

THE ETHICAL AND LEGAL STAKES IN STAGING THE WORKS OF BERNARD-MARIE KOLTÈS

Diana Nechit, Professor PhD, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

Véronique Parisot, Associate Professor PhD, University of Burgundy

BIO

Diana Nechit is a professor in the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Letters and Arts (Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu). She obtained her PhD in philology, specializing in French literature, at the University of Bucharest, with a thesis dedicated to Bernard-Marie Koltès. She supervises doctoral theses in the field of Theatre and Performing Arts at the LBUS Doctoral School. She has published studies on contemporary French theatre and on adaptations and revisitations of canonical texts, as well as theatre and film reviews for specialized magazines and cultural journals in Romania and abroad. She has translated contemporary Francophone drama, both for publication and for stage productions, by authors such as Bernard-Marie Koltès, Alexandra Badea, Pascal Rambert, Céline Delbecq, etc. She has signed the dramaturgy for several performances alongside director Botond Nagy: *The Trial* at TNRS, *The Prophet Elijah* at TNB, and *Canine* at TNLV.

Institutional Affiliation and Contact: Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Department of Drama and Theatre Studies. 12

Banatului St, 550011, Sibiu, Romania

diana.nechit@ulbsibiu.ro

BIO

Véronique Parisot is an Associate Professor of Private Law. After earning master's degrees in English Studies and International Law, she completed a PhD in International Law with a thesis entitled "Essay on the Legal Notion of Cultural Property." She has teaching experience abroad, including in Italy, Russia, and Taiwan and Japan, and has served as an advisor to the European Mission within the International Relations Department at the University of Burgundy. For the past ten years, she has directed the Department of "Culture, Education, and Training" at the Denis Diderot Institute. The Institute offers three master's programs, one of which specializes in International Cultural Management. Véronique Parisot est Maître de conférence en droit privé. Après avoir obtenu des masters en études anglophones et en droit international, elle a soutenu un thèse en droit international « Essai sur la notion juridique de patrimoine culturel ».

Elle possède une expérience d'enseignement à l'étranger, notamment en Italie, Russie, à Taïwan et au Japon, et est chargée de mission au sein des relations internationales de l'Université de Bourgogne Europe. Depuis 2012 elle dirige le département Denis Diderot « Culture, Éducation et Formation » de l'Institut National Supérieure du Professorat et de l'Éducation. L'Institut ouvert depuis 1992 propose trois masters, dont un spécialisé en gestion culturelle internationale.

Institutional Affiliation and Contact: University of Burgundy, Maison de l'Université, Esplanade Erasme, BP 27877 - 21078, Dijon, France
veronique.parisot@ube.fr

ABSTRACT

Bernard-Marie Koltès occupies a singular place in contemporary theatre: at once poetic and political, his work interrogates the human condition through questions of space, language, and otherness. Every staging of his texts draws the director into a delicate dialogue with the absent author: how to represent without betraying? How to adapt without distorting? This article examines the ethical and legal issues that surround the staging of Koltès, through the analysis of several emblematic cases (Chéreau, Touré, Bident) and by articulating notions of moral rights, artistic fidelity, and poetic responsibility. It aims to explore the fragile balance between memory and invention, between the letter of the text and the living pulse of the stage.

KEYWORDS

Bernard-Marie Koltès, stage adaptation, distortion, moral rights, representation

CITATION SUGGESTION

Nechit, Diana and Parisot, Véronique. "The Ethical and Legal Stakes in Staging the Works of Bernard-Marie Koltès", *Journal of Performing Arts*, no. 3 (2025): 14-41.

DOI: 10.54989/JAS.24.01

Acknowledgement: This article is published as part of the "Establishing a Laboratory of Cultural Heritage in Central Romania" project (ELABCHROM - <https://grants.ulbsibiu.ro/elabchrom/>) funded by European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme. Grant agreement No 101079282.

I. Introduction

Bernard-Marie Koltès holds a central position in contemporary French theatre, at the crossroads of poetic writing and political reflection. Thirty-five years after his death, he remains a paradoxical figure: a writer of incandescent language and a lucid witness of urban modernity, for whom theatre becomes a site of essential confrontation—between individuals, classes, continents. His plays—*Black Battles with Dogs* (*Combat de nègre et de chiens*), *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields* (*Dans la solitude des champs de coton*), *Quay West* (*Quai Ouest*), *Return to the Desert* (*Le Retour au désert*), *Roberto Zucco*—are sustained by a single breath: that of a ruptured world, inhabited by exiles and orphans of meaning.

To write about Koltès is to approach the stage as a space of moral tension. For him, theatre is never a mere fictional device: it is an encounter with the real, a trial of language. Each staging thus becomes an ethical act: to translate without betraying, to make visible without immobilizing. Yet to this poetic demand is added a legal constraint: the moral rights that François Koltès—his brother and literary heir—defends with scrupulous vigilance. The director must therefore navigate two forms of fidelity: that of the heart and that of the law. How can these demands be reconciled? How does one preserve the truth of a text born from the fever of the world without reducing it to an untouchable monument? This article addresses this dual question—ethical and legal—by examining the poetics of Koltès’ theatre, the history of its stage productions, and the legal frameworks governing contemporary theatrical creation.

A dramatist of exile, solitude, and confrontation, Koltès constructs an aesthetic of the impossible dialogue, inscribed in a spatiality that is at once concrete and metaphorical. His texts—*Black Battles with Dogs*, *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields*, *Quay West*, *Roberto Zucco*—interrogate the violence of human relations and the fractures of the modern world. Beyond their poetic density, these works raise major ethical and legal questions when brought to the

stage: How can one represent Koltès without betraying him? To what extent may a director interpret, rewrite, or reframe his work?

Staging Koltès always confronts the artist with a fundamental tension between fidelity and freedom: fidelity to the text, the thought, the language; freedom to create, adapt, and engage with the contemporary issues that inform a writing born in another context. This tension intersects with the domain of moral rights, protected in France by intellectual property law, which grants an author—and, after death, their heirs—a degree of control over how their work is performed and transformed. The pages that follow bring these ethical and legal dimensions into dialogue, drawing on theoretical analyses of theatrical space (Ubersfeld, Pavis) and several emblematic examples of Koltès in performance.

