

New Ancient Gestures

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by David Kilpatrick

Hyperion, Volume III, issue 2, April 2008

HYPERION:
ON THE FUTURE OF AESTHETICS



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Since 1977, when Włodzimierz Staniewski established the Centre for Theatre Practices in the rural village of Gardzienice, in southeast Poland, the company has achieved international acclaim for its unique blend of ethnomusicology and bold athleticism. Gardzienice's work seems simultaneously in touch with an archaic sensibility while charting new paths, extending new boundaries for the body in performance.

After graduating from Krakow University, where Staniewski worked with the politically and aesthetically daring Theatre STU, he worked with Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory in Wrocław. Turning from private experiments to a more public forum, with Gardzienice, Staniewski explored the musical forms and performance modes found in rural villages throughout Poland, using "gatherings" or semi-formal performances in village centers to both collect and perform material eventually surfacing in *Spektakl Wierczorny* [*Evening Performance*] (1977), *Gusla* [*Sorcery*] (1981), and *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum* (1983). *Carmina Burana* (1990) saw the company extend beyond rural Polish material to explore medieval European songs, and with *Metamorphoses* (1998) the company turned to the myth and music of Greek antiquity for its source material.

With *Euripides' Elektra-(Chieronomia/Gestures): Theatrical Essay* (2004), Gardzienice furthered their exploration of performance in classical antiquity. On January 13, 2005, in anticipation of the play's New York debut at La MaMa, the director sat down at an East Village café to discuss the company's most recent work.

DK: *I understand that Elektra marks a relatively new phase of work for Gardzienice (furthering work that started with Metamorphoses), but was wondering if you could talk about how Elektra stands in relation to your earlier work and this new direction you're taking.*

WS: *Metamorphoses* was focused on ancient Greek music, so we did quite a bit of research on ancient Greek music—which is almost completely unknown today—especially in theatre. There are books on ancient Greek music, but I don't know any theatre which would try to reconstruct ancient Greek music. So we've been focused on that, we've done research and tried to adapt it to our story, which was *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, and now what is the switch? The switch is from the music to another, let's say, forgotten means of expression, which was called *chieronomia*. This was the ancient technique of using gestures, using the hands for gesticulation, like in today's Kathakali theatre. But this is completely forgotten. Nothing is left as a matter of fact. So our work is focused on studying the images from the vases and trying to get from historical evidence to what's an expression or view of how would it be like. And this way we invent our alphabet of gesticulation, which is the main means of expression. So it's something like a pantomime but with a very strict relation to the ancient images taken mainly from the vases. Black and red picture vases. But this is combined with the music and the text. So if you read, for instance, *Elektra*, you have what we call this *didaskalia* where it is told "and now Elektra..." after her monologue, it says "and now Elektra gesticulates," and nothing more. So they were probably using as a part of the entire performance just a sort of pantomime, which had a strict connotation with their way of understanding, with the gesture. Like in today's Indian theatre, or in Bali. So throughout the performance we use these gestures and the performance is sung, again, and of course all the text or much of the text from Euripides' *Elektra* is used.

DK: *Do you think that Euripides, Sophocles or Aeschylus, when they were teaching the text, that they would have composed gestures as a part of the piece?*

WS: Definitely, definitely! They were taught in let's say the schools, like the schools for young *epebes*, for young boys, they were taught gesticulation and it was going so far that they were told to paint to make a drawing of the master paintings, the master paintings of the time and later on to use it as a sort of inspiration for the, one would say, pantomime, but I would use this word:

chieronomia. And it wasn't just to give poses, you know, it was used for the grace of the movement.

DK: *So Nietzsche would say the birth of tragedy in the spirit of music, but you would say in the spirit of gesture?*

WS: That's what I would say today, after doing the study.

DK: *But the musicology that's gone into the production as well, have you focused on trying to recover tragic music, or just ancient Greek music?*

WS: We've been using again ancient Greek music, the big part of the music which was not used in *Metamorphoses* and other writings, which was adapted specifically for this performance and adopted specifically for this technique of *chieronomia*. So the way of the music is let's say to re-invent. You cannot talk about reconstruction of the music because it's nothing like it, you can't have it, you can only reinvent. The way it was re-invented is it was strictly connected with *chieronomia*, with the technique of gesticulation. So I would say that the frequency of the body, the frequency of the hand, the dynamics of the hand were very influential for the way music was adapted for this performance. Usually I would work the other way around: I would take the music first, but then I would try to use the music as a sort of inspiration, as an impulse to find out the dynamics of the text and dynamics of the body. Now it was another way around; the impulse was gesticulation.

