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This article examines the relation between philosophy and theatre in the work of French philosopher Alain Badiou. First, it focuses on Badiou’s central categories, such as event and character, that resonate with the theatre. Second, Badiou’s own engagement with the theatre, the place theatre occupies in his philosophical world, is identified. Finally, the article argues that Badiou’s thought must be understood as a return to Plato. Plato here is understood not as an enemy of theatre, but as a philosopher who invented philosophy through a constant, if often critical, engagement with the theatre. Dramatic Platonism is the name proposed for this tradition of philosophy of which Alain Badiou is the most significant current representative.

Throughout its history, philosophy has used the theatre in two ways. The dominant way is as a model of representation. Here the theatre creates the distinction between appearance and truth. The origin of this model is, of course, Plato’s parable of the cave in book VII of the Republic, which presents a puppet master creating visual and auditory effects for the benefit of an imprisoned audience. This shadow theatre must be abandoned in order for an upper realm of truth to be accessed, as happens when a prisoner escapes to the real world above. Theatre, in other words, stands for illusion in contrast to philosophical truth: in order for philosophy to occur, we must leave the theatre behind.

The cave paradigm has had a profound impact on the relation between philosophy and theatre. Theatre studies has tended to view this impact as negative; the theatre, after all, is cast as the villain in this drama of illusion and truth, prison and escape. Jonas Barish has summed up this conventional wisdom by coining the term ‘anti-theatrical prejudice’. In the meantime, however, dramatists have returned to Plato’s cave with a very different set of interests. Rather than holding it responsible for fostering a ‘prejudice’, they recognized it as what it really was: a moment when Plato’s philosophy avails itself of the resources of the theatre. The cave parable – with its gothic shadows and ominous sounds, and the suggestion of lifelong bondage in an underground dungeon – is itself the product of a dramatic and theatrical imagination of the highest order. Into this carefully elaborated scene is then dropped the plot of the freed prisoner, his dramatic experiences in the upper world, the painful process of getting used to the sun, and then, at the climax, the descent back into the cave, where he and his news of the upper world are greeted first with laughter and finally with violence.
Refusing to dismiss this tragic drama as prejudice, dramatists of various ilks have adapted this parable to the stage. The British composer Alexander Goehr, for example, composed a chamber opera called *Shadowplay* in which a tenor sings the text of the parable only to be joined by a prisoner who enacts, in front of our very eyes, the drama of escape and ascent.3 Another adaptation of the cave parable can be found in Howard Brenton’s *Bloody Poetry*, a play set among the Romantic writers Bysshe and Mary Shelley, Lord Byron and their entourage on Lake Geneva. In a central scene, the group decides to ‘do’ the cave parable and proceeds to enact this scene.4 Byron’s pedantic biographer is forced to play the prisoner, the overbearing Lord Byron is demoted to playing the minor role of Glaucon, while Mary Shelley takes on the part of Socrates. The stage directions elaborate just how the cave and the shadows are transposed to the space of the stage: a chandelier is placed at the front of the stage representing the source of light, the fire. The chandelier merely ‘represents’ the fire because the stage direction makes it clear that in truth it is the footlights that cast the characters’ shadows on the back of the stage: the stage props are replaced by the real stage, and the parable by the theatre. More recently, the cave has been appropriated by film, and in much the same manner. *The Truman Show*, for example, creates the shadow cave as a reality show in which a child, purchased by the television company, grows up in a carefully set up all-American town, only to discover slowly that everyone else is merely playing a role.5 In this case, when the prisoner finally ascends from his constructed world, he moves from his brightly lit cave to the darkness of the control room above; Plato’s crucial difference between darkness and light is thus inverted. The conclusion to be drawn from these theatrical adaptations of the cave parable is that far from being merely the cause of a hostile relation between philosophy and theatre, the parable constitutes a genuine encounter between philosophy and theatre, a moment when philosophy needs the theatre and uses it in a carefully elaborated manner. Small wonder, then, that the theatre has responded in kind by adapting the parable’s theatrical matrix to the stage.

