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# New Mimetic Strategies

Naujosios mimetinės strategijos

• *Knut Ove Arntzen*

## REFLECTIONS ON NEW-MIMESIS: PLAYING WITH IRONY AND SIMULATION

### I

The art of directing has developed differently within marginal forms of theatre than in classicist theatre in the sense that separation between action space and spectators' space is less prevalent. New realities and experiences of both aesthetical and anthropological orders are reflected in late modern and postmodern theatre. These forms are also influenced by trans-national processes and transgressions and are impacted upon by different kinds of show culture and world culture. Furthermore these forms of marginal theatre involve ambient performances, like those of house-club inspiration, and are working extensively with new technology.<sup>1</sup> Marginal theatre can also be described as "post-mainstream," a useful term for theatre in opposition to traditional mainstream.<sup>2</sup> Theatrical forms of marginality can thus be said to be opposed to centrism, and they may have elements from folklore and rituals of shamanistic character. A visual kind of dramaturgy of a more urban cultural direction, can also relate to underground theatre and subculture. Curated project theatre produced by urban networking partner-organisations is consciously using irony as a part of their performative strategies.

A concept of new-mimesis can explain post-modern theatre and postmodern dramaturgical structures and it may also include post-ritual ten-

dencies in ethnic, historical and political typologies. Postmodernism in drama and theatre can be defined as new mimetic or post dialogic, in the sense that there is a free inter-play of many voices which can be arranged differently according to a free structure. Thus classicist unity is left behind, and at first hand replaced by epic structures and later on by a visual kind of dramaturgy. Within this kind of performance strategy, images and visual elements are basic to dramaturgical structure and means and method of expression are put on an equal footing<sup>3</sup>. This kind of theatre can also be described as postdramatic<sup>4</sup>. Hans-Thies Lehmann emphasises that gestures and sounds are replacing spoken representation. Postdramatic theatre in this sense of the word has its roots in modernism and Artaud's protest against domination of the text. The postdramatic does not mean that textuality is being abandoned, but it gets to function differently. By making all means of expression equivalent, the text in theatre can be something more than just a text; it can be any kind of telling or re-telling of the world. This way a new concept of text emerges in theatre, based on a great variation of textual forms like art texts and different kinds of fictional texts or even the telephone book.

There is a playfulness which is rooted in what can be described as a new-mimesis playing with irony. I will expand on this, first theoretically, and

then by giving some examples of how playfulness opens up to new energies in the theatre, like those of the context with regard to geography and identities. The text in theatre is more and more being embedded in a state of fusion, by which the means of expression are juxtaposing with the context of production, and also with performance of the new-mimetic kind. The new-mimesis in theatre and in the arts can be very influential to reception by the audience; as the spectators' gaze, is increasingly turning into a "Google" like experience of new-mimetic expression, which takes place in between flashes of expressiveness and fragmentation. Thus, artistic expression is turned into a postmodern playfulness, which finds its way into many postmodern directions. It affects the way that visual effects and the audiovisual are now basic to the gaze, and how the gaze perceives a performance. The playing with new mimesis — of virtuality and illusion — represents a recurrence of rituals and spectacularity, reflective of the baroque period.

I will define the new-mimetic mirror as a space beyond representation of action in traditional or classicist sense, dealing with virtuality as well as with a visual kind of dramaturgy and real-time. The historical parallel of the function of the pictorial and the allegorical in the baroque period<sup>5</sup> is indicative that art has to do with showing. The 'show' in a postmodern context reflects simulacra as artistic virtuality<sup>6</sup>.

In postmodern theatre there has been a tendency to work with mirror effects and reflections in productions, and also towards theatre as a way of re-telling the world in the context of image and memory like in works of Robert Lepage and Hotel Pro Forma. Dance, theatre and performance art have been mixed in hybrid forms of theatrical performance (with links to new ritualistic performance). I would say that the new-mimetic mirror is a kind of double reflection of different states of mind, being symbolically reflected in performances using old and new technology. The use of technological projections of film and video onto the body itself turns the theatrical body into a technological body. As a spectator you can only trust your own gaze, your own personal experience. Modernism has entered into a postmodern state of understanding and reception. You are your gaze! So, we can see the consequences of breaking away with classicist mimesis and replacing it with a virtual mimesis. One of the consequences, then, is that there is no longer any truth in the arts except for the truth of your own gaze as a spectator. The truth itself has been crushed and the fragments are tossed in the air. Each individual spectator is reflecting the glimpses of light reflections from the fragments; like when

a glass table-top smashes throwing shards to the ground in arbitrary patterns. At that moment, a new sense of spirituality is being born, the spirituality of the beauty of fragments and their arbitrary patterns, like if the fragments are reflecting something spiritual or "divine".

## II

Each generation has its own images, concepts and ways of recycling previous generations' work. As men and women of the art world, theoretically, or practically, oriented towards the creation of art, we have to sort out as best we can the bits and pieces. This is my work when I reflect upon postmodern ways of the arts. I realise that the text is no longer re-presentational text but presentational, it presents statements in a dialogic interaction. This dialogic interaction is open to investigation, from a marginal context. This state of mind or research should be understood with regard to the Situationist movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s, aimed at setting art consumers and spectators free from any kind of commercial exploitation or commodification of the art work as object. In his Situationist manifesto Guy Debord insisted that audience should become resistant to manipulation<sup>7</sup>. A spectacle should not be consuming or be consumed. The turn was Brechtian: it should not be consuming the spectators' activity; on the contrary, it should evoke activity<sup>8</sup>.

In 1986 Richard Foreman told me, as expressed in a lecture at NYU, that he wanted to use the effects of theatre to tear apart the visual world. It was at the time of performing his production *Radio is good, film is evil* with students at the University. His point was that "[...] Film gives the illusion of reality. It is a lie"<sup>9</sup>. The performance was showing some archetypal figures in a radio studio from the 1950s. Hal Foster has expressed his position by speaking about anti-aesthetics, and he wants to state and detect "a space beyond representation"<sup>10</sup>. He wants to show that traditional hierarchies of textual representation in performance could be replaced by different kinds of presence or presentational structures. Therein, he is touching upon performance art, which has a real time character. I would say that a new-mimetic mirror is reflecting a space beyond representation. It is fruitful again to refer to the concept of allegory in Walter Benjamin's book on the German *Trauerspiel*, describing the baroque period and its dramaturgy with regard to allegories.<sup>11</sup> The German critic Andreas Kilb indicates that Benjamin provided an early modernist understanding of postmodern aesthetics, by referring to the antiquity and the middle ages

in new ways. The principle of simultaneity was as important to medieval theatre, and early renaissance theatre, as the allegorical image world of the baroque period. Kilb puts it more precisely when he says about the allegorical fantasy:

“[...]Allegorisches Bewusstsein steht ein für die Erfahrung einer Epoche, in der die jederzeit machbare Apokalypse anstelle der Transzendenz getreten ist. Die Situation heutiger Kunst ist selber allegorisch, soll sie doch, nach ihrem virtuellen Ende ...”<sup>12</sup>.

(My translation: “[...]Allegorical consciousness is representing an experience of an epoch, in which the sensation of apocalypse has replaced the feeling of transcendence. The situation of the arts today is allegorical, like a searching for its virtual end”, ...).

Because of this possible apocalypse — resident in our epoch — any time can be the last time. This is paradoxically being reflected in the space beyond representation, or could we say: the performance space, a space where everything can be said and expressed because it is not of a representational kind. Art, thus, is forced to relate itself to allegories and imaginative manifestations, as aesthetically exemplified in films by Peter Greenaway and David Lynch. It also resonates in theatrical productions by Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Wooster Group, Baktruppen and Forced Entertainment. Foreman’s intention was, along with Baktruppen’s, to replace melodramatic realism with a paradoxical consciousness by doubling up reality. This is a major feature of the postmodern theatre, also basing itself on the investigation and research of memories, identities and new technologies.

Metaphorically this can be spoken about as neo-reality, after the fashion of Baudrillard’s commentary about virtual media reality<sup>13</sup>. This can be connected to the manifestation of simulation and how simulation is turned into a means of expression by creating an anti-mimetic irony effect, also worked on in Baktruppen’s production *Tonight*): as “a Real-World Anti Comedy”<sup>14</sup>. Werner Jung speaks about a new form of mimesis, which is using virtual means of expression to create a simulation, which then is anti-representational<sup>15</sup>. When we see the mirror’s reflections, irony is our first receptive response. The new mimetic mirror is reflecting the space beyond representation, moving towards recognition of the metaphorical as a carrier of reflections. The mirror reflections can be reflections of memories, rituals, dreams or different kinds of nostalgia — meanings are in multitudinous. The expression is turned into being a show, a simulation and the human self is being doubled by mirror reflections, like sitting in a Paris café decorat-

ed with mirrors doubling and re-doubling your personal reflection. Finally we recognise that art has to do with show and the showing, as well as the show’s character and the reflections of simulation. That is why it is so common to play dramatically with mirrors in postmodern theatre. New technology is also put-to-task in the non-hierarchical means of expression, as everything is fusing and image effects are flourishing. Thus, many new ways of approaching and executing art are emerging. We can speak about a multi-dimensional reflection of reality. The new mimetic mirror is at work!

### III<sup>16</sup>

Marginality in new theatre references sources working through cultural identities, subcultures and world cultures. It is a theatre of new energies, new political approaches and the search for authenticity and interactivity in communication technologies and club culture. We can, therefore, speak about new sources for theatre, a consciousness of physical and performative expressions, which are not defined traditionally within the field of high art. Clubbing is a basic concept for the ambient expression in contemporary art forms, the social dimension of a transgressive aesthetics. Dutch writer Edgar Jager has expressed this tendency as follows:

“How can we define the time we live in, which there is less and less space to live in? Looking for locations for living and creation are the main topics of culture these days. Images and metaphors or spaceships and living rooms are being used to express the urge for designing a space to live in”<sup>17</sup>.

As a guideline for theatre today Jager proposes the ambient, as we know it from techno and house parties. Consequently he mentions some examples like Baktruppen, Reza Abdoh and the later works of the Wooster Group. The Norwegian Baktruppen taught us not to be scared of the small piece of space “[...] which everyone looked at. They behaved as if there was no theatre and no time-span”<sup>18</sup>.

That is why their theatrical practice is of an ambient kind, because they dealt with a real notion of time (“real-time”), which only could be experienced via a new strategy of performance. Within this new form the main emphasis would be on the direct relationship between the performer and the audience. By mentioning Baktruppen and Abdoh, Jager dwelled in a new generation of smaller companies coming up in the early 1990s, situated far away from the mainstream of the postmodern directors’ theatre, although it has strongly influenced mainstream theatre in



Northern Europe. It started with the experience of theatrical body as a biographical body in productions like *Tonight*: (Baktruppen, 1994) and *Quotations from a Ruined City* (Abdoh, 1995).

The theatrical body would be changed into a biographical body by personal stories which the performers or actors share with the audience in an ambient and interactive setting. Physical actions as such would produce a series of bodily energies of a shared kind, as described in Hans-Thies Lehmann's analysis of postdramatic theatre where general situations, portraits, images and sounds may replace a linear dramatic action<sup>19</sup>. Postmodern aesthetics and dramaturgy have developed a playful interaction between the virtual, the illusory and moments of non-illusion. The context of the theatrical action or performance became part of that work, as if a transgression has taken place. This tendency is manifest in the increasing interest of big institutional theatres or museums in the organisation of an "event culture" for young audiences. The German contemporary art curator Ute Meta Bauer reports on how Disc Jockeys were flown into big German art museums to stage parties within their spaces<sup>20</sup>. And we know about the way artistic director Frank Castorf organised a club within the building of the Volksbühne theatre in Berlin, under the name of the "Roter Salon". The German writer Diedrich Diederichsen proposed that the concept clubbing is a metaphor for diversity. He believes that there is a congruency between club culture and the search for new spaces for the arts and firmly emphasises that these two dimensions have already been mixed up. Thus new manifestations and experiences have been produced<sup>21</sup>.

The "Ambient House" may function as a model for a new development in theatre, combined with different ways of watching and understanding theatre. The person looking also defines what he or she looks at by the identity of their gaze as the Swedish choreographer and curator Mårten Spångberg describes it: "What we do on stage and what we do in the audience is the same. All the reality aspects are present"<sup>22</sup>. The potential of shared experience is explored by some British companies like Gob Squad from Nottingham and Forced Entertainment from Leeds. They have worked with a party-like situation in productions like *What are you looking at* (Gob Squad, 1999) and *Disco Relax* (Forced Entertainment, 1999). The space for *What are you looking at* was like a big transparent box-construction where the performers could be watched by the audience without being able to return the gaze but still acting in a way that would show their awareness of the audience. In this setting they were performing rituals and doing party actions like playing

records and drinking beer, approaching a state of ecstasy. The performance lasted for more than eight hours. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, *Disco Relax* contemplated on the gaze of the audience at quarrelling pub goers:

„Disco Relax is the plunge into a pond of glossy TV-soaps, emerging out of the scenario of a pub-disco, both witty and surreal“<sup>23</sup>.

An ambient idea of clubbing has also been applied to the symposium and lecturing situation, which was demonstrated by the Showcase Beat Le Mot company founded at the Institute of theatre studies in Giessen. In 1999 they presented the production *Kongress Permanentes Testbild* at the Podewil Art Centre in Berlin. In a small bar space or party room some invited disc jockeys (DJs) and music scholars discussed topics like hiphop and new multicultural music in London. This "Kongress" took place within a general club program including Baktruppen who presented their last version of *Very good* (1997). The spectators were sitting in a cabaret-like setting, watching a huge screen that showed their action at a sidewalk stage. They spoke and sang about Chinese people and about Sami people like: "The Chinese are so many and the Sami so few"<sup>24</sup>. The German critic Stefan Strehler reflects on how clubbing or pop theatre (like the one of Showcase Beat le Mot) has become one alternative to refresh or renew a blurred and dusty state theatre: "Für das eingestaubte Theater scheint Pop eine willkommene Frischzellenkultur" (for the dusty theatre, pop seems to have become a necessary impetus, my translation)<sup>25</sup>.

Thus we now face an interesting development with influences of pop-ambient theatre, a mainstream-jamming both in community theatre and in the state or national theatres. Jamming is a concept from jazz music meaning musicians can play freely. Karaoke is a free-form that can be considered as a means of expression, and parts from classical drama can be improvised on. The choreographer Alain Platel and his company C. de la B. from Ghent in Belgium was invited to *Theatertreffen* (2004) with their new work *Wolf* (a co-production with the Ruhrtriennale and the Opéra National de Paris), which also won the juried Kerr Preis. Involved in this production is an orchestra playing Mozart, three female singers, and 12 performers telling stories from all over the world, some of them deaf. Suddenly a gang of well trained dogs appear on stage depicting a cultivated animal presence. The scenography was by Bert Neumann, consisting only of a graffiti painted container.

In this kind of mainstream-jamming, singing and dancing is often fixed within dramaturgical

frames. The material shaped and altered within those performances could be a classical drama or a private storytelling. Another example of this kind of work is the staging of Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea* by Sandra Struntz in 2001 at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg. The Lady was swimming around in an aquarium, in an emerald marine world, while the performer was running around in front of the aquarium, as if it were a free space or a space to be conquered<sup>26</sup>.

The theatre has also turned into a social space, a space for living. In community theatre artists transform the space into an integral player within social processes, as in Constanca Macras' per-

formance *Scratch* Neukölln (Berlin, presented at the Hebbel am Ufer in May 2004). Or in a recent production by Baktruppen at Lofoten International Theatre Festival (2004) in Lofoten, Norway, in which they performed a dialogue with the local population about artistic and personal engagement in the matters of public sculptural landscapes. Concepts of the personal, the social and the authentic is becoming more and more important in theatre, dance and in the arts in general. As is the emotional expression shared with the audience on an almost equal level. Thereby the uniqueness of the hermetic work of art is constantly fading away, being replaced by an awareness of context and marginality.

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<sup>14</sup> Briegleb T. *Tageszeitung*, Berlin, 30 September 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Jung, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> This part of the conference lecture was based on a text published in the book *AufBrüche. Theaterarbeit zwischen Text und Situation*, Patrick Primavesi und Olaf A. Schmitt (ed.), Berlin: Theater der Zeit: Recherchen 20, 2004, pp. 371-374: Marginality, the pop-ambient and mainstream-jamming in new theatre.

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<sup>24</sup> Baktruppen's information material: <http://www.baktruppen.org>.

<sup>25</sup> Strehler S. „Popmimen in der Bühnenburg“. *Spex* 11/1998.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Arntzen K.O. "Anvendt teatervitenskap og et regi-teater i endring, Schauspielhaus i Hamburg" (Applied theatre studies and a changing directors's theatre), *Norsk Shakespeare og teatertidsskrift*, Oslo, Nr.1, 2004.

## APIE NAUJĄJĄ MIMEZĘ: ŽAIDIMAS SU IRONIJA IR SIMULIACIJA

### S a n t r a u k a

Šiandieninė teatro režisūra perima marginaliojo teatro formas, kurioms, skirtingai nei klasicistiniam teatrui, veiksmo ir žiūrovų erdvės atskyrimas tampa nebesvarbus. Šias formas veikia transnacionaliniai procesai, jos atviros šou ir pasaulio kultūrų poveikiui. Marginaliojo teatro formomis galime laikyti ir *ambientinius* spektaklius su klubinės *house* kultūros elementais, ir naujas technologijas akcentuojantį teatrą.

Sąvoka *naujoji mimezė* yra patogi aiškinant postmodernistinio teatro ir dramaturgijos struktūrą: postmodernusis teatras gali būti pavadintas *naujosios mimezės* arba postdialoginiu, nes jis pagrįstas laisva daugybės balsų žaisme. *Naujosios mimezės veidrodis* apibrėžia erdvę anapus veiksmo reprezentacijos, būdingos tradiciniam ir klasicistiniam teatrui, ir yra susijęs su virtualia realybe, vizualine dramaturgija, realaus laiko patirtimi ir šou formomis. Postmodernistiniame kontekste ironiškai naudojamos šou formos atspindi simuliakro kaip meninės virtualybės idėją.

Naujoji mimezė teatre ir kituose menuose keičia suvokėjo padėtį. Kai klasicistinę keičia virtuali mimezė, mene nelieka tiesos, išskyrus paties žiūrovo įžvelgtą tiesą. Žiūrovas suvokia paskirus šviesos blykstelėjimus, atsispindinčius kūrinio fragmentuose. Gimsta naujas dvasingumas, paremtas grožio fragmentais ir arbitrariu jų raštu.

Naujojo teatro marginalumas yra susijęs su kultūriniu identitetu ir naujosiomis energijomis; pasitelkiant komunikacines technologijas ir klubinės kultūros formas ieškoma autentiškumo ir interaktyvumo. Todėl galima kalbėti apie naujus teatro šaltinius, fizinės ir performatyvios išraiškos suvokimą, kurio nerasime tradicinėje aukštojo meno sferoje. Asmeniniai pasakojimai, kuriais atlikėjai ir aktoriai dalijasi su publika *ambientinėje* ir interaktyvioje aplinkoje, teatrinį kūną keičia biografiniu kūnu. Meno kūrinio unikalumas praranda svarbą, akcentuojamas kontekstas ir marginalumas.

Šios tendencijos atsispindi šiuolaikinių teatro trupių „Baktruppen“, „Forced Entertainment“, „Reza Abdoh“, „Gob Squad“ kūryboje.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *postmodernistinis teatras, marginalusis teatras, mimezė, vizualinė dramaturgija.*

**KEY WORDS:** *postmodern theatre, marginal theatre, mimesis, visual kind of dramaturgy.*

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• Rūta Mažeikienė

## THE OPEN ROLE: SOME REMARKS ON CONTEMPORARY ACTING

The variety of acting methods and means of expression characteristic to contemporary theatre reveals the dynamic change of traditional ways of acting and the appearance of new acting forms. Rapid vigorous transformations in contemporary acting encourage us to look into acting practice more attentively, to reconsider the traditional conception of acting and the conventional notion of the role.

Generally, we understand acting as the representation of the *other*: as the portrayal of the dramatic character or the real person, as playing an animate or inanimate theatrical object. The most usual and simple definition of the *actor's art* states that acting is a process of creating an image of a fictional character: "Acting is the work of an actor who tells the story by portraying a character written in a play".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the term *role* in performing arts usually means "an actor's interpretation of a dramatic character" and suggests that "when the actors assume roles in a drama, they are acting "as if" they are someone else".<sup>2</sup> However, contemporary theatre practice stimulates re-evaluation of such an understanding of *acting* and *role* since there are numerous performances in which the actor is not representing the *other*; instead he/she creates the abstract score of the role or performs without pretending to be someone else. Moreover, certain roles seem to be extremely confusing and ambiguous, for

instance, when the actor is not only portraying a character but also performing different actions which are unrelated to the dramatic person or to the narrative structure of the performance. Such examples of acting invite the spectator to interpret the actor's work freely, therefore, following Umberto Eco, they can be perceived as *open works*, i.e. the works which strongly appeal to the creative reception and interpretation of the individual spectator.

Oftentimes theatre critics — when analysing complicated, open-ended and ambiguous examples of contemporary theatre practice — characterise a particular role (performance and/or drama piece) as an *open work*. However, this notion is not used as a broader characterisation describing/unfolding the specific poetics of the role. Therefore, I suggest that the notion of the *open work* can be particularly effective in explaining certain examples of contemporary acting and I propose to discuss the basic features of the *open role* in this article. The new concept of the role is based upon Umberto Eco's theory of the *open work* and supplemented with Roland Barthes' post-structural concept of the *work-as-text*.

Following Umberto Eco, it is important to specify that the openness of a certain artwork should be regarded as an intentional order proposed by the author. Thus, the notion of the *open role* may be applied only to such examples of acting which are

consciously constructed as *open works*, i.e. roles in which openness is intended and chosen as a specific artistic strategy; or, paraphrasing Eco, such roles which appeal to the active interpretation of the individual perceiver and which “are brought to their conclusion” by the spectator “at the same time as he experiences them on an aesthetic plane”.<sup>3</sup>

Referring to the conceptions of the *open work* and the *work-as-text*, one can state that the basic distinctive feature of the *open role* is that it does not have such a complete, closed and coherent form as the traditional one. Generally speaking the traditional role is a complete final *product* which has a clear, logical and definite structure, while the *open role* is a *work in process* (or a *work in movement*) which has an open-ended, disordered structure and calls for a creative collaboration by the perceiver. In other words, the spectator perceives the traditional role as a relatively complete organic whole (usually as a concrete theatrical character) whereas he/she realises the *open role* as a *field of possibilities* (using Eco’s term): the *open role* is crystallising/forming during the very act of the perceiving and invites the spectator to organise, structure the actor’s work mentally. If the traditional role usually directs the spectator’s mind towards a certain understanding of the theatrical character, the *open role* invites the perceiver to interpret it individually and allows for a great number of possible readings of it. Entering into this *field of possibilities*, the spectator can freely take his/her own point of view, choose his/her own modes of approach, create his/her own connections between the actor’s part and the other elements of the performance. So the spectator can independently perform one of several possible interpretations of the role. In Barthes’ words, the *open role* “is experienced only in an activity of production”.<sup>4</sup>

While coherency, causality, and wholeness are the basic characteristics of the conventional role, the *open role* can be distinguished by its discontinuity, indeterminacy, multiplicity and highly ambiguous character. Traditionally, the actor is representing a psychologically rounded character which has a definite function in the narrative structure of the performance. Consequently, the actor is greatly concerned about the psychological validity and continuity of the role he/she is playing and he/she is trying to integrate narrowly the different episodes of the role in order to create a plausible theatrical character. But the *open role* usually presents such an image of the dramatic character which can be described as fragmented, unstable, sketchily, and possessing weak psychological characterisations. Moreover, while playing the *open role* the actor can represent a character which undergoes radical transformations or

he/she can integrate several characters into one role, or, conversely, he/she can portray a character which is performed by different actors at the same time. That is why the *open role* is usually functioning in the *mise-en-scene* (in the performance text) not as a separate element of the narrative, but as a multifunctional component. During the particular episodes of the performance the actor can represent some dramatic person, but during the rest time of the production he/she can perform specific actions which are not related to the represented character. Thus, the actor’s movement, gesture, voice, mimicry, and posture have no representational function within the narrative and, according to Phillip B. Sarrilli; they “stand on their own”.<sup>5</sup> As a result, acting becomes multifunctional performing which combines representation of dramatic character as well as serving as a particular element of the performance text: visual component, moving figure, coloured spot, audible item, and so forth. As Philip B. Sarrilli summarises:

“What the actor or performer does on stage at the start of the twenty-first century ranges from a psychologically realist character to the sequential playing of multiple roles or personae to the enactment of tasks or entry into image without any character implications”.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly this kind of performing reveals contradictions and paradoxes of the actor’s part, underlines changes and fractures in the role’s score, allows the actor to integrate various methods of acting and different means of expression in a single role. The actor is permitted and even encouraged to combine such diverse acting modes as a psychological approach to creating a character and non-mimetic/non-representational means of expression, certain elements of physical theatre and highly codified acting or even performing in a not-acting manner. The *open role* induces the actor to merge/unify/join such episodes of the role which are stylistically different, encourages the actor to think neither about the psychological plausibility of the character he/she is representing nor about the structural unity of the score of the role. It forces the actor to step over the limits of traditional dramatic acting, make use of the very different artistic practices (for example, music, dance, circus, and pantomime, visual or martial arts). The *open work* or, as Barthes signals, the *work-as-text* “tries to place itself very exactly *behind* the limit of the *doxa*”; it is always *paradoxical* and *plural*, providing ample possibilities for its performing, understanding and interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

Although, analysing concrete examples of contemporary acting it is possible to distinguish such features of the *open role* as indeterminacy of style



and genre, plurality of form and content, intertextuality and contextual relationship with other elements of the performance, going back to the concepts of the *open work* and the *work-as-text* one can claim that the crucial feature of the *open role* is its — ambiguity. The traditional role (or other examples of so called *closed work*) usually suggests relatively univocal meaning or interpretation as it orients the spectator's mind in the direction which is more or less provided by the author. On the contrary, the *open role* offers itself as a plural, open-ended work which, as Barthes notes, protects itself "from the consumption," asks the spectator for "a practical collaboration," invites the perceiver to create possible meanings of it.<sup>8</sup> The open role is heterogeneous, contradictory, and provocative: "in this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one".<sup>9</sup>

Thereby, the *open role* stimulates the spectator to reconsider traditional understanding of acting, rethink usual modes of evaluation of the actor's art and open himself/herself to the creative proc-

ess of interpretation. The examples of the open work provoke a new kind of theatrical communication that invites a pleasant interpretational practice (not the traditionally passive, inert process of observation/consumption). The perceiver is no longer only a spectator but rather a creative participant of the performance; as not only the actor but also the spectator becomes involved in the process of role construction. In other words the heterogeneous, de-centered, and fragmented nature of the *open role* induces the spectator to become an active co-author of the role. As Barthes notes, "the more plural the text, the less it is written before I read it".<sup>10</sup>

Thus when analysing contemporary acting it is important to recognise that the role can be consciously constructed as a plural and open text the reading of which depends upon both the relationship with other elements of the performance and the individual interpretation of the spectator. Therefore the conception of the *open role* can be useful as it inspires us to consider the acting as a multifaceted and multifunctional performing which combines the representation of a dramatic character, creation of the external score of the role as well as diverse physical expression in a non-acting manner.

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<sup>5</sup> Sarrilli Ph. B. "Introduction. Theory and the Practice of Acting". *Acting (Re)Considered. Theories and Prac-*

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 945.

<sup>9</sup> Barthes R. *S/Z*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, p. 5.

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Rūta Mažeikienė

## ATVIRAS VAIDMUO: PASTABOS APIE ŠIUOLAIKINĘ VAIDYBĄ

### S a n t r a u k a

Šiuolaikinio teatro aktorių kūrybai būdinga vaidmens kūrimo metodų ir raiškos priemonių įvairovė atskleidžia dinamišką tradicinių vaidybos principų kaitą ir naujų aktorinės raiškos būdų įsiveržimą. Sparčiai kintantis aktorius menas skatina atidžiau pažvelgti į vaidybos praktiką, peržiūrėti tai, kas laikytina aktorius kūryba, ieškoti naujų jos interpretavimo perspektyvų.

Tradiciškai aktorius laikomas teatro menininku, kuris teatrinio veiksmo metu reprezentuoja *kitą*: fiktyvų dramos personažą arba realų asmenį, gyvą arba negyvą sceninį objektą. Tačiau šiuolaikinio teatro

praktika kvestionuoja tokią aktoriaus kūrybos definiciją. Analizuojant kai kuriuos vaidmenis, sudėtinga apibrėžti, kokia yra aktoriaus užduotis: ar jis turi sukurti fiktyvaus personažo paveikslą, ar kreiptis į žiūrovus savo vardu, ar atlikti konkrečias plastines / vizualines užduotis, ar tuo pat metu daryti ir viena, ir kita. Galima teigti, kad šiuolaikiniame teatre išryškėja tradicinės vaidmens sampratos krizė: jei anksčiau manyta, kad aktoriaus vaidmuo yra *kito* (dažniausiai dramos personažo) reprezentacija, tai šiuolaikinio teatro praktika komplikuoja tokią vaidmens apibrėžtį. Tačiau, nors teatro teoretikai ir pripažįsta, kad vaidybos teorijai reikia naujų impulsų ir naujos terminologijos, galinčios adekvačiai įvertinti šiuolaikinę aktoriaus kūrybos praktiką, tokių mėginimų nėra gausu. Atskirose studijose teatrologai įvardija esmines šiuolaikinio teatro vaidybos tendencijas, tačiau nesiūlo naujos vaidmens definicijos, atitinkančios pastarųjų dešimtmečių aktoriaus kūrybos pokyčius.

Vertindami komplikuatą, neapibrėžtą ir nevienareikšmį šiuolaikinio teatro reiškinių pobūdį, teatro teoretikai neretai atskirą vaidmenį, dramą ar spektaklį apibūdina kaip *atvirą* kūrinį, tačiau šis apibūdinimas netaikomas kaip platesnė, vaidmens poetiką nusakanti kategorija. Šiame tekste remiantis *atviro* kūrinio (U. Eco) ir meno kūrinio kaip *teksto* (R. Barthes) koncepcijomis bei šiuolaikine vaidybos praktika, formuluojama teorinė *atviro vaidmens* samprata. Tokia aktoriaus vaidmens traktuotė gali tapti metodologiniu aktoriaus kūrybos tyrimų pagrindu ir išplėsti tradicinės vaidybos bei vaidmens sampratos ribas. Tekste skiriami šie *atviro vaidmens* bruožai: žanrinis ir stilistinis neapibrėžtumas, formos ir turinio pliuralumas, intertekstualumas, kontekstualus santykis su kitais spektaklio komponentais, atvirumas įvairioms suvokėjo interpretacijoms. *Atviro vaidmens* samprata skatina vaidybą laikyti įvairiapuse, daugiafunkcine aktoriaus veikla, kuri apima ir fiktyvaus personažo kūrimą, ir išorinės vaidmens struktūros atlikimą, ir nevaidybinio pobūdžio aktoriaus kūno ir balso raišką.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *šiuolaikinis teatras, atviras kūrinys, vaidyba, aktorius, atviras vaidmuo.*

**KEY WORDS:** *contemporary theatre, open work, acting, actor, open role.*

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• *Mariusz Bartosiak*

## TOWARDS THE EDGE OF MIMESIS: NON-LINEAR DYNAMICS OF THE AESTHETIC OBJECT OF THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

### 1. THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE AND CHAOS THEORY

Stephen H. Kellert states that “chaos theory is the qualitative study of unstable aperiodic behaviour in deterministic non-linear dynamical systems”<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, modelling and interpretative tools of chaos theory have been applied to theatre studies. Different attempts have been made to analyse dramatic texts, revealing either their inherent non-linear dynamics, extreme sensitiveness to initial dramatic conditions inside represented reality<sup>2</sup>, or precisely defined fractal structures of dramatic time<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, a spectacle, with its stage design, choreography and course of action, has been regarded as an analogous representation of non-linear dynamics characteristic for the operating consciousness, with its continuous feedback, unpredictability, and sensitivity to its initial and changing conditions<sup>4</sup>.

It seems that phenomenologically considered cognitive processes taking place during theatrical performance might be considered in terms of chaos theory. An aesthetic object of theatrical performance considered from the viewpoint of communication and cognitive processes appears as an outcome of phenomenal information exchange between a) actors and b) between actors and spectators<sup>5</sup>. Every scenic action is then a response to the previous action or to the

spectators' response to the previous action. This feature enables us to consider the process of construing an aesthetic object of theatrical performance in terms of a non-linear dynamic system. The instability of the system results from continuous feedback in phenomenal communication, which is connected with limitations and advantages of theatrical communication processes. The limitations and advantages are determined culturally and anthropologically, and function on both sides of the scene. On the other hand, unpredictability is connected with theatrical practice, which is not limited (especially nowadays) to 'pure art', but operates in a dynamic field of interactions with social and personal reality.

In contemporary culture, the notions of 'theatre' and 'theatrical' have several meanings, among which only one refers to an art form ('theatre art'), or to a type of spectacle ('theatre performance'). However, from the viewpoint of theatrical communication three connotations seem to form a dynamic semantic field, reciprocally dependent in cultural practice, namely — 'theatre as art', 'theatre as medium', and 'theatre as vehicle'.

The first connotation is literal, and the most common one, connected with prototypical meaning (derived from the Greek 'theatron') denoting the special arrangement of physical space, so that there is an area for the audi-



ence, and a place that focuses the attention of spectators. According to Greimas and Courtes<sup>6</sup>, this spatial arrangement and the presence of an “observing actant” suffices to distinguish a theatrical spectacle from all kinds of “ceremonies, mythical rituals, for example, where the presence of spectators is not necessary”. On the other hand, according to Pavis<sup>7</sup> and Świontek<sup>8</sup>, fundamental and necessary for theatrical representation is a distance between audience and scene, and a tension between fictional world and reality. Grotowski defines theatre very simply as “what takes place between spectator and actor,”<sup>9</sup> and adds that it “cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion”.<sup>10</sup>

The two remaining terms are figurative, denoting paratheatrical practices. ‘Theatre as medium’ is connected with every social practice that is described by a metaphor of playing roles (usually social ones) and of spectacle. This meaning also refers to the theatricalisation of social life. The fundamental difference between ‘theatre as art’ and ‘theatre as medium’ lies in the aim of the activity and in the attitude of its participants. In ‘theatre as art’ there is a clear distinction between actors and spectators, of which all participants are aware and which is fundamental for the existence of theatrical conventions. Consequently, a theatrical fiction exists, which is a direct purpose of, and an artistic effect of actors’ endeavours, as well as an object of aesthetic interest of spectators. Within ‘theatre of social life’ spectators and actors are not necessarily aware of their positions and they may comprehend their actions and relations literally. However, the most distinct difference between ‘theatre as art’ and ‘theatre as medium’ is the purpose of the engendered actions. In the ‘theatre of the world’ a direct aim is to actualise a new social situation, in which decisions (for both, “actors” and “spectators”) are made for real, and become real life choices.

