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Art's political criticality: At the thresholds of difference and eventuality

Elena Tzelepis

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This text is an exercise in intertextually reading Plato's *Republic* and Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, in their provocative suggestions surrounding the unbound merge of art with life, the interference of aesthetics with ethico-politics, and, furthermore, the implication of the sensual and the imaginary to knowledge production and the political. For such "reading," the measures and rules are to be invented or re-invented in the very process of this dialogical meditation. My own point of departure for this juxtaposition, from one side Plato who is arguably among the most revered founding figures of the canon of Western reason, and on the other, Nietzsche, who is the most revered of irreverent thinkers, rightly seen as the precursor of poststructuralism, is the way in which the notion of the disinterestedly aesthetic is problematized and complicated, in fact, put into question, in both texts. Art is not merely about what the Western metaphysics has established as a non-political ideal of aesthetic pleasure (i.e., Kant's transcendental aesthetic), the two texts seem to suggest. Although the two authors engage the problem of art's non-innocence and its encumbered implication in the political in different ways, art, in both renderings, point to the various and unpredictable ways in which it can be enacted as critique.

As the risks of aestheticization continue to contentiously engage art, the old but persistent question of the politics of representation gains new currency in discussions of critical theory today. Could we prompt anew the question of art from the standpoint of the social and political exigencies of our times and of different localities? Could we address and reimagine art as a means to contest contemporary predicaments of power such as racist and gendered violence, capitalist governmentality, financialisation, war biopolitics, and the emergence of authoritarianism in Western democracies? What can art's criticality be under these conditions? Even though it is not in the scope of this essay to analyze the present with and through art, nonetheless, a historical sense of temporality is underlying here as I (re)turn to two "old" texts to think through the contemporary question of how to trouble the hegemonic ways of being in the world; how to configure the world as a world "Of everyone. Of all worlds," as Achille Mbembe punctuates in his *Critique of Black Reason*—an ambiguous gesture towards Kant's classic (p. 180). The two texts I am reading here together point to art as a political act of posing the question of the world in the present tense, which strives beyond and against the present order of the *polis* and the ethicopolitical.[1]

Plato/Socrates considers the productive status of art, and understands the poietic within the horizon of bringing-into-presence; Nietzsche calls for an artistic experience which attains its form as a "devaluation of all values." Aesthetics uncannily touches upon the entire sphere of the ethicopolitical. In Socrates/Plato, the encounter is potentially fatal and ruinous to the orderly timeless structure of the *polis*, due to an absolute—albeit ambivalent—danger, "divine terror," inherent in the (mimetic) poetry; in Nietzsche, art is understood as a vital counterforce of temporality thought of in the dimension of life, becoming, creative impulse, and self-generation, conjoined with the eternal recurrence of the Same, in a circle of actively and wilfully unsettling the universal and absolute foundations of the world of truth. The critical question would be whether there is a subversion beyond the repetition of the dominant political and social categories; whether there can be a re-enactment that lies unavoidably within and, at the same time, dynamically beyond the dialectic of appropriation and its implications of order, literalness, and ownership; or whether there can ever be a transgressive reinscription that is not recuperable by the dominant order. What is at stake, then, is a consideration of the propriety and property of mimetic iterability itself: the

possibilities (for subversion) and also the perils (of renormalization) it entails. The question (to be sure, not in the sense of question that waits to be resolved but rather of aporia that enables as much as complicates the possibility of our reflections over and over again) is this: What would it take to radicalize citationality so as to dis-place it or even re-invent it beyond (the proper place of) its discursive limits, beyond its sociosymbolic premises of penetration and containment, and beyond the semantic horizon of the existing intelligible itself—given that "horizon" figures a certain finality of what is possible (the word *ορίζων* signals the *όριο*, limit).

In what follows, the interwoven notions of repetition, relationality, approximation, and distance will be explored. Such nexus of concepts is embodied in Nietzsche's own relationship with Plato. One of the turns that have marked Nietzsche's philosophical itinerary has been his preoccupation with Plato/Socrates; an act of re-collection of his own philosophic and affective genealogies, a gesture of witnessing to a concomitance and co-extensivity with his philosophical past despite his critical even ironic engagement with it. Even though his writing seems to be an *ironic* disruption of the Platonic metaphysically tradition, it also *ironically* echoes a certain intimacy with it. [2] Nietzsche's encountering with, or receiving of, Plato/Socrates redraws, perhaps, the contours of the very field of philosophical kinship, a kinship, however, whose multitude of forces remains in the vicissitudes of language and whose rearticulations are not fully to be anticipated. [3]

The political mimesis of poetry

The dialogue of *The Republic* revolves around the pursuit of questing after and questioning about "the good," and more accurately, about the good beyond being and above essence (*epekeina tis ousias*).[4] Such pursuit assumes, in the Platonic-Socratic moral force and utopic [5] discourse of the ideal form of a rationally organized body politic, a connotation of phantasmatically capturing a universal and absolute morality; a morality, however, which, although imagined as a closed and inclusive pragmatic synthesis, is elusive enough to desist from the present of our immediate knowledge and definitive grasp. At the same time, this morality is exclusive, most notably, exclusively male and patriarchal.[6] How to adequately know about "the good"—both in the ontological dimension of the question (*what*

is the good) and its topological/locational dimension (*where* does the good take place)? Considering that Plato/Socrates' challenge as a teacher was to teach ignorance, to teach how to suspend knowledge, the questing after "the good" is a pursuit with certain limitations, a pursuit of what is always in a state of evading or escaping. The cognitive grasp of "the good," then, as an object of epistemic and ontic search, is an elusive and aporetic moral system, one that is discursively idealized and pursued as always already "yet to come." Hence the poietic projection of the *Republic* as a paradigmatic moral edification institutionalized, a transcendent normalizing ground of the ideal conception of the true and the moral.