DK: *So with this vocabulary of gesticulation, how many different movements are there? Is there a set number that each character works with or the entire company?*

WS: No, the entire company. We have like a code, like an alphabet, which is rather strict now, and which expresses, explains and expresses, a given emotion, given symbols, given characters. For instance this is Euripides, this is Elektra, or so on. I'm not going to show it because you don't have a camera, just a tape recorder.

DK: *So this play of a code would then be like a secret code for the performers but the audience can't penetrate it though?*

WS: They can penetrate it because the way we are doing the performance is structured in that way that we're doing a sort of like ... in a book they would call it a preface or prologue and we explain [the gestures] to the public. Of course, the public is not able to memorize everything but the public understands clearly that those gestures are not improvised or a mish-mash or whatever comes; they understand all the different combinations and then they see later how they are used in the performance in a much more dynamic way.

DK: *Oh I see! So in other words the vocabulary is performed in the prologue.*

WS: That's right. Even with the slides, you know, the slides are showing the reference, with the ancient images.

DK: *Did you focus on vases or bas-relief of theatrical productions? Were there other vases from athletic contest or something other than theatre, or did you focus on images from theatrical vases?*

WS: Some images are, let's say, very, very simple to read. You have for instance different paintings from funeral ceremonies and then you have—one of the gestures is this [*he demonstrates*], which means to cry, or mourning—so this is very simple, they are from the art, they are not from the theatre. But some gestures or some positions are supposedly from theatre plays. For instance, very often what you see painted is the moment of killing, when Aegisthus kills Agamemnon in the presence of Clytemnestra. And then this was used and transformed, of course, because you cannot use the killing with the ax.

DK: *You think that the violence would have been staged in gesture, then? Or would this be done through the messenger scene?*

WS: I mean this is the same as with the reconstruction or so-called reconstruction with the music. You have annotation, but you don't know the tempo, yes? Very often you don't know the rhythm even, you have just annotation. And you're taking a couple of notes and you're adapting let's say those notes to create a sort of musical feature. The same from the drawing. You have the composition of three, four figures which are representing, for instance, the scene of the murder, the murder of Agamemnon, and you're taking the three or four notes, if I can say metamorph from this, but from the drawing. Not to imitate it in a very sentimental primitive way; you're transforming it to your own advantage. So, yes, that's how it works.

DK: *So is this your first text-based piece? Obviously this is your first piece going back to an ancient text, but this is the first piece where the company is working with a pre-conceived text?*

WS: You mean drama? Yeah, this is the first drama play. I'm usually working on novels, adapting so-called novel, epic literature. Never drama. So this is the first regular drama that is adapted [by Gardzienice].

DK: *But you're also not going to be subservient to the text, right; you're bringing Euripides onto the stage?*

WS: That's a good question, you know, whether you're bringing Euripides on the stage or you are bringing just an interpretation, as you would say. Because there's a huge question of what ancient drama looked like. My trick is based on a very simple assumption, or my idea is based upon a very simple trick. I'm trying to imagine not how the play was staged in the big amphitheatre or

the big auditorium, but how the play was rehearsed in the small venue. For instance, imagine: Euripides is rehearsing with his actors in his home, which is absolutely possible, or he's rehearsing in the *palastra*, in the school; it is absolutely possible. There is evidence. One of the legends says that Euripides got very angry at one of the actors who wasn't able to follow the way that Euripides himself was instructing him to do. As you know, Euripides was a composer himself. Did you know we have two musical examples, which are surely composed by Euripides? One is from *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the other from *Orestes*.

So he's instructing the actor how to do it. This often sinks terribly into imagination, how would it be in rehearsal, you know? Euripides was the choreographer, you could say the one who was teaching all the choreography, he was surely *chierosophoie*, the one who teaches the *chieronomia*, and he was a sort of director of this. So what we know about those guys is only that they were writing a play, which is absolutely not true. So imagine them working. Then you're completely free from all the ideas imposed by history about how you should work with the ancient drama. "You have to have a mask, you have to have the *chtourni*, you have to have the shirt, this particular costume," you are more free. And as you know, the rehearsal process whenever it was happening throughout history was the most interesting process. As Stanislavsky said, "only rehearsal, rehearsal, rehearsal, that is important." So I'm trying to use this idea, this perspective, and then I'm much more free for experimentation.