Within ‘theatre as vehicle’ the characteristic means of the theatre and the actor’s art are directly used for inner, self-development of the “doer”<sup>11</sup>. There is no clear distinction between actors and spectators — all who take part in it, are participants of the same, real event, which takes place inside body and mind, and has no direct connection with social life. Actually, it is pararitual or even ritual practice, with all consequences of that fact. Similarly to the ‘theatre as medium’, the activity here aims at direct influence on reality, but — on an inner, individual reality. However, here again one has to do with a special kind of playing role and creating new reality.

## 2. THEATRE AS AN ART

Distinctive for the art of theatre is the presence of a human-actor, who in the conscious presence of a human-spectator evokes a different (than actual for both) reality. The actor’s body and his psychomotor abilities constitute a fundamental, though not exclusive, artistic material. As such, theatre possesses all the capabilities that are at human disposal. At the same time, it is burdened with human limitations. The theatre’s situation is unique in the world of arts, since only in theatre the creator himself is the only indispensable substance for the creation of a piece of art. Also, it is the only domain, where personal presence of a receiver is similarly indispensable for the very existence of a work of art. Thus, abilities and limitations of a theatre art depend in the same measure on the actual (effectively accessible in the specific time and place) knowledge, sensitivity, psychomotor and perceptual performance of both, actor and spectator (though in different proportions for each one of them). Moreover, theatre is an art form that is most intensely saturated anthropologically and socially — it cannot exist without active presence of at least two communicating human beings. Finally, a piece of theatre art is like Heraclitus’ river — it is impossible to step into it twice, it happens in its overall shape only once. This elemental and very general fact affects a specific series of consequences.

The first consequence of the transitory character of theatre art work, and the most important from the viewpoint of theatrical communication, is the necessity of the existence of theatrical convention that is relatively stably embedded in the theatrical community’s consciousness. The convention should be transparent, thereby clear enough for the receiver to understand, so it can immediately transfer him to the fictional world, since its operating time (the duration of the performance) is relatively short. In comparison with conventions operating in other art domains, theatrical conventions should be more strongly embedded in cultural consciousness of a given community. This makes the convention relatively more effective (for it is more obvious). At the same time, however, it is less adaptable to the changes taking place in community, since its every transformation needs more time and energy for the stabilisation in culture that is necessary for its effectiveness. Furthermore, it should have strong and direct relations with a local culture (of course, range of locality may differ depending generally on a type of theatre), since spectacle should be readable by a given community in a given time and place.

The extensiveness of cultural codes is strictly connected with maximisation of social effectiveness of theatrical performance. However spectacle does not cover the entire continuum of existence, but represents those fragments, which are acknowledged as anthropologically essential and, at the same time, are able to be actually performed within here-and-now of theatrical event. Of course, the scope of such effectiveness may differ according to the universality of the components of representation.

Limitations are directly connected with the fact that only certain types of activities are developed in a given convention as anthropologically and aesthetically significant. Others, however anthropologically important, remain in the background (although they may be foregrounded in another tradition). Furthermore, every foreground action must be set in a certain anthropologically dynamic background that creates its direct, qualitative and circumstantial context, because only then can it be recognised as meaningful.

Traditional theatre performance is then entirely effective only for the receivers, who are theatrically educated within a culture, which developed the tradition used in the spectacle. In other words, effectiveness of theatrical communication refers not only to the sharply outlined, hence consciously recognised contents, forms and meanings, but also to the peripherally perceived psychomotor patterns, which are received and accepted by the spectator pre-reflectively in a direct relation to the components of his own psychomotor system that is shaped in daily life.

### 3. THEATRE AS A MEDIUM

Eugenio Barba and his International School of Theatre Anthropology offer the practice of a 'third theatre' as a means of getting theatrical communication out of the culture trap. As Barba says, "the essential character of the Third Theatre is the autonomous construction of meaning, which does not recognise the boundaries assigned to our craft by the surrounding culture".<sup>12</sup> One of the fundamental elements of this practice is a 'cultural barter', in which theatre serves initially as a medium for intercultural communication. In barter, "the 'micro-culture' of one group (or individual) meets the 'micro-culture' of the other. This meeting is realised through the exchange of performances", as "cultural products".<sup>13</sup>

Theatrical barter results in a set of culturally heterogeneous, but theatrically effective means of intercultural communication, including elements of all theatrical codes (songs, melodies, sounds, gestures, actions, components of make-up, cos-

tumes and stage design). Theatrical barter is also a source of traditional acting methods and original stories, which have proved their relative intercultural effectiveness.

The practice of a third theatre belongs to the art. Although a spectacle is composed of culturally heterogenic elements that were gathered during intercultural expeditions and meetings, it is supposed to be aesthetically coherent. Theatrical performances of the *Odin Theatret* might serve as a perfect example. Of course, not all of the expeditions must necessarily mean travelling in space — there are also barter meetings with old cultures. Good example of the results of such barter is provided by the latest spectacles of *Theatre Association "Gardzienice"*, in which actors attempted to revitalise archaic paratheatrical practices traced in Greece. However the best known example of the third theatre practice one finds among Peter Brook's productions, particularly *Mahabharata* or *Tierno Bokar*, in which the actors of different theatrical traditions take creative part.

Third theatre attempts to establish theatrical practice on heterogeneous, yet transculturally effective means. Its primary purpose is to search for the universal cultural patterns with the use of a theatre; or in other words, for the social actions, which theatrically represent (at least, relatively) universal human values and, at the same time ones that can be effectively staged.

### 4. THEATRE AS A VEHICLE

Practice of 'theatre as vehicle' focuses on searching for traditional acting techniques and theatrical means that can directly serve human self-development. Their spectacular and aesthetic aspect is of secondary importance. Performing techniques are subordinated to inner transformations of an aspirant, to his "inner action", which is accounted for in terms of an inner energetic process rather than in terms of aesthetic qualities.<sup>14</sup> Hence they become personal rituals or individuation rites, temporarily detached from the socio-cultural context. Therein, an actor communicates with his own self by means of his body and imagination to achieve self-knowledge and self-consciousness. The main purpose of this project lies in practical verification of traditional songs and ritual actions from the viewpoint of their anthropological effectiveness in linking inner processes, considered in terms of reciprocal dependence of psychomotor impulses, mental images and values with outer paratheatrical activity of the body. In other words, it concerns complete harmony of thought, speech and action, optimal awareness of and also a control (to some degree) over body, imagination and emotions regarded as

unity. This state is considered to be the basis for the wholeness of humanness, hence also the essential basis for the art of acting — the essential basis, not acting itself. Training — shaping the human skills — eventually results in the competence of being a performer, which is at the same time more and less than an actor — more of an ethical than aesthetic dimension. “*Performer*, with a capital letter is a man of action. He is not somebody who plays another. He is a doer, a priest, a warrior: he is outside aesthetic genres. Ritual is performance, an accomplished action, an act. Degenerated ritual is a show.”<sup>15</sup>

Thomas Richards, a successor of Grotowski conducts this kind of research in Pontedera. Simultaneously he realizes a project “Bridge”, with a purpose to create theatrical performances on the basis of material accumulated within the frames of ‘theatre as vehicle’ by the actors that have performing competencies, in the precise, described meaning of the term. Project “Bridge” is then connected with strictly theatrical practice and its aim is to establish actual links between ‘theatre as vehicle’ and ‘theatre as art’. Stage presentations embody personally verified dynamic anthropo-

logical patterns that might induce self-development (not the ones that are only marked as such in cultural traditions), of which the spectator is a direct and active witness.

## 5. CONCLUSION

*Third Theatre* and *Bridge* are supposed to lead to the relative independence of theatrical practice from cultural and anthropological patterns that dominate in particular traditions of the art of theatre. These projects do not aim to destroy or invalidate them. Their purpose is to question this dominance in theatrical practice, and to propose possible alternatives. *Third Theatre* focuses on social effectiveness of the applied theatrical means, verified in the practice of ‘theatrical barter’. *Bridge* concentrates the attention on anthropological effectiveness of the proposed scenic actions, which are personally tested in the course of performer’s training. Both types of theatrical activity, together with traditionally conceived theatre art, form a dynamic, and entirely unpredictable aesthetic object within contemporary theatre practice.

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Mariusz Bartosiak

## TIES MIMEZĖS RIBA: NELINIJINĖ TEATRINIO ESTETINIO OBJEKTO DINAMIKA

### S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje pristatomas teatrinis įvykis kaip dinamiškas modelis, viena vertus, susijęs su komunikacijos procesais, o antra vertus, su antropologinėmis ir kultūrinėmis apibrėžtimis, kurios tyrinėjamos šiuolaikiniame teatre. Nelinijinė dinamika aptariama atsižvelgiant į santykį tarp trijų teatro veiklos būdų. Skiriamos trys teatro sąvokos reikšmės: *teatras kaip menas*, *teatras kaip tarpininkas* ir *teatras kaip priemonė*. Jei pirmoji samprata yra pažodinė, tai kitos dvi žymi parateatrinę veiklą. Pirmosios tikslai yra vien meniniai ir estetiniai, kitų dviejų atitinkamai – asmeniniai ir socialiniai. Praktinis šių sampratų kontekstas, tai – pirmiausia „Trečiasis teatras“ (Barba, Brookas, Staniewskis), o antra vertus – Richardso projektas „Tiltas“, artimai susijęs su Grotowskio teatro tyrinėjimais.

Galima teigti, kad abu projektai – „Trečiasis teatras“ ir „Tiltas“ – atskleidžia sąlyginę teatro praktikos nepriklausomybę nuo kultūrinių ir antropologinių modelių, dominuojančių vienoje ar kitoje teatro tradicijoje, nors ir nebandoma tų tradicijų paneigti arba sunaikinti. Projektų tikslas yra pasipriešinti tradicijų dominavimui ir pasiūlyti galimas alternatyvas. „Trečiojo teatro“ kūrėjų dėmesio centre yra skirtingų teatro priemonių taikymo spektaklyje socialinis efektyvumas. Tuo tarpu „Tilto“ projekte daugiausia dėmesio skiriama sceninio veiksmo, kurį aktorius pats asmeniškai išbando ruošdamasis vaidmeniui, antropologiniam veiksmingumui. Abi teatro veiklos kryptys kartu su tradiciškai suvokiamu teatro menu sudaro dinamišką ir visiškai nenusipėjamą šiuolaikinio teatro estetinį objektą.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *šiuolaikinis teatras*, *teatrinis įvykis*, „Trečiasis teatras“, „Tiltas“.

**KEY WORDS:** *contemporary theatre*, *theatrical event*, *mimesis*, *Third Theatre*, *Bridge*.

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Jan Flemming Scheel

## SOME SEMIOTIC ASPECTS OF THEATRE AS A CULTURAL EVENT IN POST-MODERN SOCIETY

### 1. HISTORY

The Copenhagen-school of semiotics or rather structuralism (with my compatriots Hjelmslev and Uldahl as the leading figures) only focused on the language as object and to a certain extent the text was then to be a signifying entity of language. So if we want to find a systematic and semiotic approach to theatre the first attempts are to be seen in the Prague-school especially between 1931 and 1941: in this decade the interest is in: 1) the procedures in which the semantic functions are provided; 2) the connotative character of the theatrical sign, (i.e.) sign of object-sign; 3) and the mobility of theatrical signs; the theatre having different systems and codes; the décor, music, verbal utterances, gestures and so on. The first one to gather all these insights and to ground a specific discipline with its own objects and its own methods and epistemology was the Polish scholar T. Kowsan with his essay: *Introduction à la sémiologie de l'art du spectacle* from 1968.

This milestone inspired quite many others and formed at least two approaches to the semiotics of theatre: one concerned about the analysis of single *mise en scène*, the other took up more theoretical items, but both approaches agreed that the theatrical performance was a macro-text made up of several subtexts such as: verbal,

scenic, musical text, text of lighting etc. (Ruffini called it *testo spettacolare*: in French *texte théâtrale*).

To fulfil the picture of theatre-semiotics I will dwell on Greimas and Courtés: *Sémiotique, dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* from 1979. The dictionary treats the theatre in an article named *sémiotique théâtrale* on four levels of which the last one is operating on a clarification of the word "*spectacle*", indicating that "*le discours théâtral*" not only covers theatre, opera, ballet but also races, matches and theatre of the streets and so on; the spirit of Roland Barthes is easy to spot. At the same time ceremonies, rites and mythological rituals are excluded from the definition, because an audience is claimed not to be necessary<sup>1</sup>.

More or less the recent semiotic investigations in theatre-science have altered into another and very interesting preoccupation: but into parenthesis however, it would be correct to say that there still are very brilliant studies on single plays and their signification-systems but to a certain extent I appreciate the tendency that more cognitive studies are emerging. Due to the fact that every cultural text is incomplete, and thereby full of "blanks" and that the work of art could be described as Umberto Eco does in his *Opera Aperta*; but the theory of theatre or better



the theatre-science must also deal with questions such as: How does the receiver complete it (i.e. the play)? Which role is given to the audience? How could we define the theatrical work of art with any exactitude?

However one could say that there does not even exist a performance in itself, absolutely considered: what exists, strictly speaking, is simply the theatrical relationship; that complex performance-spectator transaction in which is decided, after all, the significations of the spectacular text, as is also decided the success or otherwise of its acts of communication and of *seduction*. In fact the insights of the innovation of some theatre-groups could help us in some way to construct a cognitive and scientific description on how to analyse new non-dramatic forms — where the perceiver her-or-himself is given a specific role or even acts as a participant in the performance itself.

## 2. PERFORMANCE

The phenomenon of performance as it was practiced at least in Denmark especially during the last three decades of the 20th century arose from a mixing of theatre-forms, which took place in the United States during the 1960s. As a result of these new experiences and the outcome of some anthropological studies, came Victor Turner's very interesting points of view on "social drama", "ritualised performance" and "theatre in the post-industrial period". The first phase of the industrial society called permanently for theatre of redress. The post-industrial society needs new forms of expressions because conditions or states like *chaos* and *cosmos* and *inner* and *outerworld* not only were destabilised but also fluent. The fluctuation of the consciousness and the understanding of reality also put works of art into stake such as moving the emphasis on the process and avoiding any talk about the firm and solid product. The works of art coming out of this effort provided worn out ideas of *mimesis* and *diegesis* with a radical change. Something else has emerged in the field of theatre and performance and these new ideas give another and perhaps a better 'shiver' down the back of the spectator. This is due to the mixing of ritual and performance, a new sort of ritualised theatre, which gives the spectator a different and surprising perception and understanding of space, time and of his own self, the spectator being aware of what I would call "the other-hood". The works of for instance Robert Lepage take up the same theme by using other means and equipment.

## 3. HOTEL PRO FORMA

The name is given to a performance-group in Denmark led by the performer Kirsten Tomas Dehlholm: an earlier name was STOFTEATRET. And the word *stof* in Danish does not only mean textile but also material, matter and subject/issue. The group is making what they call performances: some sort of hybrid, created of fragments of other fine arts such as; theatre, dance, painting, sculpture, happenings and architecture. The popularity of the works of this group in Denmark may point at the crisis within the traditional theatre trying to communicate too much meaning and may be excavate too much false or falsifying knowledge of the human psychology — and yes one could, may be, even say that their success is due to the final goodbye to the human subject in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Names from the theatre of the 20<sup>th</sup> century point out the same mainstream: Evreinov, Grotowski, Artaud, Beckett and Ionesco — each in his own way.

The performances of the Danish Hotel Pro Forma might take place in any space: a museum, a harbour, in the city-space or on a floor of glass. The actors are not real actors, but nevertheless specialists in a definite form of being: twins, children, archers or housewives and so on. They are exposed as living pictures making series of day-to-day-life actions, over and over again in ritualised sections, often in a certain thematic gathering: like for instance: *Hvorfor bli'r det nat, mor?* (*Why is it becoming night, mother?*) That is the title of a famous Danish lullaby. The performance can be of short duration or even very long duration — in the city-space of the Danish provincial town, Holstebro, it took several days. There are no tickets, but there may be a written explanation. At the same time on these conditions mentioned the performance itself is audience to life and the audience gives life to the performance. But — and this is very important — the whole thing is out of any circulation whatsoever: psychological, social, cultural, and economical. It is a *mise en scène* of the spectator's way of looking upon the world. The only thing given away is time from both sides: the performer and the spectator.

## 4. THE LIMINALITY

In his famous book *Les Rites de Passage* from 1909, Arnold van Gennep does not treat the structure of the ritual, not its origin, nor its function, but the course of a given ritual composed of three phases: *rites de separation*, *rites de marge* and *rites de l'agregation*.<sup>2</sup>

In the article “Betwixt and Between” from 1967 Turner took up an elaboration of Van Gennep’s second phase of the ritual as mentioned above, namely rites de marge: in English somewhat like the rite of transformation or passage: and I quote from Turner:

“The subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, “invisible”. The condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories... a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.”<sup>3</sup>

The liminality is a sort of no-man’s-land: the subject is no longer what it was, neither is it yet what it shall become in the final position. The subject is hereby not outlawed, but out of any common order, in fact elevated on a higher level and excluded from the society for some time: a kind of standby in the normal circulation.

In a lecture “To give away TIME” held at the University of Copenhagen, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida treated Marcel Mauss’s *Essay sur le don*, an essay on giving, in a very special way: he renounces Mauss’s point of view about circulation, saying that to give something is the same as to withdraw from the circulation of goods. If we are giving something it must be by an act which is above or out of the economical circulation. The only thing we can really give is “time”, but since time is nothing, even time is difficult to give. There must be a total “forgetting-ness” in the relation between the one who takes and the one who gives. Now this law, this command, to give everything, comes from the phase of liminality. The purpose of the ritual is the same as the law of giving. It has no meaning and therefore attracts not only symbolic mystery but also holiness. In relation to a ritualised performance the subject not only gets close to the law, but also gets experiences from a giving, which is not economical and this leads to a state of consciousness, where the subject learns to give in abundance in the spirit of holiness. I have to add that in these kinds of performances there are many rules and forms to be followed — PRO FORMA. The individuals who are attending these performances are in a space and in

a time without any meaning, which gives sense to the laws of life itself: and that is a very good place to be and very difficult to leave as you are bound to the mystery of life itself. Talking about the law of giving, liminality and holiness we might even find the mystery and the puzzle in defining aesthetics. And I quote the Lithuanian semiotician Greimas, who worked nearly all his life with semantics and interpretation. The quotation is taken from the late and very beautiful work entitled [in French] *De l'imperfection*, from 1987:

“Every appearance is incomplete; it hides the act of being, and nevertheless it lets us construct “a want-to-be” and “an ought-to-be”, which already is deviation of the sense. Only an appearance like a “could be” or a “can be”, or a “may be”, is it possible for us to live with!”<sup>4</sup> [My translation]

### 1. A BIOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL ANECDOTE

At a semiotic theatre-seminar in 1981 in Brussels I discovered a newborn concern among theatre-scientists about the biological discovery of the two hemispheres in the brain. The French biologist Laborit had great success in explaining and exemplifying the scope of this breakthrough for theatre-folks. Actually, I have begun to think that some of the new performances are able to cross and to unify the logic hemisphere with the creative one and this gives the ‘shiver’ all over the body; some kind of a sensitive “catharsis”, which becomes possible because of the lack of spoken words (though language may occur), the non-linear way of telling and the non-diegetic narration and the simultaneous use of medias as well as actions similar to rites and ritualised sections in the performance itself. Finally, I will add a personal anecdote about the shivery feeling. On the same day when I finished this speech I attended a performance of Händel’s *Messiah* in the Cathedral of Åbo, and at the end of the second section right in the middle of “Halleluja” I got a double “shiver”: so you can also think about it and you can write about it and you can be sure to get lots of inspiration and if you are lucky you also get a double-kick!

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• Jan Flemming Scheel

## KAI KURIE SEMIOTINIAI TEATRO KAIP KULTŪRINIO ĮVYKIO POSTMODERNIOJE VISUOMENĖJE ASPEKTAI

### S a n t r a u k a

Per pastaruosius apytiksliai 140 metų Vakarų Europos klasikinio teatro tradicijoje įvyko ryškių permainų. Iš dalies jos susijusios su bendru visuomenės vystymusi. Antra vertus, reikia atsižvelgti ir į techninių galimybių revoliuciją bei pakitusius postmodernistinės komunikacijos būdus. Klasikinės stabilios individualybės vietą užėmė amorfiškas modernus subjektas. Teatro kūriniai tarsi veidrodis atspindėjo šias tendencijas.

Taigi atrodo, kad tyrinėjami modernias teatro formas, pavyzdžiui, performansus ir juose vartojamą ženklų kalbą (remdamiesi semiotiniais terminais), privalome atsižvelgti į permainas teoriniame lauke. Tokią ženklų kalbą galima lyginti su rašto neturinčių kultūrų teatro raiška. Užrašytos dramos struktūra labai skiriasi nuo ritualinės. Pastaroji yra pagrįsta nuolatiniu pasikartojimu dvasiniame lygmenyje ir remiasi religinių ir šventų taisyklių sistema.

Teatro kalbos pokyčiai straipsnyje pristatomi remiantis semiotikos ir poststruktūralizmo teorijomis. Straipsnyje analizuojama danų teatro trupės „Hotel Pro Forma“ kūryba.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *semiotika, poststruktūralizmas, šiuolaikinis teatras, ritualas.*

**KEY WORDS:** *semiotics, post-structuralism, contemporary theatre.*

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# Power, Politics, Art, Community

Galia, politika, menas, bendruomenė

Audronė Žukauskaitė

## GILLES DELEUZE AND THE THEATRE OF THE REAL

### THE INVENTION OF THE REAL

In discussing the phenomenon of the theatre, we are used to think about it in terms of imagination, symbolisation and signification. The theatre always had this privilege of escaping the Real and replacing our uncanny everyday with the help of rhetorical and imaginative devices. But what if there is nowhere to escape? What if this obscenity and banality of our everydayness is the only place we can arrive? Here we can reconsider the so-called 'antinomy of post-modern reason': on the one hand, we have the ideology of realism, directly appealing to reality, and, on the other hand, we have discursive ideology, insisting that reality is a set of discursive practices. The direct appeal to reality hardly can be considered as a philosophical solution — it is the position of common sense. The discursive ideology also seems inappropriate, but for different reasons: isn't it somehow too easy to assume that everything is of a discursive nature? Instead of this controversy, we can choose a 'third way': the conviction that our post-modern, discursive reality presents itself as the Real.

Why the Real? Slavoj Žižek, invoking Alain Badiou, insists that the key feature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the 'passion for the Real' [*la passion du réel*]. "The ultimate and defining moment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century," according to Žižek, "was the direct

experience of the Real as opposed to everyday social reality — the real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality."<sup>1</sup> In this context we are reminded of such phenomena as Georges Bataille's notion of excess, Nagisa Oshima's film *In the Realm of the Senses*, and finally, the World Trade Centre attacks. Although the 20<sup>th</sup> century always seeks for the Real, the Real never appears as such, but is always twisted with its opposite — spectacle or illusion, which somehow enables the experience of the Real. "The fundamental paradox of the 'passion for the Real'", Žižek says, "is that it culminates in its apparent opposite, in a *theatrical spectacle*... If, then, the passion for the Real ends up in the pure semblance of the spectacular *effect of the Real*, then, in an exact inversion, the 'post-modern' passion for the semblance ends up in a violent return to the passion for the Real."<sup>2</sup>

It seems that the Real cannot appear without the help of the spectacle, and, on the contrary, spectacular simulation creates *the effect of the Real*. Jacques Lacan was the first to mention the proximity between the Real, which is actually never available to us as such, and imaginary or symbolic reality, which is discursively constructed. As Lacan points out, the Real is what is missing from reality; on the other hand, reality is the only way to get access to the Real. Jean Baudrillard formulated the same paradox speaking about the

asymptotic proximity between cinema and the Real: cinema is trying to get closer and closer to the Real, but the problem is that the Real is totally absorbed by cinematographic reality, so that our everyday experience is totally virtualised and conceived as unreal. And as Gilles Deleuze tells it, we no longer believe in the world, because the whole world simply looks like a bad film.

This is why artwork is an exceptional place for the encounter with the Real. To paraphrase Jean-François Lyotard, the 'invention' of the Real is the key feature of post-modern art. According to him, "modernity, whenever it appears, does not occur without a shattering of belief, without a discovery of the *lack of reality* — a discovery linked to the invention of other realities".<sup>3</sup> Lyotard describes as modern the art that devotes its 'trivial technique' to presenting the existence of something unrepresentable.<sup>4</sup> "The post-modern, on the contrary, would be that which in the modern invokes the unrepresentable in presentation itself, that which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and inquires into new presentations."<sup>5</sup> To put it in Lacanian terms, modernism operates referring to the lack or absence of reality (the lack of the Real in reality), while post-modernism 'presents the unrepresentable', or installs the Real into the framework of reality.

Žižek distinguishes between modernism and post-modernism by relying on the same distinction between the absence and presence of the Real. He describes modern art as 'the game without an object,' presenting the central absence around which the action is organised. The greatest examples of modern art — Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow Up* or Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* — work without the object, but refer to it in a negative way. Post-modernism for Žižek "is the exact reverse of this process. It consists not in demonstrating that the game works without an object, that the play is set in motion by a central absence, but rather in displaying the object directly, allowing it to make visible its own indifferent and arbitrary character".<sup>6</sup> So if we prefer to rewrite Beckett's play in a 'post-modernist' way, we should have put Godot himself on the stage: "he would be someone exactly like us, someone who lives the same futile, boring life that we do, who enjoys the same stupid pleasures".<sup>7</sup>

## PRODUCING THE REAL

Is the concept of the Real relevant for discussing the phenomenon of theatre? In interpreting theatrical phenomena, the concept of the Real can be

used in different aspects — Lacanian and Deleuzian. From the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the stage is conceived as the place that presents the otherwise hidden reality of some traumatic event. This event is either the trauma of incest (Oedipal drama), or the trauma of (social or sexual) antagonism (presented in the form of social criticism and obscenity dramas). According to Jacques Lacan, trauma is not a 'thing in itself,' but something, which is created by a leap of time, applying a new network of signification. The traumatic event is never 'original,' but is always created retroactively: trauma becomes what it is only by inventing new signification and interpretation. In some sense this false event of trauma leads to the invention of a new reality, where this traumatic antagonism is resolved at an imaginary or symbolic level. That means that the Real is constituted in relation to representation, and thus appears as the 'innermost core' of the imaginary (or symbolic) itself.

The concept of trauma has already found its place in contemporary critical discourse. For example, Mark Seltzer generally describes contemporary culture as 'wound culture,' reflecting the Greek etymology of the term.<sup>8</sup> Hal Foster coined a term 'traumatic realism,'<sup>9</sup> which became very popular in Lithuanian art-critical discourse, because it helps to come to terms with some extraordinary or obscene art events. The theatre of Oskaras Koršunovas can be interpreted as one of the examples of such a 'traumatic realism.' His theatre performances are always tied to the same 'nodal points': Oedipal trauma, the trauma of capitalism, and the trauma of sexual difference. The artworks of S & P Stanikas, which represented Lithuania in the Venice Biennial of 2003, could be considered as another example of such a 'traumatic realism.' Their ceramic sculptures and drawings are very close to pornography, and the photos they make usually portray their own bodies in images that simulate violence, wounds, and disease.

Although 'traumatic realism' puts the Real on the stage, the Real, as I already suggested, is constituted in relation to imaginary (in S & P Stanikas's case) or symbolic (in Koršunovas's case) representation. As far as an 'original event' of trauma is beyond cognition, and the interpretation of trauma creates the new, subjective, i.e. distorted, reality, the 'original event' of trauma disappears, never appearing as such. On these grounds, 'traumatic realism' should be interpreted as a purely modernist procedure, while it doubles reality, seeking for a new signification and interpretation. Another point is that the notion of the trauma in one or another way reconstructs the subject of the trauma. As Foster points out, "in art and theory, trauma discourse continues the

poststructuralist critique of the subject by other means, for again, in a psychoanalytical register; there is no subject of trauma... On the other hand, in popular culture, trauma is treated as an event that guarantees the subject, and in this psychological register the subject, however disturbed, rushes back as witness, testifier, and survivor. *In trauma discourse, then, the subject is evacuated and elevated at once.*<sup>10</sup> It seems that 'traumatic realism' is still too modernist, too subjective, and too confined to private fantasy.

Another interpretation of the Real could be provided in terms conveyed by two French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari start their critique of psychoanalysis saying that it is stuck in the analyst's couch: "A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch. A breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world."<sup>11</sup> Deleuze and Guattari deny the dualism between the hidden, latent unconscious and its explicit symptoms that are revealed in psychoanalysis. What they are proposing is a flat, one-dimensional universe, which doesn't need interpreting, revealing or explaining, because everything is on the same plane. "For the unconscious itself is no more structural than personal, it does not symbolise any more than it imagines or represents; it engineers, it is machinic. Neither imaginary nor symbolic, it is the Real in itself, the 'impossible real' and its production."<sup>12</sup> Comparing these two models of the unconscious, psychoanalytical and Deleuzian, we can draw a conclusion that the psychoanalytical model (Freud/Lacan) still belongs to modernity, while it operates, on the one hand, on the absence or the unrepresentability, and, on the other hand, on the process of interpretation/signification. The Deleuzian model operates in the flat universe of the 'body without organs', which is the plateau distributing different intensities. If the modernist version of the Real doubled the Real in imaginary or symbolic representations, the post-modern version of the Real simply presents the Real as a process of mutually existent variations.

Another important consequence, which follows from the Deleuzian position, is that the unconscious does not refer to any individual or defined subject. "We attack psychoanalysis on the following points, which relate to its practice as well as its theory: its cult of Oedipus, the way it reduces everything to the libido and domestic investments, even when these are transposed and generalised into structuralist and symbolic forms."<sup>13</sup> Deleuze/Guattari propose a project that they entitle schizoanalysis, which implies fluid subjectivity without any stable identity forms. "We are

proposing schizoanalysis as opposed to psychoanalysis: just look at the two things psychoanalysis can't deal with: it never gets through to anyone's desiring machines, because it's stuck in oedipal figures or structures; it never gets through to the social investments of the libido, because it's stuck in its domestic investigations."<sup>14</sup> So how can we imagine a subject, devoid of all domestic investigations, Oedipus complexes, and social and sexual traumas? We already have the answer — s/he would be someone who is exactly like us, living the same futile life we do, enjoying the same stupid pleasures.

The most recent example of such a subject is presented in Rodrigo Garcia's performance *The Story of Ronaldo, The Clown of McDonald's (La Carniceria Theatre, Spain)*<sup>15</sup>. Garcia's performances always arouse controversy because they consciously aim to destroy the representational model of theatre and the limits between the imaginary or symbolic representation and the Real. Another important point is that Garcia's performances try to withdraw from the model of psychoanalysis and interpret the subject not in terms of fantasy or trauma, but in terms of social production. One of the characters of the play says: "There are no reasons to approve any mania: if you were abused in childhood, I'm very sorry. But keep silent about that". Garcia presents the post-modern Deleuzian subject, which has no inner depth, no secrets: everything is simply put on the stage. You want to know something about the hero's family — here they are, sitting, eating chips and drinking Coca-cola. You want to know his genealogy — here you see the pieces of shit, which 'represent' familial relationships.

Coincidentally or not, Garcia's character recovers from all his personal traumas (such as the death of the father or the surgery of phimosis) after visiting the local McDonalds, as if saying that subjective desire, subjective fears and traumas are transformed into the incessant flow of consumption of capitalist goods. The stage is overloaded with food in a literal sense, showing that the entity called 'subject' is just a phase in the process of production and consumption; it is a machine, determined not by 'inner' fears, but by desire, which is by nature social and materialistic. "If desire is repressed," according to Deleuze/Guattari, "this is not because it is desire for the mother and for the death of the father. If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society; not that desire is asocial, on the contrary. But it is *explosive*; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors."<sup>16</sup>

## BODY WITHOUT ORGANS

Returning to Garcia's performances, we can ask what they aim to destroy. The first answer, of course, is capitalism. The revolting amount of food on the stage, and the bodies of the actors, sliding in the oil or ketchup, directly demonstrate the functioning of the capitalist machine. The spectator is bombarded by this food flow as if saying that there is no safe position for the observer, there is no place outside of capitalism. Another answer is that Garcia's performances aim to destroy the psychic depth of the subject — and this point is somehow very painful for art critics. When it was performed here, Lithuanian reviewers accused the performance of infantilism, for fucking everything around: it seems that everyone agrees that the capitalism in which we are immersed is wrong, but nobody is ready to admit that we are also a part of this meat-grinder and we choose it with our 'free will'. Rodrigo Garcia depicts the uncanny materiality of our existence and our desire, absolutely neglecting any idealism behind it. In fact he destroys the possibility of private fantasy and, in the words of Deleuze/Guattari, shows that "there is no such thing as the social production of reality on the one hand, and a desiring-production that is mere fantasy on the other. There is only desire and the social, and nothing else."<sup>17</sup>

From this point follows the third conclusion that Garcia's performances call into question the representational model of theatre in general. What it aims at is a one-dimensional plateau, the 'body without organs', which is the keyword in the Deleuze/Guattari system, marking a withdrawal from the framework of representation. What does the 'body without organs' mean for Deleuze and Guattari? Let me quote: "The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and *signifiances* and subjectifications as a whole. Psychoanalysis does the opposite: it translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into phantasy, and it retains the phantasy. It royally botches the real because it botches the BwO."<sup>18</sup> Deleuze and Guattari say that the BwO is not at all the opposite of the organs. "The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism. [...] It is true that Artaud wages a struggle against the organs, but at the same time what he is going after, what he has it in for, is the organism: *The body is the body. Alone it stands. And in no need of organs. Organism it never is. Organisms are the enemies of the body.*"<sup>19</sup>

Deleuze/Guattari point out that "the BwO is not a scene, a place, or even a support upon which something comes to pass. It has nothing to do with fantasy, there is nothing to interpret. [...] It

is not space, nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree — to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced."<sup>20</sup> In fact the BwO is opposed to three strata: 1) the organism, 2) *signifiante* (the model of signification and interpretation), and 3) subjectification. "To the strata as a whole, the BwO opposes disarticulation (or *n* articulations) as the property of the plane of consistency, experimentation as the operation on that plane (no signifier, never interpret!), and nomadism as the movement (keep moving, even in place, never stop moving, motionless voyage, desubjectification). What does it mean to disarticulate, to cease to be an organism? How can we convey how easy it is, and the extent to which we do it every day?"<sup>21</sup>

This challenging excerpt from the text of Deleuze/Guattari provides several helpful suggestions for interpreting Garcia's performances. These performances operate on the plateau of BwO, denying any principles or the organisation of meaning, of any models of signification and interpretation. It confronts us with the fact that in our everydayness we are the BwO, experiencing and producing different intensities, experiencing and producing the Real. The BwO invokes a conception of the body that is disinvested of fantasy, images, projections, representations, and a body, which has no psychic or secret interior, but is in constant relationship with social reality. Here we can say that Deleuze and Guattari replace the psychic with the social, the interior with the political. "Desire produces reality, or stated another way; desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production. It is not possible to attribute a special form of existence to desire, a mental or psychic reality that is presumably different from the material reality of social production."<sup>22</sup>

From this follows that the post-modernist art event is not only a metaphor for society, simply doubling reality on a rhetorical level, but also a metamorphosis of society, producing and distributing new states. Metamorphosis, according to Deleuze, is the contrary of metaphor: "There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word."<sup>23</sup> Metamorphosis is describing the body in terms of what it can do, the effects it is capable of, in passion as in action. Metamorphosis places the human body in direct relation with the flows or particles of other bodies and things. Deleuze/Guattari "refer to Spinoza's conception of the univocity of being, in which all things, regardless of their type, have the same ontological status. The BwO refers indistinguishably to human, animal, textual, socio-cultural, and psychical bodies."<sup>24</sup>



Xavier le Roy's dance performance *Self Unfinished* (1998)<sup>25</sup> could be considered as a beautiful example of such a metamorphosis. Xavier le Roy studied molecular biology and after a long research of a few genes decided to express his scientific interests in dance. Le Roy is a choreographer and philosopher at the same time, and his dance performances are often considered as a way to express theoretical ideas and critique. The dancer's body is transformed in a real-time series of morphological aberrations, which represent human, inhuman, mechanical or even dead bodies. Xavier le Roy's performances intervene into a new field where scientific and social data is transferred and imprinted on the body. There is no longer any distinction between the man and the machine, the man and the animal, since each deterritorialises the other in an incessant flow.