II. Ethical and Artistic Questions in Staging the Works of Koltès

1. Fidelity to the Text and the Spirit of the Author

For Koltès, the dramatic text is never a pretext: it is the very space of theatre, the site where voices and bodies confront one another. His dense, musical language possesses a ritual dimension that resists simplification. Anne Ubersfeld reminds us that the theatrical space confronts actors and spectators within a frame coded by society; in Koltès, this code becomes unstable, mutable, continually challenged. The director therefore faces an ethical dilemma: must one respect the text scrupulously, or dare to “betray” it in order to make it live?

The collaborations between Bernard-Marie Koltès and Patrice Chéreau exemplify this tension. In *Black Battles with Dogs* (1983), Chéreau chose a monumental bifrontal space designed with Richard Peduzzi, underscoring the colonial duality and the frontal conflict between characters. Koltès feared, however, that such grandeur might “crush” the spoken word. This disagreement reveals the difficulty of giving scenic form to Koltès’ writing—a theatre built on verbal density yet also on the fragility of the gesture.

Fidelity to the “Koltesian spirit” lies less in reproducing the text than in preserving the tension between word and space. Koltès wrote for the stage, yet he imagined a theatre that exceeds the stage: “I want to tell, with simple words, the most important thing I know”¹, he confided. His incantatory, corporeal language imposes a rare responsibility on the director: fidelity to speech. Fidelity is not dogma but commitment—the attempt to let a wounded world speak without softening its roughness. This sometimes-conflictual dialogue between an author of language and a director of bodies illustrates the fertile tension between textual fidelity and scenic invention. To be faithful to Koltès is not to reduce his writing to illustrative realism, but to embrace its vertigo, its rhythm, its breath.

2. Contextualization and Contemporary Sensibility: The Limits of Representability

Koltès’ plays, written between the late 1970s and late 1980s, arise from a world in transformation: the postcolonial margins of France, and the fractures of urban and economic modernity. Immigrant workers, traffickers, prostitutes, wanderers—his characters belong to what Jean-Pierre Sarrazac calls “the dramaturgy of the defeated”, a theatre in which speech emerges from zones of exclusion.²

This world of rupture and unequal exchange challenges today’s postcolonial and inclusive sensibilities. *Black Battles with Dogs* crystallizes these tensions: its very title, grounded in a specific French colonial context, raises major ethical questions for modern staging. How can it be performed today without reproducing the symbolic violence it exposes? Should its lexical brutality be softened, or preserved to reveal its critical force? This question relates to what Hans-Thies Lehmann calls the limits of representability³: how far can theatre go in showing or re-enacting violence without repeating it?⁴

Staging Koltès always becomes a political act. Some productions choose critical reframing through contextualization or

distancing; others embrace direct confrontation at the risk of discomfort. Moïse Touré, for instance, transposed *Black Battles with Dogs* into a symbolic, derelict non-place—a vacant lot, an abandoned industrial zone—where speech becomes murmured rather than shouted. By evacuating the explicitly colonial setting, this scenographic shift transforms violence into memory rather than spectacle. Other directors, such as Éric Vigner or Arnaud Meunier, have deliberately retained the original bluntness of Koltès’ language, believing its political force lies in the collision between word and reality. To temper the language would be to temper memory.

Here, ethical tension intersects with Anne Ubersfeld’s idea of theatre as a “social mirror”—a space where society confronts its own fractures.⁵ Sanitizing disturbing words risks dulling that mirror and erasing its critical potency.

As Patrice Pavis also points out, “theatrical space is the place for seeing otherwise”⁶: adapting means transforming the way one sees but also risks neutralising the productive scandal of the text. In his definition of the stage space, Patrice Pavis emphasises that the stage does not merely represent reality: it transforms, displaces and symbolically reconfigures it. For Pavis, staging is an act of visual and critical reading, capable of revealing the invisible tensions of both the text and society.⁷ Therefore, the limits of representability are not defined solely in terms of propriety or contemporary morality, but as a dialectical space between memory and responsibility. By giving form to the unshowable, theatrical art does not seek to appease, but to bring conflict to light, to question the areas of silence and injustice that Koltès had already brought to light. Representation is not repetition of trauma, but an act of memory—a critical and poetic process through which theatre exposes the wounds of the world without hiding them.

3. The Director as Co-Author

Since the emergence of modern directing at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries—Stanislavski, Antoine, Craig, Appia—the director has progressively become a creative agent in their own right. As Patrice Pavis notes, directing is “a scenic writing in which the text becomes one material among others”⁸. Patrice Pavis defines staging as a true work of dramatic writing, an inter-semiotic translation operation in which the dramatic text ceases to be the sole vehicle of meaning. For Pavis, performance mobilizes a set of languages—body, space, light, rhythm, objects—that write as much as words do. Directing thus appears as a form of co-writing that complements, interprets or shifts the literary text.

This shift has displaced the relationship between text and stage: the text is no longer the immutable centre of the work but one component of a broader semiotic constellation. Whereas classical theatre positioned the playwright at the centre, contemporary theatre increasingly acknowledges the director as co-author. This change is based on a fundamental tension between fidelity to the text and interpretative freedom.

Fidelity today is rarely literal; it is fidelity to an atmosphere, a question, a poetic force. Peter Brook expresses this clearly: “True fidelity consists not in reproducing the letter, but in recovering the life of the text.”⁹. Brook advocates a non-literalist approach to staging: fidelity is not imitation, but reactivation, an effort to breathe new life, urgency and necessity into dramatic speech in an ever-changing theatrical context. The director thus becomes a creative mediator, responsible for reactivating dramatic speech in a new aesthetic, political and cultural context. Scenocentrism, a concept forged in the context of contemporary theatre studies, refers to this shift in the centre of gravity of the dramatic work: from the text to the stage. Performance is no longer conceived as a simple “illustration” of a pre-existing text, but as an autonomous language, in which the body, space, light, music and video all contribute to the construction of meaning.

The concept of *scenocentrism*, associated with postdramatic theory (Hans-Thies Lehmann), designates this primacy of the stage over the written drama. In postdramatic theatre, “the text ceases to be the organizing principle of performance”¹⁰. Meaning arises from bodies, images, rhythms, and sound rather than from narrative hierarchy. Lehmann sees this turning point as one of the foundations of postdramatic aesthetics. Meaning arises from a constellation of scenic signs, rather than from a pre-existing narrative structure. From this perspective, the stage becomes a plural text, in the Barthesian sense, whose staging is the true writing.