Besides the cave paradigm, however, there exists a second model for the relation between philosophy and theatre, one that is more difficult to capture: the use of drama as a paradigm for philosophy understood as act or action. In this second paradigm, there is nothing illusory or false about the theatre; instead it becomes a model for philosophy as something that happens in the manner of an act or event. Interestingly enough, this second model can also be traced back to Plato, though not to a particular scene or terminology as is the case with the cave parable and its language of (theatrical) illusion and (philosophical) truth. Rather it is to be found in Plato’s use of the dramatic form of the philosophical dialogue, which implies a conception of philosophy as an act executed by agents in a series of arguments. This is just a way of stating the obvious, perhaps, although the obvious in this case has not always been recognized: Plato invents characters, places them in scenes, and has them enact particular philosophically driven actions, or plots. Philosophy is not something that occurs in the privacy of your own mind, but something that is done, acted out in particular scenes and interactions. Borrowing a term from another theatrical philosopher, Kenneth Burke, I will call this second paradigm ‘dramatism’, since Burke used drama as a paradigm for a philosophical scheme centered on agents, actions, and the purpose of action.6
The dramatic form of the philosophical dialogue embodies the classical understanding of philosophy as intimately tied to conduct, habits and actions rather than to a set of doctrines or beliefs. If you believe that philosophy has to do with the actions of agents, you find yourself in the realm of drama. Only on occasion have modern philosophers continued this dramatic understanding of Plato’s philosophy. A notable and in some respects surprising exception was Michel Foucault, not a philosopher generally recognized for his interest in drama and theatre. This, however, changed notably in the lectures given at the Collège de France during the last years of his life. Devoted to the Greek term *parresia*, or truth-telling, Foucault elaborates the dramatic coordinates of this understanding of philosophy by differentiating his ‘dramatic’ analysis of philosophical truth from J. L. Austin’s theory of ‘performative’ speech acts. Foucault’s last lectures, which also contain fascinating discussions of Greek tragedy and the death of Socrates, have yet to be discovered by theatre studies; once they are translated into English (they appeared in France only in 2008 and 2009 respectively) this will hopefully change.

While modern philosophers have rarely paid attention to this dramatic (or dramatistic) dimension of philosophy, there exists a long and remarkable tradition of playwrights who recognized Plato’s dialogues as a dramatic form and decided to follow suit. I have so far found over a hundred plays, written since the Renaissance, centred on the philosopher Socrates and adapted, more or less directly, from Plato’s dialogues. Often these playwrights combined the material from the most theatrically vivid dialogues, such as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo*, or found other ways of portraying the remarkable actions of this quintessential philosopher and the characters with whom Plato had surrounded him. While not a major force in the history of drama, these Socrates plays, as I call them, pay homage to Plato as a dramatist.

Among the living philosophers, no one stands more clearly at the intersection of theatre and philosophy than Alain Badiou, whose significance for the study of theater cannot be overestimated. In the context of this essay, his importance lies in the fact that he moves between the various traditions and models outlined above. In line with the dramatistic model, for example, Badiou writes, ‘for me philosophical theatricality indicates that the essence of philosophy . . . is an act’. At the same time he holds onto the classical philosophical search for truth, precisely the term that organizes the cave parable in which theatre is used as a locus of falsehood. Badiou’s twin conceptions of philosophy as act and as truth are in the service of a new Platonism. His call for a return to Plato even includes the demand that ‘we can, we must write for our contemporaries Republics and Symposiums’. Uniquely among contemporary philosophers, Badiou brings together the cave model and the dramatistic model and traces both of them back to Plato.

