

Metaphor of Sound - Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus*

Eli Rozik

Volume 35, numéro 2-3, 2015

La sémiotique du son : vers une architecture de l'acoustique et de l'auralité dans le théâtre post-dramatique. Tome I
Semiotics of Sound: Toward an Architecture of Acoustics and Aurality in Postdramatic Theatre. Tome I

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1051072ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1051072ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association canadienne de sémiotique / Canadian Semiotic Association

ISSN

0229-8651 (imprimé)

1923-9920 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Rozik, E. (2015). Metaphor of Sound - Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus*.
Recherches sémiotiques / Semiotic Inquiry, 35(2-3), 131–144.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1051072ar>

Résumé de l'article

L'adaptation faite par Lee Breuer de *Oedipe à Colone* de Sophocle, intitulée *Gospel at Colonus* (*Évangile à Colone*), est à la fois une tentative de synthèse entre la tragédie grecque antique et le service religieux pentecôtiste, et un mariage d'expressions culturelles propres à l'Europe de race blanche et à l'Amérique afro-américaine. Face à cette expérimentation, il ne s'agit pas de s'interroger sur les intentions de Breuer, mais plutôt d'étudier ce qui en résulte. Or, en manipulant des styles d'expression déjà reconnus, ce résultat tient à la nature inédite de la fusion proposée. Rejetant une approche herméneutique qui, dans les circonstances, nous paraît problématique, nous prendrons pour point de départ une sorte d'intuitionnisme informé. Notre hypothèse est que le traitement de la tragédie de Sophocle par le biais de la musique "gospel" lui accorde une dimension métaphorique supplémentaire qui s'additionne à la métaphore du texte d'origine. Notre étude vise à élucider le jeu de ces métaphores en considérant la dimension sonore introduite par l'adaptation de Breuer.

Metaphor of Sound - Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus*

Eli Rozik
Tel Aviv University

Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus* is a bold attempt to achieve a synthesis between an ancient Greek tragedy and the black Pentecostal church service, constituting a mixed marriage between white and black idioms. In regard to this experiment, the key question is not, I believe, Breuer's intentions, but rather the actual results in the work itself. Indeed, in experimenting with the combination of culturally established styles of expression, the result depends on the nature of their actual and unprecedented interaction. Therefore, a hermeneutic inquiry is rather problematic and perhaps only a learned intuition is possible as a starting point. Nonetheless, I conjecture that rendering the narrative of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* through the prism of Gospel music bestows an additional metaphoric dimension on the original play-script. It is the intention of this study to elucidate the nature of these metaphoric dimensions *on the level of sound*, and their mechanism of interaction.

This study presupposes that a fictional world is a comprehensive description of the spectator's psychical state of affairs, which should explain the his deep involvement in the characters' actions and fates. Nonetheless, the inherent difference between any fictional world and the spectator's world precludes the perception of the former as a literal description; therefore, for such a text to make sense it requires the principle of "metaphor". Indeed, metaphor is the only kind of description through which *apparent impropriety results in utter propriety*. Furthermore, if the description of a fictional world is an overall meta-

phor, any component that is proper to the basic characterization of its dramatic personae and situations pertains to its fundamental metaphoric structure, and anything that is improper to it constitutes an additional metaphor grafted upon the basic one; *i.e.*, the joint result is an overall mixed metaphor. I contend that in this production Gospel music is employed in such a metaphoric capacity. In other words, Lee Breuer's staging of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* is an overall mixed metaphor of Saint Oedipus' death.

A Theory of Stage Metaphor

In order to substantiate the claim that, in *Gospel at Colonus*, the element of Gospel music fulfills a metaphoric function, a sound theory of stage metaphor and its possible dramatic function is required.