In this sense, the stage becomes a plural text. Many artists—Vitez, Chéreau, Wilson, Milo Rau—embrace their role as authors of the performance. Their fidelity lies not in imitation but in reactivation, in revealing unexplored zones of the text. Peter Brook wrote: “Being faithful to Shakespeare does not mean copying his era but rediscovering what in his work is alive today.”¹¹ Brook advocates a dynamic approach to directing, based on reactivating the text rather than reproducing it. True fidelity consists in revealing the work’s current power, making it resonate in the present. True fidelity then becomes fidelity to the spirit, not to the letter—a gesture of reactivation rather than reproduction. Thus, the directors don’t betray the author when they interpret, they extend him, reinvent him and, often, put him in dialogue with other artistic or political discourses.

However, this scenocentric approach is not without controversy. Some see it as an usurpation of textual authority, a risk of dissolving dramatic meaning in visual or conceptual over-interpretation. Others, on the contrary, see it as a democratisation of theatrical gesture, where creation becomes collective, polyphonic, open to a plurality of languages. Ultimately, the director’s role as co-author does not abolish the text: it recontextualises it. Theatre, the art of presence and transformation, constantly redefines this shifting relationship between writing and the stage. Whether

faithful or unfaithful, the contemporary director is first and foremost someone who makes the text speak in a different way, using the specific means of the stage—that is, through the living language of theatre. This evolution has led to what Jean-Pierre Sarrazac calls “scenic co-writing”: “The director is no longer a mere servant of the text, but becomes its co-author, the one who, through the stage, completes it, shifts it, and sometimes contradicts it.”¹² In this context, performance becomes an act of secondary writing, a way of “reading with the means of the stage”. Staging thus becomes an act of active reading, a secondary writing that extends the text into a broader semiotic space.

The theatre of Koltès invites precisely this relationship. His writing contains spatial potential; every word gestures toward a *mise-en-scène*. In *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields*, the duel between Dealer and Client constructs a metaphysical space that the stage must actualize¹³. In his interviews, Koltès insists that the text already contains the space, asserting that each word carries a theatrical potential and that he writes with “a place of speech” in mind rather than a naturalistic setting. As Catherine Naugrette has shown, Koltès’ space is “a space of verbal tension, not realistic figuration”¹⁴. Thus, Koltès’ dramaturgy intimately articulates text and space, one generating the other in an organic relationship where the place is less a setting than an extension of the dialogue. The staging actualises this virtuality. In her study of Koltès’ dramatic work, Diana Nechit shows that space is never simply a backdrop, but an emanation of the text itself. She analyses how Koltès’ writing constructs a virtual space, a place of potential, which is brought to life by the staging. According to her, “in Koltès’ work, the stage space unfolds as an extension of the dialogue, a field of forces generated by speech”¹⁵. The staging therefore does not merely illustrate the text: it reveals the spatial dynamics already contained in the language, confirming the organic nature of the relationship between text and space in Koltès’ universe.

In 1995, Chéreau focused the lighting on a narrow circle; Moïse Touré, in Grenoble, placed the actors in a parking bay, playing on visibility and shadow. These variations show that the director co-writes the space of the text. But how far can this co-writing go? The limit is often set by the rights holders. François Koltès, the author’s brother and heir, scrupulously ensures that the text is preserved. However, in a living art form based on reinvention, legal rigidity can appear to be an obstacle to creativity.

The challenge lies in creating a posthumous dialogue: preserving the letter while sustaining the movement of Koltès’ writing toward the contemporary world.

III. Legal Issues: François Koltès and Moral Rights

1. The Author’s Moral Rights and the Director’s Freedom

French law grants authors unusually strong protection by distinguishing between economic rights—which are transferable and limited in time—and moral rights, which are inalienable, perpetual, and imprescriptible. Moral rights include¹⁶:

- the right of disclosure (to decide when and how a work is made public),
- the right of attribution (or the right of paternity),
- the right to the integrity of the work,
- and the right of withdrawal or reconsideration (allowing the authors to stop their work from circulation).

In theatrical practice, the right to integrity is the most contentious. Directing necessarily involves interpretation: cuts, rhythmic shifts, scenographic transpositions, visual or sonic displacements. Yet French jurisprudence has repeatedly held that any deformation or modification may constitute an infringement of moral rights if it harms the author’s intention or alters the work’s artistic coherence. Jurisprudence has played a decisive role in defining the right to respect for theatrical works in concrete terms, clarifying what Article L121-1 of the Intellectual Property Code does not literally state.

Several key judicial decisions have shaped what “integrity” means in theatre:

- *Valmy* case (Cour d’appel de Paris, April 30, 1991) – the court considers that substantial changes to a production may distort the work by altering its dramatic unity, while establishing the notion of “intellectual integrity” of a dramatic work;
- *Beckett* case (TGI Paris, January 8, 1998) – upheld the prohibition of female casting in *Waiting for Godot*, asserting the binding nature of the author’s essential stage directions. The court affirms that the integrity of the work includes compliance with the essential stage directions intended by the author;
- *Mademoiselle Julie* case (TGI Paris, Mars 12, 2002) – ruled that a contemporary transposition contradicted the fundamental dramaturgical logic of Strindberg’s play, emphasising that the staging cannot contradict the fundamental dramaturgical logic of the work;
- *Incendies* (Wajdi Mouawad) case (TGI Paris, May 22, 2008) – reaffirmed that adaptation must respect the narrative structure and symbolic thrust of the original, while any transformation that risks altering its scope may be considered an infringement of moral rights.

Taken together, these judgments extend moral rights beyond the text itself to include its spirit, underlying intention, and dramaturgical coherence. Thus, the protection of moral rights is ensured not by the letter of Article L121-1, but by its interpretation in case law¹⁷.