What Badiou cares most about when he calls for a return to Plato is the continuation of philosophy as an independent discipline. It is this integrity of philosophy, he feels, that has been under threat through the last 150 years, when philosopher after philosopher has declared the end of metaphysics and therefore the end of philosophy as it had been instituted by Plato. Nietzsche’s attack on Platonism is the most famous example of this tradition of seeking to end philosophy, but Badiou also includes Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jacques Derrida. Declaring the end of (Platonist)
metaphysics, Badiou argues, comes at too steep a price, and he measures this price in terms of Plato: it means ceding philosophy to its enemies, the sophists and other relativists; it means giving up that which has distinguished philosophy from sophistry, namely the category of truth.\textsuperscript{16} It is important to recognize that Badiou is not an idealist in the sense of asserting the existence of concrete universals. For him, reversing anti-Platonism is a way of staying true to the project of philosophy itself, ‘philosophy as it was instituted by Plato’.\textsuperscript{17} And that project cannot do without the concept of truth. Once philosophy gives up truth, it reverts to sophistry, relativism, the description of an ever-changing world. Badiou identifies with Plato when he watches modern anti-Platonist philosophy tear down Plato’s bulwark against relativism. Philosophical self-critique is all well and good, but modern anti-Platonism has thrown out the baby with the bathwater, ensuring the death of philosophy in the process.

The philosopher who represents, for Badiou, an intriguing version of this anti-Platonist tendency is Gilles Deleuze. Drawing on Nietzsche among others, Deleuze had positioned his own philosophy of the multiple against Plato, making anti-Platonism the centre of his method. In many ways, Deleuze is the perfect example of what happens when you declare Platonist metaphysics to be over: all that is left to do is to celebrate contingency, immanence, heterogeneity and endless series of differences, reveling in the sheer groundlessness of all thinking: ‘Deleuze is the cheerful thinker of the confusion of the world’, Badiou writes, who offers ‘an immense description, a collection of today’s diversity’.\textsuperscript{18} Deleuze is the thinker of bodies, of endlessly differing identities, of machines, of matter in its myriad forms, a Dionysian thinker of the multiple, the thinker who identified his own writing with the project of a ‘reversal of Platonism’. Deleuze, of course, was himself a philosopher deeply engaged with the theatre, especially in his early work \textit{Difference and Repetition} (1968), which celebrates the theatre as an art form prone to disrupt the principle of identity and difference on which idealist philosophy had staked so much.\textsuperscript{19} Indeed, Foucault gave Deleuze’s book a rave review, speaking about his conception of a theatrical philosophy as one immersed in bodies and screams. Theatre here functions very much along the lines of the cave paradigm, only now it is the bodies, not the ideas, that are valued above all.\textsuperscript{20}

Without discussing this theatrical dimension of the debate, Badiou proceeds to the second step in his argument, namely that in reversing Plato, Deleuze has left Platonism more or less intact. Yes, Badiou declares, Deleuze enjoys his bodies, multiplicities, minor languages and endless series of differences, but behind this immense mobilization of difference lurks the same old distinction between appearance and essence first made in Plato’s cave parable. The only difference is that Deleuze enjoys the multiple appearances of shadows on the wall and feels little desire to turn around and leave the cave. Deleuze does not dismantle the Platonist distinction between appearance and essence, but merely changes the values assigned to them, favouring the ever-changing world of appearance over the Platonic ascent to the realm of ideas. The same argument can be made with respect to other anti-Platonists, since it speaks to a danger almost invariably associated with reversal: reversing Platonism leaves the distinction between cave and upper world in place and only reverses the values associated with it. In a way, modern philosophy has never stopped paying homage to the cave, even if it has tended to do so by means of reversal.
The surprising twist in this interpretation of Deleuze occurs in a third argument: Deleuze starts out as Platonist in reverse, but he ends up being a Platonist in disguise. It turns out that behind Deleuze’s fascination with the multiple lurks, as a foil, a conception of the one. Badiou lists many passages in which Deleuze relates multiplicities to a transcendent notion of unity and oneness. There is a singularity to Deleuze’s notion of being, for example. Here Badiou argues that Deleuze’s philosophy is a ‘classical’ one, and this means that it is a ‘metaphysics of Being and of foundation.’ This is even more true of Deleuze’s other central category, borrowed from Bergson: time. Time is the foundation of Deleuze’s philosophy, that which guarantees that the world of wild differences can nevertheless yield a conception of truth. Badiou’s bravura reading of Deleuze, counterintuitive as it might seem at first, is not to be dismissed out of hand even if it also betrays Badiou’s own Platonist philosophy, which here manifests itself as a reinterpretation of one of Plato’s greatest foes of the late twentieth century.