Any attempt to establish a comprehensive theory of metaphor, which equally applies to verbal and nonverbal metaphors, should start from the theory of verbal metaphor. This decision does not imply that metaphor is of verbal origin. It merely presupposes that, in contrast to the theory of stage metaphor, the verbal framework has developed since antiquity and achieved valuable insights into the nature of metaphor. Nonetheless, the mere use of "metaphor" for both verbal and theatrical contexts presupposes the intuition of a shared structure and a shared mechanism of generating meaning.

a) *Verbal metaphor*: The modernist approach to verbal metaphor has made a significant contribution; in particular, it brought about a paradigmatic shift in the classic theory of metaphor, which had been widely and uncritically accepted for more than two millennia; e.g., Aristotle's *Rhetoric* & Quintilian's *Instituto Oratoria*. Classic theory posits a predicative deep structure of double reference; for example in the proposition "Richard is a gorilla", reference is made to both 'Richard' and 'gorilla', and a literal comparison is expected to be made between the two. In contrast, modernist theory suggests a predicative deep structure of single reference: only to the referent represented by the literal subject of a metaphor; e.g., 'Richard' (*cf.* Beardsley 1958; Black 1962 : 233ff & 1988 : 28). Indeed, metaphor only seems to indicate double reference, but if double reference were the case, in contrast to common experience, the interchange of the syntactic functions would not affect its meaning; e.g., "this gorilla is Richard" or rather "is human" (*cf.* Henle 1958 : 190).

The starting point of my discussion will thus be the modernist approach, with only one qualification: this approach will be questioned should it fail to contribute to a comprehensive theory of metaphor, including stage metaphor. The following paragraphs recap the main tenets of the modernist theory of verbal metaphor, relevant to this endeavor:

- 1) Metaphor should be seen as a standard means of predication (description of referents and/or their phenomena, whether real or fictional), and as an alternative to literal predication.

- 2) Metaphor reflects a deep structure of single predication that underlies the generation of all its surface structures.
- 3) A metaphoric predication presupposes that (a) the subject is always literal, as otherwise the actual referent could not be identified; (b) the referent is known, for otherwise the improperness of the predicate could not be established; and (c) the predicate includes at least one improper term.
- 4) A predicate is "literal" (proper) if it is used in accordance with the convention that associates a word with a set of referents, and potentially metaphoric (improper) if such a convention is breached.
- 5) Despite being mutually alternative, literal and metaphoric descriptions have several features in common: first, there is no difference in their syntactic structure that reflects the basic relationship between a subject (referential function) and a predicate (categorizing function); second, there is no essential difference in the categorization of the referent because in both cases the actual modifiers are literal : for example, in "Richard is a gorilla", "gorilla" is meant to evoke "violent" and, therefore, this metaphor is equivalent to "Richard is violent"; and third, there is no difference between literal and metaphoric descriptions when it comes to their truth conditions.

Modernist theory fails, however, to account for the specific difference of metaphor; for example, between the straightforward literal "Richard is violent" and the indirect metaphoric "Richard is a gorilla", meaning "Richard is violent". In other words, modernist theory fails to establish the specific difference of the metaphoric "violent", and to account for its preference under certain conditions. I have suggested elsewhere that the aim of the improper modifier (gorilla) is to attach distinct and alternative "referential (nonverbal) associations", originating in the improper term, to the *common* literal modifier "violent" (Rozik 2008 : 46-9). My contention is that the activation of these distinct referential associations is the specific difference of metaphor.

"Referential associations" are nonverbal recollections of actual experiences associated with words, because they are employed for categorizing things (referents) in a world. Such nonverbal associations can be classified as sensory, emotional, ethical, aesthetic, modal (tragic, comic or otherwise) and the like. In the context of "gorilla", violent assumedly evokes the anxiety associated with animal violence. Whereas Paul Henle describes these associations in the vague terms of "feeling tones" (1958 : 190), "referential associations" can be defined quite accurately. I thus claim that through metaphor the literal modifier evokes distinct referential associations originating in the improper term; e.g., "Sally is a dragon" should evoke the common literal modifier "dreadful" as it bears improper emotional referential associations due to previous experiences with dragons, which in this case originate in fictional worlds (*cf.* Searle 1988 : 101). In metaphor, first, the *common* literal modifier evoked by