DK: *Right. And then the classicists can't come in and say "that's not what it looked like in the Temple Dionysia," because you're not worried about that, you're worried about rehearsal.*

WS: I'm showing open rehearsal, let's say. Something like that. Who knows how it looks? And of course I'm using costume, I'm using the mask, but in this way we're just in the process, the work-in-process. Of course the play is complete. It is very structured. It is very precise. It goes from the beginning to the end. But still, I am free of any, let's say, judgment. So I can say, yes, he's Euripides—Euripides in rehearsal. Probably I should call the play that!

DK: *It is being promoted as a work-in-progress, as a lecture. But you're actually showing work-in-progress, rather than it being a work-in-progress. So, you're piece is finished, it's already been performed.*

WS: Of course, of course. Don't misunderstand me. It's not like a usual contemporary work-in-progress. We can use this term for whatever but, my point of view is, don't look at my *Elektra* as something that you know from history, from the books; look at it as it could be like if whoever in antiquity would rehearse.

DK: *How does this engagement with ancient Greek material, in particular, this first work with the drama, how does it relate to your earlier work in myth and ritual? I understand that you did a great deal of work exploring traditional narratives and ritual forms and musical forms, especially. You're especially well known for taking traditional musical forms and bringing them into the context of avant-garde theatre. How does this engagement with myth relate to that earlier work? Is it a completely new direction for you? Is it a continuation? Do you see it as a different phase?*

WS: It is different work. Let's say that the starting point is much more difficult. As I said there was always music in the beginning of every process. So the actors were first learning the music and then, while singing, looking to adapt the other means of expression, like the text, the movements. Then we had to create an alphabet, a code of the gestures, with this very artificial world. The music is much more social, much more natural, much more of an opening up of the organic process as one would say. It's much more Dionysian; while the gestures, the pose, is much more Apollinian. So this would be the switch: from Dionysian to Apollinian.

DK: *Meaning your previous work was much more Dionysian?*

WS: Much more Dionysian, yeah. And so to create the language, which would be dynamic, which music would be able to follow, and the words would be able to follow the language of the gestures—it is very, very hard work. So it is like sculpture, sculpting the body and then trying to make a dancing sculpture. So the work is completely different, I believe.

DK: *Does this Apollinian structure of gesticulation harness the Dionysian in a different way? Is there foreclosure or does it allow for a different form of ek-stasis?*

WS: Well one first of all has to define exactly what ek-stasis means. What is ek-stasis? Ek-stasis is a certain state of being. An actor being in ek-stasis, or can an actor reach a certain level of dynamics, which looks so intense that it speaks to the spectator, the audience, like an ek-stasis? So it's a question of dynamics, probably, and intensity. Performance is very dynamic, very intense, but much more refined, much more, let's say, readable, much more clear, in terms of how the body language is used, because of the very clear precise alphabet of *chieronomia*, of gesticulation.

DK: *Here in New York will the performance be in Polish?*

WS: It's in Polish, in English, and in ancient Greek. The main character is played by an English actress and so she's using some English parts. The songs sung by the choir and the solo songs are sung in ancient Greek. Oh, this was good simple question. Any more like this?

DK: *Yeah, I've got a few more simple questions. I understand you have Euripides as the narrator at certain parts of the play. I always remember being taught that...*

WS: He is like the one who runs the process, who runs the rehearsal.

DK: *So he's literally running the rehearsal? Oh!*

WS: He is the one who, let's say, is being tormented. Like, he tries to find out the way how to find the proper expression, I suppose, how to find the proper climate, how to find the proper clue. So the process is his process of creation, which is not easy. So you see it is the main engine of the performance. So he's coming in the beginning, he's doing a sort of explanation of what they were doing before the play, before the rehearsal, the author and the director they just give an explanation to the gods, to get them as positive and as sympathetic as possible, and then he runs the show.

DK: *For your company, where are the gods? Is this a concern in terms of finding a trace of the sacred in the text? Of course, Euripides is blamed by Nietzsche and others for having killed off tragedy, foreclosed the Dionysian, giving over not only to the Apollinian, but over to the Alexandrian (what Nietzsche calls the Alexandrian), so that to go to Euripides rather than the other tragedians I find very interesting and there's this almost Socratic notion of Euripides being (again, I think of The Bacchae) as being the most cynical in relation to the gods. Are you concerned with rekindling a sacred fire? Is that a concern at all? Where are the gods in your equation? Are they hidden, have they withdrawn, are they dead?*

WS: Listen, first of all this is a big question which is a big mystery, whether Euripides was religious or was he a sort of atheist. Nietzsche's opinion was that he was a sort of a communist, I think he said, I don't know. But the opinion of others was that he was deeply religious, and he just asked the questions, the questions of his time, Socratic questions.