If anti-Platonism is one target for Badiou’s approach, the other is language philosophy. Badiou recognizes the focus on language as one of the dominant strains within twentieth-century philosophy and one of the chief opponents of any kind of Platonism, especially insofar as it presumes that all thinking is determined by the medium of language (whether conceived as speech or as writing). Earlier philosophies had understood language to be one of the fields of philosophical inquiry among others, but language philosophy claims that since philosophy is crucially determined by language, all philosophy must become a philosophy of language.

For Badiou, the main problem with language philosophy is that it replaces the question of truth with that of meaning. Posed against a (Deleuzian) philosophy of the body and a (Wittgensteinian) philosophy of language, Badiou summarizes the cornerstones of his philosophy in the recent book *Logics of Worlds* (2006) with the following formula: ‘there are only bodies and languages’. Even as he thus recognizes, with this assertion, the achievements of a philosophy of the body and of language, Badiou supplements that assertion with a crucial addition: ‘There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths.’ The body–language doctrine, Badiou argues, can be traced back to the Sophists and their (relativistic) declaration that ‘Man is the measure of all things’. Badiou understands truth to work against such anthropomorphic relativism. Truth is what takes the philosopher outside the human realm, indeed it ‘dislocates’, as Badiou puts it with respect to truth in the *Republic*. At another moment he says that ‘truths exist as exceptions to what there is’, as an interruption of the continuity of bodies and languages.

So far, Badiou’s resuscitation of Plato takes place within the frame of the first paradigm of the cave: modern philosophy is anti-Platonist in that it has abandoned truth and thus the possibility of the world above, contenting itself with the theatre of shadows and words below. Only the most astute anti-Platonists, such as Deleuze, pay grudging homage to Plato by being not so much Platonists in reverse as Platonists in disguise. But it takes a reader such as Badiou to ferret out the Platonist overtones in the celebration of shadows, bodies and languages current in much twentieth-century philosophy.

Folded into this critique of anti-Platonism, however, we find Badiou availing himself of the second, dramatistic paradigm, the understanding of philosophy as (dramatic) act.
The key term here is ‘event’, which Badiou first developed in his book *Being and Event* (1988) and further elaborated in *Logics of Worlds* and several other texts. For example, when, in the quote above, Badiou speaks of truth as an exception, he has in mind his definition of the event, which is always an exceptional occurrence. With the notion of the event, we arrive at the center of Badiou’s ontology. Badiou offers us four routes towards the event: love, politics, mathematics and art. The second, politics, is perhaps the most intuitive, and also the one that reveals Badiou’s political convictions: a history of true events is nothing other than the history of revolts and revolutions, beginning with Spartacus and ending with the Cultural Revolution in China. Here ‘event’ can be translated as meaning ‘revolutionary event’; periods of reaction, by contrast, are not events, but merely negative attempts to dilute the revolutionary effects of true events.