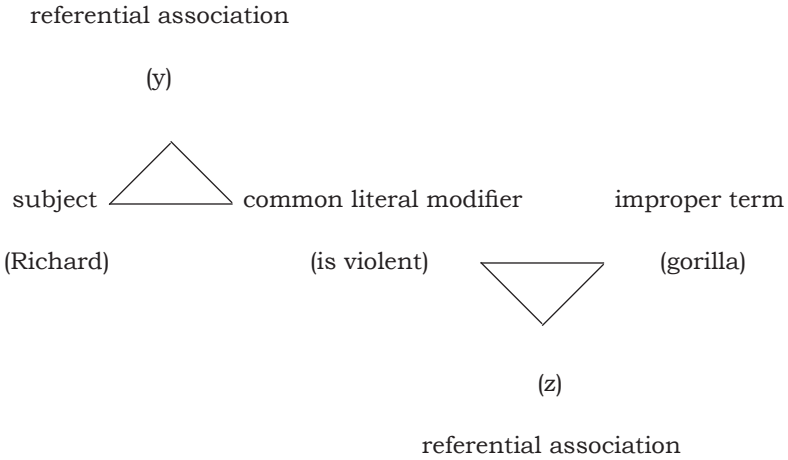
the improper term potentially modifies two nouns, the literal subject (Sally + human) and the improper noun (dragon - human), thus creating two potential sources of referential associations, e.g., “Sally is dreadful” and “A dragon is dreadful”; and, second, conventionally, preference is given to the referential associations originating in the improper noun (dragon). This modifier (dreadful), together with the referential associations originating in the improper noun, thus constitutes the predicate of a verbal metaphor.

Furthermore, the truth value of a metaphor depends not necessarily on the scientific knowledge of the improper term (e.g., the referent “gorilla”), but mainly on the commonplaces associated with it : for instance, the gorilla metaphor can be true “regardless of the actual facts about gorillas [...] I am told [...] that gorillas are not at all fierce and nasty, but are in fact shy, sensitive creatures, given to bouts of sentimentality” (Searle 1988 : 102). What is required for this metaphor to work is, therefore, that the author and the receiver share the commonplace belief that gorillas are extremely violent.

Some surface structures of verbal metaphor mark the metaphoric predication by words such as “like” and “as”. In contrast to the comparison view, these particles do not indicate a comparative relationship, but the activation and preference of alternative referential associations. These conventional markers are not essential to metaphor because preference is indicated by the mere presence of an improper term; e.g., there is no difference between “Sally is like a dragon” and “Sally is a dragon”, with the mechanism of generating metaphoric meaning being the same. There is also no difference whether the common literal modifier is evoked by an associative process or is explicit in the initial predication, *because in such a case too the mechanism of generating metaphoric meaning is the same*; e.g., between “Sally is like a dragon” and “Sally is dreadful like a dragon”.

Metaphors can reflect various types of elliptical processes that can reduce their surface structures even to a minimum, for example when a person is called “monster”. However, since the missing components can be evoked on the grounds of the deep structure of metaphor, literal context and rules of ellipsis (Rozik 2008b : 59-74), they should be seen as “elliptically present”. The only component that must be actually present in the initial predication is, therefore, the improper term; indeed, without it no improperness can be detected and no associative processes, including elliptical ones, can be set in motion. Therefore, *improperness, which implies knowledge of the referent, is the actual marker of metaphor*.

The following diagram represents the deep structure of verbal metaphor :



“Richard is a gorilla” conventionally lends preference to the referential associations “z”, originating in “gorilla”, and attaches to the common literal modifier “violent”. I note that “Richard is a gorilla” is a metaphor only under two conditions : (1) Richard is the name of a man, and not of a gorilla; and (2) “gorilla” is not used for body-guard.

b) *Stage metaphor* : I have suggested elsewhere that the holistic reading of an iconic image is equivalent to the subject of the iconic sentence or cluster of iconic sentences; and its partial readings are the set of its predicates (Rozik 2014 : 127-9). On such grounds, it is assumed here that there is no difference between verbal and stage metaphor in regard to their predicative syntactic pattern. Indeed, both kinds of metaphor are organized by a pattern of modification, in which an apparently improper sign, verbal or iconic, is set in a modifying position, whether predicate or adjunct, with the latter being an implicit predicate.