Why is Republic's moral order, in both its prescriptive pragmatics and idealized transcendence, so fatally threatened by the (mimetic) poetry? What is at stake when some forms of mimesis (i.e., *eidola*) are excluded from the idea and the place of the good? What is the role that a certain distinction between the Same and the Other plays in the constitution of the terms of such exclusion? And further, how are we to unravel what Plato refers to in the last book of the *Republic* as the "old animosity" between philosophy and art, or philosophy and poetry?[7]

What is at stake in the *Republic* is the attainment and preservation of the integrity and harmony of the just city, but also of the human as *hypo-keimenon*, subject to the abiding presence of the unitary community. As a rationally organized society founded on the notion of communal property and collective interest, the *Politeia* rests upon an authoritative anxiety over the eventuality of citizens' distance from the community. The term *Politeia* denotes the practice of constituting a political space and mode of collective life in conditions of plurality and difference—multiple and different institutions, laws, practices, and boundaries.[8] The full body of the *Politeia*, as a single enclosed space and a bounded and self-contained topos, necessitates uninterrupted closedness and orderly inclusiveness, organic unity and harmony among its multiple and different (body) parts. (The etymology is suggestive: Gk. *melos* signifies both "member" of a societal whole and body "part." The etymological conflation with *melōidia*, melody [the rhythmic, harmonized arrangement of single tones], is interesting in both the *Republic* and the *Gay Science*, as we will see in a moment.) Such is the synecdoche essential to any project of phantasizing, designing, or safeguarding the creation (pro-creation) of a body politic. In imagining the best

citizens of the ideal city, Plato/Socrates describes them as citizens who unequivocally prioritize the community's interest above any private one. The ethics of the *Republic* bespeaks an impulse to imagine and design a new or renewed ethico-political system through the *technē* of border-drawing, of defining the boundaries between what belongs to the body politic and what must be kept outside. The valued harmony of the ideal city-state is, above all, a harmony between bodily boundaries and the bounds of the body politic, between the definitely contoured *polis* and its members' definitely contoured subjectivities, tasks, and poietic involvements. Socrates/Plato is clear in his mono-thematic consideration of human activity: each citizen must engage in –submit to- one single task. The imitator does not belong with the *polis*, then, because, by virtue of her/his upsetting the proximity to the origin, the formal *archē*, s/he signifies the possibility of infinite doubleness and manifoldness; a possibility, that is, of putting into question the originality and intelligibility of the single and transcendent truth, and, therefore, a possibility that lends itself to unjustness: "Perhaps you would say he doesn't harmonize with our regime because there is no double man among us, nor a manifold one, since each man does one thing."[9] Boundaries and contours are there to be revered and preserved in the Socratic-Platonic *polis*. (We may venture the interjection—till a precocious one, but, hopefully, to be clarified later—that in their Nietzschean form, boundaries are there to be blurred and mocked, crossed, interrupted, and transgressed: signifiers of legitimation in Plato/Socrates, signifiers of dissent in Nietzsche.)

In the course of the examination of poetry in Book III, mimesis is discussed and discredited as a reproduction of likeness that involves a certain confusion of voices. Mimesis occurs when the voice of the poet and the voices of the poetic characters become confused, when the poet does not speak of herself but rather speaks of someone else in the voice of someone else. When the poet speaks in the voice of someone else, then her own voice is permeated or invaded by the voice of the other, this intrusive agent of mimesis that takes over and annihilates the "I" as the ego of the poet. The poet is self-subtracted and dissolved and what emerges from the lack of the poet is an anarchic crowd of characters. So, mimesis has to do with a becoming absent of the poet that is caused by direct speech; a certain obscuring, hiding, and disappearance, even lack, of the poet: "If the poet nowhere hid himself, his poetic work and narrative as a whole would have

taken place without imitation" (*Republic*, 393c). Imitation is a cryptic gesture, Socrates/Plato contends; what is disconcerting about it is its veiling operation: mimesis involves a certain hiding of the authorial voice, ensuing the improper closeness in the relationship between the authorial ego and the others. Claudia Barrachi has put it incisively: "As the poet recedes and disappears toward the background, those he sings of acquire their own voice, as it were, and seem in fact to sing themselves, of their own accord. Yet the clarity of this way of poetic elocution enfolds an obscuring moment (Baracchi 100)." Plato/Socrates wants to rescue the poetic elocution from the "obscuring moment" of suspended clarity as well as the authorial subjectivity from the cryptic intersubjectivity of the narrative (the confusion of voices in direct speech) that accounts for the disruptive disappearance, absence of the authorial "I", as he wants to rescue his ideal city from the disruptive occurrence of heterogeneity, disorder, and alterity. Plato's mimetology conveys an anxiety lest the author's voice should be distilled by the infusion of other voices—or, voices of the other(s)—construed as invading outsiders, signifiers of inappropriate immediacy (direct speech), and phantasmatic agents of an evocation yet to come or an evocation that calls the *Politeia*'s yet-to-come in question.

Such are the limits (and limitations) of imitative narration: one can speak of the other as long as she does not speak like, or speak as, the other, as long as she does not become the other, as long as she is not carried away by the other. Inherent in this stipulation is a certain anxiety over the danger of the inhuman: the sweeping ontology of the "other" that accounts for the detriment of the mimetic does not merely encompass human voices and/as poetic characters, but also extends dangerously to a whole archive of forces of nature, animality, musical instruments, and passions—all presumed symptoms of an impure, contaminated humanity. At the same time, these symptoms of nonhumanness and fluctuating humanity operate as "tropes" that, as the word's etymology suggests, in taking turns at invoking the malleable limits of humanity, they turn and they shift the very notion of the human[10] Plato's concept of mimesis, as defined in relation to poetry, does connote the poetic and performative turns of *tropē* and *strophē*; it also entails the cata-*strophe* signaled by a certain intimacy with the non-human:

> The more he [imitator/poet] will narrate everything and think nothing unworthy of himself; hence he'll undertake seriously to imitate in the presence of many everything we were just mentioning—thunder, the noises of winds, hailstorms, axles and pulleys, the voices of trumpets, flutes, and all the instruments, and even the sound of dogs, sheep, and birds. And this man's whole style will be based on imitation of voice and looks, or else include only a bit of narrative. (*Republic* 397a-b)

As the human is fixed in Socrates/Plato, a pre-existing integral part of the universal moral economy of truth, what renders the powerful force of mimesis pernicious to the ideal state is its capacity to suggest possibilities of the immoral by condensing and recapitulating the ghostly danger of slippage into the dystopic "others" of eventuality and temporality. The blurring of boundaries between the authorial subject and its objects—whether human or inhuman-, at once a blurring of boundaries between human and inhuman, threatens the moral integrity, stability, and political harmony of the *Republic*. Mimesis is, *inter alia*, about the eruption of difference at the heart of humanness going astray.