Among the four, mathematics is the most difficult, but also, for Badiou, the most crucial, philosophically speaking. Trained as a mathematician, Badiou has always sought to remind philosophy of its connection to mathematics. In this regard, too, Badiou follows Plato, who had identified mathematics as a stepping stone in the ascent from the cave to the realm of truth. Today’s philosophy, for Badiou, has reversed Plato’s preference for mathematics over poetry by installing poetry at the centre of (Continental) language philosophy, most prominently so in the work of Heidegger (but also post-structuralism). Badiou seeks to rectify this situation. From mathematics, Badiou takes his theory of multiples. Unlike Plato, with his insistence (at least in his middle period) on concrete universals, single ideas that are themselves sustained by the transcendent idea of the good, Badiou furnishes his worlds with multiples theorized with the help of Cantor’s set theory. Here, the philosophical notion of the situation, which harbors multiples, finds its mathematical grounding, as does the argument why there are multiple worlds, not just one. Badiou’s often technical use of mathematics has puzzled many readers (including this one), but for our purposes here suffice it to say that Badiou proposes an ontology of multiplicity that does without recourse to oneness and transcendence and remains instead on a plane of immanence.

Even though Badiou seeks to install mathematics at the centre of philosophy and thus to reverse the dominance of poetry – and literature more generally – over philosophy, he does not want to give up on literature altogether. Indeed, the poem remains another path towards the event. It is surprising how closely Badiou follows Heidegger’s reverence for poetry, his belief that through poetry the true language of being takes place above and beyond the degraded language of communication and everyday life. But where Heidegger finds in poetry the language of being, Badiou finds there the occurrence of an event. What he shares with Heidegger is the presumption that in poetry something happens, that the language of poetry is somehow truer – more revelatory – than non-poetic language, which also means that language manifests itself more fully in the poem than in other forms of speech. Avoiding the quasi-religious language of revelation, however, Badiou thinks of the poem as an event, as the moment when ‘what there is’ is being interrupted, when something new and strange enters a situation and radically alters it: an exceptional poem bears traces of an event.
The contrast with Heidegger is visible most clearly in Badiou’s choice of master poet: instead of the late Romantic Hölderlin, Badiou reveres the modernists Mallarmé and Beckett. Badiou’s admiration for Mallarmé stems in part from the poet’s own regard for numbers and from his quasi-technical understanding of poetry as an ‘operation’. The most important poem, for Badiou, is the experimental ‘A Throw of Dice’, in which Mallarmé arranges words on a page reminiscent of falling dice. By deviating from the regular poetic line, Mallarmé turns every word into an event just as the poem itself revolves around an event: a shipwreck. But even more central is the event that gives the poem its name, the throw of dice itself. A throw of dice creates an event, it distills what we might call an event to its essence. When we throw dice, we have defined the situation, a bet, into which an event will intrude by making a decision. After the throw, nothing will be the same; the event will have fundamentally altered the situation.

Not only does Mallarmé produce an event with and through his poem, he also does so, according to Badiou, by crucially relying on absence, negation and the void. The shipwreck, in that sense, is only the ruse of an external event, not its essence, which resides in a peculiar quality of absence. In Badiou’s parlance, an event takes place ‘on the edge of the void’ in close proximity with nothing (the title of his main book, Being and Event, echoes Sartre’s Being and Nothingness). Badiou’s ontology is not one of plenitude, but of a precarious relation to absence. Such absence is a recurring concern for Mallarmé, whose poems are fascinated by silence and, for the first time in modern poetry, by the blank space between the words. For Badiou, Mallarmé is thus the poet of subtraction and isolation, the representative of a modernism that seeks to reduce mimesis and expression, the traditional domain of poetry, to a minimum. The eccentric arrangement of words on the page in ‘A Throw of Dice’ might indeed be seen as a poetic rendering of Badiou’s conception of multiples arranged on the edge of the void.