Within the context of the fictional arts, “character” should be seen as equivalent to “referent” : a character, as an extra-semiotic entity, is the object of description of both literal and metaphoric predicates. For example, in Ionesco’s *The Chairs*, the old man is said to sob like a baby :

Old Man : [sobbing, with his mouth wide open, like a baby] I’m an orphan...
an orphan. (44)

It is the character of an old man, enacted by an actor, that is the actual referent of this stage direction. In other words, the old man is the actual subject of modification of the verbal metaphor; *i.e.*, it is the Old man (the holistic reading) who is actually sobbing like a baby (partial reading). He is characterized as an elderly man, represented on stage by a set of iconic signs such as grey hair, wrinkled face and shaky movements (partial readings). These modifiers are literal since they befit his being

an old man. Since these signs identify him as a distinct character, we may view them as equivalent to adjuncts. Similarly, his actions, which interchange on the time axis, should be viewed as predicates. The actual “sobbing” of the actor on stage is then an enacted iconic predicate. In other words, if the predicate befits the nature of the fictional referent, it is literal, if not it is potentially metaphoric; e.g., if the old man sobs like an old man the predicate is literal, but since he actually sobs like a baby the predicate is metaphoric.

In all kinds of iconic sentences subject and predicate signs are produced simultaneously; *i.e.*, the syntactic pattern mentioned above is perceived pictorially. In contrast to the linearity of such a pattern in the verbal stage direction, the old man and the sobbing are perceived simultaneously. It can be concluded, therefore, that the linearity of verbal metaphor only reflects the nature of language and that it is not an essential feature of the deep structure of metaphor.

What is termed “stage metaphor” is in fact a kind of iconic metaphor, in which a well-established character presents a feature or action which is improper to its basic characterization. For methodological reasons I assume that this established characterization is literal, albeit not necessarily. Such considerations apply to the following example in Fernando Arrabal’s *Picnic on the Battlefield* :

Bombs immediately start to fall... Mme Tèpan goes over to one of the baskets and takes an umbrella out of it. She opens it. M and Mme Tèpan shelter under it as if it were raining... (1961 : 119)

M. and Mme Tèpan behave as if it is raining during a picnic. Since their overall attitude to war is reminiscent of a typical attitude to a picnic disrupted by rain, we may see their nonverbal behavior during their visit to their son on the battlefield as an improper predicate, which is potentially metaphoric and characterizes them as members of the bourgeoisie.

Seemingly, there is no way to trace a stage metaphor in a play-script unless it is translated into words, whether in stage directions or dialogue. This is not the case in performance-texts in which the improper terms of metaphors are actually enacted on stage.

I have suggested elsewhere that, on the level of relationship between performance text and spectator, the described fictional world functions as a potential overall metaphor of the spectator’s psychical state of affairs (Rozik 2008 : 184-203).

Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*

The play-script *Oedipus at Colonus* was written shortly before Sophocles’ death in the year 406 BCE, and produced by his grandson at the Festival of Dionysus in 401 BCE. It relates the last episode of Oedipus’ life in what will be known as Sophocles’ “Theban Plays”, the three play-scripts focusing on the king’s house. However, these did not constitute a trilogy

in the usual sense, despite following the events of the same family. In particular, they were not written in chronological order : *Antigone* is the first despite being the last episode of the whole saga; it is followed by *Oedipus the King* despite being the first dramatized episode; and finally *Oedipus at Colonus*, which chronologically bridges the previous two. Methodologically, nonetheless, it can be perceived as a trilogy, due to *Oedipus at Colonus* shedding light on obscure passages in the previous play-scripts and offering a rewarding happy ending and relief for the sufferings of innocent Oedipus.

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus enters at the last moment of his tormenting journey as an old, blind and ragged exile, a pariah from the civilized world, to eventually leave the world as a sanctified hero. Presumably, the synchronic audience was familiar with the worship of Oedipus at Colonus, near Athens, and through the experience of this play-script they were expected to witness how this human wretch, hated by all, was transmuted into a man venerated by all. He enters the world of shadows with the wisdom only granted to the suffering, and not before administering deserved justice even to his own sons.