But what Socrates -"the one who does not write," as Nietzsche puts it—further claims is that this losing of one's self into the voices of characters may not be avoidable. However, it is the readiness to indifferently lose oneself, to withdraw and disappear for the sake of the characters' emergence that he finds problematic. While imitation may not be avoidable, however, it is nevertheless imperative for an ordered *polis* (quintessence of the properly human) to put constraints on it. In other words, given a certain ineluctability of mimesis, one should be very cautious not to give it a preeminent role in one's discourse; one should always be alert to limit and harness the desire to imitate as much as possible.

Plato is not suspicious of mimesis per se, it ought to be kept in mind, but rather of a particular aspect of mimesis: one that I would call "the contingency of surprise." Mimesis *potentially* destabilizes the relation between signifier and signified, it blurs the distinction between "true" and "false" representations, and it threatens to install falsehood in the realm of the real. This "graft" of otherness in the body of sameness *potentially* de-essentializes the universal stability of truth. In *potentially* de-instituting the representational order of truth, it *potentially* jeopardizes the order of the polis. Platonic mimesis is cast as a spectral and enigmatic strategy of de-familiarization, potentially threatening to the

epistemic and political structures of intelligibility. Plato was right in his assessment of the pernicious reality-effects of mimesis, i.e., the eruption of the subversive potential inherent in mimesis. What Plato wanted to discipline was precisely the ghostly superfluity of this impetus: the impetus of initiating new modes of sensing and knowing, the impetus of becoming otherwise and beyond the predictability of truth. Mimesis, then, ought to be either safely interwoven in the ordinary fabric of the intelligibility of the *polis* and its sovereign episteme, or condemned to exile.

The expulsion of the poet from the ideal city is not indiscriminate, but rather selective. The moral force of the *Republic* entails a re-formation and rehabilitation of poietic activity so as to bring the mimetic element under a certain control. What is pernicious about mimetic poetry is precisely the seductive power that it can exert over the (individual) soul; it is by virtue of this compelling force to affect, to "lay hold of the soul," that it is considered to be menacing to the moral order of the city. Mimetic art depicts and enhances passion, pain, and sexual desires, which ought to be harnessed. Plato/Socrates is especially concerned with the performed "aesthetic" quality of mimesis (the poietic [*poiein*] and the aesthetic [*aisthesis*] are conjoined qualities of poetry in P/S), as is exemplified in the case of music: "Isn't this why the rearing in music is most sovereign? Because rhythm and harmony most of all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite. (*Republic* 401d-e). While Socrates/Plato was forced (that is, ethically compelled) to banish certain genres of performed mimetic poetry, even against himself (that is, against his own poietic self), nonetheless he recognized the inspired and inspiring force implicit in poetry (*theios fovos*, "divine terror"). Such is the radical ambivalence inherent in the logic of the *Politeia*: Plato/Socrates' simultaneous acknowledgement of the power –and intractability- of mimetic poetry is coterminous with his impulse to subject it to a system of rules and propriety, a system of state power for which the capture of the soul is reserved. Indeed, the joyful wisdom of mimesis does not belong to the austere and univocal body of the *Republic*:

> Now, as it seems, if a man who is able by wisdom to become every sort of thing
> and to imitate all things should come to our city, wishing to make a display of

himself and his poems, we would fall on our knees before him as a man sacred, wonderful, and pleasing; but we would say that there is no such man among us in the city, nor is it lawful for such a man to be born there. We would send him to another city, with myrrh poured over his head and crowned with wool, while we ourselves would use a more austere and less pleasing poet and teller of tales for the sake of benefit, one who would imitate the style of the decent man and would say what he says in those models that we set down as laws at the beginning, when we undertook to educate the soldiers. (398a-b)

So, a fundamental power and a fundamental risk are conjoined and co-implicit in the poietic activity. Poetry is considered dangerous for society and its fixity to the extent that it initiates and propels becomings and shiftings: the capability of assuming different shapes ("to become every sort of thing"), in other words, to pro-duce into presence, is detrimental to the fixed intelligibility of presence. (The mimesis that Plato dismisses, we should note, is not a repetition of the Same. It is, rather, a bringing-forth of the ever-shifting continuities and discontinuities between the so-called "original" and the so-called "copy," between identity and difference; the production of the simulacrum is haunted by the incalculable forces of alterity.) What Socrates/Plato dreams of is an original without copy, without other; an essential, indivisible, and self-present *physis* indistinguishable from and uncontaminated by the allo-presence of the substitute that commemorates the Same's difference from itself. Socrates/Plato's concern is about mimesis's capacity not merely to repeat, but rather to supplement and supplant. In his text, *Dissemination*, Jacques Derrida has importantly drawn our attention to the supplementary qualities of mimesis that destabilize the conventional hierarchies between origin and copy. What threatens and upsets the being of the *Politeia* from within is a particular aspect of mimetic "bringing into being" (*poiein*), namely, the implication of mimesis that the so-called original can be doubled, imitated, appropriated, repeated, replaced, and alienated. Such reproducibility, implying non-proximity with the origin, calls into question the fixity of the authentic status of the origin itself qua anchor of the true. It is this spatial and temporal movement, this *différance* (the conjoined movements of difference and deferral that—in the Derridean universe—constitute the condition for transcending the ontological distinction between identity and difference) as the essential undecidability, indiscernibility, ambiguity, and confusion between "origin" and "copy," imitated and imitator, referent and sign, signified and

signifier, as well as between intimate and alien, and city and nature, that poses the problem, and thus the inalienable singularity that the *Republic* wants to establish has a high stake in mastering. This is where Nietzsche's critique of Western metaphysics lies: he seeks to liberate the signifier from the authorized, authoritative, and authoritarian logic of logos and truth. What seems to be at play as he parodies dialectical opposition and ontological difference and suggests the forces of play, laughter, and dance is a certain self-othering of truth. Let me mention in passing that dance's position (or, rather, step), always different and deferred, is particularly significant among Nietzsche's nondialectical and heterogeneous forces of "demolition."