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<sup>10</sup> Foster H. *The Return of the Real: the Avant-garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup> Deleuze G., Guattari F. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: The Athlone Press, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Deleuze G. *Negotiations*. 1972-1990. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 20.

Analogically we can say that Rodrigo Garcia transforms personal fantasies and traumas into food substances, and *vice versa*, presents food substances as a manifestation of social critique.

If metaphor operates on the literal and figural planes and doubles reality, metamorphosis produces different states of desire, which intervene in the Real. "If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. [...] The object of desire is the Real in and of itself."<sup>26</sup> The uncanny effect it sometimes produces is the price to be paid for experiencing the Real: we cannot expect to observe these transformations intact. The body is the body, Artaud says, and we never know what effects it is capable of.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Performed in Vilnius Theatre Festival "Sirens" in 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze G., Guattari F. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London, New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 168.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 175-176.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

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<sup>23</sup> Deleuze G., Guattari F. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Grosz E. "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics". *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*. Eds. C.V. Boundas and D. Olkowski. New York, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 168.

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*Audronė Žukauskaitė*

## GILLES'IS DELEUZE'AS IR TIKROVĖS TEATRAS

### S a n t r a u k a

Apie teatrą dažniausiai kalbama pasitelkus vaizduotės, simbolizavimo ir reikšmės sampratas. Teatras visuomet naudojosi privilegija pabėgti nuo Tikrovės, retorikos ir vaizduotės priemonėmis pakeisti ir

perdaryti siaubą keliančią kasdienybę. Tačiau kas vyksta, jei bėgti tiesiog nėra kur? Kas, jei atstumianti ir banali kasdienybė yra vienintelė mums pasiekiamą vietą? Čia galima prisiminti *postmodernaus proto antinomiją*: viena vertus, esama realizmo ideologijos, kuri tiesiogiai nurodo realybę, kita vertus, esama diskurso ideologijos, teigiančios, kad realybė tėra diskursyvių praktikų rinkinys. Tiesioginė nuoroda į realybę vargu ar gali būti laikoma filosofiniu sprendimu – tai sveikam protui būdinga pozicija. Diskurso ideologija taip pat atrodo nepakankama, bet dėl kitos priežasties: ar ne per daug paprasta teigti, jog visi reiškiniai yra diskursyvos prigimties? Atmetę šiuos priešingus požiūrius, galime pasirinkti trečiąjį kelią, pagrįstą įsitikinimu, kad mūsų postmoderni, diskursyvi realybė pasirodo kaip Tikrovė.

Skirtingai nei įsitvirtinę reprezentaciniai teatro modeliai, Gilles'io Deleuze'o teorija siūlo interpretuoti teatrą kaip *Tikrovės teatrą*. Postmodernus meno kūrinys yra ne tik visuomenės metafora, paprasčiausiai pakartojanti realybę retorinėje plotmėje, bet ir visuomenės metamorfozė, kurianti ir skleidžianti naujas būkles. Šiuo požiūriu metamorfozė yra metaforos priešingybė, nes ją apibūdina ne tiesioginė ar perkeltinė prasmė, o nuolatinis skverbimasis į Tikrovę, jos patyrimas ir kūrimas. *Tikrovės teatro* samprata paneigia latentinės reikšmės ir interpretacijos, vidinės gelmės ir socialinės erdvės dualizmą bei įgalina interpretuoti teatro reiškinius socialinėje ir politinėje plotmėje. Tikrovės teatro idėja detalizuojama analizuojant Rodrigo Garcia'os režisuotą spektaklį *Ronaldo, McDonaldo klauno istorija* ir choreografo Xavier'o le Roy šokio spektaklį *Self Unfinished*. Šių kūrinių analizė atskleidžia, jog metamorfozė ne dvigubina realybę, bet tiesiogiai skverbiasi į Tikrovę, kuria skirtingas jos būkles ir transformacijas. Kartais šios transformacijos mus šokiruoja ir kelia siaubą; tačiau tai yra kaina, kurią reikia sumokėti už Tikrovės patirtį: negalime tikėtis, jog patirsime Tikrovę, patys išlikdami nepaliesti šių pokyčių.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *postmodernizmas, Tikrovė, metamorfozė, kūnas be organų, teatras, Gilles Deleuze.*

**KEY WORDS:** *postmodernism, the Real, metamorphosis, body without organs, theatre, Gilles Deleuze.*

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### SHOW AND TELL: COUNTER-CANONICAL DISCOURSES AND THE POLITICS OF PERCEPTION

Theatre by its definition is a communal and social institution, representing as well as establishing certain socio-political functions. However, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a real sense, that “political theatre” as a form was thought to be dying (not to mention the notorious nature of the term *political theatre* in post-soviet space), and the ambition of theatre as cultural practise that inspires social change or at least some kind of active reflection was corrupt. As contemporary culture aspires to the condition of theatre and “society of spectacle,” a lot of differences, especially those between theatre and reality, entertainment or social action, are constantly blurred, the meanings and locations of *political* need to be retraced and redrawn. When the real live dramas are staged on a daily basis it often seems irrelevant, even disrespectful or impossible to engage in the luxury of making theatre. If we agree, however, that personal is the political, we must note that quite a number of theatre artists declare that to engage with theatre today means to take a position which is inherently oppositional or political and doesn’t need any further articulation. There is anger and sense of unarticulated frustration underlying many Lithuanian theatre productions, and that it can be read as a statement about the context in which politics and theatre might be currently played out. Therefore, the notion of *political* should not be so easily rejected

as outdated or obsolete. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of disagreement as to what it means to be political or critical of status quo in the contemporary theatre context? Looking back on the development of Lithuanian theatre of recent decades one of its most striking features is the lack of social or political reflection of the current situation. Not many of performances are affective, radical in content and intent, emotionally charged in its conception of delivering political conscience through performance. Only a small number of theatre works relate critically to the reality around them. The paradox is that the notion of *political* has not entirely disappeared from the stage of contemporary Lithuanian theatre — it exists in a complex representational matrix, variously situated between opposing forces. It’s obvious that we need to re-vision and re-read the texts of performances in order to recognise their strategic political agendas.

I’ll try not to confine the notion of *political* to works, which incorporate overtly social and political narratives and images, for example, I will exclude from my analysis a body of works attempting to engage more actively into political or social debates with the help of foreign plays, the so-called drama of *new brutality*, such as Marius von Mayenburg, Sarah Kane or Mark Ravenhill, as they represent quite simplistic notions of socially charged drama and the theatre perform-



ances that are structured accordingly. It's possible to call this kind of representation as "miming," as representation that imitates the structure of contemporary social order and its flaws, but not necessarily opens up the space for deconstruction or even criticism and is usually staged in Lithuanian theatre in such a manner that neutralises and romanticises the dramatic message. As Roland Barthes once said, where politics begins is where imitation ceases.<sup>1</sup> Quite contrary, this article deals with the performance that, although removed to some degree from a social or political "content," nevertheless establish a complex, unstable, relation with the *political*, which is probably the most relevant to the contemporary cultural context. This article will seek to provide an insight into several practices that can be conceptualised as critical or having certain socio-political underpinnings and at the same time to engage with wider debate about the nature of the *political* in contemporary theatre.

I chose to analyse several performances that embrace a more specifically *political* aim, that is: continued destabilisation of the cultural or political authority of any kind as well as the investigation of the social and ideological production of meaning. Being *political* in this sense means to reject the status of the canonical and to urge the spectator to reconsider its value. For this purpose I will use the term borrowed from post-colonial studies — "canonical counter-discourse". Helen Tiffin has defined this as a process whereby the post-colonial writer unveils and dismantles the basic assumptions of a specific canonical text by developing a "counter" text, which preserves many of the identifying signifiers of the original, while altering, often allegorically, its structures of power.<sup>2</sup> Without a doubt, not all texts that refer to canonical models are counter-discursive. It's not possible at all times to establish this affect by simply staging the canonical play, although, it's possible to articulate certain tensions between the canon and its contemporary enunciation through a revisionist performance. Most often in Lithuanian theatre classical texts are simply contemporised and usually these kinds of performances fail to fit the definition of counter-discourse. The same can be said about some post-modern techniques, such as intertextuality that does not necessarily entail a rewriting project. While all counter-discourse is intertextual, not all intertextuality is counter-discursive. By definition, counter-discourse actively works to destabilise the power structures of the original text rather than simply actualising it or acknowledging its influence.<sup>3</sup> Rewriting the characters, the narrative, the context and the genre of the canonical script provides another means of interrogating the cultural legacy

of the canon and offers renewed opportunities for performative intervention. We can trace at least several attempts to produce a counter-discursive texts and languages in contemporary Lithuanian theatre, for example: the co-operative work of playwright Sigitas Parulskis and director Vytautas V. Landsbergis *From the Life of Souls* (1995) offers a re-writing of canonical text, where master text is targeted particularly for strategic reform; *Madagascar* by Marius Ivaškevičius (2003), opens up the possibility of creation of the counter-canonical language, although this strategy is limited to drama text only and does not translate into the whole scale performance, which, almost in opposition to drama, tries to re-establish the canonical portrayals of a historicist Lithuanian past. More complex and therefore more interesting examples of implied counter-discourse can be found in the performances *P.S. File O.K.* (playwright Sigitas Parulskis, 1997) and Sophocles's *King Oedipus* (2002), both directed by Oskaras Koršunovas. These performances not only try to articulate reworking of the cultural canon that is to some extent oppositional, but also incorporate performative elements as part of their anti-canonical arsenal.

These performances deal with mythological tropes (the story of Abraham and Isaac; the myth of Oedipus) as well as contemporary 'trivial' myths so called 'real' social dramas (soviet and post-soviet) and do so by subverting or rewriting them, exposing the power structures underlying the *reality* and *myth* as well as the representations of both. Linking the canonical discourses with soviet traumas, *P.S. File O.K.* arouses conventional expectations of plot, character, and setting, but subsequently deforms and rescales them, causing disorientation in the audience. The characters in this play do not live in a world which mimetically imitates our own, but in textual worlds, which imitate other texts, thus blurring the boundaries between real/fictional past and opening it up for re-construction.

Similarly, by subverting, fragmenting, the structural elements (narrative, visual, aural) of *King Oedipus* the director aims to challenge traditional modes of perception, demonstrating that reality and fiction are both constructed in the same performative manner. In this performance of the classical drama text the director uses the actions of social life, contemporary social dramas as the underlying themes, frames, and rhythms of his performance. Through specific devices (such as costumes, speech, poses, objects, juxtaposition of different acting styles), the myth is deprived of the abstraction and re-inscribed with marks of the social, thus creating the "counter-mythical" system.<sup>4</sup>

Although strategies and operations of both performances are different, the techniques of rewriting the canon, whether textually or performatively are thereby used to challenge the common assumptions about social reality, distance between performance and experience, and fact and fiction. We can see from these examples that the numerous layers of meaning and coded information that a performance communicates are capable of acting counter-discursively. Hence the staging of *misé-en-scène*, as in *King Oedipus*, can immediately provide additional layers of signification that can point to particular underlying social drama or as in the case of *P.S. File O.K.* the subversion of the cultural codes or the appropriation of the representational signs of the canonical texts can productively shift the power structures that seem predetermined in the original script.

Another trace of the *political* in contemporary Lithuanian theatre can be linked with the politics of perception. This notion incorporates various strategies from self-reflexivity to the deconstruction of theatrical gaze. There are quite a number of performances in contemporary Lithuanian theatre that employ new technologies in order to juxtapose presence and absence, and live or mediated performances. One of the most recent examples that can be strategically read as a challenge to the spectator's gaze is Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* directed by Gintaras Varnas (2004). In this performance the action of watching (or even surveillance) is not only the object of performance analysis but a formal utterance as well. The use of digital recording and immediate translation of the ongoing performance disperses the centre of visual focus to at least two locations so that the viewer's gaze is both split and multiplied. The spectator's gaze is fractured by a complex system of intersecting gazes including those between actor and electronic image, actor and spectator, and spectator and fictional spectators. This split gaze forms a location of difference: two object sites of the gaze can never be identical. The refracted film-within-performance thus has the potential to articulate a different interpretation of events, or to de-emphasise the power of axiomatic ways of seeing. It also challenges the voyeuristic gaze of the spectator, inviting him or her to admit complicity in the acts of surveillance. This looking-at-being-looked-at not only interrogates the interplay between viewer and spectacle, showing that reality is not only what happens but also how it is seen. It confronts [a] cinematic gaze with theatrical sensibility and can invest the audience with more substantial and varied frames through which viewer positions are mediated or controlled. Although this analysis of visual mechanics does not exhaust the meanings of this performance, to some extent it interrogates

the means of representation themselves as structures of authority. Such a strategy is not a matter of articulating the political meaning, but of making visible the politics of representation.

The performances that I have discussed here offer the possibility of simultaneous reading of all the visual and aural aspects of power (or canon) and facilitates telling and showing of oppositional versions of the construction of the event, whether historical or present. These examples show that the *political* in contemporary theatre is rooted in both visual/textual effect and in its reading strategy.

I'd like to engage with more general debate about the nature of political in contemporary theatre, and address the question, what are the implications of such a complex notion as the *political*, can we define it as effective in social sense? In order to answer that, we have to understand the consequences of moving from a vertical and bipolar conception of socio-political relations to one that is decentred and multi-determined. This allows us to rethink the links between culture and power and contributes to understanding the failure of certain ways of 'doing' politics. For a long time the political in arts worked like this: against the impossibility of constructing a different order, artists established masked challenges in myths, arts or texts, hoping that starting from metaphors, new transformative practices would slowly or unexpectedly invade the picture. However, as this almost never happens, one reaches pessimistic conclusions about the efficacy of artistic practices. This limited symbolic effectiveness, observed and analysed by many researchers, forces us to acknowledge the fundamental difference between action and acting. To cite Néstor García Canclini, a difficulty in the political valorisation of cultural practices is to understand them as actions — that is, as effective interventions in the material structures of society. Cultural practices, including theatre, are performances more than actions; they represent and simulate social actions but very rarely operate as such. Alternately, political power exists insofar as it is dramatised — in ceremonies, performances, and arts. It needs ritualisation of the status quo in order to neutralise the instability of the social.<sup>5</sup> I guess we can conclude, that the *political* in theatre today means to embrace this instability of the social and to deconstruct the staging of power, to show-and-tell that there is always *the theatrical* and *the performative* in any social or political interaction. This way a study of representation becomes, in words of Linda Hutcheon, an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves in the present and in the past.<sup>6</sup>

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Jurgita Staniškytė

## VAIZDAS IR PASAKOJIMAS:

## ANTIKANONINIAI DISKURSAI IR SUVOKIMO POLITIKA

### S a n t r a u k a

Nepriklausomybės laikotarpis Lietuvos teatre buvo paženklintas diskusijomis apie teatro vietą besikeičiančioje visuomenėje ir sociopolitinio scenos meno lygmens nykimą. Lietuvos teatro posūkis vizualaus teatrališkumo link paskutiniame XX a. dešimtmetyje turėjo didelę įtaką šiandien vis gilėjančiam atotrūkiui tarp teatro ir socialinio konteksto, tarp scenos ir realybės. Galima pateikti nemažai šiuolaikinio Lietuvos teatro apolitiškumo priežasčių, tačiau viena svarbiausių – pakitusi *politiškumo*, o kartu ir politinio teatro samprata. Jeigu modernioje epochoje politinio teatro funkcija buvo kritikuoti esamas socialines formacijas ir atskleisti sociopolitines alternatyvas, tai postmodernusis realybės teatrališkumas reikalauja iš teatro kūrėjų gerokai subtilesnės strategijos. Politiškai angažuotas postmodernus teatras skiriasi nuo istorinio avangardo ar modernaus politiškumo, nes nesipriešina kokiai nors ideologijai, nesiūlo jokių socialinių alternatyvų ir neskatina maišto, o tiesiog dekonstruoja reprezentacijos mechanizmus bei juos kontroliuojančius procesus, destabilizuoja ir ardo vaizdinius bei tekstus, kuriais save įtvirtina įvairios galios formos. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamos dvi postmodernaus politinio teatro strategijos, analizuojančios galios, ideologijos mechanizmus, slypinčius po estetiniais kodais: antikanoninės vaizdavimo formos ir suvokimo politika. Atpažinti tokią kritiką neretai nėra lengva, šis naujasis politiškumas yra gerokai ambivalentiškesnis, prieštaringesnis negu modernus, jis tuo pat metu siekia ir nuversti, ir įtvirtinti ideologiją, veikia ir kaip bendrininkas, ir kaip kritikas, tarsi ir naudoja teatrinį kanoną, ir kartu jį ardo.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *politinis teatras, politiškumas, dekonstrukcija, mitas, žvilgsnis.*

**KEY WORDS:** *political theatre, the political, deconstruction, myth, gaze.*

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*Dariusz Leśnikowski*

## A DISOBEDIENT PROVOCATEUR. POLISH ALTERNATIVE THEATRE IN A BREAKTHROUGH

In Poland after the World War II the increasing socio-political conflicts and pressure were accompanied by the apparent gradual process of changes in social awareness, especially as far as young people were concerned. It facilitated (especially after 1968) the formation of the social movement which noticed the unbearable discrepancy between official slogans and daily reality: duality of values in social, political and cultural life, evident bias against intellectuals (especially manifested towards the youngest educated generation), the general debasement of material standards and the increasing threat to life prospects.

In the field of culture it was frequently stressed that public life and officially supported culture were not genuine. Cultural policy was criticised, especially the institution of censorship which effectively blocked the free expression of young artists.

This complicated, yet very inspiring social-political situation in Poland combined with the echoes of the cultural revolution in Europe and in the United States, the original innovative activity of a few official creators of the institutional theatre in Poland (Kantor's, Szajna's, Grotowski's achievements) — all these elements formed the perfect background for the formation of alternative culture in our country, in which alternative theatre played a primary role.

'The 'young theatre' search was concerned [...] with ideas and values making sense of all human activity, with the circumstances and opportunities of communication between people, with the language, means of expression, ethical standards and patterns of behaviour, with the system of institutions and culture circulation and also the principles arranging all these elements into a unified construction.'<sup>1</sup> This theatre became a centre of articulation of problems important not only to the youth's environment. Cultural degradation, deprecation of ideas, lack of moral standards, their helplessness in the face of officially maintained evil, were continually discussed. The problems presented in the young theatre referred to Polish reality.

It was in the decade 1970–1980 that many student theatres began their activity in Poland. There was a fashion for a special kind of intellectual needs, a special way of participating in culture, a special language, and appearance. First of all, however, it was an apposite way of perceiving depravation and the way of reacting to it.

What picture of Polish reality of the 1970s and 1980s have we received? The action was usually placed in a theatre space such as a lunatic asylum, a jail cell, a psychiatric hospital, a cabaret, or a circus. Or a waiting room at the railway station or on a bus going nowhere. That is, hell. The world

of absurdity and chaos. The situation typical of these productions embodied the state of threat against freedom under the pressure of physical or psychic violence. This violence is often personified by a ruler-dictator that can take the role of any symbolic figure: inquisitors, watch-guards, clerks or journalists. The individuals fighting for their independence stay in opposition to the thoughtless primitive crowd. Schools and mass media usually serve the purpose of indoctrination and stupefying training.

The sense of common blame and common responsibility for forming and preserving evil is one of the most characteristic features of the young theatre. Up to the end of the 1970s the Polish alternative theatre was dominated by a deep protest against the world, yet the departure was usually the final conclusion. Close to 1980 the emphasis was more often put on the need for resistance against evil, the need for independent work towards change. This necessitated changing man himself.

The young theatre was often attacked for the lack of 'positive programme', for pessimism. Yet we should remember that this theatre was not directly a political movement. It did not formulate a programme for world improvement. By its activity it suggested a kind of ethical programme. 'The ethical theatre is the only one to be really free and consequently really political. [...] The political value of theatre is not determined by subject matter itself, but by the ethos it declares and realises.'<sup>2</sup>

Formally the ways of putting this ethos into practice were differentiated. It should be noted that, taking into account the long run of this phenomenon, nearly all means of theatre and para-theatre expression were used. None of these forms closed the theatre in a confined space. Following the idea of 'open theatre' the groups penetrated various social environments, performing for every audience, and under all conditions.

The review of different theatre conventions and forms of theatre and para-theatre creations illustrates the great intellectual and artistic potential conveyed by the movement of Polish independent theatre. It was, firstly, a rich offering of ethical-moral proposals, different from the models of attitudes in the official culture.

Instead of being an actor as a profession and a duty, there was a proposal of being an actor as a form of expression, of common thinking about the sense of life, being an actor as a kind of fight against deviations of social life.

The movement of young theatre became a disobedient provocateur of social unrest among the

young generation. It was a source of permanent attempts to limit its vividness, attempts to close it only in its own environment. It was realised by isolating theatre events from the other interdisciplinary artistic actions and multiplying the administrative and organisational obstacles, by preventing the groups' free activity. Although these kinds of difficulties could be overcome, there were the other means of disturbing production that were much more dangerous.

In the late 1970s and after introducing Martial Law in the 1980s there were numerous cases of censorship interference and even a few performances were banned.

Taking risks, theatres used all possible means to present their work despite the ban. These productions were presented during 'closed' performances — available only for invited guests, and sometimes after announcing another title on the poster. Consequently, this strange 'battle' caused cancellation of the shows which were announced earlier, under instructions of the local authorities, imposing fines on groups, and even arresting actors for 48 hours, and calling members of groups for enquiry to the security service offices. As a result, the authorities gradually removed alternative theatres; for example, from universities. In 1984 the most extreme and outrageous example was the dissolution of the Theatre of the Eighth Day, previously professionalised, whose members, who had lived for a long time in Italy and principally performed in the West.

In the 1970s and 1980s the most 'disloyal' groups faced travel restrictions and were frequently refused passports.

The last consequence was of course connected with the subjective press propaganda, which attempted to discredit the achievements of the young theatre in Poland.

In 1979 and 1980 many theatre groups aired their disapproval of the living situation, their target was convergent but their means was diverse. Theatre works stressed the fact that a discrepancy between reality created by the institutions of the official culture and everyday experience of people came was now climactic.

The performance *Oh, How Decent Our Live Was!* by Theatre of the Eighth Day was finished with a sign of rebellion. In the dark the words were heard, addressed to the audience: 'We have the right to speak. You have the right to listen to. We all have the right to object to it!'<sup>3</sup>

In April 1980 Theatre Jedyńka from Gdańsk presented *To Regain The Years In Tears*, the performance was almost a kind of dramatic prophecy. At



the end of the performance a young man ran out of stage with a petrol can. After a while flames burst outside the window. The self-incineration was a symbol of destruction, but also a sign of rebirth.

A few months later, in August 1980 the Independent Trade Union 'Solidarity' came into being on the Polish coast.

Summer of 1980 precipitated partial political pluralism, opposition government, and the attempt to change the ineffectual economic policy. 'Solidarity' soon consisted of 10 million people — one third of the population of Poland — representing an explosion of hope for better life and social justice. Gradually socio-political life in Poland became democratised.

Dramatic events took place on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1981 when Martial Law was introduced. A few years passed and the communist government did not manage to overcome the strong will and determination of the nation. Under the pressure of political opposition and because of the economic crisis in 1989 the negotiations of the so called, 'round table' took place which resulted in the unprecedented events of the last years of the totalitarian communist regime.

Polish alternative theatre entered the decade of the 1980s with outstanding performances. In their performances young artists supported the ideas expressed later by workers on the coast of Poland. The best performances of the turning point period (end of 1980 and 1981): *Więcej niż jedno życie* (*More Than One Life*) by the Theatre of the Eighth Day or *Pusta estrada* (*An Empty Stage*) by Theatre Provisorium, *Powracająca fala* (*The Returning Wave*) by Teatr Niespokojny (Restless Theatre) tried to sum up Polish fate from the universal point of view, to define it in the categories of European history and culture, expanding the background to present Polish issues. They were not historical chronicles but an attempted artistic synthesis. Life was presented there as a state of suspense and anxiety, and people as helpless and confused creatures — left uncertain about their fate.

Gradually the reflection referring to the activity of the alternative theatre was accompanied by some critical remarks concerning the lack of responsibility to reality. It was noticed that the most important things were taking place beyond the theatre (once considered to be a means for changing the world). It was observed that there was no will to build the awareness of the generation, to search for their artistic expression.

Martial Law caused disintegration of the young theatre generation and the de-unification of the

movement. Everyday life began to outstrip artistic reality. Creation and perception of culture lost its previously essential position in the life of young people.

Finally in the early 1980s students' circles played hardly any culturally creative role. As a result of this phenomenon what used to be defined students' culture was atomised and overwhelmed by other circles that formed creative attitudes.

During the difficulties of Martial Law the Catholic church and the centres of Christian culture played a great role in preserving the ethical and aesthetic values of the young theatre.

The new cultural landscape was created, dominated by mixed students/pupils' groups, working under the auspices of culture centres, and clubs. It could also be observed in small towns, which had been deprived of the alternative culture model before. It is a symptom of a new phenomenon — the young theatre's inclination towards a social-cultural existence of secondary importance. New small circles of supporters were formed whose awareness, often local and fragmentary, was transformed into performances. The circulation of artistic ideas took place within local society and, what is more important, and in local awareness.

Stage productions of the early 1980s reflected the lost opportunity resulting from the introduction of the Martial Law in Poland and the analysis of social reception of this event. Many performances made much of analyses and diagnoses, but those expressing 'thinking ahead' were very rare. It often happened that this theatre presentation was close to the formal tradition of theatre of the late 1970s and the early years of the new decade.

In the mid-1980s theatre presented a revisionist 1970s telling about common responsibility, as well as contesting Martial Law and creating the vision of reality dominated by the totalitarian authorities and the society subject to physical and psychic trauma (often presented in a patriotic and religious manner set in a universal context). The diminished social resistance, smaller interest in alternative culture, the economic situation and partial conformity of attitudes brought the need for performances emphasising dullness and objectification of human feelings, desires and activities. The 'young theatre' creates 'a contemporary story of Polish provincialism, the inferiority complex, the social reality seen as a familiar senseless fight with seasoned enemies, led by a stupefied nation that unwillingly accepts everything to live in peace, to survive in a den, together with mates who chose the similar compromise'.<sup>4</sup>

After some time the attitude of young creators to the theatre of their predecessors changed. Values and principles characteristic of the traditions of students' theatre are still valid as — regardless of time — we can not get rid of the universal ethical categories. Theatre groups still wish to present their critical vision of the world. To a lesser extent, however, they are willing to show in their performances the existence of restoration of order. First of all the theatre form is verified. New groups do not want to be compared to the groups of the 1970s. They state that the language of theatre creations staged 10–15 years before is anachronistic, and the new audience is different.

Theatre Wiatyk was of great interest because of the original poetics of their performances. They used 'hedonistic pessimism' and slapstick comedic strategies to create black absurdist drama. Wearing the mask of aggressive naysayers, the group made a kind of a nihilist protest full of moral and artistic provocation.

The original grim sense of humour coming from Silesia could also be observed in the performances of Theatre 12a from Katowice. In their creations there were some echoes of another pre-war avant-garde, Surrealism.

The anarchical poetic of madness was typical of the work of Theatre Pstrąg-Group'80 from Łódź that, starting from the middle of the decade, began to define them selves as 'imbecile theatre' and used absurdism to react to the dilapidation of the surrounding world. The controlled chaos was the expression of the feeling of disintegration and falsification of social-political changes and it showed reality as the set of conventional behaviours, gestures and symbols which make the totality of everyday life completely absurd.

Until the end of the 1980s, the majority of groups referred first-and-foremost to established norms, which was probably caused by a fear of independence, replacing direct experience by means of expression and requisites coming from the resources of contemporary art and thought. The deliberately used mixture of styles and poetics as well as the explicit anarchy in both the contents and the form of expression were rarely observed.

In the 1980s (and later in the 1990s) many groups used the elements of ludicrous popular culture, going away from notorious avant-garde approach and elite intellectualism of the creations of the previous decade. More and more often the potential of paraphrasing was used as well as the synthesis of theatre forms, styles, symbols and motives. Some groups used pastiche and parody,

they multiplied the levels of self-referential critical distance, and in other words, they used a variety of means of expression typical of the post-modernist culture.

These features were most often manifested by the groups who willingly presented their work outside theatre venues. The street theatre, like in the whole Europe, was easily fascinated with the new poetics of deconstruction and carnival.<sup>5</sup>

Open-air theatre and street happenings became common (earlier this role was successfully fulfilled by the Academy of Movement) and it started to be one of the most characteristic traits of the young theatre of the 1980s.

On the whole, the area of theatre penetration widely expanded, especially within small local societies (understood in a demographic and territorial way), evoking such phenomena as: 'theatre for life', 'children's theatre', 'theatre for oneself', 'religious', 'ethnic' and 'folk theatre' in the area where we can observe the elements of the tradition of alternative theatre, the values typical of it as well as the methods used by it and, at the same time, new social-cultural elements.<sup>6</sup>

Mutual permeability of the spheres of institutional and alternative theatre became a fact. The need of some professional actors to look for a new space for their activities made them enter the area previously occupied by the young theatre. Alternately, some groups who used to act and cultivate the experience of the students' and alternative movement took their position in the pantheon of contemporary Polish theatre. The once distinct borders dividing these two areas of theatre gradually blurred.

In 1989 Poland faced a number of significant systemic transformations. Having got rid of the dominating ideology and the Communist authorities the revision of the past and the formation of new reality were taken up. Polish alternative theatre, which had always been a barometer of socio-political attitudes and a catalyst of change, found itself in a new situation. After 1989 many people denied its right to exist stating its role was finished.

There were three kinds of opposition which distinguished this movement: the young theatre was always in organisational opposition to professional institutional theatre, the artistic opposition, being the source of novelty and research within the theatre form and, and most important, focusing its activity on the ethical-moral norms and social-political attitudes different from those approved and presented in the official culture.

Even today the first two factors seem to make the phenomenon unique. The alternative theatre still functions on the fringe of the official culture working mostly without their infrastructure. We should remember that the scope of the alternative theatre was broadened to a large extent by unemployed professional actors who took advantage of the forms of work of independent theatre groups worked out in the 1970s and 1980s.

As far as artistic features go the alternative theatre is still — though possibly to smaller extent — the source of novelty in the theatre, including elements of the advanced convention of theatre of absurd, phenomena from the fringe of theatre and visual art, happenings, elements of techno-culture which can on the whole be defined as manifestations of post-modernist culture. After eliminating the political and ethical censorship, owing to the free transfer of information and ideas, the official theatre undoubtedly searches for new forms of artistic expression yet is to a certain degree limited by the necessity to reflect popular audience taste — that doesn't always approve of the violation of traditional forms of expression in the theatre. These endeavours are obviously the result of aggressive commercial pressures on the theatre's existence.

And the third element, used to differentiate both spheres of theatre life. How unique is the ideology of the young Polish theatre against the background of the changes undergoing in Polish social-political life?

This theatre did not seem to be of any importance after all the long-awaited changes, when 'the evil' had been overthrown. It turned out, however, that the political aspect of the young theatre activity so much emphasised by critics was only one of the elements of its intellectual content. To tell the truth there was and there is something more in it, it was shaping and presenting a moral/ethical model which under some pathological circumstances becomes political.

The phenomenon can be treated as a peculiar 'new awareness' which under some circumstances becomes the condition of survival. After accepting the idea of social inability, when in the 1980s some problems were believed not to be solved; it was a manifestation of a particular intuitive pragmatism and realism. It even developed a phenomenon defined as 'citizens' theatre'. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 1990s 'citizens' state was said to be built by theatre as well.

Yet taking into account the clear separation of

politicians from society, securing the interests of people in authority and, what is important for artists, disdaining the role of culture and education in social life, we can observe a heterogeneous relationship of the undergoing changes in Polish theatre of the 1990s. Moreover, it generally lacks the affirmation of that eagerly desired new reality.

There appeared a sequence of manifestations expressing the resistance against the subsequent, new pathologies of social and political life.

Since the late 1980s among the young generation there has been the increasing disdain for political life and the intensified differentiation of ideological attitudes which rejected the previously clear and obvious, 'black-and-white' division and belief that replacing the evil political system with a new 'good' one would solve all the problems.

The groups presented local problems in a wider more universal context. This context constituted the essence of revolution being the phenomenon that later becomes its own caricature. It brings disappointment to those who trusted in it, promotes only new people and new 'Gods,' leaving the old, and familiar structures by the wayside.

The differentiation of attitudes brought manifestations of nihilist and even anarchist character. Significantly, it embodies the rejection of the entire notions essential for building the citizens' state and revived under new conditions, such as: motherland, patriotism, nation, nationalism, etc. These words disgraced and devaluated at the time of Communism were to contribute to the character of the newborn 'honest' days.

At the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s the groups rejected the symbols cultivated by Polish alternative theatre as well as the pathos of theatre expression.