a) *Synopsis* : Blind, old, ragged and exhausted Oedipus, led by his loyal daughter Antigone, enters the holy ground devoted to Colonus, an Athenian hero. The chorus of old men vigorously order him to leave the place, especially after learning that he is the son of Laius (lines 239-40). But Oedipus has recognized the place sacred to the Eumenides, as the holy ground predicted for his burial by the oracle of Delphi, and refuses to leave. The chorus agrees to summon Theseus, the king of Athens, to settle the controversy. The king arrives, and after listening to Oedipus' plight, he pities the old man, and promises his protection. Creon addresses Oedipus and tries to trick him into returning to Thebes in order to bestow his blessing on Eteocles, who is actually usurping the crown. Oedipus refuses, and Creon abandons his charming rhetoric and threatens to kidnap Oedipus' daughters, which he actually does. Theseus frees Antigone and Ismene and banishes Creon from the realm. Then Polyneices, the eldest son of Oedipus, who challenges the rule of his brother, asks for Oedipus' blessing. Oedipus refuses again and predicts that none of them will master Thebes and that they will ultimately kill one another. Oedipus feels that his life has come to an end. He blesses Theseus and the kingdom of Athens for their hospitality. He purifies his body, forbids revealing the place of his burial and, accompanied by Theseus, leaves for the hidden place. A messenger then relates the mysterious and miraculous fashion of his disappearance. The chorus concludes : his sufferings were "unmerited" (1565).

b) *Interpretation* : While *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* constitute its background, *Oedipus at Colonus* sheds light on several of their unclear motifs. While in *Antigone*, Oedipus' prophecy that the brothers will kill one another had already been fulfilled, *Oedipus at Colonus* foregrounds

their conflict for the crown. Each of them seeks Oedipus' blessing to defeat the other. Whereas Eteocles had gained the crown through sheer shrewdness, Polyneices had recruited the city of Argos for recapturing it. It might appear, therefore, that Oedipus is unjust, at least to one of the contenders; but he blames both his sons for banishing him from Thebes, thus making him an outcast. So his refusal to bless any of them is the just verdict for their wrongdoings. In his final journey, Oedipus has become a wise judge and even a prophet. It is no wonder that he was sanctified.

The disloyalty of the two sons is depicted against the background of the loyalty of the two daughters, *Antigone* in particular, who has guided Oedipus in all his wanderings. Her attempts to save Polyneices from death, according to Oedipus' prophecy, foreshadow her unremitting loyalty to him in *Antigone*. In contrast, Oedipus duly characterizes Polyneices as a "scoundrel" (1354) and, similarly, characterizes Creon as a "rascal" (761). Creon indeed pretends to act for the benefit of the old man, but soon enough he drops his benevolent mask to reveal the fraudulent rogue underneath. He employs the very same strategy in *Antigone* by pretending to be an enlightened ruler, guided only by the laws of the gods, to eventually reveal that he is just a sheer tyrant. No wonder, therefore, that Oedipus' characterization of Creon proves correct even for *Oedipus the King* (387-9).

The main motif in *Oedipus at Colonus* is Oedipus' reluctance to conceive of himself as guilty. The chorus asks him to tell his own version of the events, and Oedipus depicts his predicament as being the victim of the gods. Oedipus vehemently declares himself as not being responsible for his actions, for being compelled to commit them (960-98). His reasoning can be accepted even by a modernist audience. Nonetheless, even when Teiresias reveals the true events in *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus could not believe him (362-4). While seeing Oedipus was blind, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, blinded Oedipus sees the truth. His self-inflicted blindness has made him a seer.

Indeed, it is Oedipus' decision to leave Corinth that reveals the real reason behind his initial downfall : hubris. He believed that it was in his power to avoid the realization of the divine prophecy. In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus disputes the validity of Delphi's prophesies (964-73), and Jocasta joins him in casting doubt on them (977-84). This motif culminates in Oedipus' implied declaration of disbelief in the power of Apollo to predict his fate, in expressing preference for Tyche, the goddess of Fortune (1080). Both Oedipus and Jocasta cast doubt on the ability of Delphi's Oracle to foretell the future on the grounds of false premises. Indeed, both believe that they have managed to outwit the gods, and that "chance is in all" (977). Both are thus afflicted by hubris. It is their hubris which seems to bring about the final catastrophes. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus presupposes the truth of Delphi's prophecy.

An often-overlooked fact is that Jocasta had been as incestuous and Laius as murderous as Oedipus. Upon learning of the fate of their newborn baby, they deliberately decided to avert the prophecy by commanding their shepherd to leave Oedipus to the mercy of wild animals, which is tantamount to infanticide; and Jocasta accepts to marry the man who saves Thebes from the plague and happens to be her son. Whereas Oedipus attempts to avoid his fate, by just leaving those believed to be his parents, his real parents deliberately decide to kill their own son. Knowing the power of prophecies, they should have been suspicious; Laius of anybody challenging him, and Jocasta of anybody about to marry her. It is sensible, therefore, to assume that both were also afflicted by hubris.