The Platonic disqualification, condemnation, and banishing of the mimetic arts are not (or, are not merely) gestures of prohibition and expulsion, but rather self-inaugurating (*maieutic*) gestures of an authoritative drive to constitute the boundaries between the propriety/properness and impropriety/improperness of poetic genres and modes. As an antidote to the maleficent mimesis, Plato/Socrates maintains the necessity to oversee and discipline the (magical, *thaumaturgical* [*Republic*, 602c-d]) power of mimesis (that is, to master the difference that mimesis plays out), to administer the *technē* of *eidōlon*, to strip the act/art of living of any trace of unplannedness, unpreparedness, unforeseeability, eventuality, playfulness, openendedness, and surprise –all (supplementary) attributes by virtue of which poetry becomes pleasing, seductive, and thus disruptive and dangerous. The ethical and aesthetic order of the *polis* is always in need of vigilance against the impulse to Other. Taming the ineffable power of the mimetic arts and their polysemy is submitted as the ultimate antidote to the perpetual danger—in fact, structural possibility— that the overpowering shadowy multitude of authorial "others" represents; a phenomenality *par excellence* that, by virtue of its errant and proliferating iterability, lies beyond the controlling bounds of the author, construed as the signifier of essence and conveyer of truth. The antidote seems to be in Socrates/Plato's eyes the didactic suppression, ostracization, of the pleasing excess, the residue of the uncontrolled movement of *mimeisthai*, by the sovereign ethico-juridical full self-presence of the authorial "I."

But is there such thing as a pure poietic topos of single authorial voice, immune from the shadows and specters of encrypted voices? Is there any way, for

instance, to capture an authentic Socrates—the nonwriter- from the devoted Plato—the mimetic writer? What is so daunting about the mimetic effects of undecidability and ambiguity between imitated and imitator, between "original" and "imitation," between referent and sign? Why is transparent and fixed self-identification so momentously important to the ethico-political order and stability? What is it about *eidōlon* (appearance, apparition, shadow) that infuses *eidos* (the "shape"—figure or, in etymological affinity with that, fiction [< *fingere*]—which endows presence with intelligibility) with the force to provoke so much anxiety and, furthermore, propels programmatic measures of surveillance, protection, demarcation, and exclusion by the custodians of the ideal state? What stakes does the ordered presence of the ethico-political system have in safeguarding the unambiguous intelligibility of the *eidos* from its phantoms and apparitions, re-presentations and de-presentations?

Aesthetic transformation in the eternal return of the Same

Here again, to such questions Nietzsche responds otherwise. The experience of art encompasses the self-reflexive movement of *turning* ourselves into an aesthetic phenomenon. This "turning" entails a certain way of seeing differently, a seeing differently that not only does not leave the self outside, but rather renders it the principal destination of the *strophē* necessarily involved in the aesthetic experience. Although art in Nietzsche's thought starts less from *aisthesis* than from the "devaluation of all values," art is an embodied experience in Nietzsche, an experience that involves the *aisthesis* (meaning sensation or perception by the senses) of eyes, hands, hearing, etc., as an organic component of wisdom.[11] The "aesthetic" experience (the quotation marks imply that it is not entirely accurate to attribute the concept of "aesthetics" to Nietzsche [12]) is a performative force in that it suspends and interrupts momentarily the way we live our lives. It distances us from ourselves, and, as a result, we manage to see ourselves as an aesthetic phenomenon (note, here, that the self, typically construed as *einai* ["being"], turns into *phainesthai* ["phenomenon"]). Far from being a describable and prescribable static "thing," the self is always already open to the ec-static performative eventualities brought forth by the strophic effects of the aesthetic experience. The human is susceptible to the tropological functioning of art as action, susceptible to the tropologies of becoming, always to become, always in motion (hence the

Nietzschean trope of dancing). Nietzsche invites us to "stand *above* morality," to "look *upon* ourselves," and to "look *down upon* ourselves." So, unlike in Plato/Socrates' one-way pro-ductive poetics, such *strophē* is a welcome and necessary move in Nietzsche: pure potentiality of distancing, negating, and annihilating. Unlike the rather austerely and hierarchically structured topography of the *Republic*, the Nietzschean topography is a topography "under erasure," a topography of perpetual turning, distancing, seeing differently, and spacing the self:

> As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us, and art furnishes us with eyes and hands and above all the good conscience to be *able* to turn ourselves into such a phenomenon. At times we need a rest from ourselves by looking upon, by looking *down* upon, ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *over* ourselves or weeping *over* ourselves. We must discover the *hero* no less than the *fool* in our passion for knowledge; we must occasionally find pleasure in our folly, or we cannot continue to find pleasure in our wisdom. Precisely because we are at bottom grave and serious human beings—really, more weights than human beings—nothing does us as much good as a *fool's cap*: we need it in relation to ourselves—we need all exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish, and blissful art lest we lose the *freedom above things* that our ideal demands of us. It would mean a *relapse* for us, with our irritable honesty, to get involved entirely in morality and, for the sake of the over-severe demands that we make on ourselves in these matters, to become virtuous monsters and scarecrows. We should be *able* also to stand *above* morality—and not only to *stand* with the anxious stiffness of a man who is afraid of sleeping and falling any moment, but also to *float* above it and *play*. How then could we possibly dispense with art—and with the fool?—And as long as you are in any way *ashamed* before yourselves, you do not yet belong with us. (*The Gay Science* 163-164)

Such distancing vis-à-vis the artistic event, a distancing which amounts to a distancing from the universal, eternal, and absolute (ethical) context in which the experience of art takes place, is not presented programmatically as necessarily emancipatory, a definite or permanent response to the rigidities of onerous morality. It is, rather, a temporary interruption or suspension of the morality that saturates our lives, "a rest from ourselves" (selves, which are "at bottom grave and serious human beings" in Nietzsche's anti-idealism). If the drive for demarcation that permeates the logic of the *Republic* aims at establishing the moral standards of proper poetry—i.e., the authority of seriousness and the *alētheia* of presence—, Nietzsche's *Joyful Wisdom* seeks for ephemeral moments of rest from the properness of the world of truth and the over-severe demands of morality.[13]

Such rest is by no means unequivocally passive, however. In Nietzsche, art is conceived of as experience (*ex-per-ientia* and *em-peiría*), a concept etymologically interrelated with *praxis*: a concept, which, in turn, suggests *peras* (limit) and *poros* (passage). The Nietzschean experience of art encompasses the praxic contemporaneous duality of *both* acknowledging-a-certain-limit *and* crossing-over. We should be capable of this willed experience, insists Nietzsche. We should be able to stand outside of our moralized selves by effecting acts of falling, relapsing, floating, dancing, and playing, by distancing and othering ourselves, by demystifying the ideals of morality, by employing the dis-identifying forces of the aesthetic experience.