DK: *Socrates would only go to the theatre if it was a play by Euripides.*

WS: Right. So he was the guy who was courageous enough to ask those questions: who are the gods, what are they for, and how much do we believe in them? *Elektra* is really about that; they try to object, Orestes is questioning if the order he got from Apollo is proper. And then Elektra's asking, "So, do you mean the god can be an idiot, can be stupid?" I think in the ancient language it sounds very strong. In the language those questions about the gods are like blasphemous questions. So I don't think that he was the one who didn't accept a so-called other reality, he was just questioning, and those questions were the questions of his time. So are the gods present in our performance? We're not using *deus ex machina* but they are present somehow in the climate of the performance. You know the way actors recite, it is like an explanation, so you

expect in a way that those explanations will be answered.

DK: *So many attempts at the rebirth of tragedy, and I'm even thinking of the ritual theatre movement here in New York—Richard Schechner, who I know is a big fan of your work, and Andrei Serban, who is so much associated with La MaMa—that there's this sense of a restoration of a dormant ritual form as if we can re-create the rite and then the gods will return. Is this at all a concern for you, the idea of the withdrawal of the gods, or of recovering a lost ritual or are you more interested in recovering a lost rehearsal?*

WS: Yeah, you're probably right there, but let me put it in another perspective. I mean your question is just ... all right, you know, the world today is it dead or, another way, how do you say monotheistic, yes? Monotheistic. One god. What I'm saying is...

DK: *Well...*

WS: Wait a second. All the fundamental religions are monotheistic. I'm saying heaven for the gods. I'm supposing to believe someone is closing a curtain, the curtain is nearly closed, and there is a god in the curtain. And through this gap in a part-closed curtain we see only one god. I'm saying this because for the last two thousand years those guys who are operating the curtain, they are trying to close the stage and trying to make the [one] god much larger. Try to open the curtain a little bit more and then perhaps we'll see the other gods who still are there, who are not necessarily dead as Nietzsche would wish. I think it was his wish, his instinctive wish; it is not necessarily true. Because I ... okay, we will go the path of mysticism ... that's my clue.

DK: *Well don't be afraid of going too far into mysticism, especially if that's what the theatre practice is engaged with. My point is, say Schechner's Dionysus in 69, Andrei Serban's Fragments of a Greek Trilogy, I don't know if you're familiar with those works...?*

WS: Yeah, I'm familiar with them, yes, very well.

DK: *Both of them seem to me to have been in the spirit of the gods are dead, the death of the gods, so even the notion of, you use the great image there of the curtain and it being closed so much, the idea is that the curtain is completely closed, and if we open it back up, they've withdrawn altogether, they're not there on the stage anymore, and so if we put forth this rite, if we follow the trace of these ruins, perhaps the gods will come back. That seems to me to be part of the spirit of it, and that Dionysus could maybe lead them back. Is this a concern for something sacred going on, even if it is a sacred in the absence of the divine? Do you understand what I mean? Is there something sacred going on in your theatre, is that a concern?*

WS: You know this is very ambiguous.

DK: *Grotowski talks about the sacred actor. Is this a concern at all to you?*

WS: He talks about the sacred actor but at the same time he was talking about the actor as a whore, in opposition to the sacred actor. The whore very often is a sacred figure, Mary Magdalene, so this is very ambiguous. I believe that the actor in that or another way is a sort of holy prostitute.

DK: *For you?*

WS: For me, yes. So through what he or she sacrifices, how much is god or are the gods are taking part? However, anything which is beyond our mind is taking part. You know there are two kinds of dialogue, dialogue in between two persons, as we are talking, and dialogue with ourselves. We are in permanent dialogue with ourselves. Who the hell is inside of us, who is the second? Who is the double that speaks all the time? I believe this is sort of the structure which can be related to something which is beyond the mind. I am very delicately walking around the issue, because I don't want religious terms, I don't want to be qualified on religious grounds. When we are saying "the gods" we are using a certain idea of something god is, let's say as today, it is the supernatural. And look what happens with this modern belief with technology and so on, this incredible reinvention of something which is the supernatural. So we have our matrix or we have our gods, or we have gods, two different terms; maybe it's a question of terminology.

DK: *I guess, I'm wondering if Gardzienice is in some way...*

WS: A sect? A religious sect?