How is it possible that in *Oedipus the King* Oedipus is guilty, and in *Oedipus at Colonus* he is exonerated not only by himself, but also by the gods? In fact, on the grounds of any value system, Oedipus cannot be blamed for killing his father and marrying his mother, because these actions were imposed on him by the gods themselves. In this sense, at Colonus, Oedipus has eventually reached the only sensible conclusion. Nonetheless, this conclusion does not contradict the fact that he is polluted, by his mere involvement in patricide and incest (on *miasma* see Parker 1983). However, whereas intentional patricide cannot be amended, pollution can be atoned; and, through his harrowing journey, Oedipus has been purified through extreme suffering, even in the eyes of gods. Instead of immature hubris he has learned humility.

If the Theban plays are approached as a trilogy, an implicit plan can be discerned: in facing the gods, in *Oedipus the King* Apollo's divinity is questioned and eventually reaffirmed in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Nonetheless, Antigone repeats Oedipus' sin of hubris. She believes that she knows exactly what the gods expect from her. Each generation is to experience the very same blunders; in regard to Antigone, the chorus speaks in terms of "daring" (853) and "self-sufficiency" (875), possible synonyms of hubris. She has learned nothing. The mythos of the House of Labdacos is Dionysiac in nature and Sophocles has bestowed an Apollonian veil upon it. The implicit assumption is that the more dreadful the mythos, the more profoundly we conceive it, and the more aesthetic is the whole experience. In *Oedipus at Colonus* Sophocles wraps up the entire saga with a forceful Apollonian final accord, in order to upset it again in *Antigone*, thus revealing the ghastly nature of the human condition : the new generation has to learn the same lessons, all over again. This is the overall metaphor that the audience was probably meant to experience.

Gospel at Colonus

Lee Breuer's production of *Gospel at Colonus* premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) in 1983. Since then it has received numerous

awards; has been performed throughout the States and around the globe; and even renewed lately. Bob Telson joined Breuer in composing the music in the style of Gospel worship.

The production was designed in the guise of a black Pentecostal church service, in which the priest narrates the sufferings of Oedipus, accompanied by singers in various groupings, including the typical Gospel choir. Morgan Freeman played the role of storyteller/preacher, and blind Clarence Fountain and the Blind Boys of Alabama enacted Oedipus. All the singers were Gospel music practitioners, some of them professional. The singing *a cappella* was occasionally accompanied by the Little Band, with horns, organ and guitar – typical instruments when Gospel music is performed. The set was arranged in the shape of this service, the Pulpit down stage and the choir in the background. The narrative of Sophocles' play-script was presented in the form of a parable celebrating the blessed death of Oedipus after a cursed life – the death of a saint. Broadly speaking, Sophocles' concept of the narrative was preserved. The performance was occasionally applauded by spectators' hand clapping, and even dancing in the theatre aisles.

Breuer's intention might have been to produce a visceral impact on the audience; but it is the result of the blend of an ancient Greek myth and a Christian musical style that should not be ignored. I believe that Breuer's production attempted at least an actualized version of the canonical play-script, especially for those familiar with the vibrant style of the black Pentecostal church service. In addition, the unusual combination of Classic myth and Christian ritual was made under the commonplace assumption that the roots of tragedy lie in ritual, as if this combination reflected an attempt to revive the origins of tragedy. However, such origins are groundless, as I have tried to demonstrate in my *The Roots of the Theatre*. Richard Schechner correctly observes "When artists, or their audiences, recognize that these staged 'rituals' are mostly symbolic activities masquerading as effective acts, a feeling of helplessness overcomes them. So-called 'real events' are revealed as metaphors" (1988 : 118). I suggest that the aforementioned combination adds a metaphoric dimension, with the nature of the Gospel music providing a set of nonverbal associations firmly linked to the improper black Pentecostal church service.

Gospel Music

Gospel music has developed within the framework of the Afro-American Christian experience. It is usually performed by a choir, singing *a cappella*, but accompaniment by musical instruments is possible. The musical performance is characterized by repetition and antiphonal elements, and is usually accompanied by hand clapping and foot stomping. Repetition enables the participation of all. These qualities are meant to foster communal bonds and, possibly, an ecstatic state of mind.