The tension intensifies in contemporary theatre, where directors often claim the status of co-authors of the performance. The director, considered to be the co-author of the performance, may be required to “rewrite” the text in order to offer a critical or updated interpretation. However, this artistic freedom sometimes conflicts with the absolute protection of the author’s intention. French jurisprudence illustrates this tension well. In the *Bataille de*

Valmy case (1990), for example, the courts recognized that an adaptation could constitute an infringement of the author’s moral rights if it betrayed the meaning of the work. Similarly, certain radical stagings of Molière, Racine or Beckett have led to conflicts between rights holders and directors: Beckett’s heirs, in particular, have repeatedly banned female or experimental versions of *Waiting for Godot*, citing a violation of the moral right to respect for the work. Still, contemporary doctrine—supported by jurists such as André Lucas and Pierre-Yves Gautier—recognizes the need for a balance between respect for the work and creative freedom. Theatre, by its very nature, is based on reinterpretation. “Every performance is already a recreation”, wrote Antoine Vitez¹⁸, while staging is as an act of invention rather than execution. According to him, the transition from writing to the stage inevitably involves a transformation: the work is not replayed, but rewritten by the stage, by the actors’ bodies, by the historical and sensitive conditions of each performance. The stage is therefore a space where the text is constantly reinvented, and where fidelity takes the form of a living interpretation rather than a literal reproduction. The law cannot therefore ignore the living, ephemeral and collective nature of the performing arts.

Thus, the central question becomes: *Where does fidelity end and betrayal begin?* In theatre, cuts or reinterpretations are not necessarily violations—if they do not distort the work’s artistic core. The director acts as a continuator rather than a transgressor.

Ultimately, moral rights safeguard the coherence of the work, while artistic freedom sustains its vitality. Contemporary theatre unfolds within this dynamic zone of negotiation—between the right to protect and the right to invent.

2. François Koltès: Guardian of the Author’s Legacy. The “Koltès Affair” (2007)

Since Bernard-Marie Koltès’ death in 1989, his brother François has served as heir, mediator, and vigilant guardian of the

playwright's legacy. Attentive to the unique rhythm and political resonance of the writing, he defends the integrity of the text with rigorous consistency. Certain productions have been refused or halted because they diverged too radically from what he viewed as the essential character of the work.

This vigilance, grounded in moral rights (Article L.121-1 of the French Intellectual Property Code), ensures the preservation of Koltès' literary heritage. As we already mentioned, article L.121-1 of the Intellectual Property Code defines moral rights as comprising four essential prerogatives: the right of disclosure, the right to a name, the right to respect for the integrity of the work, and the right of withdrawal or repentance. Although the text does not explicitly mention the concept of "prejudice to the author's intention", case law has gradually extended moral rights to protect the spirit of the work, considering that a substantial modification may constitute an infringement of its artistic integrity. It is this interpretation by case law—and not the strict letter of Article L.121-1—that today underpins the vigilance of rights holders in the theatrical field. Yet it also raises questions regarding artistic freedom: How far may legal control extend without freezing a text conceived for reinvention? Theatre, by its very nature, calls for variation, updating and resonance with the present—all elements that strict protection of the text can sometimes restrict.¹⁹

Some directors respond not by confronting the restriction, but by embracing poetic displacement. Christophe Bident's 2001 *Solitude*, for instance, focused on the musicality of the text and the density of silence, while Djamel Tatah's pictorial scenography transformed the play into a contemplative mental space without altering a single word. These productions embody a form of inventive fidelity: they reactivate Koltès without violating the text.

One of the most emblematic collisions between theatrical creation and moral rights, in the specific case of Bernard-Marie Koltès, occurred with what the press quickly dubbed "The Koltès Affair"²⁰. At the heart of this controversy, which arose in 2007

around Muriel Mayette's staging of *Return to the Desert* at the Comédie-Française, lie major aesthetic, institutional and political issues. As Cyril Desclés²¹ points out in the foreword to his book, certain critics had long wanted to consider this play as a "special" work, "belonging to a relatively classical form using fables, action, characters and dialogue", which Christophe Deshoulières described as "well-tempered modernity" where "classicism means regression"²².

Controversy erupted when the role of Aziz, which Koltès explicitly wanted to give to an Arab actor, was assigned to Michel Favory, a member of the Comédie-Française. This was a distortion of the text, and it was precisely here that moral rights came into play. Cyril Desclés's pages clearly show how this intervention was immediately interpreted by some professionals not as the legitimate defence of an inalienable right, but as interference: according to some, the rights holder had "wanted to meddle in the staging"²³. This simplification, which was widely reported, often obscured the complex reality of the case, which Desclés describes as "a controversy concerning copyright, the author's right, the right of the beneficiary to protect his work—and the freedom and constraints of theatrical creation". The strength of Desclés' analysis also lies in his desire to broaden the scope of reflection. He shows that the Koltès Affair relates to "the very ethics of contemporary representation through the deeper meaning of what is presented to the public", a mechanism that is "far from devoid of political implications". By drawing on previously unpublished documents, Desclés also sheds light on the grey areas of the case: institutional decisions, evidence submitted for debate, and the successive shifts of the dispute from the artistic arena to the courtroom.²⁴

Finally, three major elements emerge from his conclusion: first, that this case now belongs fully to "the history of theatre"; second, that it reveals the singularity of a playwright who, "by challenging certain well-established habits, perhaps stands apart in the contemporary theatrical landscape"; and finally, that it invites us

to rethink the responsibility that comes with any staging of Koltès' work—ethical, aesthetic and political responsibility, as his work makes the stage a place where the world is both represented and questioned.

3. Artistic Freedom and the Legal Framework

Theatre is an art of transformation: a text becomes a living organism, unfolding in space and time. Law, conversely, protects fixity—the form, structure, and language of the work. Between the fluidity of stage practice and the rigidity of legal protection lies a zone of inherent tension, which requires ongoing negotiation between rights holders and artists.

In the case of Koltès, this tension is exemplary. François Koltès guards the integrity of the text yet acknowledges that his brother's work can only live through reinvention. Dialogue between him, as heir, institutions such as IMEC (Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine), Koltès Association, and theatre companies often results in negotiated permissions for bilingual productions, contextual adaptations, or new scenographic approaches—provided the spirit of the text remains intact.

This reveals a dynamic conception of moral rights, not as a restrictive cage but as a living framework adaptable to artistic needs. The survival of Koltès' writing depends not on its ossification but on its breathing through performance. The fundamental question remains: *How can one preserve the singularity of a writer's voice without immobilizing the living art of theatre?* The answer lies in a dialogue between memory and invention. A dramatic text must be allowed to be “lovingly betrayed”—reinvented without being denatured, faithful not to the letter but to the force of life within it.