Situation, event, throw of dice – the terms of Badiou’s discussion of Mallarmé have one thing in common: they are at home in the theatre. Even though Badiou, following Heidegger, discusses Mallarmé under the general rubric of the poem, the more important category is in fact drama. In Being and Event he emphasizes at the outset that ‘A Throw of Dice’ is ‘dramatic’ (his emphasis) and that Mallarmé more generally ‘is the thinker of the event-drama’. In A Handbook of Inaesthetics he details more fully what kind of theatre is at work in this extraordinary poet. Trying to specify what use Mallarmé makes of the theatre, Badiou approaches a category that almost all philosophers interested in the theatre encounter sooner or later: anti-theatricality. Mallarmé, the writer of the event-drama, as Badiou puts it, isn’t he really an enemy of the theatre?

Badiou approaches this question via the rival category of dance as a metaphor for thought. Noting the frequent opposition between dance and theatre, Badiou sees a clear anti-theatrical turn in the work of the later Nietzsche, who attacks Wagner with an anti-theatrical polemic and praises instead, via Zarathustra, the superiority of dance. Mallarmé, with his interest in dance, seems to go a similar route – but not quite. Mallarmé, for Badiou, parts company with Nietzsche in that he installs a peculiar, purified, idealized theatre at the centre of his dramatic poetry. Badiou avoids a conception of theatre as mimesis and reads Mallarmé’s monologue The Afternoon of a Faun as just
such an anti-mimetic dramatization of the idea. This is another way of recognizing
that Mallarmé has managed to install anti-theatricality at the centre of his theatre,
creating an event drama in the manner of Plato, as I have detailed at greater length
elsewhere.29

Behind Badiou’s philosophy of the poem, we thus find a conception of Platonic
theatre. What are the contours of that conception? First of all, it asserts the centrality
of the theatre for thought. In his recent _The Century_ (2005; translated into English 2007)
Badiou observes that ‘the twentieth century is the century of the theatre as art’, the
century that witnessed the emergence of the theatre and of the _mise-en-scène_ as high
art. In particular, Badiou is interested in the figure of the director, who has emerged as
‘a thinker of representation as such, who carries out a very complex investigation into
the relationships between text, acting, space, and public’.30 Badiou places the modern
director at the centre of theatre because he wants to formulate an understanding of
theatre that emphasizes its connection to philosophy, or more precisely, to thought.
The director, as he specifies in another short text on theatre, assembles components,
including text, acting, set design and music, but assembles them in a unique manner;
this is why the theatre can be called an event. The theatrical assemblage occurs only in
the present, night after night, there, on the stage. Further, Badiou argues that due to this
unique form of assemblage, the theatre is capable of producing ideas. ‘This event – when
it really is theater, the art of the theater – is an event of thought. This means that the
assemblage of components directly produces ideas.’31 Since philosophical truth has the
character of the event, it is the theatre, the most eventful of the arts, that plays a central
role in its formulation.

Badiou’s most important text on theatre to date is _Rhapsody for the Theatre_,
published in 1990 (as editor of _Theatre Survey_ I commissioned a translation of this short
book into English; it appeared in its entirety in the autumn 2008 issue of _Theatre Survey_
and can be accessed via Cambridge Journals Online).32 It is in this book that Badiou
spells out the theatrical dimension of his thought, and sums up his understanding of
theatre in the thesis that ‘All theatre is theatre of ideas’.33 Badiou here does not mean
that theatre fulfils merely a kind of pedagogical assumption, ‘distancing the Idea in the
veil of representation’.34 Rather, it means returning theatre to a Platonist conception of
the idea, albeit an idea understood as event and therefore as something that must be
understood dramatically.

Badiou’s conception of theatre as event also identifies the theatre as the most political
art form, the art form most closely tied to the state. This, of course, is especially true in
France, with its tradition of national theatre and generous state subsidies. Things could
not be more different in the United States. But even if we allow for national difference,
the essential relation between theatre and the state posited by Badiou has a relevance for
us as well, since it identifies the assembled public, the liveness of the theatre event and the
history of theatre as crucial political categories. (Here and elsewhere Badiou contrasts
the political nature of live theatre with film, which cannot be political in the same way,
and this preference for theatre over film might be seen as yet another contrast with
Deleuze, whose earlier interest in theatre had given way to an engagement with film.) In
order to preserve this character of the live assembly, Badiou also demands that theatres
keep the practice of intermission, the moment when the audience can see and experience itself as audience rather than disappear, as it does in film, in the anonymity of the dark.