DK: *Yeah.*

WS: No, no, no, no, no. What I believe in the process of working theatre is something more than only a way of manipulating people, subjects, space, and so on. Yes, I do believe. So if you would push me and say "okay, so declare in one word what belief your belief is about," I would say it clear: I believe in miracle. You're working very hard, you're reaching your limits, your extremes in the world, because that's what real work is about, all kinds of artistic work, and suddenly you're touching something that is revelatory, comes without any pre-conception, and unexpectedly, blows you away. So where it came from, I say, from somewhere; and so and so on, where is the somewhere, where is the somewhere? A good word: somewhere. Somewhere. It's like eternity, heaven, it's like...okay...that is very shaky ground. I wouldn't be qualified, I wouldn't like to be qualified as a religious theatre, a religious thing. Because we've been very open, particularly with our earlier shows, like *Avvakum*, you know, "okay they must be dealing with religion all those Poles, you know who are overwhelmed, who are a company absolutely absorbed with the religious stuff" and so on...

DK: *That's why I ask because there's that association with your company, and again from New York, Gardzienice might be thrown into this category with Grotowski, and so I'm trying to understand how they relate, how your work relates and how it doesn't relate...*

WS: To Grotowski?

DK: *Yeah, to Grotowski and again that notion of the sacred actor, and the way in which you've pursued mythical materials, ritual materials, and the way in which you incorporate music so much, it seems like there's something sacred going on, but I appreciate your...*

WS: Listen, my notion is like this: is art about something what we call, what we used to call metaphysical? I would say yes. Metaphysical, beyond the physical. Is metaphysics possible without the physics? I would say no. So the moment of transformation is like a sort of a chemical process. You put the different physical ingredients and then suddenly you have, believe it or not, the miracle, the revelation, something which is completely beyond your physical perceiving. The word, the process, is there. So that is how I would put it.

DK: *One thing that's obviously very different from your work, say with the other environmental or ritual theatre forms, is your use of multimedia, and I was curious to hear more about how you use slide projections and animation in this piece.*

WS: You know, I will say something that doesn't support very much my way of doing P.R., propaganda for our art. I am very much for this type of art which has the didactic attitude. But didacticism doesn't work very well with the real artistic big-bang. That's why I'm so careful. Maybe if you were doing a theatre show and it works, it has to smuggle, like smuggling with drugs, a certain didactics. Not offensive, not trying to impose on you, "I know something; I am going to tell you something." That's why I'm using the multimedia because to show multimedia, it has to be very well integrated into the process of acting, so multimedia can say some of the things which are not necessarily commonly known but should be. For instance, I'm using slides, and in the last performance in *Elektra* there is a very short animation film to tell that with my way of reinventing *chieronomia* I'm not improvising, I'm not doing whatever, but I'm returning in reference to a certain knowledge, certain technique, certain methodology which existed in antiquity. So listen, there was something like *chieronomia*; look at this picture, and look how it was drawn out, how it was inspired, and now we're doing a rock-n-roll adaptation which is, today, contemporary—we fix today part of the dynamic, the organics. So, this message is the didactic moment; you're revealing or you're saying something to the public which is forgotten, but which should be told. Like *chieronomia*, like all the ancient music. I was showing documentation, I was showing ancient Greek notation on the slides. This is very, very unknown, and very

forgotten.

DK: *But it's not didactic in a sense of imparting a moral lesson.*

WS: Exactly what I said. It's not like I am a teacher and you are the tool. No, I just want to have a look at it and just put it in light, a certain interesting sensitive fact, very spirited for the larger perspective, not only Gardzienice, but for a larger amount of people, for the larger number of researchers and the larger amount of artists. Just have a look at it...

DK: *Is this why the piece is subtitled "an essay"?*

WS: Yeah. Exactly.

DK: *I'm curious how do you see Gardzienice in relation to say, and again I hate to emphasize this nationalist query too much but, how do you see Gardzienice in relation to say Grotowski or Kantor, are you in relation to them or are you in relation to other international avant-gardists in a different way?*

WS: You know I am very declared Meyerholdic, in Russian they say Meyerholdic, one who is Meyerhold follower. Very, very declared. His work on biomechanics, his work on antiquity again, not very known.

DK: *So biomechanics and gesticulation...*

WS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but his work was one of the most important in twentieth century theatre, for twentieth century theatre. We are not yet twenty-first century theatre, so we can still say twentieth-century theatre. But I've been wary, as I have worked with Grotowski. Maybe because of that I had this desperation to oppose him. Now when I read him and I can see him in the large picture, I can say that he was a very influential and important person for international theatre, why not for Polish as well?