IV. Ethics and Law in Dialogue: Toward a Necessary Coexistence

Rather than a frontal opposition, ethics and law must be understood as two complementary modes of preserving an author's

memory. Moral rights, as defined by Article L.121-1 of the French Intellectual Property Code, protect “the respect of the author's name, status, and work”. They ensure the continuity of intention, the endurance of a voice. Yet legal protection alone cannot safeguard the vitality of a text destined for the stage. This is where the ethical responsibility of the director becomes essential: a responsibility grounded in respect, dialogue, and sensitivity toward both the text and the audience. Law fixes, while ethics interprets. Law prohibits, while artistic judgment questions, nuances, and reinvents.²⁵ Patrice Pavis expresses this tension as a conflict between legal fidelity and poetic fidelity²⁶—two demands that must coexist if theatre is to remain both respectful and alive.

Ethical staging means allowing the text to breathe in the present without distorting it—recovering what Peter Brook calls “the truth of the text, not its letter.”²⁷ Several notable productions demonstrate the possibility of such coexistence. Patrice Chéreau, in *Black Battles with Dogs* (1983) and *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields* (1987), embodied an “inventive fidelity”: he did not reproduce Koltès, he revealed the theatricality, the sensuality of the language, the tension between desire and silence. François Koltès himself acknowledged these productions as faithful “to the poetic truth of the text, not its literal surface”²⁸. Similarly, Élisabeth Chailloux, in her 1997 production of *Quay West* at Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry, transposed the play into a contemporary urban environment without altering the structure or music of the language. She maintained the integrity of the text while opening it toward new social realities. These examples illustrate what Jean-Pierre Sarrazac calls “co-writing for the stage”²⁹, in which performance becomes a space of mutual resonance between memory and invention, between the written word and present-day perception. Representing Koltès is never a matter of reproduction; it is a process of renewing meaning. His theatre demands presence, silence, shadow—a listening that allows the world's fractures to reappear without being neutralized. Fidelity is not repetition but attention.

Cyril Desclés highlights a crucial aspect of Koltès' thinking: the presence of "foreign bodies" on stage is not symbolic ornamentation but an ontological necessity. In his letters and interviews, Koltès repeatedly insists that the casting of actors whose identities resonate with those of the characters is not optional but integral to the dramaturgy. Recalling the difficulties encountered in previous productions, he writes, for example: "In the absence of Arab actors, Turkish or Pakistani actors were the obvious choice, as it seems to me that they suffer the same harassment from fascists as Arabs did in France in the 1960s"³⁰. This logic of analogy was never a personal whim but a way of preserving the political density of his plays.

It is in this context that he explicitly refuses to see certain roles assigned to actors belonging to unrelated groups: "I will never give permission for my plays to be performed if the roles of Arabs are played by Africans"³¹. This is not a question of identity fixation, but of fidelity to what he himself calls "absolute theatrical reality". This requirement was at the heart of the tensions that erupted around *Return to the Desert*, which stemmed from a misunderstanding of the depth of the theatrical principle defended by Koltès: it is not the sign that counts, but the substance of the body. Koltès explains: "The blood that nourishes our plays ends up being that of immigrants"³². This is a sentence that simultaneously expresses the political and poetic dimensions of his dramaturgy: a theatre nourished by real bodies, not by a device of imitation.

The pages also reveal how, in Koltès' work, French political history—the Algerian War, the rise of the far right, the identity crisis—influences the interpretation of bodies on stage. The famous metaphor of the "French desert", taken up by the author, re-enacts on stage the difficulty of a France deformed by the Algerian War³³. The theatre thus becomes a space where the tensions between colonial memory and the political present are replayed. Reading *Return to the Desert* without grasping this dimension would be to reduce the text to a domestic fable. The staging must therefore

consider what Koltès specifically called "the real—and not counterfeit—presence"³⁴.

More profoundly still, Koltès places the question of bodies within a reflection on language. His relationship with the French language is ambivalent, almost conflictual: "The French language, in general, only interests me when it is altered."³⁵ He believes that French gains strength when it is revised, corrected, and colonised by a foreign culture. This principle finds a model in *Quay West*: "In my next play, all the characters will speak French without it being the mother tongue of any of them."³⁶ The presence of foreigners is therefore never a symbolic gesture but a genuine linguistic project: to make French heard differently, as a displaced language.

The analysed pages also show that Koltès is wary of actors' mimetic tendencies. Michel Cerf, working on the role of Aziz for Muriel Mayette's production, explains: "It only lasts for a few rehearsals. But the effect is deplorable." Far from producing an effect of truth, vocal imitation "ceases to be ridiculous" only when it is abandoned in favour of a deeper relationship with the text. It is not a question of the actor imitating the Arab or the immigrant, but of understanding what Koltès calls "the difference in languages"³⁷, a difference that is at the very heart of his theatre.

Finally, the pages devoted to stage directions highlight the major evolution in Koltès' writing: while *Les Amertumes* contained 288 stage directions over forty-eight pages, *The Night Just Before the Forests* (*La nuit juste avant les forêts*) is devoid of any external stage directions, and *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields* contains almost none.³⁸ This gradual disappearance of stage directions confirms the idea that Koltès creates his theatre not as a system of signs to be illustrated, but as a space where bodies and languages re-enact reality. The performer must never substitute imitation for presence: this is where, according to Koltès, dramatic truth lies. The pages provided highlight another essential aspect of Koltès' thinking—that of stage directions and the complex relationship between writing and theatrical embodiment. Contrary to the widespread idea

that Koltès wrote “open” texts, easily detached from any material constraints, a careful reading shows, on the contrary, the importance of a theatrical truth intertwined with the very fabric of language and the body. The controversy surrounding Aziz’s role in *Return to the Desert* is one of the most striking examples of this. As the text points out, “there is certainly no explicit indication that Aziz must be played by an Arab actor”, but a constellation of structural clues nevertheless points in this direction: Arabic dialect, social status, imaginary inscription, metaphorical networks. This is why the court hearing François Koltès’ conviction was able to point out, with supporting evidence, that “the text requires Aziz to be played by an Arab actor”³⁹.