We should be able not to be afraid of falling from morality (perhaps that is the only occasion of gravity that Nietzsche subscribes to); we should be able to float and dance unashamedly above it, "from an artistic distance" (164), "beyond good and evil." Nietzsche conceptualizes this temporary exteriority ("above," "outside," and "beyond") as an exteriority vis-à-vis the bounds of what has constituted us as selves, the human spirit itself, the text of its naturalness. It is in that sense that, according to Nietzsche, it is the "beautiful *unnaturalness*" of the "passion that sings" (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 134) that accounts for the popularity of opera. After all, we all need a rest from the strenuous sublimity of the whole (text plus music) melody:

> Confronted with the characters in an opera, we are not supposed to take their word for it, but the sound! That is the difference, that is the beautiful *unnaturalness* for whose sake one goes to the opera. Even the *recitativo secco* really is not meant to be heard as words and text: this kind of half-music is only supposed, first, to give the musical ear a little rest (rest from the *melody* as the most sublime but therefore also most strenuous enjoyment of this art) and then very soon also something else: namely, a growing impatience, a growing irritation, a new desire for *whole* music, for melodies. (ibid, p. 135)

The joyous spirit of a passionate philosophy that sings. A playful suspension of the sublime wholeness and certainty that spawns—via perpetual revaluation—the *restless* desire for a renewed version of it. It is this self-determined desire emerging freely from the temporary suspension of gravity that guarantees the keeping of the promise of harmony. Ecstatic weightlessness, then, is presented as an antidote to the doctrinal discipline and rigorous seriousness of humanness

("really, more weights than human beings," ibid, p. 164). "Light feet" as an antidote to the unbearable gravity of Science. He writes in *The Gay Science*:

> One could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence. (289-90, original emphasis)

Such playful distancing is not an escape from oneself, only a different kind of addressing oneself through a collusion between joining and separation. We do not use the bliss of art to escape our lives, but to run back to our lives, equipped with a different way of being ourselves, in ourselves, and with ourselves, a way of being-in-becoming. The very concept of the subject (*hypo-keimenon*) is inextricably tied to the risk of its own self-dissolution as a kind of substratum, the risk of a self-formation effected through the *techne* of a continual—albeit ephemeral—loss, a temporary suspension of serious selfhood and breakdown of rigorous identity. The distancing of joyful wisdom does not contradict the elimination of distance: the subject—that is, the subject of art, who coincides with the figure of the overman—is momentarily captured by the forces of joyousness, in what seems to be a prelude to the inevitable re-call. Nietzsche presents us with the openness of the self to the forces of becoming. This recurrence of open-endedness (pragmatic rather than mystical) consists in a particular inevitable mode of becoming human that is affirmed through the overcoming of the human[14]; an eternal shifting of the limits of the human towards the forces of life, whereby these forces take hold of the Nietzschean subject. (For Plato/Socrates, let us be reminded, this shift and confusion of limits is something to be reckoned with; the characters and their voices should be kept in check by the authorial subjectivity.) Nietzsche's distancing does not allude to a definitive moment of radical emancipation from the originary "home" of sovereign morality and truth, but rather an eternal nomadic and overflowing counterforce, a heterogeneous movement that involves dancing even *near* the abyss of self-dissolution.

We would certainly see the desire to mime as included in these Nietzschean acts of rest from properness. Nietzsche's "free spirit" of art enters "into every skin, into every emotion". On the Dionysian aesthetic intoxication as mimesis, Nietzsche writes:

> In the Dionysian state, on the other hand, the entire emotional system is altered and intensified: so that it discharges all its powers of representation, imitation, transfiguration, transmutation, every kind of mimicry and playacting conjointly. The essential thing remains the facility of the metamorphosis, the incapacity *not* to react (-in a similar way to certain types of hysteric, who also assume *any* role at the slightest instigation). It is impossible for the Dionysian man not to understand any suggestion of whatever kind, he ignores no signal from the emotions, he possesses to the highest degree the instinct for understanding and divining, just as he possesses the art of communication to the highest degree. He enters into every skin, into every emotion; he is continually transforming himself. (*Twilight of the Idols*, 84, original emphasis).

In the emotional realm of art, Nietzscean subjecthood involves a certain expropriating, or displacing of the authorial voice—the author of one's own life—ensuing the improper closeness in the relationship between the authorial ego and the others; it confuses the boundaries between the authorial subject—in the metaphysics of subject, the self is self-identical- and its (imitated) objects. Beyond the pure bounds of the authorial subject who in the western metaphysics of representation has been the signifier of essence and conveyer of truth, mimesis may provoke the unintended, unexpected slippage of the self into the dystopic "others" of eventuality, temporality and potentiality. Coalescing with "what is alien," the individual becomes, as Nietzsche remarks, both "Dionysus and the Crucified": s(h)e learns "to recognize [herself] not in- and [for-herself] but as the fortuitous case, as just like everyone else (perhaps as all the names in history). This would amount to the individual recognizing itself solely as the event ..." Pearson 126). In other words, there is no pure originality of the subject and there is no subject prior to mimesis. The mimicking art subject also "possesses the art of communication to the highest degree". If s(h)e communicates art and art is communicated then an intensified affect that could trigger others in acts of self-transformations, is also communicated. In Nietzsche, mimesis is about the eventness of self-displacement; it is on this point of deferring and displacing self-significance that one should turn to the problematic of the "other" and the larger problem of the self/other binary. Linking art, mimesis and subjectivity, I consider mimesis via Nietzsche as a self-altering mode of authorship, enactment and performative and I invite critical consideration of the ethics and effects of mimesis

as a self-action, a performativity of selfhood, or as a "technology of the self" in the Foucauldian sense.