The phenomenon of lack of affirmation refers to a large extent to the direction of changes which have recently been undertaken in Poland. The direction 'to the West' taken up in politics and economy results in actual, sometimes painful consequences, for instance the impoverishment of some public sectors.

However the threat mostly emphasised in the independent theatre is the endangered culture identity caused by the west European perspective.

The slow unification and 'Americanisation' of culture, demand for other than only consumerist attitudes, raise questions about the systems of values and express anxiety about the future of Polish culture.



In the productions of the 1990s apart from the retrospection with some elements of lyricism the essential motif was the question concerning the future, the expression of anxiety referring to the character and results of the changes. Power has now been transferred from the creative action to the consideration of an audience.

The performances were characterised by a kind of auto-ironic reflection on the lost ideals, ambitions, and wasted time. There was also nostalgia for the foregone 'old-fashioned' elements of Polish tradition and culture. The performances presented the elements which through generations built 'otherness' and the identity of the nation: from the intellectual basis formed by a literary canon through the glorious facts from Polish history, to the features of Polish

mentality, tradition and culture. Symbolically hidden in suitcases, they accompany Poles travelling into the future to the more and more unified reality, deprived of its originality and sentiments.

The alternative theatre is based on the existence of evil and pathology in various forms: intolerance, rejection, violence and suffering. As long as they are present in our consciousness and common experience, they will result in the principle of rebellion and opposition, especially among young people. Therefore they will talk about their problems and they will need another theatre characterised by tolerance, and a new perception of the world. Honesty will remain fundamental, if the theatre is to be regarded as a place of social activity.

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## NEPAKLUSNUSIS PROVOKATORIUS: ALTERNATYVUSIS LENKŲ TEATRAS LŪŽIO LAIKOTARPIU

### S a n t r a u k a

Aštuntajame dešimtmetyje Lenkijos studentų ir alternatyvusis teatras protestavo prieš visą pasaulį, ir jo moralinė laikysena aiškiai skyrėsi nuo oficialiosios kultūros pozicijų. Tačiau pirmiausia šis teatras buvo būdas suvokti moralinės krizės mastą ir į ją reaguoti.

Devintajame dešimtmetyje Lenkijoje įvyko daug svarbių sistemos pokyčių. Alternatyvusis Lenkijos teatras, visada buvęs savotiškas socialinių ir politinių nuotaikų barometras ir pokyčių katalizatorius, atsidūrė naujoje situacijoje. Po 1989-ųjų metų daugelis žmonių atmetė šį teatrą teigdami, kad jis negali pasakyti nieko naujo.

Nuo devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigos jaunosios kartos atstovai vėl ėmė neigiamai vertinti politinį savo šalies gyvenimą ir ideologiškai atmetė aiškias, paprastas, „juodai baltas“ schemas ir naivų tikėjimą, kad visos problemos bus išspręstos, kai tik blogąją politinę sistemą pakeis naujoji sistema. Politinių manifestacijų banga išreiškė nepritarimą naujoms socialinio ir politinio gyvenimo patologijoms. Straipsnyje analizuojama kaip keistėsi alternatyviojo teatro vaidmuo permainų laikais, parodoma kaip palaipsniui buvo atsisakyta anksčiau dominavusių simbolių ir teatrinės

ekspresijos patoso o svarbiausia tema tapo ateities klausimas, nerimas dėl ateityje laukiančių permainų pobūdžio ir pasekmių.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *Lenkijos alternatyvusis teatras, studentų teatras, politiškumas, ideologija, etika.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Polish alternative theatre, student theatre, the political, ideology, ethics.*

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# Theatre as Cultural Memory

Teatras kaip kultūrinė atmintis

• *Stephen Wilmer*

## NATIONAL THEATRES IN AN ERA OF TRANSNATIONALISM

In the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, numerous national theatres were established in Europe that fostered notions of national identity and citizenship.<sup>1</sup> In fact the process is still going on with new national theatres being created in the last decade in Slovenia, Hungary, Italy and other countries, but these national theatres today play different roles from the past. In this article I want to review the general movement that led to the creation of national theatres, the ideologies that underlay it, and some of the patterns inherent in it. I then want to proceed to make some general observations about national theatres today and the relation between the past and the present. In the process I will be omitting any mention of the Lithuanian national theatre, partly because I do not know enough about it, and partly because I think that many of you can relate the general statements I am making to Lithuania better than I can.

The first point I want to make is that each national theatre that was created in earlier centuries was unique in that it reflected a specific originary moment, location, set of goals, language, history, and mythology, as well as the idiosyncratic beliefs of its individual founding members. At the same time one can point to some distinctive patterns in their period of creation. There were two general types of national theatre that were developed during the early period: the first type was that created by stable autocratic regimes, e.g. the

*Comédie Française* in Paris, the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, the *Burgtheater* in Vienna, etc.; the second type was that which arose in association with nationalist movements in emerging states under the yoke of foreign rule, such as the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen, the National Theatre in Prague, the National Theatre in Helsinki, the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, etc. In addition there are countries that fall outside these two patterns such as Germany where the national theatre in Hamburg established in 1767 provided an interesting but short-lived experiment of a citizens theatre but where later attempts at national theatres evolved into court theatres. In Poland the national theatre followed both patterns, since it was first created in 1765 under the Polish monarchy, but soon after, Poland was carved up between Russia, Prussia and Austria, and the Polish national theatre took on the role of a national theatre within an emerging nation while Poles tried to regain their sovereignty. Meanwhile, some major countries in Europe such as the Netherlands never created national theatres, and others such as Britain and Italy waited till the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to establish them.

The proliferation of national theatres in the 19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the dissemination of ideas about democracy, citizenship and national distinctiveness. Although each theatre acquired

unique characteristics and although the function of such theatres has changed considerably since the political independence of the countries in which they are situated, I want to examine some of the structural similarities in the national theatres that developed in emerging nations before independence. In particular I want to compare the role of early national theatres in the construction of national identities and in legitimating the aspirations of nationalist movements. While recognising the powerful role that some of these theatres played in instilling a sense of national commitment and future citizenship, I also want to highlight the reliance on essentialist and exclusionary notions of identity that were inherent in the work of such theatres.

As Alain Finkielkraut has indicated in his book *The Defeat of the Mind*, part of the responsibility for the proliferation of ideas of cultural essentialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century lies with the widespread dissemination of the work of such philosophers as Johann Gottfried von Herder.<sup>2</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, German intellectuals fostered a Romantic belief in the importance of the cultural traditions of the common people. Influenced by the ideas of Rousseau, Herder encouraged German-speaking people to take pride in their own cultural traditions and their native language, and he urged them to acknowledge the importance of the German folk poets of the past.<sup>3</sup> He believed in national distinctiveness and a *Volksgeist* (spirit of the people) and encouraged all nations to express themselves in their own individual ways. As a result of his endeavours and his admiration for folk songs and literature, Herder instilled a new respect for the German common people and German folk traditions, thereby helping to undermine the prevailing class distinctions of the day, and promoted a persuasive notion of national cultural unity, which influenced other writers.

The ideas of Herder encouraged intellectuals in countries throughout Europe to search for the unique aspects of cultural expression amongst their own peoples that would testify to separate and distinct national identities. In seeking to formulate their own notion of what tied their people together and made them unique, cultural nationalists to some extent reinvented the past, often writing ancient national histories that came to justify the creation of separate nation-states.<sup>4</sup> They investigated and exploited folklore, myths, legends, and local history, and also romanticised the lives of the rural folk. Medieval epics such as the *Nibelungenlied*, the Nordic sagas and other legends were suddenly regarded as important and used as raw material for creating new works of art. In most European countries, the interest in folk culture did not start from scratch during this

period, but had evolved over centuries. However, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, folklore and folk culture or ethnography (as well as philology) became important reservoirs for notions of national identity. In some countries nationalist feelings caused over-enthusiastic folklorists to manufacture their own heritage and create their own epics where none existed.<sup>5</sup> James Macpherson created an international stir by supposedly discovering the epic *Poems of Ossian*, which he had written himself. In Finland Elias Lönnrot assembled folk songs and organised them into a Homeric style narrative called the *Kalevala*.<sup>6</sup> In Ireland nationalists collected folklore tales and published them to give a greater sense of an ancient history and culture in Ireland.

Theatre was one of the principal and most visible forms of this cultural nationalist movement of “recovery” and mythification in emerging European states. Opera and symphonic poems also proved to be powerful media for National Romanticism such as in the work of Wagner, Verdi, Smetana, Dvorak, and Sibelius.

In many cases, national theatres were established to further the aims of the cultural nationalist movements. For example, the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen, the National Theatre in Prague, the Finnish National Theatre in Helsinki and the Abbey Theatre in Dublin closely interacted with their respective cultural nationalist movements.<sup>7</sup>

The national theatres played an important role in trying to construct distinctive national identities as well as in asserting the cultural achievements of their nations. Schiller, who was involved with the National Theatre in Mannheim, argued that that the theatre could help to construct the nation. “If in all our plays there was one main stream, if our poets reached an agreement and created a firm union for this final purpose — if a strict selection led their work and their brushes dedicated themselves only to national matters — in one word, if we had a national stage, we would also become a nation.”<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, national theatres in emerging nations often experienced numerous teething difficulties, partly because of the resistant attitudes and policies of the imperial authorities. The National Theatre in Prague, which was perhaps more politically motivated than others, was imagined as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. After the 1848 revolution, a committee headed by František Palacký, published an *Announcement* outlining their intentions to build a national theatre and simultaneously raising hopes for greater political autonomy: “Our national theatre will soon arise as a monument to our constitutional rights and equality.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it took another thirty



years to build the theatre, amidst considerable controversy. In Norway the establishment of the national theatre in Bergen by Ole Bull led some critics to feel that the theatre was misplaced. The dramatist Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, for example, while praising Bull's efforts, wrote that the national theatre should eventually be located in the nation's capital of Christiania (later Oslo).<sup>10</sup> Wagner, who became involved in the 1848 revolution and the uprising in Dresden against the Prussian King, proposed a national theatre for Dresden that would operate as a democratic institution with the director being elected, but his proposal was rejected.<sup>11</sup>

Some countries such as Finland and Ireland had no history of indigenous drama before their nationalist movements began. The first major performance of a Finnish-language drama occurred in 1869, and Irish-language drama only began to be written at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, well in advance of national independence, the national theatre companies in these two countries used the stage — even though theatre was an art form more associated with the cultural oppressor — to project notions of national identity in opposition to a dominant foreign culture.

The act of building a national theatre edifice was often a way of spreading the ideas of nationalism from the intellectual few to the masses and celebrating their communal endeavour. In Bohemia and Finland, for example, collections were made around the country for the construction of the theatre, and so the theatre became a commonly owned enterprise (at least in spirit if not in law). The foundation-laying ceremony for the Prague National Theatre took place at a time of patriotic protest as a result of the Czechs' disappointment in failing to gain autonomy from Austria. When the Prague national theatre was finally constructed twenty years later, the curtain tapestry facing the audience as they awaited the beginning of a performance reminded them of their spiritual ownership of the theatre in its depiction of images of the national collection of money for the new theatre.<sup>12</sup>

In Finland, in response to the "February Manifesto" by the tsar in 1899 that threatened the country with a policy of Russification, nationalists seized the opportunity to assert their cultural independence by building a massive granite temple near the centre of Helsinki.<sup>13</sup> A national collection was made and the foundation-laying ceremony in 1900 occurred amidst a three-day singing event.

The linguistic identity of national theatres was often one of their most crucial aspects. In Prague,

the theatre staged plays and operas in Czech to overcome the dependence on German culture. In Norway the National Stage in Bergen introduced the Norwegian language to demonstrate its ascendancy over Danish (and Swedish). In the Finnish theatre, although some of the nationalists (such as Topelius) favoured two branches of a national theatre, one in Swedish and one in Finnish, this position was rejected by nationalists who stressed the importance of creating a Finnish language theatre.

Often the building of a national theatre was accompanied by the demand for and in some cases the development of an acting school, which would help educate the actors to speak correctly and in the process encourage a sense of good citizenship. In countries where the national language (such as Czech, Hungarian and Finnish) had not yet been securely established as a medium for high culture, the correct use and pronunciation of the language on the national stage was a major issue in creating national theatres and ultimately became an important feature for the audience and a topic on which the critics frequently commented. In Hungary the Parliament assigned the Academy of Sciences the role of establishing a national theatre as part of its function in "the institutional cultivation of the Hungarian language."<sup>14</sup> In Germany the term *Bühnensprache* (stage language) as a term for correct pronunciation indicates the role of the theatre in helping to standardise the German language for the population.<sup>15</sup>

The repertory of each theatre was of course a major concern to the nationalists. The nationalist canon often included plays about historical or legendary figures engaged in the nation-building or national liberation process or in some way representing certain nationalistic ideals, such as *Wilhelm Tell* in Switzerland (and Germany), *Joan of Arc* in France, *Libuše* in Bohemia, *Boris Godunov* in Russia, and *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* in Ireland.

As previously mentioned, the repertory also included characters from the local mythological and folkloric tales such as the Norse and Germanic epics in Scandinavia and Germany as well as historical, and rural characters in order to provide national protagonists who would help to define the character of the "awakened" nation. Cultural nationalists often blurred the border between folklore and history. For example, some nationalists in Finland celebrated the characters in the *Kalevala* as historical. Likewise, Irish nationalists used folklore to create a national mythology about ancient Irish history that helped distinguish themselves from the English colonists. In Bohemia legendary stories about the origins of the Czech royal family became the subject matter

of plays and operas. Plays dealing with folkloric heroes helped authenticate the folk culture and construct alternative histories to those that had been imposed by the dominant cultures. The legendary characters and stories that were created became an important source for inculcating notions of national identity. While Wagner exploited the *Nibelungenlied*, Finnish dramatists used the *Kalevala* and Irish playwrights the *Táin*. For example, Yeats wrote a cycle of plays about the mythical hero Cúchulainn.

In his play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* in 1902, Yeats created a nationalist archetype that was mythical but rooted in history. Yeats, who collaborated with Lady Gregory in writing it, set the play in the context of the 1798 rebellion led by Wolfe Tone but avoided the obvious strategy of characterising the male leader. Instead, he created a mythical figure of mother Ireland calling out her sons to fight for their country. As the spirit of a suppressed people longing for independence, Cathleen speaks in metaphors to an audience on stage as well as in the audience, urging them to fight for independence.

In addition to national archetypes, the repertory also featured dramas about anti-heroes that sometimes caused controversy when they first appeared in print or on the stage (such as Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*). Often these plays about anti-heroes were sanitised in subsequent stage productions, and the characters were accepted as loveable national figures in spite of their roguish or amoral behaviour (and, in some cases, the author's implicit attack on society.) Sometimes, particular sections of such plays, for instance the fourth act of *Peer Gynt* (which satirised Norwegian nationalists), were omitted because of their problematic nature.<sup>16</sup>

While national theatre directors were often anxious to include both foreign classics as well as domestic drama in the repertory, they frequently ran the risk of offending nationalists who wished to promote the distinctiveness of the national culture. In Ireland Yeats was accused of being too influenced by Wagner. However, at the same time, he recognised the power of the theatre to influence the nationalist movement and to gain credibility from it. He often looked for appropriate symbols for a new national identity. In a letter to Gilbert Murray (suggesting a version of *Oedipus Rex* for the Abbey), Yeats wrote, "Here one never knows when one may affect the mind of a whole generation. The country is in its first plastic state, and takes the mark of every strong finger."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Yeats was never comfortable with simply presenting nationalist sentiments and often challenged his audience by using

nationalist rhetoric for the theatre enterprise but presenting images on the stage that were discordant with that rhetoric and which sometimes caused riots.

In summary, European national theatres exploited their folk traditions and folk poetry as advocated by German philosophers such as Herder. Many of the notions of national identity that persist in European countries today owe their origins to 19<sup>th</sup> century myth making by cultural nationalists who were influenced by the values and ideals of Johann von Herder and German nationalism and Romanticism. Although the social circumstances in the various countries were somewhat different in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the process was similar and tended to homogenise national character and culture into essentialist features which were deemed to have arisen organically in the development of the nation. The national theatres fostered the construction and promotion of such notions of national identity by putting various types of national protagonist on the stage and trying them out in front of a live audience who could accept or reject them.

Therefore there is an implicit contradiction between the historical role of the national theatre in a European country and the current transnationalist ideology of the European Union. While the European Union is trying to undermine notions of national identity by fostering a transnational or European identity, national theatres to some extent impede this policy by continuing to help construct notions of national identity and serving as national institutions.

There are several factors implicit in national theatres that tend to promote distinctive nationalism, but I want to examine how these have also been overcome. The first is the reliance on a building. The fact that national theatres still tend to be located in the national capital helps to strengthen a nationalist perspective. There have of course been ways to subvert this. First, since the 1960s, there has been a move towards regionalisation through decentralisation. Some countries have established national theatres outside the capital or instituted a policy of touring. France, for example, has created five national theatres and many regional national theatres. In Sweden, in addition to the Royal Dramatic theatre in Stockholm, there is a national touring theatre (*Riksteatern*) that has no theatre building of its own. A more recent example is the new national theatre of Scotland which again has no building of its but intends to move its whole enterprise from one building to another for months at a time. This possibly helps to foster a more local or regional relationship with the audience (by seeing audiences as distinct rather

than homogenous) and can generate more local or regional types of repertory.

In addition, national theatres today have developed transnational links with national theatres in other European countries through such networks as the Union of European Theatres and the Convention of European Theatres, and so touring patterns have been established whereby national theatre personnel and whole companies change places and exchange performances or develop co-productions, frequently overcoming linguistic differences through simultaneous translation in the form of surtitles in theatres.

A second factor that promotes nationalism is the legacy of a national repertory. Most national theatres continue to serve partly as museums for national theatre cultures. Thus they regard part of their duty as performing the national classics from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They also often receive subsidy from the government on the basis that they are promoting new national writers to write in the national language, and such artists inevitably create works that reflect national values and national cultural identity. On the other hand, national theatres today see their remit as producing world dramatic classics and as giving voice to those people in their countries who reflect other aspects of the national culture than the essentialist notions of a traditional national identity, thus immigrants and marginalised ethnic groups, and others reflecting transnational developments which have resulted in more pluralistic and multicultural populations, (such as portrayed in the collaboration of Theatre Complicité with the Royal National Theatre in London).

A third factor is language. National theatres have tended to promote the hegemonic language of the state, rather than allow other languages to be spoken. Even today language is a divisive force in national theatres. Swedish is never spoken on the National Theatre in Helsinki, even though it is one of the official national languages. The justification for this is that there is a separate Swedish theatre in Helsinki. And in Belgium there used to be a bilingual national theatre, but this did not work and the remaining national theatre is exclusively French speaking. On the other hand, the role of the national theatre as a place to refine the national speech has to some extent been reversed since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as performers have been allowed to use their regional accents and dialects rather than a nationally promoted accent or “received pronunciation” (for example in the Royal National Theatre in London). Moreover, it seems that national theatres in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (at least as far as I have been aware) seem to promote more

performances by foreign companies in national theatres in foreign languages (again often with the aid of simultaneous translation and surtitles). In particular two of the French national theatres, the *Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe* and the *Théâtre National de Strasbourg* have adopted a transnational policy, with the *Odéon* regularly staging international theatre, and the *Théâtre National de Strasbourg* performing frequently in German as well as in French. The programme of the *Odéon*, according to its website, is “fostering joint projects with stage directors, actors, playwrights and other figures involved in the dramatic arts in Europe, to present new works and breathe new life into Europe’s artistic heritage”.<sup>18</sup> According to David Whitton, “In practice this means a mix of foreign-language productions produced in-house or imported, and foreign works in French translation.”<sup>19</sup> The *Théâtre National de Strasbourg*, located on the German border, is similarly transnational in its approach. According to Whitton, “Typically, of the 15–20 productions presented each year, four or five will be by the resident company, three or four will be co-productions with other European theatres, and the remainder visiting shows including a number of foreign-language productions.”<sup>20</sup>

A fourth nationalist factor is the relationship with the national government. Regardless of their origins and the process that they went through for legitimisation with the general public, national theatres are almost always subsidised by the national government and to some extent influenced by government policy. The national theatre is generally regarded by national governments as the apex of the theatre culture, setting the standard by which other theatre companies are measured. National governments generally regard it as reflecting the cultural achievement of the nation and therefore privilege it when it comes to funding by providing a disproportionate amount of the national subsidy for theatre culture. The national government is thus a source of finance, legitimacy and control for national theatres as well as of promoting their activities at home and abroad. Since the policy of the national governments in the European Union promote European identity and foreign trade as well as the health and welfare of national institutions, national theatres are often regarded as having not just a national but also an international status. They help to sell the national culture abroad in foreign tours, and provide economic benefits as part of the tourist industry to international tourists. This is especially true of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and the Royal National Theatre in London which frequently tour abroad with the help of government subsidy and which are used by their respective

national tourist industries as part of international tourist packages. In some cases implicit pressure is placed on national theatres (such as the Abbey) to put the country in a good light through their work. Though the effect of this is difficult to measure, it is significant that Patrick Mason, the artistic director of the Abbey Theatre, wanted to stage the second part of *Angels in America* but encountered opposition and didn't go ahead with it.

Historically, national theatres have periodically come under very oppressive control such as in Nazi Germany and under the Soviet Union, and the increase of governmental artistic control remains a potential factor. The role of the national theatre in negotiating a satisfactory relationship between the hegemonic ideology of the country, the policies of the government in power and the stance of the individual playwright or director (with as a potentially subversive or dissenting voice) varies of course from one country to another. However, because the governments within the EU are expected to help foster a European identity, national theatres are expected also to

play a part in this development, and so transnational collaboration is encouraged and supported by national governments as well.

In conclusion I want to end by posing a series of questions that might help to relate this analysis to Lithuania in the post-Soviet era. To what extent is the Lithuanian National Theatre trying to represent national identity today or to what extent is it helping to construct a transnational or European identity? Who wants a Lithuanian National Theatre to exist and why? Is it wanted by the government or by the people of the country or by the elite or by tourists or by all four groups? In what way is the Lithuanian National Theatre national? Does the Lithuanian National Theatre try to speak for the nation? To what extent does it allow a variety of national voices as well as newly arrived ethnic groups in the nation to be heard or represented? Lastly, and this is a question that is more general, why do you suppose new national theatres are being created today when they would seem to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century institution? Is nationalism more important today than we like to believe?

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Some of the first part of this essay appeared in an earlier form in "Herder and European Theatre" in *Staging Nationalism: Essays on Theatre and National Identity*, ed. by Kiki Gounaridou, Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, UK: McFarland Publishers, 2005, pp 63-85.

<sup>2</sup> Finkelkraut A. *The Defeat of the Mind*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> See Herder J. G. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. by Bernhard Suphan. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877, vol. 9, pp. 525-529.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Henri Pirenne in his *Histoire de la Belgique* tried to prove the existence of a Belgian people, hence nation, dating back to the Roman period. Benedict Anderson has observed, "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past." Anderson B. *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed., London: Verso, 1995, p.11. Also Ernest Gellner argues, "The cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred would have served as well. [...] Nationalism is not what it seems. [...] The cultures it claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition." Gellner E. *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 56. Although the dissemination of such political and cultural ideas throughout Europe was assisted by political events such as the American Revolution in 1775 and the French Revolution in 1789 (both of which promoted the importance of individual human rights), German nationalism stressed the sovereignty of the nation

as opposed to the sovereignty of the individual. Rather than the Kantian idea that the common people should be voluntary participants in a state and could equally opt out of it and go somewhere else, Herder's ideas carried a notion of obligation on the part of the people to belong to a particular nation that was their natural place of belonging. This sense of obligation allowed intellectuals and political leaders later on to exert a certain coercive force in imploring the common people to sacrifice them selves for the greater glory of their nation, for their fatherland or motherland.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the invention of the Scottish kilt and tartan, for example, see Trevor-Roper H. "The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland". *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 15-41.

<sup>6</sup> See Wilson W. A. *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976, pp. 49-53.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this, see my essay "Herder and European Theatre" in *Staging Nationalism: Essays on Theatre and National Identity*, ed. by Kiki Gounaridou, Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, UK: McFarland Publishers, 2005, pp 63-85.

<sup>8</sup> Schiller F. *Werke in drei Bänden*, Munich: Hanser, 1976, vol.1, p.728. Translation by Anna Lohse.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Kimball S. B. *Czech Nationalism: A Study of the National Theatre Movement, 1845-83*, Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1964, p. 39. See also Černý F. "Idea Národního divadla". *Divadlo v české kultuře*



19.stoletį, Prague: Národní galerie v Praze, 1985, pp. 17-25.

<sup>10</sup> *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746-1900*, ed. by Laurence Senelick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> See *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie. New York: Macmillan, 1997, vol. IV, p. 1056.

<sup>12</sup> This was, in fact, the second curtain because the first, with a different design, was destroyed in a fire shortly after the opening of the theatre in 1881.

<sup>13</sup> Although the location was somewhat peripheral to Senate Square, it was located next to the central train station and across from the Atheneum art school. The organizers were disappointed that they could not obtain a more central location.

<sup>14</sup> See, *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Laurence Senelick, p. 287.

<sup>15</sup> See Patterson M. *The First German Theatre*, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 9. For a discussion of the standardization of languages, see Wardhaugh R. *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Blackwell: Oxford, 2002, pp. 33-37.

<sup>16</sup> See Bryant-Bertail S. *Space and Time in Epic Theatre: The Brechtian Legacy*, Rochester: Camden House, 2000, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Yeats to Gilbert Murray, 24 January 1905, quoted in Clark D. R. and McGuire J. B. *W. B. Yeats: The Writing of Sophocles' King Oedipus*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.theatre-odeon.fr/english/odeon/ft>

<sup>19</sup> Whitton D. "The National Theatre in Question: France since 1968", paper presented in Dublin in March 2005, privately held.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Stephen Wilmer

## NACIONALINIAI TEATRAI TRANSNACIONALIZMO EROJE

### S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje rašoma apie kintančią nacionalinių Europos teatrų funkciją ir tikslus transnacionalinėje politikos ir kultūros vystymosi stadijoje. Nacionaliniai teatrai, kurie Europos šalyse buvo steigiami nuo aštuonioliktojo amžiaus iki dvidešimtojo amžiaus pradžios, atliko svarbų vaidmenį formuojantis nacionaliniam identitetui ir nacionaliniam charakteriui. Remdamasis skirtingų Europos šalių teatrų istorija, autorius aptaria svarbiausias nacionalinio teatro fenomeną apibrėžiančias sąvokas: *teatro pastatą, nacionalinės dramaturgijos repertuarą, spektakliuose vartojamą kalbą ir finansavimo bei administravimo būdus*.

Straipsnyje bandoma pažvelgti, kaip šie procesai vystosi dvidešimt pirmajame amžiuje, kaip pasikeitė nacionalinio teatro vaidmuo globalizacijos ir Europos Sąjungos procesų kontekste, ar jis ir toliau palaido sienas, skiriančias tautas. Analizuojant šiandieninę Airijos *Abbey* teatro situaciją, kitų Europos šalių nacionalinių teatrų veiklą, jų transnacionalinius ryšius, tarptautinį repertuarą, įvairiakalbius spektaklius ir gastroles, atskleidžiamas nacionalinio teatro vaidmens prieštaringumas šiandieninėje Europoje, ir bandoma apibrėžti, kokie tikslai jam vis dar gali būti keliami.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *Europos teatro istorija, nacionalinis teatras, nacionalizmas, nacionalinė dramaturgija, repertuaras*.

**KEY WORDS:** *European theatre history, national theatre, nationalism, national dramaturgy, repertoire*.

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Edgaras Klivis

## (UN)MEDIATED: VOICE-SCAPES OF NATIONALISM

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism – as a modern ideology and a form of culture – has been vitally linked to the printed word and the subsequent mass media technologies of reproduction and dissemination. Because of its potential to transcend the isolation of a local community the press has been used by emerging nationalist politics to implement a new holistic vision of the homogeneous nation. The new identity, that became overwhelmingly important during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was shaped by the progressive advances of chemistry and technological leaps in typography and lithography. Marshal McLuhan has reflected on this interrelation in his famous *Understanding Media*: the press, the magazine seem to be the most adequate means to address the public as huge as nations are, thus McLuhan has defined print media as the *architect of nationalism*.

”Of the many unforeseen consequences of typography, (writes McLuhan) the emergence of nationalism is, perhaps, the most familiar. Political unification of populations by means of vernacular and language groupings was unthinkable before printing turned each vernacular into an extensive mass medium. The tribe, an extended form of a family of blood relatives, is exploded by print, and is replaced by an association of men homogeneously trained to be individuals“<sup>1</sup>.

Abstract or ”imaginary“ (to use Benedict Anderson’s term) association of physically isolated individuals is built upon the rhetoric and imagery circulating through print. And not only print: other media may potentially be considered as productive for nationalisms dissemination. There is a reference by Ernest Gellner, for instance, to the existence of nationalist nostalgia in the Soviet Union wherein city dwellers in the industrial centres would maintain their ethnic roots, by listening to vinyl recordings of folk songs.<sup>2</sup>

The development of the film industry, Mike Featherstone argues, ”facilitates this process even better, as film provides an instantiation and immediacy which are relatively independent of the long learning process and institutional and other support necessary to be able to assimilate knowledge through books“<sup>3</sup>.

And eventually we can consider contemporary national channels of radio and television as a way of spreading the ideology of *banal* nationalism or state’s nationalism, both as a platform for political messages, system for spreading information of national interest, framework for collective memory and a gauge for uniform national language.

Thus, nationalism, can hardly escape deep addiction and dependency upon modern industrial technologies of reproduction and broadcasting. But where does the idea of (national) theatre

stand in relation to these modern processes of mutual collaboration between nation-state and mass media, considering the important part it played as an institution within the everyday activities of bourgeois and intellectuals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? Is there yet something in national imaginary calling for the ontology of performance as “representation without reproduction” (“Performance’s only life is in the present”, according to Peggy Phelan)<sup>4</sup>? Why unmediated participation and face-to-face contact of theatrical performance is so essential in maintaining the political idea of nation, when the nation itself is a product of mechanical and media reproduction?

There is a curious autobiographical text from late 19<sup>th</sup> century Lithuanian literature that may cast some light upon the issue. It was written by Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899), a writer, a publicist, a translator and a literary critic, a left-wing political figure, two times imprisoned for anti-tsarist activities and connections with illegal student associations at Warsaw University. He was educated in Polish and in his youth identified himself utterly with Polish culture, as a part of European high culture and modern political and philosophical discourse. Within the context of nascent Lithuanian nationalism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century he eventually got involved in anti-imperial, clandestine work of the newly born Lithuanian nationalist intelligentsia movement and soon became one of its unquestionable leaders and the author of the Lithuanian national anthem (sung today). His self-determination to become Lithuanian is now often represented as a chrestomathic case of a sudden, unexpected emotional conversion when a deep national subordination replaces former counterfeit identity. The action took place in his room when he was leafing through the first clandestine Lithuanian newspaper *Aušra*<sup>5</sup>.

“Few months had passed when I obtained the first issue of *Aušra*. I started quickly thumbing through the newspaper and ... I can’t remember what happened to me afterwards. I just remember that I stood up, bowed down, and afraid to look up at the walls of my room ... and it seemed as if I’ve heard the voice of Lithuania, accusing and excusing at the same time: where have you been until now? Then I felt sorrow and lapsed into tears. I regretted all these hours that were stricken from my life as a Lithuanian and I was so ashamed of being such a scoundrel ... and afterwards a calm and kind warmth filled my heart [...] and I felt myself great and powerful: *I felt myself Lithuanian*”<sup>6</sup>.

The fragment raises a number of interesting issues, like the structure of 19<sup>th</sup> century melodramatic *mise-en-scène* in describing the emergence

of the new nationalist identity: thus Lithuanian-ship is not the result of rational political choice, but rather a *dramatic* experience. Although the revelation and twist of biography was obviously inspired by the artefact of print – the newspaper – the text does not inform us about the ideas encountered, the reading process, and the discursive activity. We are told instead that the subject of the autobiography (as if) *heard* the voice of Lithuania. This imagined voiced appeal turns the encounter with the print and with something as anonymous as a newspaper into a very personal and sensual experience. The voice is a phantasm and yet it is obviously more authentic and ultimate reality than the fragile and secondary reality of the print.

We can think of this text as a primary example of understanding and creating the new political identity, based on nationalist ideals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A nation comes into political being when a sufficient number of people start thinking of themselves in terms of the nation. This thinking is initiated and maintained, as the autobiographical text clearly suggests, by print or by other media that can reproduce, spread and broadcast the discourse and the images that legitimate the very idea of nation. Interestingly, the very moment this thinking or the process of new spatial and temporal self-redefinitions centred on the core myth of nation and based on media technologies, start they immediately initiate the dream, the utopia of unmediated, pure, organic reality, i.e. the reality of a voice. Despite direct dependency upon media technologies, nationalism insists on the running of the pure, unmediated human voice as the emanation of its true presence. It takes just one step further to claim media technologies to be something of an alien character, a degradation of national community brought about by imperial or colonial powers colluding with modern industrial civilization.

Fetishisation of unmediated voice as opposed to its technological extensions is clearly manifested in the film by Italian neorealist director Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battles of Algiers*. The film was made in 1966; four years after Algeria became an independent nation-state. The film depicts the last years of an intense period of fighting in Algiers, with the Algerian National Liberation Front attacking the French paratroops. Only one professional actor was cast and the film included people who were actually taking part in the resistance movement. Pontecorvo – a left-wing filmmaker – spent a year interviewing Algerian people. Thus, according to Ben Highmore, the film was “the result of a collective and political act of remembering by the newly liberated Algerians involved in the film”<sup>7</sup>.

Although cinematography is itself a complicated technique of mediation there are obvious attempts to demarcate the borderline between the unmediated voice of the Algerian nation and technically supported voices of colonial European powers *within* the narrative of the film. The last minutes of the film depict intense and violent scenes of fighting in the streets of Algiers when an unarmed crowd of protesters is attacked by French troops armed with machine-guns and tanks. Just as the riot starts we see European men rushing towards their post offices and editorial offices and making calls to inform their newspapers of the recent events. Thus, the viewer is encouraged to think that the articulate male voice of French narrator is either the voice of a journalist, speaking on the phone, or the voiceover by a radio reporter. When in the last scene of the film a French official is addressing the rioting mob he is using a megaphone. Thus, the representation of colonial violence includes “the prosthetic extension of man”, relating machine-gun to the phone, the megaphone, the press, the radio and, eventually, the film itself.

By contrast to the male, articulate, distanced and presumably mediated voices of French colonialists, Algerians in the fight scenes are represented by undifferentiated clamour of the mob – as yet inarticulate, wild and amorphous voice-scape of resistance, solidarity and violence. It is even more evident in the intermissions between the fights when the camera shows the night landscape of the Casbah (the Muslim part of Algiers) accompanied by the haunting high wavering ululation of Muslim women. Simultaneously, we hear the voice of the reporter commenting in French: “Now calm has returned, although from the Casbah continue to be heard those cries ... incoherent, rhythmic, nightmarish cries”. Nationalist colonial struggle is thus represented by a confrontation between feminine, inarticulate (though rhythmic), wild *voice*, attached to a particular landscape and masculine, civilized, alien *speech* broadcasted through an unlocatable media.