The passage from the judgement that we have just quoted shows that the court’s decision is much more nuanced than Cyril Desclès’s rephrasing suggests. The court does not say at all that Aziz “must be played by an Arab actor”. On the contrary, it recognises that Aziz is *historically* Algerian but rejects any assignment; it explicitly concludes that the text does not prescribe any particular origin for the actor. This is therefore the exact opposite of the simplified interpretation sometimes repeated in secondary literature:

Given that it is indisputable that Aziz refuses to be identified as an Arab, an Algerian or a Frenchman. Whereas it is undeniable, however, that Aziz is Algerian, that is to say, a person originating from the then French departments of Algeria, who, given his situation of domination in every respect in the difficult process of building Algerian national consciousness due to the destructive aspects of French colonialism, refuses ethnic or national identification; that fundamentally, Aziz identifies with the character of the fool, in his own words, of those who have fallen by the wayside of history, which clearly has no meaning for him, a man who, through his destitution, which includes the rejection of a national or ethnic

*identity, reveals his profound humanity to the viewer. [Then] Whereas nothing in the text of the work indicates that the author intended the role to be played by an Arab or Algerian actor.*⁴⁰

What might appear at first glance to be reductive naturalism is in fact a dramatic ontology: Koltès does not assign the actor an identity-based role, but recognises that certain texts—his own in particular—function on the basis of a dialectic between voices, bodies and signs. The Dealer’s speech, for example, draws on “interposed images” as a way of describing the world in which the black body takes its place in a literary lineage, as Koltès points out with regard to Faulkner, where black people are those “who endured, that is to say, who lasted in, so that black people maintained this contact [with nature]”⁴¹.

All of these passages reveal how much Koltès seeks a truth of embodiment, not a simulacrum. The criticism of the “token Arab”—which the text explicitly cites—emphasises this categorical rejection of stereotypes: “that the token Arab finds no embodiment anywhere other than in his role of service”⁴². The argument is ethical: a role based on a fragile or discriminated identity cannot be entrusted to an actor who shares neither his history nor his vulnerability. Any attempt at imitation would risk reproducing symbolic violence on stage. This is why Bruno Tackels’ reflection, quoted several times, takes on a programmatic force here: “he was unable to achieve what Beckett had managed to do... the archetypes in these plays would never have been so controversial”⁴³. In other words, staging cannot be limited to a technical device: it involves a responsibility to do justice to the story, to the bodies it summons, to the reality it transforms.

This journey through theatre history—Corneille, Abbé d’Aubignac, classical practices—finally allows us to situate Koltès within a unique dramatic genealogy. Whereas d’Aubignac recommended “the absolute effacement of the author” to allow

actors to “express themselves in their own name”⁴⁴, Koltès takes the opposite position: the author’s voice is never separated from the action on stage. The text itself calls for a certain type of embodiment, a certain type of body, a certain way of speaking. Theatre is thus, for him, a place of writing in the literal sense: bodies are the ink, the stage is the page, and stage directions compose the rhythm.

V. Conclusion

The work of Bernard-Marie Koltès compels us to rethink the relationship between text, space, and law. Theatre—an art defined by presence, ephemerality, and reinvention—is always caught between two forces: conservation and transformation. Moral rights safeguard the trace; directing renews the breath. Between François Koltès’ juridical rigor and the poetic freedom of theatre-makers, a fragile equilibrium emerges: a necessary coexistence between memory and invention.

The “Koltès affair” thus illuminates a broader issue within contemporary theatre: how does one preserve the uniqueness of dramatic writing without suffocating the living vitality of the stage? Perhaps the answer lies in the nature of theatrical space itself, which Patrice Pavis describes as a site in perpetual motion, where architecture, speech, and gaze merge. Koltès—poet of space and voice—remains a fragile conduit between the right to speak and the right to dream. His theatre demands that we hold both the law and the imagination in tension. It is not a question of choosing between fidelity and freedom, but of letting them illuminate each other. The director must listen to the text without embalming it; the heir must protect the text without imprisoning it.

To stage Koltès is to enter a realm where bodies, languages, and silences shape a world both concrete and symbolic. It is an ethical act, a legal negotiation, and a poetic wager: a way of letting the dead speak while allowing the living to answer.

Endnotes

¹ Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Une part de ma vie : Entretiens, récits, notes* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1999), 45: « Je veux raconter, avec des mots simples, la chose la plus importante que je connaisse ».

² Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, *L’Avenir du drame* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2000), 38-40.

³ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Le Théâtre postdramatique*. Traduit par Philippe-Henri Ledru (Paris: L’Arche, 2002), 153-158.

⁴ Lehmann develops the notion of “limits of representability” within the framework of his theory of postdramatic theatre, showing that the contemporary stage is confronted with realities—violence, trauma, oppression—that resist any mimetic form. These limits, according to him, are not only moral or political, but also aesthetic: the stage can only represent the extreme by accepting opacity, fragmentation and non-figuration, rather than a literal reproduction of reality. (Lehmann, 153-158).

⁵ Anne Ubersfeld, *Lire le théâtre* (Paris: Belin, 1978).

⁶ Patrice Pavis, *Dictionnaire du théâtre*. 3e éd. (Paris: Dunod, 2002), 131: « l’espace théâtral est le lieu d’un voir autrement ».

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Pavis, *Dictionnaire*, 228: « la mise en scène est un travail d’écriture scénique où le texte n’est qu’un matériau parmi d’autres ».

⁹ Peter Brook, *L’Espace vide*. Traduit par Jean-Claude Carrière (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 18-19: « La fidélité véritable consiste à retrouver la vie du texte, pas à en reproduire la lettre. ».

¹⁰ Lehmann, *Le Théâtre*, 46-52: « le texte cesse d’être le principe organisateur de la représentation ».

¹¹ Brook, *L’Espace*, 34-35: « Être fidèle à Shakespeare ne signifie pas copier son époque, mais retrouver ce qui, dans son œuvre, est vivant aujourd’hui ».

¹² Sarrazac, *L’Avenir*, 112-115: « Le metteur en scène n’est plus un simple serviteur du texte, il en devient le co-auteur, celui qui, par la scène, le complète, le déplace, parfois le contredit ».

¹³ Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Dans la Solitude des champs de coton* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1986).

See also: Bernard-Marie Koltès. *Une part de ma vie : Entretiens, récits, notes*, op. cit.

¹⁴ Catherine Naugrette, *Bernard-Marie Koltès : La scène et le monde* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 72-75: « un espace de tension verbale, non de figuration réaliste ».

¹⁵ Diana Nechit, *La problématique de l’espace théâtral dans l’œuvre dramatique de Bernard-Marie Koltès* (Sibiu: Editura ULBS, 2013), 41-47:

« chez Koltès, l'espace scénique se déploie comme une extension du dialogue, un champ de forces généré par la parole ».

¹⁶ *Code de la propriété intellectuelle*. Art. L121-1, Légifrance, www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/id/LEGISCTA000006161885/. (Accessed on Nov. 24, 2025.)