How can one be open to acts of displacement and disarticulation, to occur from within the horizon of the existing world? "How, then, can one set oneself up to be surprised by otherness?," Barbara Johnson asks. In her words:

> The surprise of otherness is that moment when a new form of ignorance is suddenly activated as an imperative. If the deconstructive impulse is to retain its vital, subversive power, we must therefore become ignorant of it again and again. It is only by forgetting what we know how to do, by setting aside the thoughts that have most changed us, that those thoughts and that knowledge can go on making accessible to us the surprise of an otherness we can only encounter in the moment of suddenly discovering we are ignorant of it. (16)

Her suggestion of the activation of a deconstructive ignorance of "what we know how to do" resonates with Nietzsche's call for actively forgetting what has most dynamically formed one's own life. For Nietzsche, historical sensibility "injures and ultimately destroys all living things, whether a human being, a people, or a culture":

> All action requires forgetting, just as the existence of all organic beings requires forgetting, just as the existence of all organic things requires not only light, but darkness as well. A human being who wanted to experience things in a thoroughly historical manner would be like someone forced to go without sleep, or like an animal supposed to exist solely by rumination and ever repeated rumination. In other words, it is possible to live almost without memory, indeed, to live happily, as the animals show us; but without forgetting, it is utterly impossible to *live* at all. Or, to express my theme even more simply: *There is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of historical sensibility, that injures and ultimately destroys all living things, whether a human being, a people,* or *a culture*." (Nietzsche, "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life" 89, original emphasis.)

I would like to turn to Denise Ferreira da Silva, at this point, in order to read into Nietzsche's dismissal of the historical, a political gesture opening to a transgressive future not programmed by the normative present. In her book *Towards a global idea of race*, Ferreira da Silva identifies temporality and interiority with white and Eurocentric subjectivity, and spatiality and exteriority with racialized subjectivity. In the history of western philosophy, the modern white Eurocentric subject is self-sufficient, self-determined, rational, universal, idealized and human, whereas the racialized subject is affectable, outer-determined, corporeal, particular, negated and merely—or, less than- human. In

an unmediated manner, the universal subject is able to intuitively conceive of abstractions and achieve a space of knowledge and freedom in a temporal process of progressive continuity. Outside of universality, history, and transcendentality, the racialized subject is always already mediated by the body, by others, by spatial belongings according to power dynamics that introduce geographical hierarchies and differentiation. In this interpellation of the non-white as pathologized, the philosopher reclaims corporeality and spatiality as a pluralistic political space of "contemporaneous, coexisting, and contending" embodied relations among all (Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* 106). She points to an intersectional poetics along the analytics of race and gender with the ethical mandate to emancipate the category of Blackness from the registers of the other, the object, and the commodity. Her black feminist "poethics" is a moment of radical praxis acknowledging the creative capacity that blackness indexes, and demanding decolonization—that is, a reconstruction of the world opening up new ways of knowing, doing, and existing (Ferreira da Silva, "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics 112). Nietzsche's aesthetics as a rest from moral, epistemological and historical properness is radicalized by Ferreira da Silva's black feminist poethics.

The critical ironies of *poiesis* and *praxis*

To read Socrates/Plato's and Nietzsche's treatment of the problem of art in parallel is to venture to read metaphysics of presence and metaphysics of the will in parallel; to trace the trajectory from locating the problem of art in the realm of poiesis to locating the problem of art in the realm of praxis. The Platonic-Socratic *poiesis* (*poiein*, to pro-duce, to bring into being, into existence—as Plato explains in the *Symposium*) signals the linear effecting of the passage from nonbeing to being, from absence to presence, from obscurity to unveiling, from latency to view, revealing -opening spaces of- *a-letheia* (*a+ lēthē*, forgetfulness, oblivion); in other words, the Platonic *poiesis* is a mode of truth, which is the *peras*, the limit of pro-duction. While, by contrast, the Nietzschean *praxis* alludes to the practical and voluntary creative desire, willful drive, and impulse, in other words, the experience whereby the will—will to power—expresses itself in an act of art rather than truth: "art is *worth more* than truth" (*Will to Power* 453 n. 853). The Nietzschean *praxis*, in other words, is not pro-ductive, in the sense that it has no *peras*—it is limitless and aimless—and brings forth nothing external to itself: "The

world as a work of art that gives birth to itself" (ibid, 225 n. 419); it is a configuration of the circle of the eternal recurrence. [15]

And yet, the two critical discursive renderings on art that I proposed here to read together (that is, the one as supplementary to the other, especially at their limits, or the one as the limit of the other) belong together in some way or another. They both invoke one of the most fundamental themes of Western metaphysics, namely, the acknowledgement of the very predicamets of its own "truth" and the attendant impulse to generate discourses that point beyond it. In doing so, they both thematize the very limit which comes to bespeak the limit of their own discourse. The *Republic*'s discourse that cautions against the over-exposure to the abysmal effects of mimesis, its uncanny spell and enjoyment, is essentially mimetic. The truth that the text purports to present—concerning the essence of poiesis as pro-duction into presence, and the principal mimetic effect as falling away from the truth of the single and original presence- remains errant and indeterminate in the undecidable dialogic play between writing and nonwriting. Plato and Socrates perform thus the very transgression that constitutes the limit of their own ideal and their own discourse.[16] In Nietzsche's universe in turn, the indetermination of the self-disrupting distancing from the Same, the promise of the devaluation of actuality and origination, has its own limits and limitations; reaching into the abyss is ensued by the regressive moment of rebounding back to Sameness. The blissful moment of suspending, negating, and annihilating the properness of universal truth, the moment of voluntarily falling from sovereign morality and dancing the dance of creative self-generation (the joyous moment of art and becoming), comes inevitably to a closure. This closure designates a reinvigorated impulse to return; return to the universal circle of the eternal recurrence of the Same (the world of truth and being). This is a will to power in its "weakness or repentance or resignation or hardening or gloom" (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 2). Will to power and an all-too-human eternal recurrence belong to one another in a way that echoes the anxious and ambivalent ways in which the Platonic-Socratic mimesis and alterity belong to one another.