We can now see the contours of Badiou’s theatrical philosophy. The poem is for him an ‘event-drama’, and this emphasis on the event ultimately leads him to think of the theatre as the art form – or assemblage of existing art forms – that is the most directly tied to ideas. Like many theatrical philosophers before him, including Plato, Ficino, Diderot, Voltaire, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus and Sartre, Badiou also translated his dramatic philosophy into drama. His plays have not appeared in English, even though they have acquired a (small) following in France. They are wide-ranging and witty, turning philosophical concepts into scenes and characters, including the figure of Ahmed, an Algerian immigrant around whom four of Badiou’s plays revolve. These plays also testify to the fact that Badiou’s philosophy not only is dramatic, but actually veers towards the drama itself. Badiou’s work is an occasion for rethinking the relation between philosophy and theatre; it is also itself an exemplar of this relation, a reminder of how fruitful the encounter between theatre and philosophy can be.

NOTES
3 Alexander Goehr, Shadowplay, op. 30 (Mainz: Schott, 1970).
7 For an elaboration of this understanding of philosophy see Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, ed. and with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). Foucault was Hadot’s sponsor for a chair at the Collège de France.
For a reading of the Symposium as an encounter between the philosopher Socrates and the two playwrights Agathon and Aristophanes, see Freddie Rokem’s ‘The Philosopher and the Two Playwrights: Socrates, Agathon, and Aristophanes in Plato’s Symposium’, Theatre Survey, 49, 2 (November 2008), pp. 239–52.

One of the first, and few, theatre scholars to be interested in Badiou was Janelle Reinelt, with a piece called ‘Theatre and Politics: Encountering Badiou’, Performance Research Special Issue on Civility, 9, 4 (2004), pp. 87–94.


Badiou, Conditions, p. 77.

Ibid., p. 307.

Ibid., p. 75.

Ibid., p. 77.

Alain Badiou, Deleuze: Le Clamour de l’être (Paris: Hachette, 1997), 18, 26. All translations from this text are mine.


Badiou, Clamour, p. 83.


Badiou, Conditions, p. 318.

Badiou, Logiques des mondes, p. 12.

Badiou, Conditions, p. 163.


Badiou, Conditions, p. 108.


Martin Puchner, Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-theatricality and Drama (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). Indeed, it has been one of the pleasures of encountering Badiou’s work to see his reading of theatre, from Mallarmé via Brecht to Beckett, dovetail with my own (anti-)theatrical history of a Platonist theatre. In Handbook of Inaesthetics, for example, he identifies, in passing, Brecht’s anti-Aristotelian theater as ‘ultimately Platonic’, noting that Brecht ‘theatrically reactivated Plato’s anti-theatrical measures’ (p. 6). Beckett is cited as having achieved another reactivation of Plato.


Ibid., p. 206.

Ibid., p. 225.
James Russell Lowell Award). He has published essays in the London Review of Books, Raritan Review, N+1, Bookforum, Yale Journal of Criticism, Drama Review, the Journal of the History of Ideas, New Literary History, Theatre Research International, and Theatre Journal, among others. His edited books and introductions include Six Plays by Henrik Ibsen (Barnes and Noble, 2003), Lionel Abel’s Tragedy and Metatheatre (Holmes and Meier, 2003), The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings (Barnes and Noble, 2005), and Modern Drama: Critical Concepts (Routledge, 2007). He is the co-editor of Against Theatre: Creative Destinations on the Modernist Stage (Palgrave, 2006) and The Norton Anthology of Drama (2009).