¹⁷ *Code de la propriété intellectuelle*. Légifrance, www.legifrance.gouv.fr. (Cour d'appel de Paris. 30 avr. 1991, affaire *Valmy*. / Tribunal de grande instance de Paris. 8 janv. 1998, affaire *Beckett*. / Tribunal de grande instance de Paris. 12 mars 2002, affaire *Mademoiselle Julie*. / Tribunal de grande instance de Paris. 22 mai 2008, affaire *Incendies*).

¹⁸ Antoine Vitez, *Le Théâtre des idées* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991).

¹⁹ *Code de la propriété intellectuelle*. Art. L121-1, Légifrance, www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/id/LEGISCTA000006161885/. Accessed on Nov. 24, 2025.

²⁰ Frédérique Chauvin, « L'Affaire Koltès : droit moral et liberté de mise en scène ». *Théâtre/Public*, no. 194 (2009): 12-15. The media expression "Koltès Affair" refers to the conflict that arose in 2009 between Bernard-Marie Koltès' copyright holders—mainly his brother François Koltès—and several directors whose artistic freedom was deemed incompatible with respect for the author's moral rights. One of the most talked-about episodes concerns the banning of a free adaptation of *La Nuit juste avant les forêts* (*The Night Just Before the Forests*), which sought to modify the textual structure and fragment the monologue; the beneficiaries saw this as an infringement of the integrity of the work within the legal meaning of the *Intellectual Property Code*. The French theatre press quickly dubbed this controversy the "Koltès Affair", revealing the structural tension between the protection of dramatic text and the need for theatrical invention. The affair sparked a national debate on the limits of moral rights in the theatre.

²¹ Cyril Desclés, *Bernard-Marie Koltès : Une écriture du monde* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013).

²² Christophe Deshoulières, *Bernard-Marie Koltès : Les paysages de la nuit* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1992), 44-47.

²³ Desclés, *Bernard-Marie Koltès*, 102-105. Cyril Desclés takes a detailed look at the controversy sparked by François Koltès' intervention, showing how part of the theatre world perceived this action not as the legitimate protection of an inalienable moral right, but as interference in the creative field. Desclés cites reactions from directors and critics who felt that the rights holder had "tried to interfere with the staging", blurring the line between heritage protection and aesthetic control. This interpretation highlights the inherent ambiguity of moral rights as applied to theatre: protecting the integrity of the text can easily be

interpreted as interference in the staging process itself.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ *Contra* to a recent decision (Civil Division 1, June 22, 2017, No. 15-28467, 16-11759) accepting a substantial modification of the ending of *Le Dialogue des Carmélites* on the basis of Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

²⁶ Pavis, *Dictionnaire*, 128-130.

²⁷ Brook, *L'Espace*, 18-20: « la vérité du texte, non sa lettre ». In *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook emphasises the fundamental distinction between the letter and the truth of the text. For him, literal fidelity leads to the work becoming frozen, whereas true fidelity consists of rediscovering "the truth of the text, not its letter", that is to say, the vital impulse, the inner dynamic and the profound necessity of theatrical writing. Brook thus invites directors to seek out what remains alive, active and shareable in a text, rather than mechanically reproducing the original conditions of its creation.

²⁸ Desclés, *Bernard-Marie Koltès*, 98-101: « à la vérité poétique du texte, et non à sa littéralité ». Cyril Desclés reports that François Koltès, far from defending a strictly literal reading of his brother's plays, recognised in Patrice Chéreau's productions a fidelity "to the poetic truth of the text, and not to its literal meaning". This remark appears in the context of a broader reflection on the notion of creative fidelity: according to François Koltès, respect for the text does not lie in the mechanical reproduction of stage directions or structure, but in the director's ability to reveal its inner dynamics, verbal tension, musicality and dramatic energy. Desclés shows that this position nuances the image of a strictly protective rights holder, emphasising his openness to inventive stage interpretations, as long as they remain faithful to the poetic spirit of the work.

²⁹ Sarrazac, *L'Avenir*, 110-115: « co-écriture scénique ».

³⁰ Koltès, *Une part*, 62-63: « À défaut d'acteurs arabes, des acteurs turcs ou pakistanais s'imposaient car il me semble qu'ils subissent les mêmes tracasseries de la part des fascistes que les Arabes en France dans les années soixantes ».

³¹ Ibidem, 69: « Je n'accordai jamais l'autorisation de représenter mes pièces si les rôles d'Arabes sont joués par des Africains ».

³² Ibidem: « Le sang qui nourrit nos pièces finit par être celui des immigrés ».

³³ Ibidem, 57-59. The metaphor of the "French desert", which Koltès uses in his interviews, refers to a social and moral landscape marked by the traumatic legacy of the Algerian War. The author evokes a France "deformed by the Algerian War", devoid of meaning, dialogue and hospitality, where relations between communities are fraught with

mistrust and symbolic violence. This image permeates many of his plays, notably *Combat de nègre et de chiens* and *Quai Ouest*, where the stage becomes a projection of a country fractured by its colonial past and its inability to welcome the Other.

³⁴ Ibidem, 61: « *la présence réelle – et non contrefaite* ».

³⁵ Ibidem, 34: « *La langue française, en général, ne m'intéresse que lorsqu'elle est altérée* ».

³⁶ Ibidem, 49-50: « *Dans ma prochaine pièce, tous les personnages parleront le français sans qu'il soit la langue maternelle d'aucun d'eux* ».

³⁷ Ibidem, 53: « *Cela ne dure que le temps de quelques répétitions. Mais l'effet est déplorable [...] cesse d'être ridicule [...] la différence de langues* ».

³⁸ Desclés, *Bernard-Marie Koltès*, 67-70. See also: Naugrette, *Bernard-Marie Koltès*, 54-56. Cyril Desclés highlights the radical evolution of Koltès' stage writing through the transformation of stage directions, marking the transition to a dramaturgy of autonomous speech, where the text is conceived as an addressed flow, without heavy stage directions. This movement corresponds to a refocusing on the voice and verbal tension rather than on stage description.

³⁹ Ibidem, 67-69: « *il n'y a certes aucune indication explicite pour affirmer qu'Aziz doit impérativement être joué par un comédien arabe [...] le texte qu'Aziz doit absolument être joué par un acteur arabe* ».