Both examples demonstrate that although it was print technology and other media that “created the possibility of a new form of imagined community”<sup>8</sup>, it is the voice that takes a central position in nationalism’s core imaginary. The voice-scape – the physiological surface of the phonetic substance as an organic and unmediated or immediate experience – is a metaphysical presence considered a guarantee for the metaphysical presence of nation, while the media are seen as something alien and secondary. The voice as presence, as, according to Régis Durand, “absolute presence”, vanishing in the air and leaving no trace behind<sup>9</sup> lends presence and absoluteness

to phantom articles like nations – maintaining these political inventions’ truthfulness and naturalness. The voice is Frankenstein’s fantasy. Self-presence, self-affection of the voice (“from myself to myself”<sup>10</sup>) is an evidence for self-sufficiency and autochthonism of the imagined community. Hence, the singing of the national anthem, poetry read by distinguished nationalist poets, talks in vernacular dialects in the villages, and eventually (national) theatre as a place of unmediated voice possess a loaded symbolical value: maintaining the political idea of a nation-state. The voice-scape of an actor – pauses, breath, physiological fractures – unmediated, rooted in the deep organs of the flesh signifies the Utopia of the autochthonous identity, and the immediate sensual presence of the imagined collective individual. Hearing the voice articulating one’s native language can be considered the primary driver of national theatre.

And it is within the context of repressed national and colonial cultures, that the dramatic pattern based on the repugnance between the mediated and the unmediated, between the presence of voice and technologies of reproduction becomes most evident and assumes the power of the site of resistance. Within the metaphysics of presence, according to Régis Durand, the voice is “freedom of the language”, in that it “does not have to borrow its signifiers from the world, and hence is never in danger of being possessed of them.”<sup>11</sup> In the countries where mass media was occupied and controlled by totalitarian regimes and imperialist power, imaginary voice-scape extended beyond their reach and buried itself in the fissures of mediated realities. Private spaces, readings of poetry, festivals of folk songs and theatre performances were regarded then as the places of truth, as hot-spots of true metaphysical presence of national identity, squeezed into intimate/seminal circles as small as voice can register.

Dialectically, the imaginary national community is born when the printed word or other media pass over small oral communities speaking in vernacular dialects, instantaneously enshrining the voice and the dialect as exalted nostalgic objects, representative of the vanishing identity of the ‘true’ nation – threatened by media technologies. The rhetoric of threat and nostalgia as results of this initial and inevitable split are therefore inscribed in the very nature of nationalism and frame the dramatic discrepancy, it has faced from the outset. The stage of national theatre is at least a partial and illusory negotiation of this split; it is a backward gazing space reflecting the lost innocence of pre-media(ted) vocal communities situated beyond reproduction. Here lies the importance of national stage.

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Edgaras Klivis

## (NE)PAVEIKTA MEDIJŲ: NACIONALIZMO BALSAS

### S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje aptariama balso esatis ir jos reikšmė nacionalizmo metafizikoje. Istoriskai žvelgiant, nacionalizmas yra neatskiriama susijęs su medijomis, žiniasklaidos priemonėmis – spauda, kinu, radiju, televizija. Spauda, kurią Marshallas McLuhanas pavadino *nacionalizmo architektu*, taip pat įvairūs techniniai būdai sustiprinti ir transliuoti garsą yra vienintelis būdas kreiptis į tokią milžinišką įsivaizduojamą bendruomenę kaip tauta. Kinas ir televizija taip pat yra svarbios priemonės, padedančios įtvirtinti politinę nacionalinės bendrijos ir valstybės idėją ir ją palaikyti. Vis dėlto, nežiūrint šių istorinių sąsajų, nacionalistinė mitologija visuomet yra linkusi akcentuoti gyvą, tiesiogiai girdimą žmogaus balsą, o medijas ir technines priemones laikyti svetimomis, primestomis ir nereikalingomis. Taigi balsas, gryna, techninių priemonių nepalietusi fonetinė substancija, išsiskleidusi kūno organuose, simbolizuoja autochtonišką augalinį identitetą, švarų ir nesuteptą technologijų ir reikšmės (arba reikšmės technologijų). Kaip tik todėl XIX ir XX amžių nacionalizmui buvo tokia svarbi nacionalinio teatro idėja.

Straipsnyje analizuojami konkretūs literatūros, kino ir teatro pavyzdžiai atskleidžia gyvo ir technologiskai išplėsto balso dinamiką, parodo jos reikšmę konstruojant politinę ir metafizinę tautos sampratą. Teigiama, kad dramatiškiausiai balso esaties ir reprodukcijos technologijų konfliktas atsiskleidžia kolonijinėse kultūrose, kur įgauna rezistencijos reikšmę. Teatro scena, gyvas aktorius balsas suvokiama kaip būdas nors trumpam įveikti skausmingus vidinius nacionalistinės ideologijos prieštaravimus ir sugrįžti į utopišką nekaltą *balso bendruomenės* būseną.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** nacionalizmas, nacionalinis teatras, medijos, kinas, spauda, balsas, metafizika.

**KEY WORDS:** nationalism, national theatre, media, film, press, voice, metaphysics.

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*Nomeda Šatkauskienė*

## DISCOVERING OURSELVES AND OTHERS: IMAGES OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN DRAMA

Among the crucial changes in contemporary Lithuania the question of national identity, its cultural, sociological, and political aspects, raises its head as one of the major problem. This article makes an attempt to bring Lithuanian drama in the field of discourses, concentrating upon this problem.

For a long time the question of identity in Lithuanian drama and theatre was a purely political question. But it looks like our national drama/theatre has been standing apart from social and political life of the last 15 years since independence. Lithuanian playwrights have just been scanning the new and open world. Is it possible, therefore, to find answers to the questions: what is the political influence in formation of national images; are our traditional images completely exhausted or not compatible with contemporary national drama; and what are the ways of searching for new ones? What is the new perspective for discovering ourselves and others in drama? I'll argue that a new approach to national identity images in contemporary drama requires knowledge of traditional perspectives. To this end I'll make a brief exegesis of the history of Lithuanian drama.

It's natural, that the formation of national images reflects the increase in our national self-awareness that has passed through three phases:

- 1) The first period is the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century till 1940 (it includes the first period of independence). I call this: "The basis of image formation".
- 2) The second period is the Soviet period (1940–1989). I call this phase: "Fixation of the image, and stereotype formation".
- 3) The third period is the period of second independence from 1990– When images are being re-created or what I call: "The overhaul of images".

The birth and formation of national Lithuanian drama began at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with ideas of national rebirth, and was associated with the goal to raise historical self-awareness; in which historical drama has played the main role<sup>1</sup>. The drama formed the main images, myths and conception of national identity. The important drama texts of authors such as Aleksandras Fromas-Gužutis, Vincas Krėvė, Vydūnas, Balys Sruoga, and Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas supplied basic national imagery, which firmed not only in drama, but in the Lithuanians consciousness in general<sup>2</sup>. These images increase in contemporary drama texts in different manners. Some of the principal images and concepts, which were formed in that period and which are still alive, read as follows:

"The best time is the PAST". (Because in the past Lithuania was great, free and strong).



“Our nation is small, but we were BIG”. (The image of wider Lithuania — the Lithuanian Grand Duchy — from the Baltic Sea in the West to the Black Sea in the East. We are big in our spirit and morality. Our origins and history are lofty).

“Our rulers are the most honest”. (The Lithuanian Dukes are the main heroes in historical drama).

“Freedom is more important than life or the apotheosis of self-immolation”. (The popular dramatic myth depicts Lithuanians who prefer to burn than to surrender).

The main characteristics are: self-devotion and the coupling of national and individual fate”. (In Krėvė, and Sruoga’s drama texts)

The main internal qualities are: Women are chaste, fair-haired maidens, emotional, sentimental and lyrical. Men are silent, introverted, passive, and sensitive, love nature, and are cultivated.

“Understanding others”. “Others” are bigger, that means dangerous. We are honourable and always right. Drama propagates national clearness, closeness and purity. “Others” are our “occupiers” or “enemies”. (Some depictions of the Polish, the Russians, the Germans, and the Jewish we can find in that period drama. However, they are rather negative: for example, the picture of Polish people depicted in Sruoga’s drama *Milžino paunksmė* (*In the Shade of a Giant*)).

The ways of image presentation are: romantic, sentimental and pathetic.

By no means, the formation of images in this period was influenced by political power, and artistry played a secondary role. The great Lithuanian culture researcher Vytautas Kavolis noticed, that this period had a lack of historical fulfilment, and images of national identity show superficial and sensitive relation with history<sup>3</sup>. I would argue that the efforts to create deeper, more rational, full-length images are evident in Krėvė, Sruoga, and Mykolaitis-Putinas’s drama texts. However this process was stopped by the soviet occupation.

Though, the soviet period didn’t erase the old images but ideological re-selection of images was unavoidable. In spite of radical censorship, which fought with nationalism in drama, the principal images of that period drama were carried over. Historical drama remained the most important drama genre.

Our brightest figure of that time Justinas Marcinkevičius in his conceptual dramas *Mindaugas* (1968), *Katedra* (*Cathedral*) (1971), *Mažvydas* (1976), and *Daukantas* (1984) while exploring some new or modified images, brought the sense of history closer to our time<sup>4</sup>. I would prefer to emphasise some new identity images which could be found in this period drama. First

of all it’s the image of ‘Lithuanian language’ emphasising its relevance, beauty, and singularity. If the previous period put stress on ‘the land,’ as physical place, so now the language became the other main condition of national identity.

Of course the images in the soviet period changed, they became more metaphorical, as this was the only way to discuss the tragic crash of humanity and history, the only way to tell about the pervasive violence. The desecrated nature of colonised national identity lifts the national images somewhere higher, to a holy space. The purpose of national drama was to conserve imagery and to guarantee their resistance. They were saved, became untouchable icons, and finally became stereotypes<sup>5</sup>.

Politics played the main role in formation of relations with “Others” (I use this term under the sign of post-colonial theory and “the other”). In that period others first of all were the Russians and the Western world. Others were treated as enemies because the Russians occupied Lithuania and the Western world didn’t help. But it was forbidden to talk about that in drama. Later the Western world became the faraway, inaccessible world, so we have no real images of western others in that period drama.

Finally the third period of the second independence brought with it the possibility to speak about ourselves and freedom to explore others. Paradoxically, it was a period of silence and not productive for playwriting. The gap between Lithuanian and Western drama hasn’t been filled for the past 10 years. Its evident, that Lithuanian drama authors didn’t follow to the example of Western drama (maybe, it was the result of the lesson learnt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when drama writers ineffectually attempted to thrust modern forms into drama).

Contemporary Lithuanian playwrights haven’t necessarily absorbed ‘fashionable’ images from the West. The aesthetics of cruelty and pop culture overtook Lithuanian drama — as we hid away our self images from confrontation with others.

The first step reflection of old images and symbols surfaced in Sigitas Parulskis’ drama *P.S. Byla O.K* (*P.S. File O.K.*), written in 1997. While it didn’t focus wholly on national symbolism and its problematic identity and reflection of national imagery were to an extent the cornerstones of the play.

The other Parulskis drama *Barboros Radvilaitės testamentas* (*The Testament of Barbara Radziwill*) makes inroads with the depiction of a romantic image of a historical person — as the Lithuanian ideal of woman. In this case adorable image of Barbara was grounded and confronted with cruelty of real life of contemporary woman.

We find different, more post-modern reflections in Herkus Kunčius’s drama texts. They open a

new ironic, satiric, perspective in the field of our national literary imagery. For example, in the drama *Sučiuptas velnias* (*To Snare the Devil*) the author reveals images with a dose of fantasy and irony: the chaste love transforms into forms of perversity and falseness. The dramatic heroes and style of speaking are taken from Lithuanian literature and are easily recognised by Lithuanians. But, it seems, the drama was or too radical, or maybe flat, plainspoken for Lithuanian audience and wasn't very popular in the theatre.

The young playwright Marius Ivaškevičius makes masterful and extensive play with imagery in his play *Madagascar* that premiered in 2004. The story is based in fact. The main character Pokštas has as his prototype Kazys Pakštas the interwar geographer, traveller and geo-politician, which was a legendary public figure of that time. Pakštas's idea was to move Lithuania to Africa, and to reinvigorate nationality there. This fact is the main leitmotif of the drama; as Ivaškevičius invokes all traditional arsenals of images in the play.

The two main heroes, Poštas and Salė, are redolent with national features, created in Lithuanian drama and literature. The images of man Pokštas and the woman Sale are rather traditional: Pokštas is an enlightened person from Lithuanian village, he is silent, dumb, but deep thinking, and possesses a Great Vision of Lithuanian Future that animates a surprisingly fluent, original and sharp discursive turn. Salė is a prototype of a famous Lithuanian poetess, she is very sensitive, but distrustful, and yearns after real love. Their main features are exaggerated to the extreme and shaped in comic forms. For example, Pokštas loves his Lithuanian nation so much, that he can reject Salė's love because he can only love a woman 'co-eval with his nation'. His constancy to Lithuania makes him think in purely 'statesmanlike' terms, and not as a person. The drama presents a panorama of our national identity images, which in a global light appear petty. As we know, we like to present ourselves as a nation of basketballers, aviators and poets — as Ivaškevičius does. With a secret smile on his face Ivaškevičius asks: what would have happened to our national identity, if the [calamitous] trans-Atlantic heroics of aviators Darius and Girėnas had changed direction to fulfil Pokštas desire of settling Lithuanians in Africa? As Pokštas reflects: "America is the past. The New World is moving to Africa"<sup>6</sup>.

Let me introduce a sample of transformations made in national images in *Madagascar* based on the aforementioned list the basics of stereotypes.

The best time in *Madagascar* is not the PAST but The FUTURE. Because in the future Lithuanians

will achieve a new status, they will live warmly and safely in a 'Black continent' (but run the risk of racial miscegenation).

"Our nation is *not* small," but hemmed-in, our nation is "pressed by such giants as the Russians, Polish and Germans," so we can raise our nation only in a vertical direction. 'Quality' and 'verticality' is our strength. 'The sea' is not a particular place, but it is our direction and ideology. Pokštas calls Lithuanians 'to turn their eyes away from the land and turn their faces towards the sea'. To look west.

"Life is important" Pokštas argues, and not a "fatalistic immolation". He makes heroic rational survival in any circumstance, its normal to change even a living place; the native land, if it is necessary.

The main value is not sensitivity but thinking in a 'statesmanlike' way. Mind can overcome matter: or emotion. The identity of the national and individual fate is still worthy, but an individual hero, such as Pokštas, takes initiative and is able to change national fate. Value lies in being active and enterprising.

*Madagascar* is a play about our confrontation with the other. It is the first drama that pays so much attention to a relationship with others. The action of the play takes place not only in a Lithuanian village, but in Paris, America, Hollywood, and on Madagascar Island. In *Madagascar* others transform Lithuanians, give new colours to traditional images. Despite their being alien and exotic, and sometimes dreadful the others must be initiated, and tested as "pineapple for Pokštas' stomach".

The other two important images of national identity transformed in the play are the language and the land. The language itself is an active hero of the drama. Ivaškevičius makes a pastiche of interwar period language and the text sounds very unusual and at the same time funny. Even the name Pakštas is transformed to Pokštas, what in Lithuanian language means a 'trick' or a 'joke'. The highest point of irony is a parody of a great scene from Marcinkevičius' play *Mažvydas*. It is the scene, when Pokštas teaches the Madagascans to recite in syllables "Lie- tu-va," [i.e. "Lith-u-a-ni-a"] and with a sense of tolerance suggest a hybrid name of Madagascar + Lithuania, which becomes "Skarotoji Lietuva".

Concepts of the land, particularly territory were always a point of honour and reason for battles; but in this play are secondary. Our land, according to Pokštas, could be in Madagascar or Mozambique, or other countries absolutely foreign to Lithuanians. And the extreme relationship with others is the suggestion of Pokštas to mix our nation with black people,

to bring our culture to the 'black continent'. That absurd situation conflicts with the image of national pureness, closeness and sounds like a parody of our fear of 'strange' others, national intolerance and egocentrism. As well as it sounds like an attempt to stop treating others as enemies and strange, but in contradiction as relatives.

So my conclusions are: Only in contradiction with others we can verify ourselves and the best way to discover ourselves is to discover others. Images of Lithuanian identity are changing in contemporary drama; as depicted in Ivaškevičius' *Madagascar*. The irony, the radical transforma-

tion, the pastiche, the post-modern play, the fantasy, set the new dramatic terms of Lithuanian contemporary drama.

Now is the best time to "overhaul" our images, and national identity. Implicating the fact, that instead of creating new images, contemporary drama still re-creates them or makes overhauls of images. I assume that *Madagascar* is like a farewell to our clichéd romantic historical drama, and the heritage of stereotyped images and myths. It shows the potency of drama to create new mixed forms of images<sup>7</sup> based on the traditions as a means of discovering "ourselves" and "the other".

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Nomeda Šatkauskienė

## TAUTINIO TAPATUMO ĮVAIZDŽIAI ŠIUOLAIKINĖJE LIETUVIŲ DRAMOJE: ATRANDANT SAVE IR KITUS

### S a n t r a u k a

Tautinio tapatumo klausimas sparčiai besikeičiančioje lietuvių visuomenėje yra viena svarbiausių nūdienos problemų. Straipsnyje nagrinėjami kintantys tapatumo įvaizdžiai šiuolaikinėje lietuvių dramoje. Žvelgiant iš istorinės perspektyvos, plačiau aptariamas tautinių vaizdinių formavimasis ir transformacijos šiuolaikinėje dramaturgijoje. Siekiama atsakyti į klausimus, ar tradiciniai tautiniai įvaizdžiai tebėra veiksmingi ir kaip jie transformuojasi, koku būdu kuriami nauji, iš kokios perspektyvos šiuolaikiniuose dramos kūriniuose žvelgiame į *save ir kitus*.

Tautinių įvaizdžių formavimasis dramoje labai aiškiai atspindi tautinio sąmoningumo raidą Lietuvoje, tad skiriami trys esminiai etapai: 1) pagrindinių tautinių įvaizdžių formavimasis nuo XIX a. pab. iki 1940 m.; 2) įvaizdžių įsitvirtinimas, stereotipizacija (1940–1989 m.); 3) įvaizdžių perkūrimas ir revizija (nuo 1989 m. iki šių dienų). Straipsnyje pateikiamas platesnis stereotipizuotų tautinių įvaizdžių, įprasminančių *save ir kitą / svetimą*, arsenalas remiantis klasikiais A. Fromo- Gužučio, V. Krėvės, B. Sruogos, J. Marcinkevičiaus dramos kūrinių. Šių stereotipinių įvaizdžių transformacija šiuolaikinių autorių S. Parulskio, H. Kunčiaus ir M. Ivaškevičiaus dramose įvardijama kaip *įvaizdžių perkūrimas* pasitelkiant postmodernistines ironijos, pastišo, parodijos galimybes. Kaip vienas originaliausių dramos pavyzdžių pateikiama detalesnė M. Ivaškevičiaus dramos „Madagaskaras“ įvaizdžių analizė. Darna išvada, kad šiuolaikiniai tautiniai įvaizdžiai, atskleidžiantys *save ir kitus*, prarasdami ankstesnį romantinį atspalvį, uždaramą ir metaforiškumą, šiuolaikinėje dramoje patiria radikalias transformacijas. Juos pakeitęs posmodernistinis fiktyvumas, ironija, žaidimas tautiniais įvaizdžiais ir stereotipais traktuotinas kaip naujas Lietuvos dramos etapas, leidžiantis naujai įprasminti *save ir kitą* kur kas platesnėje ir atviresnėje perspektyvoje.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** tautinis tapatumas, šiuolaikinė Lietuvos drama, ironija, parodija.

**KEY WORDS:** national identity, contemporary Lithuanian drama, irony, parody.

*Anneli Saro*

## INFLUENCE OF THE NATION STATE ON ESTONIAN THEATRE

Although theatre is considered to be a mimetic art form and a reflection of life, nevertheless it is relatively complicated to assert something about the interrelations between theatre and society that would be categorically verifiable. Wars, dictatorships, political events, economic atmosphere and so on definitely have a certain influence on theatre structures and to a certain extent on the topics and aesthetics of productions and strategies of reception. Many social historians have assumed that culture and ideology of a period cannot be understood properly by investigating the arts and society separately. But in general it still seems that the arts have their own temporal patterns, quite independent from social history. It becomes especially evident when we investigate the history of theatre in democratic countries.

Estonia has enjoyed two periods of independence in the course of history: from 1918 to 1939 (Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, but the Red Army bases were established in 1939) and from 1991 until the present. The periods of liberation and transition have not brought any radical changes to Estonian theatre life: nevertheless these two historically distant cultural epochs carry some remarkable similarities; a moderate modernisation of theatrical language, a craving for romantic heroes, a slow increase of popularity of national drama, etc. In my article I

will consider these features more closely, as well as looking for the social reasons behind these similarities.

First, a short introduction to the political and cultural contexts of Estonia is in order. Ever since the subjugation of Estonians by Teutonic crusaders in the beginning of the 13th century, Baltic German nobility has been the ruling class in Estonia both economically and culturally, although politically the territory has been a subject of constant warfare, being ruled at times by Germany, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, and starting from early 18th century, the Russian empire. In the 19th century, when a wave of national awakening swept all over Europe, the Estonians could not distance themselves from the movement either, and it was in connection with this that during the 1870s, a network of Estonian amateur theatres was created all over the country. Thus Estonian theatre was born as part of an international trend of the time, and followed the structure and repertoire of local German theatres that were part of a system of such theatres circulating all over Europe. In spite of the geographical vicinity of Russia and the Russification policies at the end of the 19th century, German culture remained the primary paragon for Estonian theatrical discourse until World War II, an important political and cultural turning point. The war and the iron curtain of



the Soviet occupation interrupted most of the brisk connections between Estonia and Europe, replacing these with a cultural turn towards the East and the Southeast, as well as with the strict regulations of Soviet aesthetics. Nevertheless, the European cultural identity was restored in Estonia already at the end of the 1980s, before the second period of independence as a nation state.

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Many new cultural institutions were founded, especially in the field of education, in Estonia as an independent political and cultural system, a nation state. In early 20th century, this was mostly due to the need for professional artists, but towards the end of the century this was replaced with an intention to increase the diversity of the cultural field. Several actors, directors and set-designers studied in Germany before World War I, some in Russia. The first private acting school was opened in Tallinn only in 1920, hiring local theatre practitioners as teachers and using Estonian as the working language. The monopoly of a single school of acting lasted until the beginning of the 1990s, when two other institutions, the Estonian Institute of Humanities in Tallinn and the Viljandi Culture College also began to train professional actors. Another sign of the aim towards decentralisation and aesthetic diversity was the opening of a contemporary dance department in Viljandi, meant to balance out the Tallinn Ballet School. Until 1992, the disciplines of theatre history and criticism could only be studied in Moscow or in Leningrad; then a curriculum of theatre research was opened in the University of Tartu. This event marked a switch from empiricism and theatre history to the more versatile theoretical-empirical investigations and co-operations with Western colleagues; thus meta-theatrical discourse in Estonia underwent a gradual change.

On neither occasion did state independence bring about a radical restructuring of the theatre system, nor other organisational changes. The only significant novelty that characterises the first phase of Estonian independence is the appearance of new theatre groups and institutions, which somehow coincides with the period of political disorder and economic decline. The Drama Theatre was founded already in 1916, during the war. The dates of the establishment of the Drama Studio Theatre in 1924 and the network of the Workers' Theatres all over Estonia, as well as a professional theatre in Viljandi in 1926, mark a period of economic crisis and an attempted *coup d'état* by the communists.

A similar cultural excitement and activity accompanied the political liberation movement at the end of the 1980s, when several independent groups were founded: VAT Theatre (1987), Ruto Killakund (1989), Children's Theatre of Tartu (1989), Von Krahle Theatre (1992), Theatrum (1991, 1994) and a few others, mostly performing for children or practising contemporary dance. The aforementioned groups had a few vague alternative intentions that were only fully realised at the very end of the century. I will discuss this topic more closely later on in this paper. Surprisingly, the appearance of these independent groups took place against the background of decreasing audiences in state theatres — from 1987 to 1992 the annual number of spectators abruptly slumped by half, from 1,7 million to 700 000 visitors. This process could be explained by a more intense participation in political, business and cultural life (consumption was replaced with action), later by the economic difficulties faced by the potential audience.

### A TURN TOWARDS EUROPE

The prominent Estonian theatre historian Jaak Rähesoo admits that a comparison between the 1920s and the 1990s seems to work only in two respects: the leading role of the theatres of Tallinn, and a repertoire dominated by translations. He interprets the predominance of translations as a tool for constructing a 'normal' European theatre. Indeed, in both instances Estonian theatre seems to have been lagging behind its European counterparts and was in need of accelerated development.

For the majority of its short history, Estonian theatre has been aiming at presenting and preserving the national culture of politically repressed Estonians. But as in many colonised countries, the theatre was formed in a dynamic process of adopting and rejecting influences of hegemonic cultures, and even the periods of liberation have not changed fundamentally this controversial dichotomy of gravitation and opposition.

Estonian theatre had a clear orientation towards Germany before World War I — more than 50% of the repertoire consisted of works by German and Austrian authors and theatres were copying the repertoires and often even whole productions of their German counterparts. A course was set towards a realistic style of acting and production but only a few actors and theatres reached this goal. Estonian writers and fine artists had replaced their Baltic-German exemplars with a broader European cultural orientation already during the first decade of the 20th century,



thereby accepting the first wave of modernism, but this ideology only had an indirect influence on the field of theatre. Likewise, state independence did not change the repertoire of theatres rapidly; instead, more attention was paid towards the quality of plays that were therein translated from original languages, not through German or Russian translations. The number of works by contemporary French and English authors was steadily increasing in the repertoire, though German plays still held the central position.

In the Soviet Union, the repertoire of theatres was strictly regulated: one third had to represent Soviet literature, one third could represent national drama and no more than a third could originate from Western drama. It should be added, however, that although today's Estonian theatre researchers have been trying to find a document that would contain such a regulation; they have yet to find anything of this sort. In any case, theatre administrators were aware of this rule and were working hard either to obey it or evade it. For example, in 1985, the repertoire of Estonian drama theatres consisted of 33% of works by Estonian authors, 25% of Soviet (mostly Russian) authors and 41% of Western authors. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation in theatres changed, at least outside of Russia — the protracted gap in cultural communications with the West needed a quick refill, and it was thought that to integrate with the European cultural life was to restore the 'normal' paradigm. The most prominent feature of this cultural transition is the dominance of Anglo-American drama, especially light comedies. During the Soviet regime, Anglo-American drama constituted approximately 10 to 15% of the repertoire, yet the numbers increased to 30-35% in the early 1990s. The importance of Russian literature has decreased to 10-15% and even this modest share is mostly due to the loyalty of the Russian Drama Theatre to their motherland.

#### MODERATE MODERNISATION OF THE THEATRICAL LANGUAGE

Three periods of modernisation can be distinguished in the history of Estonian theatre, during which vigorous attempts are made to withdraw from the mainstream, from the so called 'realistic theatre'. Compared with other arts, there is always a little incredulity and temporal shift before new tendencies become ingrained in the complicated system and popular art of the theatre. The first experiments with modernistic styles were only carried out in Estonian theatre during the first years of independence, almost 10 years after similar changes had taken place in literature and the fine

arts. Impressionism and symbolism, introduced to Estonian theatre through Russian theatre and literature, only influenced a few productions and production elements. Somewhat later, expressionism found its way into Estonia through the German influence, and left its impressive footprints on performance arts as well, most notably on the amateur Morning Theatre (1921–1924). But the unfavourable response of inexperienced spectators, as well as economic crises that made theatres dependent upon large audiences put an end to these attempts to experiment with unconventional tools of expression.

The second period of modernisation in theatre also began almost a decade after a similar change in other arts at the end of the 1960s and petered in the middle of the 1970s. This aesthetic renewal in Estonian theatre could perhaps be considered as an aftermath of the political liberation in the Soviet Union or connected with political manifestations from Europe; this overlap may, however, be a coincidence. Although I believe that the arts have their own rules of development, for the purposes of this paper it cannot be denied that social events have a certain influence on the artistic sphere. There were two paradigmatic changes that characterised the renewal of theatre in Estonia: a withdrawal from literature, anti-logocentrism, an interest in physicality and presence; and a second approach to irrationality and the subconscious. This relatively universal trend was fully realised outside of the capital city of Tallinn, in a large institutionalised theatre, *The Vanemuine*, by young actors, most of them graduated from the local acting studio. Although their activity was initially marginal, they nevertheless had a reduced impact on the whole of Estonian theatre.

The third period of experimentations began in the wake of political liberation at the end of the 1980s and continued throughout the next decade, and was connected with opened state borders. The most radical experiments in theatrical language were carried out by amateurs or performers with a limited acting training, so at first a lack of experience and a low aesthetic standard nullified the credibility of their efforts. The (post)modernisation of Estonian theatre was related more with particular persons rather than institutions, which were quite liberal toward all kinds of peculiarities. One of the most influential experimenters was Mati Unt (1944–2005), a well-known writer, whose career as a director in leading Estonian theatres was rather controversial, mostly because of his style, which was theatrical and eclectic. He initiated the theatre renewal of the 1960s and practised bold dramatisations from there on, although it wasn't until the 1990s that he became really radical in rewriting

and mixing high and popular culture. Another restless experimenter is Peeter Jalakas (1961–) who graduated from the Pedagogical Institute as a supervisor for amateur theatre groups, but who continued his studies with Eugenio Barba, Pina Bausch and Roberto Ciullo. Jalakas has founded several independent groups (VAT Theatre (1987), Ruto Killakund (1989)) as well as the first private theatre in Estonia — Von Krahle Theatre (1992). He has been in a constant search for new aesthetics in the interdisciplinary, multimedia and intercultural fields that have become his and his theatre's trademarks. An important step in the development of the Von Krahle Theatre was the establishment of a highly professional troupe in 1998, bringing the theatre's unconventional productions into the highlights of Estonian theatrical life. By now, mainstream theatre has integrated almost all of the former experimental (post)modern tricks and the young directors who started their careers during the 1990s tend to be rather conservative (Tiit Ojasoo is perhaps the sole exception).

#### A CRAVING FOR ROMANTIC HEROES

In the first half of the 1920s, theatre directors and critics were surprised by a sudden audience interest in plays by Schiller and other classical authors. From 1921 to 1924, four productions of Schiller were performed in Tallinn: "Wilhelm Tell" (1921), "The Virgin from Orleans" (1923), "Maria Stuart" (1923) and "The Robbers" (1924). Among these productions, those with a female protagonist were the most successful. At the beginning of the decade, three different versions of the biblical story of Judith and Olovernes, as well as "Salome" by Oscar Wilde were staged. In addition, tragedies by Shakespeare and Sophocles — "Hofmannsthal" earned a special attention from the audiences. All these facts point to the conclusion that in the context of economic difficulties on the one hand and an upstart mentality on the other, a special craving for heroes and romantic pathos has cropped up.

A similar correspondence between the economic situation and the aesthetic taste of audiences was perceptible in the middle of the 1990s. In 1995, an Estonian could watch four different versions of Don Quixote, all in different genres: Jules Massenet's opera "Don Quixote", Mitch Leigh's musical "The Man from La Mancha" and Bulgakov's drama "Don Quixote" all had their opening nights in this year, and Minkus's ballet from 1986 was still in the repertoire. "The Man from La Mancha" was performed for five years and it gathered more than 18,000 spectators. But the hit

of the year 1995 was the open air production of "The Three musketeers" by Alexandre Dumas, which heralded the end of the era of romantic heroes and the arrival of the era of haberdashers.

#### INCREASE OF THE POPULARITY OF NATIONAL DRAMA

The first phase of the two periods of independence may perhaps be called the phase of modernisation on the one hand, and a devotion to the classics on the other. (Returning to the classics is quite characteristic for theatre in times of crises and confusion, so Shakespeare and Schiller once again became popular at the end of the 1930s.) But in the second half of both the 1920s and the 1990s, Estonian theatre began to follow international trends; it took contemporary conditions of life and the human being as its main points of interest, and this change of direction brought more and more contemporary Estonian plays to the stage.

At the end of the 1920s, the official cultural policy in Estonia stressed the importance of national and naturalistic, "down-to-earth" elements in the arts; this policy was met with positive feedback from the people. The number of Estonian works on stage increased constantly: during the season of 1919/20, five original plays were performed, 1924/25 11, 1927/28 22, 1931/32 33 and 1933/34 40. A breakthrough in this chain of events turned out to be a production of a village comedy, "Mikumärdi" by Hugo Raudsepp in 1929, which unleashed a boom of the author's plays. Hence in the 1930s, half of the repertoire consisted of Estonian literature, these productions being also top-ranking in the number of spectators.

The end of the 20th century is not as optimistic; nevertheless, from 1995 onward, the number of Estonian plays in theatres has been steadily increasing. Nowadays, almost one third of the repertoire, approximately 60 to 70 productions, are based on Estonian literature, but almost a half of them are productions for children and there are many rewritings/dramatisations of novels from foreign literature as well. Nevertheless, when 23 Estonian plays were staged in 1995, 13 of them were for adults and half of them were literary classics. In 2003, the situation is markedly different — among the 33 new Estonian productions, 27 represent the repertoire of adults and only six of them are derived from the classics. The most popular dramatist of the past 10 years has been Andrus Kivirähk. Similar to Raudsepp, he is a topical satirist working for a daily newspaper, who in his numerous comedies investigates the nature of Estonians. Kivirähk and Raudsepp are

two rare but colourful examples of playwrights whose successful and reliable brand, like a centrifugal force, takes a whole column of less talented colleagues to the theatrical Parnassus.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although the two periods in Estonian history, 1918–1939 and 1991–the present, carry some

political, economic and cultural similarities, a closer investigation often reveals different causes for similar symptoms or vice versa — similar political-economic conditions result in different expressions within the arts. In general, it can be concluded that society and the arts may share a certain homology, but constant new investigations are required, based on concrete empirical material, and oversimplifications should be avoided.