DK: *Are you concerned with national character or anything?*

WS: Like what?

DK: *Do you conceive of yourself, or Gardzienice, as a Polish company?*

WS: No, it was always international. Always fifty, sometimes forty percent of actors hail from other countries.

DK: *Do you see your work in relation to Eugenio Barba, the theatre anthropology approach of Odin Teatret?*

WS: I respect Eugenio Barba. I'm in antiquity. I believe that antiquity is still the source of inspiration. I would say I'm more in theatre archaeology than anthropology. Of course I respect his work. I think he is much more working on so-called ethnic stuff, ethnodrama.

DK: *Have you shifted from ethnography to archaeology then in your own work? Wasn't your earlier work more anthropological?*

WS: That's how we've been received or how we've been described, but it was always a sort of archaeology. You know you're digging in the earth and you're trying to find out where are the bones of your fathers and grandfathers and great-grand-grandfathers, and then you go to Mediterranean culture because this is the one of our real cultural sources.

DK: *The reason I ask is I know that Barba did some work in terms Kathakali gesture, and I wondered how that might compare to your archeology of gesticulation, but as you're describing it, it sounds quite different.*

WS: You tell. You will see the performance. You will see how much it is similar. Why not compare it to Kathakali itself? But of course those guys, those people are no doubt very inspiring for today's theatre.

DK: *Do you see your work then as in some way modern or postmodern but then also with another foot in antiquity? How do you see your work in relation to time, temporality in the present moment, in terms of Elektra? Why Elektra now?*

WS: Oh, for a very simple reason. I'll tell you why. There is of course a couple of other reasons, but I'll give you only one. You know what I did in this performance or in my hook of this performance was not only *chieronomia*, which is a sort of the company's new invention; anyway, every theatre is based upon or using in some other way gestures, gesticulation, pantomime more or less through time, but I don't think a theatre has gone so far researching how this technique functioned in antiquity.

So despite that, the other hook was Elektra, all the issues concerning her, her desperation, her not-to-be-stopped force to destroy, to kill, to damage; all the issues of destruction, of killing, of let's say demonic power which lies inside of us somewhere. Probably in relation, when we say with demons, we say with the gods. Who are the gods? They are there. Who [ever] the gods are, they are there. All of these issues are very contemporary, very today. So she was stopped several times during the play not to proceed - with this fatal demand coming. The question is where does this come from, this urge to kill? Actually the main explanation in the play itself is: kill, kill, kill, kill. All the time it is all the killing, an obsession with the kill. As you know Euripides was the Dostoevsky of his time; in other words, he was the first one who went very into the character's psychology. Especially he was penetrating, obsessive with women's psychology. And this is very contemporary. Of course, my analysis on this issue is a bit dangerous because some people could say he's the same, like Euripides, a misogynist.

DK: Thesmaphoriazusae, *right...*

WS: Woman is the real source of fatal destructiveness. I'm not necessarily telling you this but I'm very struck by the mysterious world of womanhood. Yeah, okay, no more about it. The point is the hook is in the play, which I believe I found, and I believe that Elektra, I did a sort of prejudgment as it is called in the theatre of interpretation. The main thing is that Elektra was raped by Aegisthus as a child and all the consequences of this act are running through the performance. And today it is a very hot issue, like Ophelia, children being raped and so on. So there's the hook.

DK: *That's not Euripides' hook.*

WS: This is to be discussed. You take your peg and I'll take mine. Let's take your translation. You know that translation does not necessarily reflect the real thoughts of the author. Every translation is not so much reflecting the original author but is reflecting the epoch, the given epoch when the translation is done. Why? For a very clear reason. You are enslaved by a lot of topics using the language which is the contemporary language of your time, using the references which would make the play, give it life today. All this is just making the play whatever and it doesn't reflect necessarily what the author wants to say. More [so] the ancient language; ancient Greek language is sort of an enigma still. You can make many different interpretations of not just a given sentence, but sometimes even a word. The metaphors are incredible, giving multiple interpretations. So I would say, this issue whether she was raped by Aegisthus or not is to be discussed between you and me. You take your translation and I'll take mine and we can argue. It is somehow I believe hidden in the text—I'm suggesting it is.

DK: *And in some ways it's these new ancient gestures...*

WS: "New ancient gestures," I like it. You know, my other term that I used in the very beginning was looking for a new natural theatre environment. So, new ancient gestures, very good.

For more information on Gardzienice, see <http://www.gardzienice.art.pl/>.