Gospel music is at the heart of the black Pentecostal church service, which is highly regarded even by people who do not belong to the Church. It is often perceived as musically interesting by white people and non-believers. The church usually attracts non-initiated spectators/listeners who may outnumber the worshipers. Such has been my own personal experience. The black service thus becomes an all embracing religious celebration.

The pertinent question here is as follows : what could be the function of this musical style when coupled with the presentation of the last episodes of Oedipus' life? First and foremost, I suggest that performing Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* in the style of Gospel music is meant to attach an additional metaphoric dimension to the fundamental metaphoric function of this fictional world; and second, *inter alia*, this additional metaphoric dimension is rooted in the apparent improperness of the Gospel ritual.

Metaphoric Function of Gospel Music

As I have suggested above, the iconic description of an entire fictional world constitutes a potential metaphor of the spectator's psychical state of affairs. It is the inherent gap between the fictional world and the world of the spectator that necessitates the metaphoric principle. For example, Sigmund Freud claims : "It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first *murderous* wish against our father" (1978 : 364; my italics). It follows that the referent of the myth of Oedipus is every person. Yet, this narrative cannot be a literal description of such universal human drives; first, because Oedipus not only directs his "first sexual impulse" toward his mother, but actually marries her and has children with her (*i.e.* he commits incest); and second, because Oedipus not only directs his first hatred toward his father, but actually kills him (*i.e.* he commits patricide). This could have been a literal and true description only if the suppressed drives of a son were indeed incestuous and murderous, which is doubtful for the so-called "Oedipal age", the supposed age of suppression. Children of this age probably have no exact idea of what "marriage" and "death" mean. If indeed this myth maps two of everyone's fundamental and universal drives, these and additional gaps preclude considering Oedipus' actions as their significant description, unless the principle of metaphor is invoked. Freud definitely fails to perceive this myth as an unmistakable case of metaphoric description of an unconscious state of affairs.

The metaphoric gap, which reflects the apparent improperness of the fictional world to the spectator's psychical state of affairs, is emphasized if the style of the black Pentecostal church service is also taken into account. The result is a mixed metaphor. The Gospel chanting arouses the association of the black Pentecostal church service in

handling a Christian parable. *Oedipus at Colonus* suits the notion of “parable” because it is a narrative employed for revealing a universal truth, and this was probably the intention of Sophocles himself. This play-script actually narrates the sanctification of an ancient hero, after enduring a cursed life.

Since Breuer’s *Gospel at Colonus* is an overall mixed metaphor, textual analysis should be conducted separately for (a) the set of common literal modifiers evoked by Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* : humans’ extreme suffering for being created with tabooed drives and compelled to suppress them, relief in exoneration, reconciliation with the community, and eventual exultation; (b) the set of referential associations originating in the unique nature of Sophocles’ fictional world; (c) the set of common literal modifiers evoked by the Gospel style of the performance; extreme involvement in the worship through experiencing a parable of sanctification, like the narrative of a Christian Saint, with the choral nature of Gospel music, under the leadership of a priest, corresponding to the ancient chorus and coryphaeus, in both dithyrambic poetry and tragic drama; and (d) the referential associations originating in the manner of narration through chanting Gospel music, which is associated with the (improper) black Pentecostal church service. Gospel music also elicits associations of grass roots, joy of worship, musical beauty, emotional communion and Christian fervor. In general, sound and music in particular may be employed in a metaphoric capacity, that is, if it evokes at least one literal common modifier that elicits referential associations originating in an apparently improper term.