Plato's mimesis and Nietzsche's eternal return are in suspension between being implicated in the ethical convention and yet undermining the operations of authorial and authoritative conventionality. They are in a suspension between the return of the Same and the production of the event. The connections between the

identification, affiliation, and the power contexts within mimesis as a form of repetition occurs, is the perception that this spectral bodying-forth of eventness is not a question of overcoming the limits and the logic of the proper but rather of ironically miming/repeating intelligibility in ways that allow for acts of disruptive inscription to occur. What is of crucial importance is the eventness that emerges from the (im)possibilities of mimetic incorporations. Employing a performative/citational account of mimetic signification informed by Judith Butler's theorization of gender performativity and Jacques Derrida's theorization of citationality, I think the relation between materiality and intelligibility beyond causality, beyond transitivity, and beyond the teleological conception of matter in Plato.[17] The imitating is not a purely and simply representation for the imitated, a solely objective (accurate or less accurate) replica. Instead the copy, in its repetitions and reproductions of the original, may lose its origin. It has the potential to re-form, subvert, and transcend the authoritative premises of the original. The original in its turn is imperfect, malleable, and tenuous to such transformation; as a matrix of ideality or idealized power, the original is susceptible to the instabilities and contingencies of materialization. Repetition and difference are unavoidably implicated in a disquieting site of contestation. Repetition then is an incalculably dynamic and differential processes of materialization in the sense of susceptibility to the spectral—a vital and precarious eventuality, which does not originate, and which never fully materializes. [18] What is at stake, then, is a consideration of the propriety and property of mimetic iterability itself: the possibilities (for subversion) and also the perils (of renormalization) it entails. The question (to be sure, not in the sense of question that waits to be resolved but rather of aporia that enables as much as complicates the possibility of our reflections over and over again) is this: What would it take to radicalize citationality so as to dis-place it or even re-invent it beyond (the proper place of) its discursive limits, beyond its sociosymbolic premises of penetration and containment, and beyond the semantic horizon of the existing intelligible itself—given that "horizon" figures a certain finality of what is possible (the word *ορίζων* signals the *όριο*, limit).

How, then, might this destabilization in epistemologies of fixed origins and authentic presences, as put forward by the doubling structure of mimesis and its implications of representation and identification, gesture toward the

potentialities of art's criticality? Rather than a semblance of the present, the mimetic element of art's criticality encompasses the contradictory impulse towards rearticulating the unfulfilled and the unrealized. I tried here to prompt anew the question of art's critical performativity, especially in its mutual affective entanglement of the literary and the philosophical, as a means of contesting predicaments of power and reconfiguring (instead of representing) the world. Critique, instead of criticism, involves rethinking (as well as relearning and unlearning) the underlying limitations, assumptions, and truth claims that determine what can be thought, sensed, known, acknowledged. Embedded in a present marked by states of continuous crisis, criticality allows us to critically think (with) past and present injustices as well as unrealized, disavowed transformative possibilities ensconced in the established power-knowledge structures. Addressing art as critique and criticality becomes a performative resource that allows us to reclaim and re-embody the never-ending task of imagining the present and the future. It might allow us to think with the limits and possibilities entailed in this task.

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[1] On how thinking through, with and after the global in the present might allow us to *decenter* and *displace* the dominant ways of being differentially tangled up in the world, see Athanasiou.

[2] As Butler convincingly argues:

Is that temporary identification that I perform, the one that raises the question of whether I am involved in a parody of these positions, not precisely a moment in which, for better or worse, they become my position? It is, I would argue, impossible to perform a convincing parody of an intellectual position without having a prior affiliation with what one parodies, without having and wanting an intimacy with the position one takes in or on as the object of parody. Parody requires a certain ability to identify, approximate, and draw near; it engages an intimacy with the position it appropriates that troubles the voice, the bearing, the performativity of the subject such that the audience or the reader does not quite know where it is you stand, whether you have gone over to the other side, whether you remain on your side, whether you can rehearse that other position without falling prey to it in the midst of the performance" (266)

[3] In my essay "Metaphysical topo*graphies* re-layered: Critique and the feminine, I attend to the particular ways in which Luce Irigaray, philosopher, psychoanalyst and theoretician of sexual difference appropriates and stages in her own idiom what she recites from Plato

and Nietzche. She reads them by breaking the boundaries between authoring, reading, and re-writing and exposes the limits of the texts she writes on by exposing and reworking their underlying heteronomic forces. Through *miming* and *reiterating* the textual strategies and gestures of the philosophical text she comments on, she seeks to call into question and transgress the terms by which the hierarchical ontological binary of origination/generation is posited by/in the Platonic text. As she critically appropriates the Platonic and Nietzshean text, she reads in them the constitutive erasure of the feminine (Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak could have had Irigaray's work in mind when she wrote: "In the long run, the most useful thing that a training in French feminism can give us is politicized and critical examples of 'symptomatic reading'" (154-184).

[4] This Platonic idea of the good beyond being is of profound interest to Emmanuel Levinas and his endeavor to think alterity by starting from the Other rather than the totality of the Same (*Time and the Other*). The attempt to think difference beyond being is linked, in Levinas' "ethics of the other," with the overcoming of the Eleatic notion of being (i.e. Parmenides).   In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas rethinks and problematizes the formulation of "going beyond," by elaborating on his notion of proximity. Luce Irigaray is clearly influenced by Levinas' thought, especially by his theorizing of ethics and his attempt to insubordinate otherness from the logic of sameness.

[5] The utopic, by its inception, is a force field of the imaginary. In Plato's account of ideal political commonwealth, the utopic is fundamentally fantasized as a self-contained place, a topos of a perfectly regulated and controlled society. Utopia is, in other words, a fantasy of perfect and absolute control, which can only be attained through the subordination of the possibility of the "event" -in the Foucauldian sense- the possibility of the eruption of the truly novel, the unheard-of, the unimagined. It is not accidental that "utopia" is etymologically and conceptually linked with a logic of spatiality rather than a dynamic of temporality. As Elizabeth Grosz so aptly put it:

> the utopic is always conceived as a *space*, usually an enclosed and isolated space –the walled city, the isolated island, a political and agrarian self-contained organization, and thus a commonwealth....The utopic is definitionally conceived in the topological mode, as a place with definite contours and features. ... It is significant that the question of the future in and of the Republic, the future of the Utopians, remains unaddressed; utopia, like the dialectic itself, is commonly fantasized as the end of time, the end of history, the moment of resolution of past problems. The utopic organization is conceived as a machine capable of solving foreseeable problems through the perfection of its present techniques. This is the image of an ideal society in which time stops and, as Plato recognized, the timeless sets it. ... The utopian mode seeks a future that itself has no future, a future in which time will cease to be a relevant factor, and movement, change, and becoming remain impossible." (135-142)