## Appendix 1

### EVENTS IN ESTONIAN THEATRE AND SOCIETY

1914 – 1939	1985 – 2005
1914 beginning of World War I	1985 beginning of the Gorbachev <i>perestroika</i>
1916 foundation of the Drama Theatre	1987 foundation of the VAT Theatre
	1988 massive resurgence of national aspiration
	1989 foundation of the Children's Theatre of Tartu etc.
	1989 beginning of the experiments with theatrical language
1918 proclamation of Estonian independence	1991 proclamation of Estonian independence
1920 peace treaty with Soviet Russia	
1920 foundation of the first acting school	1992 foundation of the Von Krahle Theatre
1924 – 1926 foundation of new theatres: the Drama Studio Theatre, the Tallinn Workers' Theatre etc.	1990 – 1992 opening of acting and theatre departments
1921 – 1924 high time of the expressionist experiments and romantic heroes	~1995 high time of romantic heroes
1925 – 1935 increase of popularity of national drama	1995 – increase of popularity of national drama

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<sup>3</sup>Haan K. *Karl Menning ja teater "Vanemuine"*, Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teatriühing, 1987, p. 135; Kask K. *Teatritegijad, alustajad. Eest teatrilugu ∞ – 1917*, Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1970, pp. 214, 216.

<sup>4</sup>*Teatrielu* 1985, Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, pp. 282–287.

<sup>5</sup>*Teatrielu* 199, Tallinn: Eesti Teatriliiit, pp. 284–292.

<sup>6</sup>Süvalep E. *Kirjandus 20. sajandi alguskümnendil. "Noor-Eesti". "Siuru"*. – Eesti Kirjanduslugu, Tallinn: Koolibri, 2001, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup>Rähesoo J. *Estonian theatre*, Tallinn: Estonian Theatre Union, 2003, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup>Unt M. *Teatriuenduse algusest Nõukogude Eestis*. – Hermaküla, Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2002, pp. 47–52.

<sup>9</sup>Tormis L. *Eesti teater 1920–1940. Sõnalavastus*, Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1978, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

• Anneli Saro

## NACIONALINĖS VALSTYBĖS ĮTAKA ESTIJOS TEATRUI

### S a n t r a u k a

Teatras laikomas mimetiniu menu ir gyvenimo atspindžiu, tačiau skelbti moksliskai patikrinamus teiginius apie teatro tarpusavio santykius su visuomene yra sudėtinga. Karai, diktatūra, politiniai įvykiai ir ekonominė aplinka neabejotinai daro poveikį teatro struktūrai, iš dalies lemia dominuojančias temas, pastatymo estetiką ir suvokimo galimybes. Kita vertus, menui, berods, būdinga savita laiko struktūra, nepriklausoma nuo visuomenės istorijos. Tai ypač akivaizdu, kai tyrinėjame teatro reiškinius demokratinėse valstybėse.

Estija XX amžiuje buvo nepriklausoma valstybė du kartus: 1918 – 1939 m. ir nuo 1991 m. iki šiandien. Pereinamieji laikotarpiai ir išsilaivsinimas neatnešė į Estijos teatrą radikalių pokyčių, tačiau palyginus šiuos istoriškai nutolusius laikotarpius, ima ryškėti, kad juose esama tam tikrų stulbinančių panašumų, pavyzdžiui, nuosaiki teatrinės kalbos modernizacija, romantinių herojų poreikis ir pamažu augantis nacionalinės dramaturgijos populiarumas. Vis dėlto, geriau įsiziūrėjus aiškėja, kad dažnai panašią teatro raišką lemia skirtingos politinės ir ekonominės sąlygos ir atvirkščiai, panašūs socialiniai procesai teatre atspindi visiškai skirtingomis formomis. Todėl apibendrinant galima teigti, kad tarp visuomenės ir meno egzistuoja tam tikra homologija, tačiau ją atskleisti gali tik nauji tyrinėjimai, pagrįsti konkrečia empirine medžiaga ir vengiantys supaprastinto vaizdo.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *XX amžiaus Estijos teatras, nacionalinė dramaturgija, teatrinės institucijos, modernizacija, romantiniai herojai.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Estonian theatre of the 20th century, national drama, theatre institutions, modernization, romantic heroes.*

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# Media(ted) Reality

Medijų (paveikta) realybė



• *Benjamin Cope*

## LET'S DV8... – THEATRICAL STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL IN AN AGE OF FILM

As a lecturer in Visual and Cultural Studies I consider art, film, urban space, television, adverts, the Internet, but hardly ever theatre. Why not? Is theatre somehow incompatible with the technological advances of the visual media dominated world in which we now live? Yet I have the feeling that in my own teaching the element of performance is growing ever more important. No longer does it seem reasonable to expect students to sit and engorge a steady flow of information; rather I find myself seeking a whole range of scenarios and forms of address to try to engage students in an encounter with the ideas or questions of a given lesson. This general tendency of the development of contemporary teaching seems to be forgotten only at academic conferences which are surely the only type of play in which the actors can't be bothered either to learn or even, as in the case of politics or television, to pretend they have learned their script. Both of these phenomena, a disappearance of theatre and a spread of performativity seem to be linked to the media soaked environment in which we now live. What I intend to do in this article, therefore, is to approach the question of how theatre, and indeed the very process of thought, have been changed by the growth of visual media. What role is there for theatre in the age of cinema?

On first inspection, the answer might simply be "There isn't one." As early as 1928 Buster Keaton,

for example, seemed exuberantly intent on proving this point in the climactic hurricane scene from his film *Steamboat Bill Jnr.* In this episode, a great storm causes everything to be put in motion: the hapless Bill Jnr. is first liberated from a mental asylum when its roof and walls are blown clean away in front of the eyes of the cinema spectator. His bed is itself then blown off down the road where he slips and slides his way through collapsing buildings, flying cargo, wind-driven cars, electricity pylons, etc., before finally flying off clinging to an uprooted tree and being plunged into a nearby river. In the midst of all this environmental carnage, Keaton unwittingly runs through a stage door and into a theatre. Here, the outside wind makes a static stage dummy come to life, causing Keaton to step on a car horn and then leap in panic and fall through an unseen trapdoor and disappear. Keaton, by this point thoroughly fed up, decides to escape and therefore runs and leaps into the set design landscape painted on the back wall of the stage. He of course simply bounces off the field and lake painted on the two-dimensional surface of the theatre back wall. But a second later, the wind (of change?) blows the theatre down and Keaton runs out into a landscape that in cinema is not only real, as opposed to the painted illusion of theatre, but full of the potential threat of wind-uprooted flying buildings, one of which promptly lands over him.

Here is cinema making the great claim of its superiority. For while theatre would use tricks or the illusion of representation relying on the convention that we as childish spectators agree to pretend that what occurs on stage is a picture of what has happened out in the real world, the cinema does something quite different. It shows us man or woman in the world, since it is the relations to the outside environment, to the world off-screen, that are key in making films what they are. Is it then only cinema that can make Shakespeare's great boast for theatre that "All the world's a stage" finally come true?<sup>1</sup>

But at this point Martin Heidegger might enter stage left (or perhaps stage far right) and shout: "Cut! Cut! Don't you see that this is all a hoax? You're only seeing one side of the question concerning technology?"<sup>2</sup> For, Heidegger argues, when we look at an aeroplane on a runway, we just see an aeroplane; what we don't see is the global aviation network required to have this object waiting on the runway ready for us. Likewise, when we see nature in all its awesome power on the screen, what is carefully (or quaintly not so carefully when we now look back at Buster Keaton) hidden from us is the perverted mechanics required to produce violent wind when you need it and the even sicker machinations of the global film industry. Through technology man puts nature on standby, on reserve, and therefore loses the deeper relationship to the process of the revelation of truth of which he is only a part and not, as visual culture might lure us into believing, the master.

Should I have failed to convince you that visual culture is the tragedy predicted by that grumpy oracle of the hubris of technology, and then Jonathon Beller makes the point explicit.<sup>3</sup> Beller argues that when we watch a film we are not looking at the object we think we are. What cinema in fact represents is not the world as object, but commodity fetishism in its most extreme form. For in its becoming the object that it is, a visual illusion, film performs an absolute peeling away of the labour relations required to produce it. Unlike other contemporary commodities, like mobile phones or computers, in whose completed form the labour processes of production are also hard to spot, a film has no use-value. A definition of film might therefore read as follows: the pure object of visual consumption which requires that the huge levels of capital and labour-time involved in its production have to disappear.

It therefore seems almost logical to pursue, as Beller unnervingly does, a reading of global visual culture through Marx's theory of labour. Now, he argues, the labour-time that will generate the surplus value necessary for the capitalist is that of the apparently idle spectator, the act of looking.

Whether we look at a film matters to the profits of those who made it, every time we set eyes on a web-search engine, someone is making money. Should cinema therefore be viewed primarily as an active agent in the machinations of global capitalism enabling "the extraction of value from human bodies beyond normal physical and spatial limits and beyond normal working hours — it is an innovation that will combat the generalised falling rate of profit."<sup>4</sup> It seems perfectly plausible to argue that the growth of the film industry, and the other visual media it spawned, has had a profoundly disruptive effect on a certainty of where work is: for if a film requires huge amounts of labour to disappear and watching a film appears to be relaxing but makes someone a profit, then do we know what we are doing and when we are doing it? To put it another way, albeit with a somewhat American sense of cinematic slogan-making, "Production has entered the visual and the virtual has become real."<sup>5</sup>

The contemporary world can thus be described as the continual encounter with a vast array of visual fetishes which lack any grounding in objectivity, a process which can only, as Beller proposes, have had a profound impact on the structure of our unconscious. For Jacques Lacan, in developing his structure of the unconscious, was acting as a great theoretician of theatre: indeed, his notion that the true sense of a phrase is cut off from the words used to express it is one he wonderfully performed in his lectures. The pregnant pauses and the dramatic monologue that Lacan played before a packed auditorium is, like the obvious presence on stage of the Purloined Letter in his famous seminar, what gestures us towards the deep truth that must always just elude us.<sup>6</sup> An actor speaks on stage, both subject and object, craving the subjective desires of the objects in the audience to whom he performs the desire he cannot express. Is Lacan's thought of the mirror stage anything other than the paradox of the actor: recognising oneself as part of a symbolic network in which the individual inevitably feels the impossible necessity of being both subject and object.

The times, however, have changed. The circulation of rootless images has enlarged to such an extent that the primordial question is not that of the relationship of desire separated from an objective symbolic structure, but rather of how the unconscious itself is shaped and stimulated by the constant impact of visual fetishes. The zones of our unconscious leisure, pleasure, are growing and the question of how these diverse instances of desire relate to a coherent individual becomes ever more tenuous. Does the sight of so many partial quasi objects of desire produce so many partial quasi subjects? The constant impact of

these groundless visual fetishes, Beller thus argues, enlarge and radically further destabilise the spheres of the unconscious, to the extent of changing who we are. Thus, a thought of how we now relate to thinking and acting cannot but pass through an analysis of our changed relationship to images, of what sort of a spectator we are. Or to put it another way, our ability to see the 'empty space' that Peter Brook saw as sufficient to constitute theatre is already polluted by the montages of desires provoked by moving images.<sup>7</sup>

This same point is made by Jean-Luc Nancy in his moving article on Iranian film-maker Abbas Kiarostami.<sup>8</sup> Nancy proposes that rather than being the 7<sup>th</sup> Art, the cinema has become the art which disturbs the classification of all the others. This is true not just of theatre and, as in the Buster Keaton example discussed above, how cinema has questioned the theatre's need for a stage, but also of painting, literature and music's sense of identity as artistic genres. However, Nancy's vision of cinema, perhaps not surprising if he watches more Iranian cinema than corporate American nonsense, is not so black as Beller's. For although Nancy agrees that cinema has transformed our mental experience, he does not agree that this has distorted a real experience of reality and labour to leave us confronted only with fetishes. Rather, for Nancy, the key feature of contemporary experience is a certain cinematography that marks all of it and which has fundamentally changed our distinction between the real and the representational. There is not one experience that is real and another that is mediated through a canvas, a stage or a screen. After a century of cinema we are becoming aware that our experience of the world is itself a complex product of our memory of cinema. Art is no longer about representing the real, but is itself a process of production: producing nothing less than our experience of the world. In this sense, stage or no stage, screen or no screen, becomes rather insignificant: the essence of drama lies elsewhere.

What might theatre have to say in this new situation? The first thing that happened at the Warsaw performance of British dance-troupe DV8's play (is it cinema's fault that this was somewhere between a dance and a play?) appropriately called *The Cost of Living* was that the lights went up on the house and a gruff, rough-looking coarse-voiced Scot hurled abuse at some members of the crowd who arrived late: "What the fuck do you think you're doing! We've all been working on this play for 2 years and you bastards can't even be bothered to make it here on time! Don't you know time is money?!"<sup>9</sup> If, as discussed above, in Beller's view the problem of contemporary visual culture is that it makes invisible the labour of production, here we have theatre aggressively doing precisely the

reverse: the human work of production is made as explicit as the language used to state it. For a moment the passive/active audience become actors under the spotlight of a gaze, and the usually sublimated lack of awareness of the value of the labour that goes into producing a cultural product is made the play's point of departure.

The brutal attack on spectator illusions is continued throughout the performance. "How old were you when you lost your innocence?" someone screams and it is clear that that innocence, presumably the innocence that would have allowed us to believe in theatre, has been truly lost. But we do believe, because as in Chekhov, this is theatre that makes our real. At another moment, surrounded by the paraphernalia of the pseudo-Dyonisian excesses of a British Friday night, a chorus of dancers just jumps mechanically up and down, their arms by their sides, singing "Happy, happy, happy me," underneath a neon logo threateningly encouraging us to "Jump while you can". The stimuli of today's culture tell us to "Just do it!" and the body responds, but for how long and where is the subject? Desire has been polluted, made object irrelevant, and when a female dancer shoves a male dancer's hand down her pants, it is clear that this is neither theatre, nor erotic.

This disturbing of the relationship between real and illusion is taken to an agonising climax when the dancers who are not of the sort of shapes and sizes one traditionally associates with dance are urged by a smiling master of ceremonies to step forward for a perverted (or honest) beauty contest. They have to present themselves to the audience: a first huge man comes forward and says, "Hi! I'm Mark from New York and I have to keep eating because DV8 only employs me 'cos I'm fat". The next, "Hey, I'm Valentino from Sicily and I've got Aids". The next, "I'm Shirley, from London, and I've been a drug addict for 10 years". After each the audience is encouraged by the host to applaud wildly. Thus, in what might be seen as an extension of Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, the traditional relationship of theatre has become astonishingly inverted. It may be that we are hearing and seeing a simple truth which we suddenly desperately start wanting to believe is fiction. "Show us your body — only that can't lie" rings out the slogan, but is even that true? As the next stage in their beauty contest, the competitors have to run out and retrieve objects from the audience: first, black socks and most return, after a few minutes frantic activity, with a black sock. Then 'droga biżuteria', and a few less succeed, but some do; then 'karta kredytowa', and only three reappear back on stage grinning and waving someone's visa. Here then the illusion of the contemporary interactivity of visual media is made

wonderfully and, especially for the card donors, slightly anxiously real.

Throughout the performance time runs ahead frantically: is the bankruptcy of time the final cost of living? The message is clear and black: time and money have polluted everything, distorting all beyond our ability to recognise it or ourselves. This after all was also a big production kindly financed by the wonderfully effective tourist propaganda machine the British Council, and as such is an example of the unjust process of cultural globalisation of which I too am, as much as it pains me, an active beneficiary. It was a play that fought against an easy sense of reassurance and even its brightest spot was one licked with darkness. For the play's leading character was a disabled dancer whose body is astonishingly misshapen in a way that provokes a complex set of emotional responses, not least because the character himself was not just victim but also petulantly and sometimes vulgarly aggressive. But in combination with other dancers there were moments when he produced movements of a lyrical beauty that suggested that if there is hope it lies in the invention of new combinations of physical interactions. Perhaps the key is not understanding, but searching for new ways of meeting and moving.

For movements are conditioned it seems more socially than physically. In Poland, there is a strong heritage of this in the deforming of bodies which, as in Tadeusz Kantor's *Dead Class* or Kristian Lupa's staging of Thomas Bernhard's *Erasure*, is associated above all with the weight of tradition and the trauma of the war. The issues that have caused these physical burdens have not disappeared in the period after World War II. While in Belarus, as powerfully embodied by the theatre Inzhest they have perhaps got heavier, in other places the physical distortions have become displaced and fragmented, but remained just as violent.<sup>10</sup> This was intensely demonstrated by the St. Petersburg street theatre troupe Derevo who in their performance of *The Execution of Pierrot* ran dirty and naked amongst the tables of the elegant cafés of Warsaw's pristinely tourist-preserved old town square, confirming all our worst fears about the barbarian, un-European nature of Russians. The plot of the play, in this time of anti-terrorist paranoia and the war in Chechnya, is to shoot a deserter, which they repeatedly attempt and fail with burlesque and gloriously sexualised physical excess. Derevo, like DV8, provoke the crowd: into giving many '*poslednye cigarety*', using audience members to stand on to prepare to shoot, stealing walkie-talkies from confused security guards, causing the police to be called and eventually involving the crowd in an all-engulfing tomato fight. This play was particularly en-

joyed by passing drunks and children, whereas I heard an old lady behind me saying, "Well, it's one thing for them to show this on television, but this, this is terrible. There might be children watching". The provocation of their performance indeed succeeded in engineering a drastic change to the bodily politics of the space in which they were performing.

What might this exploration of physicality in contemporary theatre suggest? In an essay on Maurice Maeterlinck, Antonin Artaud wrote "Drama is the highest form of the spirit. It is in the nature of the deepest things to clash, to combine, to come apart. Action is the very principle of life".<sup>11</sup> What does this quotation mean? If we read it across the cuts, clashes and rhythms of Sergei Eisenstein's thought of montage as integral not just to the craft of cinema, but also to the passage that causes thinking to become the expression of emotions in action, we get to a point where theatre now can become the embodiment of cinema's revolutionary impact on thinking.<sup>12</sup> For the revelation of Gilles Deleuze's books on the cinema is made in the title of first volume, *The Movement-Image*, when we understand that this movement image is a higher form of thinking: thinking beyond thought. Thought is an encounter, or rather a series of encounters, whose outward movement is its transformative power. So when Deleuze, with Félix Guattari writes, "If the mental objects of philosophy, art and science (that is to say vital ideas) had a place, it would be at the deepest point of the synaptic gaps, in the hiatuses, the intervals and the between-times of a brain that refuses to become object" they are metaphorical only to the extent that they attempt, even partially, to localise the encounter nature of the thinking experience.<sup>13</sup> In Artaud's sense, the clashes, combinations and coming apart with the world around us are nothing less than the expansive process of thought that takes place through the body.

The revolution to thinking that Deleuze and Guattari attempt to bring about is the end of thinking about thought as representative: rather thought is dynamic, transformative and expansive. Thought is not that which comprehends, it is that which goes out to meet, does not understand and through the meeting of not understanding is transformed and thus stimulated. In terms of language, this sounds provocative and indeed accounts for much of the frustration often expressed with regard to Deleuze and Guattari's writing: what do they mean, why are their concepts so unfixed and fluctuating? But as a description of the power of contemporary dance or a contemporary theatre of movement, it seems perfectly acceptable. This theatre seems most successful when its movements express the paradoxical mixture of bodily freedom and self-imposed restriction



which form the paradoxical characteristics of today's society. For regarding thinking as encounters means that it will always be in tight relationship with the society in and against which it emerges. Thus the plays I mentioned seemed successful precisely to the extent that they became no longer plays, but an expression of the material truth of society. Theatre becoming non theatre, as Deleuze and Guattari write that philosophy can only become non-philosophy in order to become itself.<sup>14</sup>

What can theatre do for us? What can we do for the theatre? In their description of how to resist the spread of capitalism, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write the following:

We certainly do need to change our bodies and ourselves, and in perhaps a much more radical way than cyberpunk authors imagine. [...] The will to be against really needs a body that is completely incapable of submitting to command. It needs a body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex life, and so forth. (If you find your body refusing these "normal" modes of life, don't despair-realise your gift!) In addition to being radically unprepared for normalisation, however, the new body must also create a new life. [...] The infinite paths of the barbarians must form a new mode of life.<sup>15</sup>

Frankly, separating Hardt and Negri's insight from their rhetorical excesses is sometimes frustrating, so I use two examples from the plays I described which help to try to figure out what this might imply. A particularly intense moment in the *Derevo* performance is when a strikingly androgynous girl appears to rescue the hero as a Russian ambulance service: smoking four cigarettes at once, waving and licking raw meat and fish, with her strangely adolescent and both provocative and obscene body, she is the incarnation of a health service one would rather not meet. However, she also embodies a sphere beyond the disciplined bodies of the self-enforced realm of bio-power in which capitalist mechanisms of control function. Or the disabled dancer in *DV8* leers towards the audience, "I bet you've been wondering if I can have sex, haven't you? Can't help it, can you?" Can we?

I would therefore argue that it is primarily in its resistance to the image as fetish and to sex as commodity that theatre has especial potential at the current image soaked stage of the development of late capitalism. Theatre can install the corporal productivity of thought into the encounters of existence as process, but is this any longer relevant? Has not cinema stolen and effectively negated the chance of the productive missed encounters of being together on which theatre is based? I think

here of Sergei Eisenstein's principle of basing the cinema on the montage of fairground 'attractions', the attention catching stands of public theatre. It is clear that in making the strong emotional hits of 'attractions' ubiquitous, the cinema has more or less destroyed, the possibility for the being together on which such street theatre was founded.<sup>16</sup> So how can theatre join not theatre and have an impact on society in any way that can compare to that of say, Robbie Williams or Tatu? In Poland, our great manifestation of street theatre recently was the 100,000s persuaded to synchronically get on their knees in public squares: but it seemed as if this deforming of bodies was done in the name of pre-cinema morality and a subjugation of bodies to hierarchy. It is perhaps for this reason that Deleuze's works on theatre, on Samuel Beckett and Camelo Bene, are especially dark, self-destructive and difficult to accept.<sup>17</sup> Exploring bodily resistances to power seems to lead in some dangerous and threatening directions, perhaps revealing the dangers that lurk in the shadows of the radically democratic space of unstructured encounters opened by Deleuze's thought.

But perhaps the pope was a great street actor and the cinema opens up the chance of rethinking theatre by connecting individual expression with the multiple physical and psychic movements from which it is created. Russian philosopher Oleg Aronson argues that we should understand cinema in terms of the miraculous.<sup>18</sup> Cinema events happen: we don't know why or how, they appeal firstly to our emotions (our sense of wonder), they are perceived by a crowd, they are profoundly democratic in that they appeal not to scholars but to the wider public and they have the power to change us. But is one of the miracles of cinema to give us back the chance of a theatre where it no longer matters that we can't understand, since the manifold movements of our visual culture stimulated unconscious find their expression in the manifold interactions of our moving bodies. Our attention thus would now be on the environment that enables or perverts such movements, the mechanisms of crossing the interval and the potentials thus created for change. As Eisenstein in his article on montage in acting and Peter Brook both write, this acute sensitivity to the multiple possibilities that create the psychic reality of physical interpersonal space and how to cross it is at the essence of theatre.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps now in something like an experienced return to silent film, we need to become better actors. Like a person learning to swim, comfortable with repeating the swimming instructor's movements against the unpredictable moving currents of the sea, despite not knowing how the sea works or what it means. Wouldn't it be nice to think so?



- <sup>1</sup> Shakespeare W. *As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7, available at [www.artofeuropa.com/shakespeare/sha9.htm](http://www.artofeuropa.com/shakespeare/sha9.htm).
- <sup>2</sup> Heidegger M. "The Question Concerning Technology". *The Question Concerning Technology*, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, pp. 3-35.
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- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 66.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 67.
- <sup>6</sup> Lacan J. *Seminar on the Purloined Letter*, available at [chaucer.library.emory.edu/carroll/lacan\\_pages/lacan\\_text.html](http://chaucer.library.emory.edu/carroll/lacan_pages/lacan_text.html). For information about audio and video recordings of Lacan see <http://www.ubu.com/sound/lacan.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> Brook P. *The Empty Space*, London: Penguin, 1968.
- <sup>8</sup> Nancy J.-L. "The Evidence of Film: Abbas Kiarostami". *Sinii Divan*, ed. by Elena Petrovskaya, No. 4 (2004), pp. 78-99, my translation.
- <sup>9</sup> DV8 gave this performance in Warsaw in Autumn 2003. For further information about DV8, see [www.dv8.co.uk](http://www.dv8.co.uk).
- <sup>10</sup> For information on Inzhest see [belorus.by/inzhest](http://belorus.by/inzhest). A powerful example of the physical expression of the distorting psychic violence of living in everyday post-communist reality is offered by the Polish group Suka Off, see [www.sukaoff.com](http://www.sukaoff.com).
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- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 205.
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- <sup>19</sup> Eisenstein S. "Montage v aktyorskom masterstvie". *Montage*, pp. 189-197.

*Benjamin Cope*

## DV8 IR TEATRO IŠLIKIMO STRATEGIJOS KINO AMŽIUJE

### S a n t r a u k a

Remiantis kino teorija, šiame straipsnyje siekiama išsiaiškinti, kaip teatras galėtų tapti veiksmingo pasipriešinimo globaliai *media* kultūrai centru. Ar teatras nėra filosofiškas, ir ar neturėtų jis dėl to dėkoti būtent kinui? Analizėje išskiriamos dvi trupės: anglų DV8 ir rusų *Derevo*, tačiau minimas ir lenkų, baltarusių teatras. Straipsnyje remiamasi šiais mąstytojais: Busteriu Keatonu, Martinu Heideggeriu, Jonathonu Belleriu, Sergejum Eizenšteinu, Antoninu Artaud, Peteriu Brooku, Jacques'u Lacanu, Olegu Aronsonu ir neišvengiamai – Gilles'u Deleuze'u bei Félixu Guattari.

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad kaip tik gebėjimas pasipriešinti atvaizdo fetišizacijai suteikia teatrui išskirtinių galimybių dabartinėje vaizdiniais persunktoje vėlyvojo kapitalizmo stadijoje. Tačiau ar kinas, paversdamas vaizdinius visur esančiais, nesunaikino paties poreikio susirinkti ir būti kartu? Kaip teatras galėtų daryti visuomenei tokią pat įtaką, kokią daro, pavyzdžiui, Robbie Williamsas arba *Tatu*?

Rusų filosofas Olegas Aronsonas teigia, kad kiną reikia suprasti kaip stebuklą. Kinas tiesiog atsitinka, nežinia kaip ir kodėl, jis veikia mūsų emocijas, be to kinas yra masiškas ir išskirtinai demokratiškas, nes suprantamas ne vien mokslininkams, bet ir platesnei publikai, pagaliau jis turi galią mus keisti. Bet galbūt vienas iš kino stebuklų yra tai, kad jis sugrąžina mums teatro galimybę, kuomet suprasti tampa nebe taip svarbu, nes įvairios mūsų judančių kūnų sąveikos tik išreiškia įvairius vizualiosios kultūros paveiktos sąmonės procesus. Teatre mes galime atkreipti dėmesį į aplinką, kuri įgalina arba iškreipia judesius, į tuos mechanizmus, kurie reguliuoja mūsų judesius tam tikru metu, ir suprasti kokios yra galimybės visa tai pakeisti.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *kino teorija, vėlyvasis kapitalizmas, medijų kultūra, teatras, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari.*

**KEY WORDS:** *film theory, late capitalism, media culture, theatre, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari.*

• *Dagmar Kase*

## NEW THEATRE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The ground for this article is technology that is subordinated by our wish to explore human being and the world, and theatre that doesn't necessarily need theatre halls and that spreads outwards the word. Michael Huxley and Noel Witts write in their book *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader* that technology has created a new vision of the world, and theatre can now be expected to deal with the complex treatment of complex subjects, and of complex responses to 20th century life.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately Estonian theatre has not yet dealt with a complex treatment of the subjects — it stands still while commercial entertainment that marks the intelligent is growing. This is the reason why examples of Estonian theatre are lacking.

I will present 10 forms of new theatre (the basis for the classification of these forms are performances, and not theatre groups, nor individuated artists) that show three different ways to use Internet:

- 1) *Internet as a Tool*: different theatre forms that explore reality versus virtual reality through the use of Internet
- 2) *Internet as an Output*: theatre that uses virtuality in order to become partly machine, human and theory
- 3) *Internet as a Tool and as an Output*: theatre forms that consider environment to be more important than the space itself

My aim is not to make a deep analysis but to introduce the terms.

### INTERNET AS A TOOL

The INTERACTIVE THEATRE got its name from an interactive performance *Hotel from Hell* (2002)<sup>2</sup> by Australian Kelli Dipple aka Gravel Rash<sup>3</sup> who used Max/MSP object orientated programming, tracking the motion of a live performer and sending data across an ethernet network, in order to control the audio levels of a soundscape and the time frame for playback of short video clips.

The text as an illustrative mean is replaced by the pre-recorded sound of the neighbours and live audience, and by video images that create illusionary space perceived as a real space by the spectators. We have multiply repeated chain model linking the space, motion of the person, and technology: computer and Internet. All three components have to work, otherwise the chain will break and the world will fall apart.

The MULTIMEDIA THEATRE is based on the performance *Escape Velocity* (1998) by Australian group Company in Space.<sup>4</sup> *Escape Velocity* creates dialogues between our visual, aural and kinetic perception, using real space and virtual space that is created by ISDN (Integrated Services

Digital Network) video conferencing. Company in Space shares Patrice Pavis' vision that the theatre space is conceived as invisible, unlimited, and linked to its users, space as a substance not to be filled, but expanded and extended.<sup>5</sup> Reality may be exceeded when real actor is accompanied by virtual actor who has been brought to the stage using technological means. We can describe two realities — the space in which the performance is held and the space where one dancer is watched by a camera. These two realities create the third that is common for both dancers.

The TELEMATIC THEATRE questions concepts such as identity, space, and time, perception of reality, the natural and the artificial. In the performance *Dementia of Angels* (1994) by Canadian group Corpsindice<sup>6</sup> the dancers have a double presence; a direct and real one, and a telematic one. Every dancer has coded captors placed on their bodies that generates data, the formatted data is sent to the other location where the data generates musical space. In this interactive creative circle every dancer can be aware of the result of their actions and movements - a sound produced in one place have an impact on the sound of the other.

ISDN video conferencing posits time at the centre of the performance and widens its meanings. During the transfer of a dancer, it may happen that the time zones and units will be mixed up — the time where past, present and future intertwines I call a 'dimensional time'. Theatre no longer deals with physical objects but the digital signal, modified and combined in real time.

The AVATAR-PERFORMANCE is a laboratory where an actor is a participant of an experiment and a director is a scientist. *Movatar*<sup>7</sup> (2000) by Australian Stelarc<sup>8</sup> is an experiment where physical body is animated by 3D computer generated virtual body. *Movatar* is an inverse motion capture system where instead of a body animating a computer entity, the avatar possesses a physical body in the real space. Stelarc's arms and upper body are controlled by 'the skeleton of the avatar', but his legs are free to move and touch the floor sensors that prompt and modulate the avatar's behaviour. *Movatar* shows that evolution of technology has brought us to a point where our fantasies about modification of the human being do not have to be limited by 'ordinary use' of forms (costume) and colours (make-up).

#### INTERNET AS AN OUTPUT

The CYBERTHEATRE *honorio in ciberspazio*<sup>9</sup> (1997) allows the audience, with aid of Internet

and a computer, to stay at home. *honorio in ciberspazio* reflects the time we are in. We can meet people in the net whom we have never met nor seen. Through exchanged texts characters will be born but the person will remain textual information until we meet him/her personally. Cybertheatre mediates the perception of the audience — the observational senses are limited, and it presses the experience of psychical processes at the audience's home. Guy Debord considers media and technology as powerful mechanisms keeping individuals numb and docile, watching and consuming, rather than acting and doing.<sup>10</sup> *honorio in ciberspazio* is entertainment that controls the viewer but simultaneously it shows convincingly — life is not on the one side and the theatre on the other.

The IRC-DRAMA *Hamnet* (1993) by The *Hamnet* Players<sup>11</sup> took place on a specially created channel on IRC called #hamnet. IRC has the elements of theatre — direct speech, the (global) presence of people and an audience. Stuart Harris, the author of the script, shows-off his linguistic playfulness by mixing archaic characters Hamlet, Ophelia et al. with contemporary IRC-characters Prologue, Audience et al. whose task is to perform the text and not the play itself. *Hamnet* plays around with language, creating wordplays that turn everything — activities, characters, and sounds etc. into the text. In order to enjoy the wordplay fully, it is necessary to be familiar with the work of Shakespeare, to know English, coded net-language like emoticons and acronyms, and IRC commands quite well. The minimal text is enriched by the improvisation of the actors who demonstrate their splendid use of the language.

Harris proves that we can have all the glory of the text when the actor's music is poor and that Shakespeare's texts are immortal, rich and contemporary no matter the year in which we are living.

Italian dlsan<sup>12</sup> cuts *Macbeth* and renders it with sounds and images into a new medium, HYPERTEXT. In *HyperMacbeth*<sup>13</sup> (2001) several narratives are told simultaneously both in Italian and in English. The traditional theatre has main characters and main plot; hypertext has all the characters on the stage at the same time, all equally important. Hypertext lets a viewer create his/her own story, making every way unique, being a net of possibilities, similar to our everyday life full of options and results. The hypertext of *HyperMacbeth* is special among its kind because although the audience makes the choices, it has an engine, created by a programme by dlsan that decides randomly which words-sounds-graphics are linked. dlsan has created complete symbol-

theatre, applying Artaud's idea of the word: the word has to be treated like a solid object in order to use it to move things.<sup>14</sup> At the theatre, as in everyday life, people do not pay enough attention to the words. *HyperMacbeth* is a thinking-practise that can help overstressed and hurried contemporary people to focus, think, and analyse.

The TWO-DIMENSIONAL CYBERFORMANCE follows the specification of a term "cyberformance" by Helen Varley Jamieson to describe the activities of group Avatar Body Collision.<sup>15</sup> Over a 12 hour period they presented four performances of *Dress The Nation*<sup>16</sup> (2003) that was created for free downloadable chat application The Palace. Actors and spectators were online, represented by avatars and their speech was displayed in cartoon bubbles. The instructive cyberformance explored the production of meaning in relation to 'idle' reception of chaotic world politics presented in our media. The process of education is entertainment that makes the form milder without the disappearance of the message and meaning. The Palace makes prolongs the existence of our body (by its multiplication). One can create unique avatars and change costumes as characters with just one single touch of a keyboard; also one can play several roles and even all the roles alone. Story, space and characters fuse on the computer screen that for Sherry Turkle<sup>17</sup> is the new location for our fantasies, both erotic and intellectual, showing that our imagination is the only limit we have.

#### INTERNET AS A TOOL AND AS AN OUTPUT

English group Blast Theory<sup>18</sup> introduces with its *Kidnap*<sup>19</sup> (1998) the SURVEILLANCE GAME. The group launched a lottery in which the winners had the chance to be kidnapped. One month before the actual kidnap 10 finalists were chosen at random and put under surveillance. Later on two winners were snatched in a broad daylight and taken to a secret location where they were held for 48 hours. The whole process had live broadcast on the net and the audience were able to control the video camera inside the safe-house and communicate live with the kidnappers.