Bibliography

- ARISTOTLE (1991) *The Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. H. C. Lawson-Tancred. London : Penguin Books.
- ARRABAL, F. (1961) *Picnic on the Battlefield*. B. Wright (trans.). In *Plays*, Vol. II. London : John Calder.
- BEARDSLEY, M. C. (1958) “Theories of Metaphor”. In *Aesthetics*. New York : Harcourt : 134-144.
- BLACK, M. (1988) “More about Metaphor”. In A. Ortony (ed.). *Metaphor and Thought* : 19-43.
- _____. (1962) “Metaphor”. In Joseph Margolis (ed.). *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*. New York : Scribner : 218-235.
- HENLE, P. (1958) “Metaphor”. In *Language, Thought and Culture*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press.
- IONESCO, E. (1958) *The Chairs*. D. Watson (trans.). In *Plays*. Vol. I. London : Calder.
- ORTONY, A. (ED.) (1988 [1959]) *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- PARKER, R. (1983) *Miasma, Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*. Oxford : Clarendon Press.
- QUINTILIAN (1976) *Instituto Oratoria*. H. E. Butler (trans.). Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press & Heinemann.
- ROZIK, E. (2014) *Theatre Sciences – A Plea for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Theatre Studies*. Brighton, Chicago, Toronto : Sussex Academic Press.

- _____. (2008) *Metaphoric Thinking – A Study of Nonverbal Metaphor in the Arts and its Archaic Roots*. Tel Aviv : The Yolanda & David Katz Faculty of the Arts, Tel Aviv University.
- _____. (2002) *The Roots of Theatre – Rethinking Ritual and other Theories of Origin*. Iowa City : University of Iowa Press.
- SCHECHNER, R. (1988 [1977]) *Performance Theory*. New York and London : Routledge.
- SEARLE, J. R. (1988 [1959]) “Metaphor”. In A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* : 92-123.
- SOPHOCLES (1968) *Oedipus the King*. D. Grene (trans.). In D. Grene & R. Lattimore (eds.). *Greek Tragedies*, Vol. 1. The University of Chicago Press.
- _____. (1968) *Antigone*. W. Wyckoff (trans.) In D. Grene & R. Lattimore (eds.). *Greek Tragedies*, Vol. 1. The University of Chicago Press.
- _____. (1968) *Oedipus at Colonus*. R. Fitzgerald (trans.). In D. Grene & R. Lattimore (eds.). *Greek Tragedies*, Vol. 3. The University of Chicago Press.

Abstract

Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus* is an attempt to achieve a synthesis between an ancient Greek tragedy and the black Pentecostal church service, in addition to offering a mixed marriage between white and black cultural idioms. Regarding this experiment, the question is not, I believe, reducible to Breuer's intention so much as the actual result of the work itself. Indeed, in experimenting with culturally established styles of expression, results depend on the nature of their unprecedented interaction. Therefore, hermeneutic inquiry is rather problematic and perhaps only a learned intuition is possible as a starting point. Nonetheless, I conjecture that rendering the narrative of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* through the prism of Gospel music bestows an additional metaphoric dimension on the basic metaphor embodied in the original play-script. This study aims at elucidating the nature of these metaphoric dimensions, specifically on the level of sound.

Keywords : Metaphor; Sophocle; Lee Breuer; Gospel Music.

Résumé

L'adaptation faite par Lee Breuer de l'*Oedipe à Colone* de Sophocle, intitulée *Gospel at Colonus (Évangile à Colone)*, est à la fois une tentative de synthèse entre la tragédie grecque antique et le service religieux pentecôtiste, et un mariage d'expressions culturelles propres à l'Europe de race blanche et à l'Amérique afro-américaine. Face à cette expérimentation, il ne s'agit pas de s'interroger sur les intentions de Breuer, mais plutôt d'étudier ce qui en résulte. Or, en manipulant des styles d'expression déjà reconnus, ce résultat tient à la nature inédite de la fusion proposée. Rejetant une approche herméneutique qui, dans les circonstances, nous paraît problématique, nous prendrons pour point de départ une sorte d'intuitionnisme informé. Notre hypothèse est que le traitement de la tragédie de Sophocle par le biais de la musique "gospel" lui accorde une dimension métaphorique supplémentaire qui s'additionne à la métaphore du texte d'origine. Notre étude vise à élucider le jeu de ces métaphores en considérant la dimension sonore introduite par l'adaptation de Breuer.

Mots-clés: Métaphore; Sophocle; Lee Breuer; musique gospel.

ELI ROZIK (1932-2017) was professor emeritus of theatre studies, and former head of the Department of Theatre Studies and Dean of the Faculty of the Arts at Tel Aviv University. He specialized in theatre theory, particularly in the analysis of non-verbal communication in performance-texts. Dr. Rozik has published numerous

articles in international leading journals, and books in the USA, England, Poland and Argentina.