[6] A disclaimer and note of clarification is in order here. The point is not to dismiss the Platonic text for not "including" women, but rather to expose and discuss the *sexual indifference* –to borrow Luce Irigaray's terminology- that has overwhelmingly marked the Western philosophical history, since at least the time of Plato. When Irigaray and other feminist philosophers set out to reread the history of philosophy, they pose the question of

sexual difference as a question that has not been adequately raised within Western metaphysics. It is not, in other words, that the feminine is "absent" from the "egalitarian" political organization of the *Republic* (in Book V, for instance, Plato expounds on the ideal arrangements between the sexes and the inclusion of women in the education to the guardian class), or other Platonic texts for that matter, but rather that the feminine "is there" to work as the constitutive excluded condition of the phallogocentric discourse of metaphysics, the constitutive outside of its economy and intelligibility. As Judith Butler has put it, "when those specular (and spectral) feminine figures are taken to be the feminine, the feminine is fully erased by its very representation. The economy that claims to include the feminine as the subordinate term in a binary opposition of masculine/feminine excludes the feminine, produces the feminine as that which must be excluded for that economy to operate." (Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* 1993, p. 36). Such is the aporia of the thematization and figuration of the feminine within the textual body of Western metaphysics: The feminine cannot adequately thematized or figured in the Platonic text, precisely because it is the very excess that renders the conditions of the text possible, it is what eludes figuration, even if "it is there," represented as a poor copy, a shadow, a reflection, a derivative complementary to the self-presence of Truth. In the economy of representation of metaphysics, the feminine is represented as the unrepresentable condition of representation. Consequently, the feminist critique articulated by Irigaray and others is by no means organized by a pursuit to "enter" this economy. What is at issue, in other words, is not "equality" between the sexes, but rather the exclusionary rules and presuppositions that govern the logic of that discourse.

[7] Martin Heidegger notes that Plato's conceptualization of art as a whole is associated with the conjunction of the notions of *poein* -to bring forth- and *poiesis* -poetry. On Plato's identification of art with poetry, he writes:

> Finally, if by "art" we mean what is brought forward in a process of *bringing-forth*, what is produced in production, and the producing itself, then the Greek [Plato] speaks of *poiein* and *poiēsis*. That the world *poiēsis* in the emphatic sense comes to be reversed for the designation of the production of something in words, that poiēsis as "poesy" becomes the special name for the art of the word, poetic creation, testifies to the primacy of such art within art as whole. Therefore it is not accidental that when Plato brings to speech and to decision the relationship of art and truth he deals primarily and predominantly with poetic creation and the poet. (165, original emphasis).

[8] For an insightful analysis of the resonances of the ancient Greek term and theme of *politeia* in contemporary Western political theory, see Brown (38-39).

[9] *The Republic of Plato,* translated and introduced by Allan Bloom, 1968, 397e. Thereafter cited as *Republic.*

[10] The Greek verb "τρέπω" (*trepo>* "τροπή," *tropē*, "τρόπος," *tropos*, and στροφή, *strophē* > *strephein*) indicates the figure of turning and twisting, but also, in the context of ancient Greek theater, the movement of the chorus in turning from right to left of the stage, while, at the same time, performing the choric song.

[11] Although the *aisthesis* of the spectator is not quite as manifestly essential as the sensory involvement of the creator, the sensuousness of perception has certainly a role to play in the world of the Nietzschean conjoining of "wisdom" and "folly" in which the experience of art consists: *aisthētikos* [sensitive] < *aisthanesthai* [to perceive]. The etymological affinity between *αἰσθάνομαι* (to perceive) and *ἀΐω* (to hear), is not accidental.

[12] Although there is an aesthetic ideology underlying such Nietzschean themes, Giorgio Agamben is right to point out: "There is no such thing as Nietzsche's aesthetics because Nietzsche never thought of art starting from aesthesis, from the spectator's sensuous apprehension –and yet it is in Nietzsche's thought that the aesthetic idea of art as the opus of an operari, as a creative-formal principle, attains the furthest point of its metaphysical itinerary." (Agamben 85).

[13] A disclaimer concerning the resonance of Nietzschean "joyousness" is in order at this juncture: it should not be understood merely as a blissful state of redemption. Rather, it signals a complex interlacement of the experience of nothingness and the experience of the approbation of life; the contemporaneity of monstrosity and divinity. Akin to what he calls "pessimism of the future" (*Gay Science* 370), Nietzsche's eternal joy of becoming –self-generation of the will to power- brings into itself the eternal joy, and the abyss, of annihilation.

[14] The distinction between an art deriving from an abundance ("over-fullness") of life and an art emerging from the wish to overcome or even destroy life is developed in Gay Science, in "What is Romanticism?" Nietzsche asks: "is it hunger or superabundance that has here become creative?" This question becomes the point of departure for his drawing the distinction between the desire to fix and immortalize (the desire for being) and the desire for destruction and change (the desire for becoming). Nietzsche cautions against a clear-cut and unambiguous construal of this distinction. The desire for destruction, for instance, can be a creative force as much as the will to immortalize can be the tyrannic will to force a binding law.

[15] This difference reinstates and complicates the Aristotelian distinction between poiesis that denotes production in the sense of a means in view of an end and praxis that signals action as an end without means.

[16] For an analysis of the multi-layered pervasiveness of the imitative strategy in Politeia, see Baracchi 101. As Baracchi eloquently explains, Socrates' resorting to mimesis becomes even more forceful and poietically effective by virtue of the strong reservations against mimesis that he articulates in the course of the dialogue. This is about a movement against mimesis, which transpires within mimesis itself. Also, the elision of the figure of Plato, the other narrator –or, "the one who does not speak"- emerges as a mimesis of Socrates' mimesis.

[17] In his discussion of representation in the Republic - the process of creating fictive signs that they resemble/imitate the "reality" they represent- Plato introduces a dichotomous structure of mimesis consisting on one hand of the original, the arche – which is essential, mental, absent, same, identical- and on the other hand the copy, the reproduction - which is (or, appears to be) unessential, material, present, other, different. Plato does not only differentiate these two components, but he also morally judges them. The original is primary, authentic, true, and real whereas the copy is secondary, deficient, artificial, and unreal.

[18] The notion of the performative, as it has been developed by J. L. Austin in his speech act theory and has been reworked by Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida, is crucial in my renderings here in elucidating mimesis as a potential means of critical engagement with discursive and symbolic structures. For Butler, performativity has enabled a powerful appreciation of the ways that gendered identities are constructed iteratively or interpellated (summoned, hailed into subjectivity) through complex citational processes. In Derrida's theorization of citationality, a sign and its meanings can never be delimited by its original context, authorized convention, and authorial intention; every sign can be deterritorialized from its original context and grafted onto another one, and thus made to signify differently and unexpectedly.

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