It is realistic surveillance game that reflects a society whose members are treated like test animals. The circumstance that all participants are voluntarily and knowingly playing a 'game within a game' lifts it up from that reflection, and gives to it the quality of theatre. The essence of *Kidnap* is the method-based experiential art of Stanislavski. Similar to actors who need to know their characters, Blast Theory has to do the same, using three forms of surveillance techniques: pedestrian, ve-

hicular and residential. *Kidnap* has fixed rules: fixed players, a defined beginning and end, an improvised middle, a conceptual through-line, and a defined time and task. Unfortunately it does not take on a war-game dimension that would have enabled interesting and critical situations, raising a question — what would have happened if the frames would have been shifted and it would not have remained just 'a rehearsal of life'?

With PLAYFUL INSTALLATION *Blinkenlights*<sup>20</sup> (2001) German hacker group Chaos Computer Club (CCC)<sup>21</sup> turned Haus des Lehrers (the House of Teachers) into the world's largest interactive computer display. Webcam was set up for those who were not in Berlin and/or who wanted to have a remote view of the building. CCC painted 144 windows (eight floors with 18 windows) in white and put behind each window a single lamp on a tripod. The pattern of animations, text and image messages were created when the lamps were switched on and off. The computers that communicated using network protocol shared the control of the whole system in separate modules: control, playback and telephone interactivity. Everyone could create messages using free downloadable software made by CCC. Also it was possible to attach a simple text file to an e-mail in order to send it to CCC and play Pong, using mobile phones or send popular love letters. CCC changed the building into a scenographical info-body, adding the dimensions of a spectacle to it and creating a feeling that the environment is more important than space. Info is limited and simple as in the city-space, consisting of short words and signs — reality has been turned into a sign-language and 'multicultural party'. The most astonishing thing about this spectacle was its up-to-the-minute responsiveness, proceeding directly from its environment and its time, and expressing exactly what the audience wants.

#### CONCLUSION

New theatre carries the traditions of old theatre, telling important and meaningful stories about the human relationships and the problems of the society. But the whole process has been taken into the contemporary circuit of communication, fixing the view that theatre does not stand apart from society but is a global and playful organ that functions as a totality of components of the era. The sense in which reality is heightened as communication without barriers evolves presents potential for a dynamic existential revival of the theatre of the 21st century. Whether the new theatre will remain a utopia, or not, is left to the theatre and its audience to decide.

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Dagmar Kase

## NAUJASIS TEATRAS XXI AMŽIUJE

### S a n t r a u k a

Teatras ištisus amžius kuriamas pasitelkus technologiją, filosofiją, skirtingus teksto panaudojimo būdus, fizines raiškos priemones ir pan. Taip patvirtinama M. McLuhano mintis, kad medija yra priemonė, priverčianti kultūrą veikti, o žmogų mąstyti. Galima pastebėti, kad teatras, kaip savosios eros ženklas, yra apimtas sąstingio ne vien Estijoje. Teatro istorija liudija, kad spektaklis turi išlaikyti pušiausvyrą tarp intelektualaus vaidinimo ir pasilinksminimo. Atrodo, kad naujosios teatro formos, pvz., *interaktyvusis teatras*, *telematinis teatras*, *dvimatis kibernetinis spektaklis*, *IRC drama* ir pan. tokią pušiausvyrą išlaiko.

Straipsnyje pristatoma 10 spektaklių, kuriuose vienaip ar kitaip yra panaudojamas internetas. Autorė skiria tris pagrindinius internetinės erdvės funkcionavimo spektaklyje būdus: internetas yra naudojamasi kaip įrankis įvairiuose spektakliuose, tyrinėjančiuose realybės ir virtualios realybės santykį; internetas funkcionuoja kaip išvestis teatre, kuri panaudoja virtualumą, kad taptų vienu metu mechaniškas, žmogiškas ir teoriškas; internetas naudojamas kaip įrankis ir kaip išvestis teatre, kur aplinka yra laikoma svarbesne už erdvę.

Naujasis teatras tęsia senojo teatro tradicijas pasakodamas reikšmingas istorijas apie žmonių santykius ir visuomenės problemas. Tačiau pats procesas atsidūrė mūsų laikų komunikacijos lygmenyje tuo patvirtindamas, kad teatras nėra atskirtas nuo visuomenės, bet veikia tarsi globalus žaismingas įrankis, siejantis skirtingus šiandieninės eros komponentus. Ar naujasis teatras liks utopija, ar ne, gali nulemti tik pats teatras ir publika.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *medijos, teatras, internetas, interaktyvusis teatras, medių teatras, telematinis teatras, kibernetinis spektaklis.*

**KEY WORDS:** *media, theatre, internet, interactive theatre, multimedia theatre, telematic theatre, cyberformance.*



• *Tomas Pabedinskas*

## THE THEORY OF PERFORMATIVITY: A NEW CONTEXT FOR INTERPRETING CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Concepts of performativity have been influenced by anthropology and sociology, the art of performance, and the visual arts. These various influences resulted in an interdisciplinary concept; consequently it can be applied to the analysis of different cultural and art phenomena — and is a useful theoretical tool for understanding contemporary photography.

It's useful to set down my ideas about performativity at the outset. According to theatre theoretician Marvin Carlson, in every culture there is a kind of activity that is separated in time and space and therefore is understood in a special way.<sup>1</sup> In other words, limits of time and space create a certain "frame", in which human behaviour is understood in different way, than the performance of the actions of everyday life. The "frame" of the action can be defined as the organising principle that determines the ways in which the action is executed and perceived.<sup>2</sup> This "frame" of time and space is evident in different cultural and social phenomena: its function in a basketball game, for instance, is no less important than in traditional theatre performance. The actions that take place inside such a "frame" gains the importance and significance that they would not have outside it — it would make no sense to struggle for the ball so hard outside the "frame" of the game and the actions of the actors certainly would not signify the character of the play outside the stage. In this sense, it's possible to

say, that "framing" turns the action into performance — it is watched by spectators, who don't take part in it. The important thing to stress here is that the space and time delimitations are not the only cause of the change in perception of the action — the "frame" of the action can be merely mental and not dealing with any objective circumstances. For example, children's play can take place anywhere at any time, the only condition for it to happen is that the players understand each others actions as play. So we can say that performativity depends upon how it is perceived and interpreted by the viewer.

Alongside "framing" in time and space there is another reason why the action can be understood as performative. It can be interpreted as performative, if it is compared to certain patterns of behaviour, which are known to the spectator and therefore have special meanings for him. The researcher Richard Schechner uses the term "restored behaviour" to define human action, which can communicate certain meanings, as it is compared with the "potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action".<sup>3</sup> The concept of "restored behaviour," as previously discussed "framing," can be applied to various cultural and social events too. It can be used for analysing religious rituals as well as everyday social behaviour of a man. The renowned feminist theorist Judith Butler employs the concept of "restored behaviour" in her explanation of sexual identity. Although she does not

use the term “restored behaviour,” she argues that “acts, gestures, enactments [...] are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means”.<sup>4</sup> Butler tries to reveal, that sexual identity is some kind of role, consisting of socially and culturally defined acts, which have certain meaning. In other words, sexual identity is based on repetition of actions, which can be called “restored behaviour”. The same function of “restored behaviour” can be traced not only in sexual, but in other aspects of personal identity. In this way “restored behaviour” becomes one of the central notions when analysing the performative qualities of human behaviour.

Another important concept in performativity theory is “double consciousness”. “Double consciousness” emerges when the person, who acts, understands the difference between his behaviour and his ‘real’ identity. The simplest example of such “double consciousness” could be the theatre actor who consciously creates the dramatic role. But the same “double consciousness” can mark every human action, which we previously called “restored behaviour”. It is so, because “restored behaviour” is always compared with a “potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action.” It is always understood as real action taking place here and now and at the same time it is interpreted as a sign, whose significance comes from some common pattern of that action, which has socially and culturally defined meaning. Similar “double consciousness” results from the already discussed “framing” of the action — inside the “frame” it is interpreted as a sign, “framed” action can communicate certain meanings to the viewer, while still remaining real action, executed in present time in front of the audience. In fact, even the necessity of the audience can be questioned if we agree that “double consciousness” is enough to call an action performative. The concept of “double consciousness” implies that an actor can be his own spectator. His personality becomes divided: one part of it acts, while the other reflects his actions. It’s a kind of self reflexivity that is important here. At this point we can quite naturally turn to interpreting contemporary photography in the context of theory of performativity.

The theoretician of new media Maryla Hopfinger writes that contemporary audiovisual media have anthropocentric character.<sup>5</sup> Hopfinger gives an example of cinema and television, which show a man in various situations; doing something or engaged in interaction with other people. The presentations of these anthropological situations in audiovisual form reveal their variety and common principles. The possibility of recording

and observing human behaviour turned it into the object of self reflection. New media contributed to the formation of everyday actions and interpersonal communication that are based on understanding of their culturally defined models. In other words, contemporary media reveals that usual human behaviour and the everyday practice of interpersonal relations have performative quality — it is clear that at least part of them consist of “restored behaviour”. That’s why they help to communicate certain information or even consciously construct one’s personal identity. In fact, such social and cultural consequences of audiovisual media are a concrete example of the famous Marshall McLuhan’s statement, that “the medium is the message” because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action.<sup>6</sup> And photography is one of the visual media forms, whose role in the process of this modelling of the form and the scale of human interaction is particularly significant. Soon after its invention photography became a tool for reducing the variety of human appearances and different behaviours into simple, but “scientifically” defined types. “From the moment it was invented, photography was dedicated to examining the human body [...] The body was seen as the visible proof of human differences, criminal tendencies, pathology, and delinquency.”<sup>7</sup> With the help of photography human body became inscribed with various social and cultural signs and a man’s actions were attached to certain culturally and socially predefined meanings. Because of the belief in photography’s documentary nature, it was used as a means for providing evidence for artificially constructed presuppositions about a man, which were once believed to be scientific. To put it in another way, photography helped to create certain corporeal signs and then manipulate them. Art critic Virginijus Kinčinitis has an even more radical opinion and states that “[...] in photography the canonical, theatrical dramaturgy of bodies, objects, and phenomena is played and the taxonomical order of their arrangement is supposed to form the experience of present time and of historical truth as well as the model of human subjectivity and hierarchical understanding of art”.<sup>8</sup>

This is how photography falls into the performative domain of art and reality: it creates the visible surface, which is believed to be true. It is the same performative principle as in sexual identity expression at work here. Accordingly, various aspects of personal identity and surrounding reality can be understood as certain kind of enactments, played by the help of photography. In fact photography employs all the previously discussed performative principles. By photographing something, the psychological “frame”

is created — the traditional understanding of photography implies that the object seen in a picture must be significant even if it does not have any special meaning in everyday life. In addition, as mentioned, photography helps to create and spread some stereotypical judgments about the meaning of person's appearance and his actions. The latter in this way become understood as "restored behaviour" with the culturally and socially defined meaning. And of course it is a perfect tool for self reflection. By recording our

actions on light sensitive surfaces photography turns them into the objects of "double consciousness". This explains why we often become nervous while posing before photo camera — we understand that each of our gestures when seen in a photo will be perceived as a sign that tells something about our personality. Perhaps that's why contemporary artists use photography to explore various aspects of personal identity and include the function of the photographic media itself into their explorations.

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*Tomas Pabedinskas*

## PERFORMATYVUMO TEORIJA KAIP NAUJAS KONTEKSTAS ŠIUOLAIKINĖS FOTOGRAFIJOS INTERPRETACIJAI

### S a n t r a u k a

Performatyvumo sampratą veikė šiuolaikinė teatro teorija, antropologija, sociologija, performanso menas ir vizualieji menai. Tai lėmė, kad ši samprata tapo tarpdiscipliniška, todėl ją įmanoma pritaikyti patiems įvairiausiems kultūros ir meno fenomenams analizuoti. Straipsnyje aptariami svarbiausi performatyvumo principai ir atskleidžiama, kaip jie susiję su šiuolaikinės fotografijos samprata. Daug dėmesio skiriama performatyviams asmeninio identiteto formavimo principams, kurie veikia kasdieniame gyvenime. Analizuojama, kaip šie principai pasireiškia fotografijoje ir koku būdu patys yra veikiami fotografijos.

Fotografinis atvaizdas yra laikomas tikru ir teisingu, tačiau jame galime įžvelgti visus performatyvumo principus, kuriuos savo teorijose suformulavo teatro teoretikai Marvinas Carlsonas ir Richardas Schechneris: *apibrėžtas laikas ir erdvė, atkuriamas elgesys, dvigubas suvokimas*. Todėl įvairūs asmeninio identiteto aspektai, užfiksuoti nuotraukoje, gali būti suvokiami kaip savotiška vaidyba.

Tarpdisciplininė analizė, paremta feministinėje teorijoje apibrėžta performatyvaus identiteto samprata ir postmodernia atvaizdo interpretacija, parodo, kad, viena vertus, toks teorinis pagrindas suteikia galimybę kritiškai vertinti pačią fotografijos mediją, kita vertus, jis yra naudingas interpretuojant šiuolaikinę meninę fotografiją, kuri tapo ypač autorefleksyvi. Šis tekstas – tai atsakas į būtinybę ieškoti naujų kontekstų, kuriuose būtų galima interpretuoti šiuolaikinę fotografiją, neapibūdinamą tradicinės meninės fotografijos sąvokomis.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *performatyvumas, šiuolaikinė fotografija, feministinė teorija, atkuriamas elgesys, dvigubas suvokimas*.

**KEY WORDS:** *performativity, contemporary photography, feminist theory, restored behaviour, double consciousness*.



# Subject, Interpretation, Ideology

Subjektas, interpretacija, ideologija

• *Agnieszka Jelevska-Michas*

## INSPIRATION FROM EDWARD GORDON CRAIG IN TADEUSZ KANTOR AND JÓZEF SZAJNA'S ARTISTIC THEORIES

"Have you ever noticed that in theatrical life there come long, torturing periods of inactivity during which there appear no new and talented writers on the horizon, no actors, and no stage directors? And then suddenly, unexpectedly, nature spews forth a whole theatrical troupe and adds to it out of its bounty a writer and a stage director, who, all together, create that wonder, an epoch in the theatre. [...] And there appear the inheritors of the great men who created the epoch. They accept the tradition and bear it to the next generation. But tradition is capricious, it takes on strange forms, just like the blue birds of Maeterlinck, and becomes a trade, and only one seed of it, the most important one, retains life till the new rejuvenation of the theatre, which takes the inherited seed of the great eternal and creates its own and new eternal."<sup>1</sup>

This fragment from *My life In Art* by Constantin Stanislavski, although it is written in a lofty style (which is usually very common for such memoirs, when flashes of memory are frequently idealised), pinpoints two interesting aspects connected with the process of constructing theatre tradition. First of all, Stanislavski uses the notion of a "capricious theatre tradition" which evolves under the influ-

ence of time and space. Each successive generation which derives from the tradition simultaneously reformulates it, bringing out only that which is most important for a specific time and place. Secondly, for him the continuity of tradition does not depend on the duration of its original version and shape, because each fragment is in the process of being inscribed into a new context, which very frequently modifies the original meaning. Artists' fragmentary reading of the texts of tradition causes that which is "new" in their concepts to always emerge in relation to the "old," even if this relation means negation or total rejection. We can say that Stanislavski was very modern or even postmodern in this fragment, as he relates to the very particular way of interpreting texts of tradition.<sup>2</sup> That is why references in theatre art are distant, converted and mutated in the frame of historical process, and they can be found embedded in the deep structure of theatrical theories. The question about Craigian inspiration in Polish avant-garde theatre is connected with these sorts of references: definitely not literal, but modified and even reversed in a new aesthetic and social context.

It is intriguing and significant that, although the Craigian vision was never put into practice



as a coherent whole, it became an inspiration for the artists who could find captivating issues in it, which they then transplanted into their own concepts. In a way, despite his intentions and the main aim of his art “after practice theory”, Craig became one of the first theatre theoreticians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What remained from his concepts was, apart from a large amount of texts-manifestos, texts-visions and texts-instructions, many engravings and sketches of set designs. From these materials one can identify a very individualistic model of the art of the theatre. This is, however, an abstract and imaginative model. On the one hand it has its roots in the “living theatre”: there are some instructions for future directors and actors (such as for the construction of his famous screens, which Craig even patented); on the other it displayed his metaphysical bent, manifested in his philosophising about theatre. Craig was first and foremost an artist-philosopher, as Jean-Noël Vuarnet<sup>3</sup> would call him – using the Nietzschean notion. His utopian theory or vision was capacious, oblique and unfinished (and these are features which enabled it to persist). His open theory became one of the most significant cultural texts for the art of the theatre, and it was created by an artist who, in his use of transtextual and intertextual devices, made an attempt at an individual reconstruction of “the past” of the theatre. In transforming this “past” into his own theory, he thereby created an open work that it could easily function as a cultural reference point for generations of artists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Some of Craig’s unique ideas can definitely be found in both Kantor and Szajna’s theatrical visions: they were converted and processed within their own art. Of course these Polish artists, even if they share some ideas with Craig, have their own theatre history, and consequently their art refers to a variety of contexts. They were both painters and theatre men, which enabled them to probe the nature of theatre through the plastic arts. Their very individualistic ways of thinking about art could be also ascribed to fine art movements that were popular in the 1950s and 1960s, such as ‘environments’, happenings, collages, installations, and even conceptual art, among many others. Even if their vision was marked by their individually realised idea of avant-garde art, they have one thing in common – for them art appeared as a meta-textual form. The *mimesis* category, which is fulfilled in their works of art, was based on constructing new and specific relations between art and reality, but also on intertextual processes taking place between their works of art and other cultural texts, such as those of Craig.

It is not possible in the frame of my text to go deeply into this interrelation between the Crai-

gian vision and Kantor and Szajna’s concepts, and that is why I am only going to touch on some layers of Craig’s artistic theory, such as: the language of art, the model of theatre space, the form of the acting, and the image of death.

## LANGUAGE OF ART

Craig’s discourse, from which his model of the theatre emerges, is very complex. His writing includes genre-crossing stylistic variety, lots of metaphors, symbols, and references which are very difficult to decode and interpret. This maybe because the discourse was not created as a coherent system of the kind we are used to dealing with in science or specific disciplinary fields, it was one of the ways through which he expressed himself, his ideas and his attitude to art. Craig’s essays articulate his own philosophy of the theatre, so we can even call his discourse transcendental.<sup>4</sup> It is mostly metaphysics of the theatre. A deeper examination of Craig’s articles and essays gives even the impression of a mixture of discourses: from a mythical story and Socratic dialogue; through to the parts in which Craig seems to be a priest giving hints to believer-apprentices of his newly created “religion of the art of theatre”; fragments which are encrusted with various quotations from poetry (the most crucial are William Blake and Walt Whitman) and literature; and finally to journalistic and colloquial style. His discourse displays a tendency towards mysticism and for constructing his own virtual art of the theatre, which had to be expressed in a specific way, and also reveals him as an artist who has innumerable masks, both in his art and in his life.<sup>5</sup>

This sort of philosophising about the art of the theatre, with its very sophisticated poetics and stylistics, dominated the language of most of the theatre in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: it is enough to recall the names of Antonin Artaud, Oskar Schlemmer, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, then finally Tadeusz Kantor or Józef Szajna. Their written articles and essays also became a part of their artistic expression.

Kantor’s individualistic language is a very interesting example. His theory of art emerged from important contradictions between “illusion and reality”, “fiction and life”, which in fact corresponded to each other. He considered that every artistic trend is first of all an intellectual movement. “Theory in art – he said – does not precede practice. Relations develop from both sides.”<sup>6</sup> According to him – and here he echoes Craig’s thoughts – the artist had to become a philosopher of his art. Although he did not need

to be precise and logical, to fulfill the demands of rational discourse, he had to be as capacious as possible when expressing his ideas, and cross the borders of art domains. This way of thinking about the relation between theory and practice in theatre was introduced by Edward Gordon Craig at the beginning of the century, thus opening the route for artist-philosophers of this art.

In his theory of art, Szajna wanted to go beyond the boundaries of each art (from painting through to sculpture and theatre) and therefore his language is full of notions and ideas from different contexts, it can be also treated as a kind of art philosophy. Some critics call it a "total language". His writing about theatre is very metaphorical and symbolic, but it is also associative in connection with its aim to express the artist's vocation for moral duty, which is to reveal the humanistic values in art. That is the main difference between him and Craig: even if Szajna follows the Craigian idea of a total, multidimensional language he filled it with different artistic convictions. The structure is quite similar but the content has changed.

#### MODEL OF THEATRE SPACE

Since Craig emphasized the fact that the art of the theatre must be autonomous, he wanted to re-define the essence of the theatre, through searching for its laws and aims. He wanted to create a model of theatre which could become an everlasting masterpiece, as a durable piece of poetry, architecture or painting. Craig desired to change the mortal nature of theatre. He tried to explore theatre history, music, painting and architecture in order to rediscover their eternal and essential laws and forms from which the artist may create his own work. The laws which he found, such as for example harmony, simplicity, unity of elements, could help to create a new, coherent, homogeneous theatre space. Rejecting realism in theatre, he turned to symbolic and abstract art. In his projects of set designs he experimented with different theatre styles and traditions and then mixed them. In *Scene*, published in 1923, he presented modifications of an abstract space which was constructed of geometrical forms illuminated from several points by artificial light. Through the movement and change of their composition, the artist can draw on different symbolic meanings. Thus understood, kinetic space became a very flexible and simultaneously durable element of the theatre model - it was Craig's essence of the art of the theatre, where dynamics meets with durability. Craig's *Scene* can be also interpreted as an artistic realisation of the *topos of theatrum mundi*.

• Creating a durable and individualistic model for

theatre space, which can also be transformed into an endless number of combinations and variants, he compares his creative process with the creation of the universe.<sup>7</sup> As an artist, he imitates the creator's gesture in constructing a new space in an aesthetic reality, beyond time and history.<sup>8</sup>

Following a similar phenomenological desire, Tadeusz Kantor also wanted to find the essence of the art of theatre. He believed that in every work of art there exists an *ur-matter*: a constant element, which "is being created by itself", and in which "there are all the infinite aspects of life". Kantor found, as he wrote in his *Milan Lessons*, that this *ur-matter* is an eternal essence which could be present in every work of art in a tangible, real space of performance. "Figures and objects become the function of space and its mutability - wrote Kantor, and he added - I believe in this SIMULTANEITY and this EQUALITY of actions - in my individual action and the action of this Primordial Matter."<sup>9</sup>

In Kantor's art the notion of space can be extended into its different aspects. Besides being rediscovered *ur-matter*, it is also connected with memory. The artist brings the performance to life from his own fragments, flashes and patterns of memory. Here space was also connected with his constant "trying out and manipulating". Space as *ur-matter* can give birth spontaneously, but the creator - the artist - must manipulate it. This significance of the artistic gesture was very close to Craig's version. Kantor, however, went further; he put the artistic process into practice, and revealed it in front of the public. As he wrote: "pure creation - this is what I am". The main difference between them was that for Kantor space was always in tension with fragments of reality, which became new iconic signs in avant-garde sense, while Craig was trying to cut his art off from imitation of reality at all costs.<sup>10</sup> But beyond these two artists there are two different not only aesthetic models, but also models of thinking about the human, and art, condition.

Szajna's understanding of theatrical space was also close to Craig's version on a theoretical level, in many regards (even if he would deny any influences from any artist). As a painter, he transferred his experience from the easel to the theatre. For Szajna, the concept of space was also a crucial issue. The space created by him also gave rise to symbols and metaphors. To some extent following Craig's idea of the total theatre, he treated theatre as a mixed art form and therefore as a mixed phenomena. In his opinion, theatre, in its newly created space, can still move people's minds and feelings: for him this art still has ca-

thartic meaning. But his thinking about space was also rooted in his own extreme and particular experience. This is the crucial difference – the moment when history came sharply into art. As Zbigniew Taranienko wrote:

“In Auschwitz waiting in total darkness for two long weeks for his execution in a *stehbunker*, knowing that it might be carried out at any moment, Szajna profoundly experienced space. Under his eyelids he felt the existence of a deep inner space, continuously expanded and transformed – in its essence infinite although the place where it happened was minute”.<sup>11</sup>

In Szajna's work, space always hints at the subconscious level through materials and objects. In 1962 he designed the setting for a famous production by Jerzy Grotowski: *Acropolis*. It was then that he fully presented his conception of what could be called “archetypal space” for the first time. Because the act of creating was for him also the dictate of a moralist, he always used signs from the high artistic canon to convince and influence his audience. Even when he used grey paper, dirty clothes or broken vessels, they became the symbols of high aesthetic order.<sup>12</sup>

Recently, he admitted in an interview that the aim of his art was the contamination of beauty, truth and right, and that he was still searching in his art for the spiritual beauty.<sup>13</sup> This almost Platonic idea of *kalokagatia*, which he inscribes into his art, was differently understood by Craig. For him everything which made his art pure, symbolic, non-imitative could be “moral”. In this huge qualitative difference between these two artistic visions it is possible to notice how existence can easily change and modify the aesthetics in art. The old, Craigan demand for high aesthetic form in theatre is still in Szajna's theatre, but is layered with a new existence.

## FORM OF ACTING

To compose his vision of the art of theatre as an everlasting masterpiece, he needed a specific type of actor able to become its organic element. According to Craig, each art must use a predictable material since the vagaries of chance may destroy it. Because he focused his efforts on the universe of ‘pure art’, where aesthetic rules were different from those of real life, he needed a perfect creation: a perfect being – the *übermarionette*.<sup>14</sup> The conception of the *übermarionette* yielding to the universal laws of art became the ideal form of acting for Craig.<sup>15</sup> The *übermarionette* was to be a constant and predictable element of the art of the theatre. Craig stressed that actors who followed this image must create a “new form of acting”,

which relied on symbolic gestures. The *übermarionette*, as Craig saw it, was not exposed to emotions but submitted to the requirements of the work and the artist. He could precisely carry out the score of gestures and movements ascribed to its role<sup>16</sup>; was creative and yet devoid of any individualism which may lead to buffoonery. He became, by this means, an invariable reference for the creator and the recipient of the new art.

For Kantor it was also important to make the actor an integral part of the whole in his conception of the theatre as total art. In the manifesto *Theatre of Death*, written in 1975, he mentioned the Craigan *übermarionette* as the source of inspiration, but through negation. And actually through this negation Kantor became very close to the Craigan meaning of *übermarionette* as a model, symbolic form for actors.

“I do not share – he wrote – the belief that the MANNEQUIN (or WAX FIGURE) could replace the LIVE ACTOR, as Craig wanted. This would be too simple and naive. I am trying to delineate the motives and intention of this unusual creature which has suddenly appeared in my thoughts and ideas. Its appearance complies with my ever-deepening conviction that it is impossible to express life through absence of life. (...) The MANNEQUIN in my theatre must become a model through which passes a strong sense of DEATH and the conditions of the DEAD. A model for the live ACTOR”.<sup>17</sup>

In 1980 Kantor developed an idea of the actor which he called a “bio-object”. The “bio-object” was not a permanent state but rather a phase in the rhythm of the subjectification of man and of the humanisation of the object. The name was derived from the fact that actors were frequently enclosed in their costumes, with their bodies forming a plastic object moving in space. The rivalry between “objectification” and “regained subjectivity” destroyed all psychological relations between the actors and the character they played. It was a version of Kantor's contradictions: “illusion” and “reality,” “death” and “life” obsessively appeared in his thinking. Also the object itself, once inseparable from the actor, then separated from him, became his competitor and never let him fully identify with the character he played. The actor remained an ambiguous, symbolic type with heavy makeup on his face, which looked like a mask.

One of the most important attributes that Craig ascribed to the proposed form of acting was a mask. “I would like to get rid of the actor-individualist and leave a choir of figures with masks.”<sup>18</sup> The mask symbolised the essence of the type represented by the actor. It was to be a bridge between the actor and the theatre space as

programmed by the artist. It deprived the actor of all individuality, and at the same time let him cut off any links with the category of *mimesis*, thus making him an ideal element in Craig's art. In his theory, the mask was also a reference to the sources of theatre – the ritual – so it not only de-personalised the actor but also automatically put him in a different context. Craig quoted mythical rituals from Europe, America and Asia as sources of his conception; he wrote about rituals of Death and rituals “celebrating the Spirit of Motion” in which the image of the “divine-being was worshipped”. Mythical genealogy, created by him for the perfect actor, had a divine element at its roots: the *übermarionette* was to be a reflection of the idea of God. Only art, which like ancient hieroglyphs, “showed and veiled the beauty”, made sense for him. The *übermarionette*, wrote Craig, “will not compete with life – rather will go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in trance it will aim to clothe itself with a death – like beauty while exhaling a living spirit”.<sup>19</sup>

The Craigian concept of the mask may have inspired Kantor, although he didn't ascribe these sorts of divine attributes to his image of the actor. His actors used the masks, and it was an immensely important element in their creation. This was an element in transforming ‘bio-objects’ into metaphorical signs and putting them into a mythical context. The mask symbolised the essential elements of man and object. The mask stressed the specific transformation and tension created in Kantor's theatre between subjectified man and humanised object, and was also related to his individual understanding of the ritual of death.

In the mid-1960s, Szajna formulated his conception of the actor – he was to be typified, he was to move and exist in the space of art like a mannequin, he was to become a symbol and refer to subconscious realities. At the same time, the materials used in his theatre began converging upon each other – objects became personified, and characters became “marionettised”. His actor had to be a person able to undertake and develop the artistic and acting tasks of searching for their own methods and solutions, outside any conventions (of realistic ways of presenting and feeling). To him, however, the actor was not an element that had to submit completely to the will of the artist in the way Craig or Kantor demanded that their actors should. He left the actor with quite a wide range of freedom and relied on his creativity. The actor's presence on stage in Szajna's performances reminded the audience of the human element immanent in all art. During one of the rehearsals which took place in Theatre Studio in 1976, Antoni Pszoniak, his outstanding actor,

told students that the acting in Szajna's concept is “understood as theatre material, which on one hand has to be the same as what is animated and weak-willed and on the other must rise and emit energy”.<sup>20</sup> Szajna's thinking about the actor came about as a consequence of treating the theatre in a similar fashion to the fine arts, especially to painting. He mostly worked and experimented with mainstream theatre actors: it was a kind of interesting and difficult test for traditional actors in the plastic theatre.

## THE IMAGE OF DEATH

The image of death in Craig's vision undergoes a different and more fundamental process – the process of aesthetic production. His vision of death is always beautiful, is dematerialised in a symbolic, metaphysical sense and has nothing to do with a real death. He created its image in such a way as to make it harmonise with his ideas; he included it in his art, which aspired to pure beauty. Beautiful death appeared to be an overriding image of his art and the keystone to his entire conception. He constructed a sign of death with a dominant aesthetic feature. In his essay *The Actor and Über-marionette*, where he made many references to death, he wrote:

“From the idea of death, which seems a kind of spring, a blossoming – from this land and from this idea that can come so vast an inspiration, that with unhesitating exultation, I leap forward to it; and behold, in an instant, I find my arms full of flowers. I advance but a pace or two and again plenty is around me. I pass at ease on a sea of beauty, I sail wither the winds take me – *there*, and there is no danger”.<sup>21</sup>

This vision, in which Craig calls death an “idea,” is riddled with metaphors and symbols: for example those connected with spring, such as hands full of flowers, and allusions to ancient images of the rite of death as a part of the process of eternal recurrence; this death does not relate to suffering and danger. Craig, using the mythical order which he inscribes into art, liquidates the contradiction between life and death, reality and illusion, life and art. For him art creates life, illusion is much more important than reality, and death realises the potential of life.<sup>22</sup> Unlike in Kantor's contradictory vision, his world of art is harmonised, well-ordered and beautiful.

One consequence of Craig's fascination with the image of death was his entering deeply into the realms of rituals and ceremonies. As in the case of the *übermarionette*, ritual roots became symptomatic. Death ceased to uncover the mythical beginning of the new art. He particularly ex-



ploited the myth of Isis and Osiris, the myth of eternal return and resurrection. Craig used this reactivation of ancient myths to construct his own model of the art of theatre, in which the beginnings of this art were to be rituals connected with inscribing death into circular, sacred time.<sup>23</sup> Theatre was to have its roots in a ritualistic feast when historical time is suspended and the eternal return occurs. In such eternal time a masterpiece of theatre may be created. This image of beautiful death abolishing the borders between real life and real death was necessary for Craig to deny the mortal nature of real theatre and to construct a model of theatre the essence of which would be eternal. As there are no binary contradictions, the art of theatre can be treated as universal and durable.

"Shades – spirits seem to me to be more beautiful and filled with more vitality than men and women;

cities of men and women packed with pettiness, creatures' inhuman, secret, coldest, hardest humanity. [...] from mysterious, joyous, and superbly complete life which is called Death – that life of shadow and unknown shapes, where all cannot be blackness and fog as is supposed, but vivid colour, vivid light, sharp-cut form; and which one finds people with strange, fierce, and solemn figures and calm figures, and those figures impelled to some wondrous harmony of movement – all this is something more than mere matter of fact."<sup>24</sup>

Kantor in his reference to the image of death created by Craig wrote in the late 1940's:

"[...] I no longer see the shape of man. His shape external which has always been identified with life

itself becomes suspicious, its nature too much simplified and presented in clichés.

I can sense the breath of death

this beautiful lady as Craig calls her.

Doesn't she happen to govern art...?"<sup>25</sup>

As it became apparent later, death was the fundamental thematic and essential category of Kantor's theatre. But for Kantor, death could not have aesthetic dimensions, even a metaphysical dimension -- in Craig's meaning of it – did not express what the experience of death meant for him. The artist must stay torn between life (from which he cannot escape) and art (with its new avant-garde postulates for the artist).

If we examine Kantor's productions such as *The Dead Class* or *Wielopole, Wielopole* it becomes clear that the death is present in every aspect of the performance. The space of the performance emerges from memories, photographs: pieces of

a dead world. In *The Dead Class* there is a row of old desks and figures of double or rather dual existence – a woman with a cradle, an old man with a tricycle, and an old man in a toilet. Kantor found it impossible to present the past; what is dead cannot be made present again; so he experimented with the state of a kind of split between "life" and "death". The woman with the cradle must participate in the ritual of a futile labour, determined by inevitable death; the old man with the tricycle ceaselessly pushes this strange vehicle with a child mannequin attached to it; and the other old man fated to humiliating activity. According to Kantor, life and art can be presented in art only through its lack. Both Kantor and Craig saw that the history of art is marked by death. But this was never connected with decadence or nihilism. As Kantor formulated it: "decadent are these tendencies which have their roots in consumerism, they want to move this thinking away [...] Art is always after life. It takes reflection about the most fascinating side of life – death."<sup>26</sup>

The basic contradiction in Kantorian art is constructed between life and death, reality and illusion, and also between history and art. In the Craigian model of thinking there was no place for "life," "reality," or "history," there were individually interpreted illusions, ideas, symbols and abstractions. Here we can see the most important differences between these two artistic concepts – Kantor never cut his art off from "life," "memory," or "history," but was desperately trying to transform it into an avant-garde work of art.

