is, moreover, fundamental and constitutive. It is a direct relation to the responsibility of the gaze, which, on a stage, is always a kind of theft. The scene forces the crucial question: *is it legitimate to look at what I am looking at?*

AS And this shame does not concern theatre alone, but the way in which we daily accept not to intervene, to remain passive. In this sense, several episodes of *Tragedia Endogonia* in which children appear seem to bring to the surface something that theatre often tends to remove: its violent, sacrificial origin. I want to ask whether, for you, the infant's presence on stage contributes to making this dimension visible.

RC Yes. The stage should return to what it is: a dangerous place. Theatre overcomes sacrifice, but the amnesia of this transformation lingers in the air. With an infant seated at the centre of the stage, in absolute silence and in a time that feels like waiting, the violent origin of theatre reveals itself in filigree.

AS It seems important to emphasize how this dispositif functions very differently from other works, in which the spectator's discomfort and shame are constructed through a long dramaturgical progression. I am thinking, for instance, of *On the Concept of the Face of the Son of God*, where tension builds gradually. In *BR.#04*, by contrast, with the presence of the infant – or in *B.#03*, with the return of the child – everything seems to happen immediately.

RC Yes, this is a fundamental difference. In *The Concept of the Face*, a large dramaturgical maneuver was necessary, like a logarithmic curve that bent the human drama as if drawn taut by a bow. With the infant, by contrast, there is neither a before nor an after. It is immediate and punctual. The presence of the child – like that of the animal – requires no preparation. The scene is put into crisis from the very outset.

AS It is starting from this experience of immediate collapse that, within *Tragedia Endogonia*, the final episode, *C.#11 Cesena*, introduces a significant variation, since in that case too the child is killed. Yet, unlike in Berlin, the child does not seem to return.

RC Yes, in *Cesena* the child was probably abducted. There is an apparent narrative, a kind of very rarefied and opaque noir plot. A child is kidnapped and taken away from their mother. This produces an important difference with respect to Berlin or Brussels. There, the child was present, exposed; in *Cesena*, instead, the child was elsewhere. He was no longer there.

AS But in *Cesena*, does the child return?

RC Yes, he does not simply disappear. At a certain point, in the midst of a forest, a hitman – after killing the child – seems to sever his head from the rest of the body. But what returns into the mother's hands is no longer the child's head: it is the head of a cat, with eyes wide open. They are eyes that see the scene of the adults. It is therefore not correct to say that the child in *Cesena* disappears. He returns in another form.

AS This return in animal form seems to shift the problem of the gaze even further. It is no longer a human gaze, nor a recognizable face. What function does this animal gaze have for you when it returns in place of the child?

RC This return is neither catharsis nor reconciliation: it is the pierced gaze of the dead looking out from elsewhere – the gaze of Medusa.

AS In *Cesena*, but also in other works, childhood and animality seem to intertwine without ever becoming metaphors for one another. I would like to ask you to clarify the relationship between these two figures: what kind of continuity exists between them?

RC Between childhood and animality, there is osmosis, but we might also imagine a passing of the torch. The animal and the child share a double condition: they are without language and unreachable by it. Language cannot redeem them, and this is the message they hurl at us. In the linguistic battle that the stage has always presupposed, animals and children are the prophets who open the way to the tautological and endocrine struggle of language within language.

AS This return, however, does not open onto a promise or a future. In my essay, I have attempted to read Berlin as an interruption of tragic time,

rather than its resolution. I would like to ask you to clarify this point: what relationship do you see between childhood, return, and futurity?

RC The child does not represent the future. This is a modern idea, but a false one. The child, like the ghost, is a force that returns from the past. When one speaks of futurity, at most one is speaking of a time that is always present, not of the promise of what is to come, always deceptive. There is no salvation in the future. But theatre opens onto another time: the time of the possible, which is at once a time in potency and a factual demonstration. The unheard-of force of theatre lies precisely here: the possible is realized before the spectators, eyewitnesses to this event, a bulwark against the absolutism of reality.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. 2006. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (2000), translated by Patricia Dailey. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- 1993. *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (1978), translated by Liz Heron. London and New York: Verso.
- Belfiore, Elizabeth S. 2000. *Murder Among Friends: Violation of Philia in Greek Tragedy*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Guidi, Chiara, and Annalisa Sacchi. 2015. *Minimo Theatrum* (Secondo quaderno di Puerilia). Cesena; Edizioni Societas.
- Foley, Helene P. 2001. *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Kelleher, Joe, Nicholas Ridout, Romeo Castellucci, Claudia Castellucci, Claudia, and Chiara Guidi. 2007. *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mulvany, Kate, and Anne-Louise Sarkis. 2015. *Medea: A Radical New Version from the Perspective of the Children* (after Euripides). London: Oberon Books.
- Pitozzi, Enrico, and Annalisa Sacchi. 2008. *Itinera: trajectoires de la forme*. Tragedia Endogonia, photographs by Luca Del Pia, preface by Romeo Castellucci, translation by Jean-Louis Provoyeur. Arles: Actes Sud.
- Rabinowitz, Nancy S. 1993. *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*. Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1984. *Time and Narrative, vol. 1* (1983). Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press.
- Sacchi, Annalisa. 2014. *Shakespeare per la Societas Raffaello Sanzio*. Pisa: ETS.