⁴⁰ « Attendu qu'il résulte sans discussion possible qu'Aziz refuse d'être identifié à un Arabe, à un Algérien, ou à un Français. Attendu qu'il est indéniable pourtant qu'Aziz est un Algérien, c'est-à-dire une personne originaire des départements alors français d'Algérie, qui, compte tenu de sa situation de dominé, à tous points de vue, dans le processus difficile de construction de la conscience nationale algérienne en raison des aspects déstructurants du colonialisme français, refuse une identification ethnique ou nationale ; que fondamentalement, Aziz, s'identifie au personnage du « couillon », selon ses termes, de ceux qui sont tombés sur les bas-côtés du chemin de l'histoire, qui n'a manifestement pas de sens pour lui, homme qui par son dénuement, qui inclut le refus d'une identité nationale ou ethnique, relève au spectateur sa profonde humanité. [Puis] Attendu qu'aucune indication du texte de l'œuvre n'indique que l'auteur ait entendu que le rôle soit confié à un acteur Arabe ou Algérien. » Paris High Court. Judgment of May 22, 2008, *Combat de nègre et de chiens* case (Koltès beneficiaries v. Compagnie X). Contrary to certain critical interpretations claiming that the court had required Aziz to be played by an Arab or Algerian actor, the court's decision is much more nuanced. The judgment states that “it is indisputable that Aziz refuses to be identified as an Arab, an Algerian or a Frenchman”; that “it is undeniable, however, that Aziz is an Algerian” in the historical sense of the term, while rejecting

any national identity because of colonial violence and his “situation of subjugation”. In other words, the court considers that the character's colonial and postcolonial identity is part of the dramatic meaning, but that the text does not prescribe the actor's origin, thus invalidating any essentialist reading of the casting. The subtlety of the judgement highlights the central issue in Koltès' work: the question of identity as a historical and relational construct, not as an assigned category (Judgement of May 22, 2008, 67-68).

⁴¹ Koltès, *Une part*, 84-86: « *les images interposées [...] qui enduraient, c'est-à-dire qui durèrent dans, de sorte que le Noir a maintenu ce contact [avec la nature]* ».

⁴² Ibidem: « *que l'Arabe de service ne trouve aucune incarnation ailleurs que dans son rôle de service* ».

⁴³ Ibidem, 69: « *il n'a pas su inscrire comme Beckett avait su le mettre en œuvre... jamais les archétypes de ces pièces n'auraient à ce point prêté à polémique* ».

⁴⁴ François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac, *La Pratique du théâtre* (Paris: Édition de Laurent Thirouin, Champion: 2001), 112-118: « *l'effacement absolu de l'auteur [...] s'exprimer en leur nom propre* ». For him, it is a question of maintaining the theatrical illusion by preventing the presence of a narrative authority or an external authorial discourse from disrupting the transparency of the action being represented. This conception—inherited from a normative dramatic poetics—is the opposite of Koltès' writing, in which the author fully embraces the vocal, poetic, and subjective dimensions of speech.

REFERENCES

- BIDENT, Christophe. *Bernard-Marie Koltès : une écriture du monde*. Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000.
- BIDENT, Christophe. *Bernard-Marie Koltès, la dramaturgie du silence*. Paris: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 2001.
- BROOK, Peter. *L'Espace vide*. Gallimard, 1977.
- CHEREAU, Patrice, KOLTÈS, Bernard-Marie. *Correspondance 1979-1989*. Paris : IMEC/Minuit, 2009.
- DESCLES, Cyril, *L'affaire Koltès : retour sur les enjeux d'une controverse*, Paris: L'œil d'or, 2015.
- DESCLÉS, Cyril. *Bernard-Marie Koltès : une écriture du monde*. PUFC, 2019.
- DESHOULIÈRES, Christophe. *Les paysages de la nuit : Essai sur Bernard-Marie Koltès*. Actes Sud, 2007.
- KOLTÈS, Bernard-Marie. *Les Amertumes*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1998.
- KOLTÈS, Bernard-Marie. *Théâtre complet*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1999.
- LEHMANN, Hans-Thies. *Le Théâtre postdramatique*. Paris: L'Arche, 2002.
- MAÏSETTI, Arnaud. "Bernard-Marie Koltès." *Poétique & Éthique*, 1988.
- NAUGRETTE, Catherine. "L'espace koltésien." *Études théâtrales*, vol. 24, 2002.
- NAUGRETTE, Catherine. *Koltès : La scène et le monde*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2009.
- NECHIT, Diana. "Spațiul teatral : reperaj teoretic și analiza koltésiană." *DramArt*, no. 10, 2021.
- NECHIT, Diana. *Bernard-Marie Koltès et la problématique de l'espace théâtral, Sibiu*: Editions ULBS, 2013.
- PAVIS, Patrice. *Dictionnaire du théâtre*. Dunod, 2002.
- SARRAZAC, Jean-Pierre. *L'Avenir du drame*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2000.
- TACKELS, Bruno. *Dramaturgies de Koltès*. Théâtre Ouvert, 2001.
- UBERSFELD, Anne. *L'Espace théâtral*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1982.
- UBERSFELD, Anne. *Lire le théâtre*. Belin, 1996 (1re éd. 1977).
- VINAVER, Michel. *Écritures dramatiques*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1999.
- VITEZ, Antoine. *Le Théâtre des idées*. Paris: Gallimard, 1991.

LEGAL SOURCES

- Code de la propriété intellectuelle. Legifrance, 2024.
- GAUTIER, Pierre-Yves. *Propriété littéraire et artistique*. PUF, 2020.
- LUCAS, André, et Pascal Kamina. *Traité de la propriété littéraire et artistique*. Litec, 2012.
- LUCAS, André, et Emmanuel Pierrat. *Droit d'auteur et droits voisins*. 4e éd., Dalloz, 2017.
- SIRINELLI, Pierre. *Droit moral et liberté de création*. Dalloz, 2009.

CASE LAW CITED

- Cour d'appel de Paris*. Affaire Valmy, 30 avril 1991 – sur l'intégrité intellectuelle de l'œuvre.
- TGI Paris*. Affaire Beckett : *En attendant Godot*, 8 janvier 1998 – sur la fidélité aux didascalies.
- TGI Paris*. Affaire *Mademoiselle Julie*, 12 mars 2002 – sur les limites de la transposition.
- TGI Paris*. Affaire *Incendies* (Wajdi Mouawad), 22 mai 2008 – sur la structure narrative et la portée symbolique.