His productions excel in showing shreds of material, their dual existence, and their suspension between reality and art. The aim of his "rituals of death," which he revealed in every performance, was to trace and extend the boundaries of art. His individually constructed theatre turned out to be the instrument for making these kinds of experiments, as it could display the process before the audience. Neither did Kantor believe that art can show the complex forms of human existence, but through the process of searching for it in art it is possible to find some thin and perishable ways to contact these two realms.

Photographs, films, and memories are all signs of death, but, being a *simulacrum* of the past, they abolish the contradiction between life and death; some of them become even immortal icons of the past.<sup>27</sup> They are so little, Kantor seems to be saying, because they cannot serve to restore the past and make it present; and yet they are so large, as in the context of art they can be transformed into symbolic and metaphoric signs.

The tension between life and death, between art which is unable to express life and thus turns to



death, was something that Szajna was also trying to convey. But Szajna, as I mentioned, was much more influenced by aesthetic categories. In his case we deal with something that some critics call the "obsession with death". All of his productions refer to death, to his own traumatic experience of Auschwitz and the World War II. Costumes with holes as if from machine gun bullets, tattooed numbers, rotten planks, pipes, parts of gallows, striped camp uniforms, broken crosses, heaps of old shoes, human figures similar to shooting targets; all these leitmotif are attributes of the image of death. But in the form and context in which Szajna was putting all those anaesthetic elements – they turned into high-artistic signs. In contrast to Kantor, Szajna's art is much more connected with moral duty than with revealing its references to life. In his theatre another important dimension becomes important – that of responsibility: ethics must precede aesthetics. Szajna's art, although it grows from the impulse of Craig's aesthetic vision of theatre, also has a different, added role — which is "not to forget".

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Stanislavsky C. *My Life in Art*, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1924, pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> Theatre tradition is mainly based on theatrical theories, ideas, concepts, projects and drawings of set designs. Although this seems too obvious, Stanislavski reminds us of this special side of theatre history. Because each performance – treated as a piece of art – is unique, the one and only and it can not remain. That's why Stanislavski states that what „retains life (...) is the great eternal which creates its own and new eternal". The elements of theatrical cultural texts can be easily changed, reversed, transplanted in the body of new work of art, but the essence still there exists.

<sup>3</sup> See the interpretation of Nietzschean notion in the Vuarnet J.-N. *Le philosophe-artiste*, Paris: Leo Scheer, 2004, especially the chapter about artist-philosopher-utopianist.

<sup>4</sup> I use the notion: "transcendental" in its romantic sense. Romantic artists and critics, especially connected with German idealists, created the notion of "transcendental poetry". The notion: "transcendental" was first used by Kant in his epistemology. Friedrich Schlegel transformed it into the realm of aesthetics, postulating such poetry in which the artist should reveal himself also as a philosopher. Of course Craig's essays can not be treated as poetry, but I think that his highly sophisticated, multi-stylistic discourse may be seen as his individualistic way of philosophising about art, and it may be inscribed into the category of widely understood – transcendental discourse.

<sup>5</sup> Craig created a distinctive form of expressing himself as an artist through language.

<sup>6</sup> Quotation from the press conference (Krzysztofory:

Seeking for Craig's "seeds," one can discover the process of "capricious tradition," which is dynamic, and has the power to change the original meaning of the notions, ideas and concepts, and their application in new aesthetic, historical, and existential frameworks.

It was not my thesis to compare these conceptions, (as an inspiration is something dynamic, inextricable from the artistic process) but to show how such a utopian vision, treated as a very basic theory of art from the beginning of the century, could inspire concepts of art intricately connected with very specific history, and could be used in new social and aesthetic contexts. My focus is theoretical, as it was in that domain that influences and allusions became the most visible. I chose only fragments of these three artistic concepts and sometimes I had to distil them from their biographical and historical contexts, to be able to find their particularity and locate their transformative impacts on the deep structure of artistic thinking.

1978) reprint: Kantor T. *Pisma, 1975-1984, vol. 2*, Kraków: Ossolineum, Cricoteca, 2004, p. 447.

<sup>7</sup> And if we evoke also for example the Shakespearean maxim, that all the world is a stage, which is one of the realisations of this *topos*, it is clear that according to Craig, it was possible to see life in theatrical categories and that is why art must precede life, not contrarily.

<sup>8</sup> For Craig there was no 'today,' just 'yesterday' as a source of ideas, influences, and 'tomorrow' when all these could be realised through the genius of the artist. The eternal essence of Kantor's theatre: *ur-matterie* was also beyond time: present time. Time in art, as he often stressed, approaches in his understanding the conception of eternity. Eternity was for him suspended between the perfect aspect of the future tense, an extraordinary coexistence of artists, epochs and works. But, unlike Craig, as I mentioned above, his artistic gesture and work was never 'beyond history'. *Ur-matterie* was eternal but its realisation, the process of bringing it into reality, was always connected with history.

<sup>9</sup> Quotation from Pleśniarowicz K. *The Dead Memory Machine*, Kraków: Cricoteca, 1994, p. 154.

<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of his artistic journey Kantor was impressed with symbolism and constructivism. The tensions between these two trends would remain at the foundation of all his work, both as a painter and theatre artist. Symbolism, as Kantor used to stress, was the heritage of Polish tradition, which for him was considerable. He used to refer to Wyspiański and to "Krakow's royal castle with its ghosts of Polish kings". But his way of thinking and of using symbolism and its stylistic elements was also a heritage of Craig's vision of theatre. Constructivism was fundamentally the herita-

ge of the achievements of Bauhaus Theatre and Oskar Schlemmer, but then he too was inspired by Craig.

<sup>11</sup> Józef Szajna i jego świat, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Hotel Sztuki Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Zachęta, 2000, p. 51

<sup>12</sup> Which in a way could correspond with Craigian demand for art of theatre as high aesthetic art?

<sup>13</sup> Długie życie, interview with Józef Szajna in "Opcje" nos 4/5, 2003, pp.60-67.

<sup>14</sup> It is not possible to enumerate all the possible levels and types of tradition which Craig made a reference to in constructing his tradition for the conception of *übermarionette*. He treated the fragments of tradition very loosely; he changed them, and blended them together. The most important was the tradition of antiquity, from both the Mediterranean and the Middle and Far East, but also of the Middle Ages and romanticism.

<sup>15</sup> Craig probably adapted the notion of "form" from the theories of other arts such as music or painting, where it started to appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and he interpreted it for the needs of his own art.

<sup>16</sup> Craig inscribed only a masculine genre to the notion: *übermarionette*.

<sup>17</sup> Kantor T. *A Journey Through Other Spaces. Essays and Manifestos, 1944-1990*, ed. and transl. Michał Kobińska, London, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p.112

<sup>18</sup> Quotation from Innes C. *Edward Gordon Craig*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> Craig E. G. *On the Art of the Theatre*, London: Heinemann, 1968, p.84-85.

<sup>20</sup> Szajna i jego świat, p. 69

<sup>21</sup> Craig E. G. *On the Art of the Theatre*, London: Heinemann, 1968 pp.74-75.

<sup>22</sup> This image of beautiful death can be also seen as close to aesthetic of classical essentialists. Heroic but beautiful death was either the most significant issue for Corneille or Racine's vision of art.

<sup>23</sup> "Circular holy time" is the notion which was used by Mirceau Eliade in his description and interpretation of the structure of time in myths. He noticed that many myths realised the concept of time which is compatible with the seasonal changes of nature. Craig inscribes this structure of circular holy time, immanent for myths connected with the issue of repeatability or beginning, into his model of the art of the theatre.

<sup>24</sup> Craig E. G. *On the Art of the Theatre*, p.74

<sup>25</sup> Kantor T. *Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1938 - 1974*, ed. by K. Pleśniarowicz, Kraków 2000, p.16.

<sup>26</sup> From press conference (Krzysztofory:1978) pp. 446-448.

<sup>27</sup> Compare this with the concept of the image in Jean Baudrillard's philosophy, which liquidates the binary oppositions, also between life and death.

*Agnieszka Jelewska-Michas*

## EDUARDO GORDONO CRAIGO ĮTAKA TADEUSZO KANTORO IR JÓZEFO SZAJNOS MENINĖMS TEORIJOMS

### S a n t r a u k a

Edwardo Gordono Craigo kūryba ypač svarbi XX a. teatro raidai: jo straipsniai vis dar tebeskaitomi, o kai kurios meninės idėjos tebenaudojamos. Įdomu tai, kad nors jo vizija niekada nebuvo visiškai įgyvendinta teatro praktikoje, ji įkvėpė daugelį menininkų, bandžusių susieti ją su savo istorine, socialine ir politine situacija. Craigo modelis pasižymi ypatingu teatrinės realybės ir metafizikos jungimu, o jo nevienareikšmiškas pobūdis leidžia menininkams siūlyti savo novatoriškas interpretacijas.

Tiek Tadeuszo Kantoro, tiek Jozefo Szajnos teatrinėse vizijose galima rasti kai kurias Craigo idėjas, permąstytas ir perdirtas. Žinoma, netgi turėdami sąsają su Craigu, Lenkijos menininkai remiasi savo teatro istorija, o jų menas nurodo daugybę skirtingų kontekstų. Įdomu pažvelgti, koku būdu utopinė Craigo vizija transformuojama, kai ji siejama su teatro koncepcijomis, besiremiančiomis Lenkijos istorija ir nauju avangardiniu mąstymu.

Beieškančiam Craigo „sėklų“ tyrinėtojiui atsiveria kaprizingos, nepastovios tradicijos procesas, dinamiškas ir galintis pakeisti pirminę sąvokų, idėjų, sampratų reikšmę ir jų taikymą naujuose estetiniuose, istoriniuose ir egzistenciniuose kontekstuose.

Šiame straipsnyje bandoma atskleisti, kaip utopinė G. Craigo vizija veikė meną, labai artimai susijusį su Lenkijos istorija ir vietiniais socialiniais bei estetiniais kontekstais.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** teatro istorija, meninė teorija, Edward Gordon Craig, Tadeusz Kantor, Józef Szajna.

**KEY WORDS:** theatre history, artistic theory, Edward Gordon Craig, Tadeusz Kantor, Józef Szajna.

• *Martynas Petrikas*

## LITHUANIAN THEATRE CRITIQUE IN THE FIRST DECADES OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE PROBLEM OF DENOMINATION

When did theatre critique in Lithuania actually begin? This issue still needs to be resolved in the history on Lithuanian theatre. Although over a century has passed since articles on theatre first appeared in the Lithuanian language, historians cannot agree on the date marking the commencement of national theatre critique. They persistently tend to note a number of different dates. Most *theatralia*<sup>1</sup> in the press before World War I has not been treated as a subject of serious scholarly study. This is partly due to the influence of a confusion of criteria for such an investigation, for example, the 'qualification' or 'objectivity' of a critic. The writings of the pre-World War I period are considered almost as a homogenous entity, useful merely for generating a list of performances played<sup>2</sup> or, as an amateurish criticism, critics had to abandon in the Interwar period<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconsider the status of the *theatralia* of this period by treating it differently, overlooking the various, rigid and not necessarily relevant, and criteria for evaluation.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian regime repressed Lithuanian culture by prohibiting print in the Lithuanian language. This period is considered one of the darkest in Lithuanian history. One witness of those times, Vincas Kudirka, expresses that, "The only signs that Lithuania exists at all are the newspapers."<sup>4</sup> Newspapers at the time, it must be recalled, were all published

abroad and smuggled into Lithuania illegally. Despite this, in 1888, Kudirka attempts to form the *Lietuva* (Lithuania) Union in Warsaw. In Kudirka's letter to Jonas Basanavičius,<sup>5</sup> he mentions theatre as one of the means for retaining Lithuanian culture. The theatre, as a phenomenon of joint endeavour, was generally linked to retention of national identity. Such thought resulted in a boom of illegal cultural gatherings known as "Lithuanian evenings".

Texts on theatre appeared in the Lithuanian press at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most, especially those of a publicist nature, dealt with theatre as part of general reflections about safeguarding the Lithuanian language and national identity, as well as reducing illiteracy in the rural population. Very few reviews of actual performances can be found during this period for an obvious reason. "Lithuanian evenings" were illegal and it was dangerous to mention them in print. However, performances held abroad, in Lithuania Minor, in the territory of contemporary Latvia and other areas were treated differently.

*Varpas* (*The Bell*) periodical published one of the early reviews in 1889, rather unexpectedly discussing *I Lituani* opera, performed in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The author, Andrius Vištelis-Višteliauskas, had attended and sent his report about this opera, written by Amilcare Ponchielli,

who based it on a poem by Adam Mickiewicz. Višteliauskas greatly admired the music but pointed out distortions of historical facts in the opera's plot.<sup>6</sup>

In 1895, *Varpas* and *Žemaičių ir Lietuvos apžvalga* (*Review of Samogitia and Lithuania*) periodicals published the first extensive polemic articles about theatrical endeavours by the Birutė Union, established in Tilsit in 1885. Publicists were arguing the worthiness of plays that the Union had chosen to stage. Critiques were about two plays by Aleksandras Fromas-Gužutis, entitled *Kauno pilies išgriovimas* (*Destruction of Kaunas Castle*) and *Ponas ir muzikai* (*Gentleman and the Peasants*) and a third by the brothers Keturakis, *Amerikairtyje* (*America in the Steam Bath*), a comedy.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the risks involved, the press also mentioned some plays, performed within the country. For instance, in 1895, *Varpas* informed, "the Lithuanian intelligentsia held a private staging of a certain Lithuanian comedy at a certain town for the Easter holiday."<sup>8</sup> Additionally, in 1900, *Ūkininkas* (*The Farmer*) announced that a certain family had arranged a private performance of a comedy, based on *The Wedding* by Nikolay Gogol, in Šiauliai during Shrovetide.<sup>9</sup> The press demonstrated considerable interest about the first legal performance — *America in the Steam Bath* — played within the territory of contemporary Lithuania in the Palanga Resort in 1899.

Can these early examples of writing be considered theatre critique? This question can only be answered by a comparison of *theatralia* in the underground, illegal press with that in legally authorised newspapers and magazines, which appeared after the ban on the Lithuanian language in the press, had been lifted. Critique is understood as the art of judging and evaluating, as indicated by the term's etymology. Yet, in early Lithuanian *theatralia*, a particular evaluative element was remarkably different in comparison with later texts.

Before the relative liberalisation of social life, established from 1904, authors writing about Lithuanian performances often employed a special approach. They treated Lithuanian activity of any kind as extremely important. For example, Lithuanian evenings were considered, as Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė later called them, "a feast of the nation but not an art, which did not exist at that time."<sup>10</sup> This sort of position of benevolent enthusiasm by reviewers explains the frequent absence of a critical view. Nevertheless, this changed after the turn of the century.

A critical approach to performance first began to appear immediately after the change in the political situation in the mid-1900s. In 1904, an unknown author remarks in *Varpas*, "Aesthetics

are absent from the Lithuanian stage"<sup>11</sup> (written about a performance by a Lithuanian charity union in Riga, Latvia). Such expression suggests, in my opinion, the start of a shift in perception about performance, not merely a change in tone. External conditions were more favourable, enabling authors to take a more critical stance regarding theatre arts. This also made it possible for Lithuanian theatre to surface from the underground and engage in more intense development.

Detachment or distance, which is characteristic of evaluating and judging, offers authors an opportunity to reflect their own personalities in their compositions. Now, the notion of national interests relevant to theatrical endeavours is more directly linked with the intellect and personal experience of a specific author. Moreover, younger Lithuanian intellectuals developed a new concept regarding theatre, as well as art in general, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since theatre critique is a deeply subjective mix of emotional and aesthetic reactions, traces of an author's personality are extremely important.

Authors can be perceived differently in texts published from 1904 to 1914. Numerous texts are presented with nearly no argumentation. These boil down to a simple "liked or disliked" formula. The lack of a clear aesthetical declaration is characteristic for this period. Most reviewers failed to support their opinions with precise aesthetical statements. (An exception was Adomas Jakštas, who defined his outlook on the "expression" of beauty and art in his theoretical articles).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, signs of very different systems of reacting and evaluating can be discerned in texts with a more complex structure.

The turn of the century was paradigmatic; its echoes are distinct in Lithuanian *theatralia* of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although critics continued to be profoundly concerned with national issues, they emphasized aspects of artistic value. All critical texts can be categorised as containing one of two concepts of theatre ontology. The mainstream tendency, adopted for the notion of theatre at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emphasised its social and political importance. It was enriched with aesthetic criteria while preserving its utilitarian nature.

The younger generation of Lithuanian artists and writers created an alternative concept. Interplay of a rational and anti-rational outlook on the world marked this concept, which was characteristic of Western culture at the turn of the century. Critical statements of this later faction expressed a revolutionary longing for the theatre as an autonomous form of art, dealing with the depths of the human soul as well as with national spirit. These were linked with different aesthet-



ics of Neo-romanticism. The critical thoughts of the earlier faction expected theatre to teach and construct an image of Lithuanian culture. Then, up to a certain degree, claims were relevant to the aesthetics of Naturalism.

Several factors can be discerned that assisted in the establishment of the impact of these forms of *theatralia* in society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First, the policy of the press must be examined. Articles on theatre can be found in almost every edition of the major newspapers. Some were also published in magazines on culture. (The first specialist theatre magazine, *Veidrodis* [Mirror], was published in Chicago, in 1914).<sup>13</sup> While none hired a regular reviewer, editors sought a broad discussion on the current situation of the Lithuanian stage. Thus, quite a liberal editorial policy was adopted. A great many reports of several lines can be found in the press alongside a wide range of articles and reviews.

A characteristic feature of this period was the lack of a definite aesthetical declaration. The only means of tracing the criteria for evaluation by most authors was to combine their remarks in different texts. That was one of the reasons for a generally negative view of theatre critics. Subjectivity was the most frequent accusation addressed to a critic. Contemporaries of the times, Sruoga and his pupils Julius Būtėnas and Vytautas Maknys, had already fixed this in the memory of Lithuanian theatre.

Clearly, critical thought was under constant discussion at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Theatregoers and artists of the period were aware of critical texts and often reacted by publishing a counter strike. Significantly, statements that critics expressed in an article were sometimes treated as a personal insult. For instance, in 1908, Liudas Jakavičius-Lietuvanis, who was directing Lithuanian performances in Riga at that time, declared that theatre reviews are often harmful. He claimed that many amateur actors lose their spirit for further work after being evaluated.<sup>14</sup> Notably in his article, Lietuvanis uses as an argument that the reactions of an audience differ from those of a critic. Thereby, the author instinctively underlined the major difference in evaluative perceptions of a performance: spontaneous and emotional by an ordinary viewer and distanced and judgmental by a critic.

Another factor that helps to define the status of *theatralia* at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the self-reflection of art critiques in general, a process which began in period under discussion. The need for art critique by the intelligentsia of that period was obvious and this issue received much attention. Art criticism was a relatively new

genre for most writers. Thus, some texts, which were devoted to 'quality' critique, encouraged further readings of specialised literature. Others simply called for a serious view on criticism.

Despite the elementary nature of some of these texts, it is possible to define two concepts on theatre critique. The principle of grouping is based on a notion of the functions that theatre critique was expected to fulfil. The mainstream faction employed this first concept. They considered critique as a tool for improving theatre arts or, in other words, as a "serious and impartial filter"<sup>15</sup> of the developmental process. The other faction presented an alternative concept. Texts by Sofija Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė provide the most concise position. She placed the activity of a critic on the same level as that of an artist. This author called for a creative intermediation between the art and a receiver, since the gift of the artist cannot be influenced by critique.<sup>16</sup> The goal of criticism, according to Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė, is to broaden the field in which an artist's gift "radiates" and by which the work of art reveals the invisible "world of soul". The ability to perceive artistic inspiration within the work of an artist was considered necessary and Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė defined the talent of the critic as equal with that of the artist.

In conclusion, a brief remark must be made on the specifics of *theatralia* genres. There is an opinion that Lithuanian theatre critique of the period did not fulfil its basic function due to the relatively small number of reviews devoted to any one particular performance. Indeed, an analysis or description of a performance was often set within a wide discussion on theatre or social issues. For instance, an article on plays staged by Juozas Vaičkus in *Žemaitija* [Samogitia] includes general impressions about the trip to the area.<sup>17</sup> (The editor of *Viltis* [Hope] had specially commissioned the author, Martynas Yčas, for this trip due to public interest about the Vaičkus theatre). The most prominent authors of critiques hardly ever reviewed specific performances. Treatment of single Lithuanian plays had not yet become a sphere for wider discourse. Moreover, authors clearly avoided discussing performances by Polish, Russian or Jewish troupes (at least in the Lithuanian press), although sometimes, they attended such performances. There are many instances in the press of reports on performances, especially the peripheral ones, which consist of no more than a few lines.

Regardless, a more precise analytical revision of *theatralia* during the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is absolutely necessary. It needs to include considerations regarding the nature of critical texts, which contain a distinct tendency to evaluate and



judge and maintain an intellectual distance from the performance being observed. It must also regard the controversial status of critics in society and the process of self-reflection. A more exhaus-

tive analysis of these critiques on the theatre in Lithuania could lead to a more distinct positioning of their beginnings and role during the decade prior to World War I.

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<sup>2</sup> Almost everyone interested in the Lithuanian theatre of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century has done this, including Gabrielius Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, Mykolas Biržiška, Balys Sruoga and Vytautas Maknys to mention a few.

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<sup>5</sup> Kudirka V. „Laiškas Jonui Basanavičiui iš Varšuvos (1888, gegužės 19)“. *Raštai*, t. 2, red. J. Lankutis. Vilnius: Vaga. 1990, p. 812.

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## Martynas Petrikas

### LIETUVOS TEATRO KRITIKA PIRMAISIAIS XX AMŽIAUS DEŠIMTMEČIAIS: DENOMINACIJOS PROBLEMA

#### S a n t r a u k a

Šis straipsnis skiriamas dvidešimtojo amžiaus pradžios lietuvių teatro kritikai bei kontraversiškam jos statusui lietuvių teatro istoriografijoje. Tradiciškai kritiniai šio periodo tekstai yra nuvertinami dėl abejotinų profesionalumo bei objektyvumo kriterijų, taikomų jų autoriams. Atmetus apriorinį požiūrį bei traktuojant kritiką kaip meninio sąmoningumo ženklą, leidžiantį rekonstruoti teatrinio įvykio suvokimo strategiją, įmanoma gilesnė ir vaisingesnė analizė, leidžianti tiksliau nustatyti lietuvių teatro kritikos pradžią.

Pagrindiniais požymiais, padedančiais nustatyti teatrui skirtų tekstų prigimtį, tampa intelektualinė autoriaus pozicija spektaklio atžvilgiu, subjektyvaus vertinimo elemento intensyvėjimas, visuomenės reakcija į viešai išsakytas kritines pastabas bei polinkis į autorefleksiją, užsimezgęs bendrame dvidešimtojo amžiaus pradžios lietuvių meno kritikos diskurse.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *Lietuvos teatro istorija, teatro kritika, XX amžiaus pradžios Lietuvos spauda.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Lithuanian theatre history, theatre critique, Lithuanian press of the early 20th century.*

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Asta Ališauskaitė

## LITHUANIAN THEATRE CRITIQUE: BETWEEN NATIONAL THEATRE AND INNOVATIONS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

In this report, I would like to throw some light on the traces of nationalist ideology in interwar Lithuanian theatre critique and discuss the reflection of national theatre, catalyzed by aesthetic innovations, which appeared in Lithuanian theatre during the 1920s-1940s.

A professional Lithuanian theatre materialized in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet the conception of a 'national' theatre was still linked with the ideological base for amateur performances of "Lithuanian-evenings". Clearly, this primary phase of Lithuanian theatre was idealized, as it was an important vehicle for the retention of national identity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is no doubt about the value of this cultural movement. It had a great impact on the priorities and goals of Lithuanian theatre at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also influenced a further search of national identity in professional theatre.

An awakening of national consciousness was still considered essential during the 1930s and 1940s. Despite the constant underlining of this goal, and its constant discussion for the entire period (though in an unoriginal fashion), it was never solved – begging the question why? The question is especially relevant, considering that the aim of national theatre and the means for its establishment had been elucidated much earlier.

The essential conception of the defence of a national culture has not changed since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Retention of a national and cultural core became the most widespread statement. Nevertheless, there was an obvious difference between *fin-de-siècle* and the 1930s and 1940s. Amateur theatre had different goals than professional theatre, or as Faustas Kirša states, "Amateur theatre had no artistic goals. It was meant for spreading enlightenment, national spirit and cultural entertainment."<sup>1</sup>

Dangiras Mačiulis comments that this represents a system for the creation of a nation state, whereby independence is achieved by political means and asserted by cultural ones. The Antanas Smetona authoritarian regime applied such scheme under which a transformation into a directive becomes the basis of cultural policy.<sup>2</sup>

State policy, therefore, strongly influences the conception of national theatre. This becomes highly visible after the *coup d'état* in December 17, 1926, when the authoritarian Smetona regime became established. During Smetona's presidency, the theatre became a primary tool for the expansion of national culture. The ideological importance of this institution is made obvious by constant public declarations, and by enormously generous financing (expenditures for the State Theatre rose from 824,000 LTL in 1926 to 2,309,344 in 1939).<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, by funding theatre, the state could determine the aspects of greatest importance. According to Balys Sruoga dependence on the state resulted in unveiled political propaganda on the stage, which had nothing in common with art.<sup>4</sup> The press, which ran many articles of theatre critique, always played an important role in circulating the dictates of the political regime. The idea of a national theatre was essential for all theatre critics of the period; until recently, however, there was no examination regarding the impact of the political regime on their actions.

The situation of the professional Lithuanian theatre in the 1930s could easily be compared to the one in pre-reformed theatres of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Universal and, in a way, unifying ideas of a modern and reformed theatre in the context of establishing a national theatre were considered inconvenient. Theatre critics, especially those who proclaimed a model of the theatre based on national ideas, urged that changes in European theatre development should be ignored. Instead, they believed it necessary to concentrate on the creation of a pure and unique model of Lithuanian theatre.

In 1934, an ex-executive of the State Theatre, Liudas Gira, wrote that the priority of such a theatre is to stage Lithuanian dramaturgy because this is the major goal of National theatre.<sup>5</sup> This author underlined the thesis of President Smetona, stating, "Arts and sciences are the foundation on which Lithuanian consciousness rests."<sup>6</sup> He goes on to state that theatre is the most distinct institution for representation of Lithuanian culture.<sup>7</sup> It is worth mentioning that original Lithuanian dramaturgy was often criticized due to its lack of artistic value. Gira stated that it is a mistake to expect outstanding creations without developing deeper playwriting traditions. Meanwhile, it is enough if the original play is sufficiently scenic.<sup>8</sup> Such statements clearly show the way in which aesthetic criteria became second-row in a theatre-tribune. According to Gira, the Lithuanian audience expects its *own* theatre to be a sum of Lithuanian art and national culture. Therefore, the viewer wants to observe the life of his or her nation on a stage; this viewer will not appreciate the lessons of Shakespeareology.<sup>9</sup>

These statements illustrate part of the discourse in which critics aimed to eliminate artists, who, according to their conviction, *impede* the development of high Lithuanian culture. The State Theatre was supposed to become a place where the pantheon of national culture could be presented. Thereby, it could not host any artist who was not properly aware of national issues. It is very likely that here lies the reason for the im-

mensely negative criticism that Mikhail Chekhov's works evoked.

Chekhov was judged by ideological rather than aesthetical criteria. The tendency to discriminate Russian art and its artists is quite clear in Lithuanian interwar theatre discourse. Naturally, this tendency generally related to contemporary, post-revolutionary Russian theatre. This particular kind of phobia became extremely distinct during the short tenure of Andrius Oleka-Žilinskas and Mikhail Chekhov in the State Theatre. The press, during 1929 to 1935 when Žilinskas worked in the State Theatre, reveals a conflict, which Kirša and *Naujoji Romuva* magazine particularly sharpened. Critics divided into two opposite groups – apologists of Žilinskas on one side and attackers on the other. Motivation of the criticism by the latter group could be linked with the background of Žilinskas – his Moscow education and work in the Art Theatre of Konstantin Stanislavski. It is significant that during this period there was an increase of articles in Lithuanian press of an inflicting nature, offensive to the Russian nation.

Lithuanian theatre critics adopted aspects of nationalist ideology for their evaluations. In this period, only a patriotically oriented Lithuanian was considered for the head of the State Theatre. No connections with Russia or its regime could have become acceptable or, according to Rapolas Šaltenis, a truly national Lithuanian theatre is achievable only when its leader and personnel are Lithuanians.<sup>10</sup> Anti-Russian leitmotifs within theatre critique was manifold. One of the most frequent arguments was an issue of national identity, whereby Lithuanian was always perceived as superior to other nationalities. The abilities of these subjects were depreciated in such instances. One theatre critic and a nationalist ideologist, Vincas Rastenis said, "It is necessary to raise a voice against those who praise everything that is Russian and undervalue everything that is our own."<sup>11</sup> A characteristic feature of this kind of statement is the narrow outlook on the artist, where the criterion of nationality becomes dominant. According to Rastenis, Lithuanian homemade artists deserve a benevolent approach since most important is that their creations are *our own*.<sup>12</sup>

The critic, Povilavičius, had more moderate outlook. Povilavičius, as well as other critics, linked the creation of a national theatre to studies and preservation of Lithuanian theatre traditions. One of the most important issues for this author was limiting influence by an alien theatre school on the Lithuanian stage. Povilavičius stated that it is necessary to eliminate traces of foreign tra-

ditions for a gifted and creative Lithuanian personality with a background of a Lithuanian life style.<sup>13</sup> The critic did not underestimate the cultural achievements of other nations on the way to the creation of unique national identity but called against blind replication.<sup>14</sup>

Another aspect of antagonism to foreign traditions was the particularity of the idea of national theatre, which was always related to an incorporation of elements of ethnic culture into Lithuanian.

Let's analyse the arrival of Žilinskas to Kaunas, taking the position of the executive of the State Theatre, in a light of preceding information. As mentioned before, after establishment of professional Lithuanian theatre, this institution was expected to create a model of a national theatre, as well as to accumulate artistic creation of a high level. When expectations failed or, according to some opinions, the State Theatre was in a condition of agony, Balys Sruoga took the initiative to reform the Lithuanian stage. He invited Žilinskas to Kaunas. In correspondence with Sruoga, there are signs of the future artistic line by Žilinskas. Žilinskas wrote, "An idea of nation [...] cannot be solely the cement of artists' spirits. It needs more – universality. There is a need to broaden artists' minds. In his work, an artist has to be enabled to rise above geographical and territorial boundaries; he has to observe broadly, deeply and there, find the answer."<sup>15</sup>

The drama, *Šarūnas* by Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, was chosen for the Žilinskas début at the State Theatre. Mačiulis observed that the opening night of this performance (December 17, 1929) was concurrent with the third "anniversary" of the Smetona *coup d'état*. The symbolism of the date is significant. The drama by Krėvė-Mickevičius tells about Duke Šarūnas, who sought a united Dainava and wanted to create a powerful state. The resemblance between Šarūnas and Smetona in a performance, each constantly calling for unity by a *coup d'état*, was politically nuanced.

Nevertheless, Žilinskas performance evoked controversy among theatre critics. Kirša pointed out that *Šarūnas* lacks "particularities of the Lithuanian spirit"<sup>16</sup>. Vytautas Bičiūnas stated that he had not seen "fatherland Lithuania"<sup>17</sup> in the performance. Sruoga, attempting to counteract these statements, employed the principles of Lithuanian folk song composition in the *Šarūnas* analysis which, according to him, were subtly expressed in the performance.<sup>18</sup>

Enormous disapproval was addressed to the director, Žilinskas, because of the innovative form of the performance – the means of stage expression, conception of the *mis-en-scène*, mass scenes and light effects, which were clearly different

from usual artistic level of performances by the State Theatre. Žilinskas was accused of being either "anti-national" or "international".

In the beginning of the 1930s, when Žilinskas became the executive of the State Theatre, he was accused of Bolshevism. More importantly, any Žilinskas connections with Bolshevism are doubtful because he emigrated from Russia under ideological pressure.<sup>19</sup> For many authors, who raised these questions in the interwar period, Russia and communism were synonyms. In 1932, the date of the invitation of Žilinskas, a Russian actor and director, Mikhail Chekhov, arrived in Kaunas. The number of accusations and articles of this kind visibly increased.

Chekhov directed three performances in Kaunas, *Hamlet* and *Twelfth night* by Shakespeare and *Government Inspector* by Gogol. Leonas Kalvelis, a critic, wrote of Chekhov that, "Several poor performances were filled with the Russian spirit"<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, in the structure of the *mis-en-scène* of the *Government Inspector*, he perceived, "A certain tendency for asserting communism"<sup>21</sup>. Chekhov's nationality became one of the most substantial negative arguments by critics, writing comments such as, "The director forces the actors to use Russian intonations of voice since he doesn't speak Lithuanian and cannot be aware of the spirit and musicality of our language."<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, *Naujoji Romuva* magazine published one of the most offensive articles. In the opinions by reviewers, performances such as Chekhov's *Hamlet*, with its "sickly crooked *mis-en-scène*" ruins Lithuanian theatre. One author points out that the intense, "somewhat hysterical" intonation in *Hamlet* reminds him of the intonations of Soviet radio announcers. This unknown author felt certain nuances in *Šarūnas*, *Sabbatai Cevi* and other performances directed by Žilinskas.<sup>23</sup>

The xenophobic tendencies in the interwar discourse of theatre critique were caused by the eminence of the idea of developing a national theatre. To the majority of theatre critics, this was linked with traditions of ethnic culture and a conception of national identity on the stage. From this point of view, Žilinskas was considered unreliable and disloyal despite his Lithuanian nationality and activities in the Moscow Lithuanian community, in which he grew up. The feeling of threat for national theatre development becomes even more perceptible after Russian artist Chekhov came to the State Theatre. It is likely that nationality was the main reason for his failure in Lithuania. Theatre historian, Rūta Skendelienė, states that one of the major causes of the sharp criticism of Chekhov's performances was the aim "to protect

the national identity of Lithuanian art.”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the Lithuanian interwar society was not yet ready for the conceptual experiments by Žilinskas and Chekhov. Undoubtedly, there was also lack of tolerance for a different point of view on theatre art.

In relation to Žilinskas and Chekhov performances, some theatre critics employed ideological criteria over aesthetic ones for their evalu-

ations. This movement also brought to action utilitarian goals of theatre criticism as the tool for asserting nationalist ideology. Ideologically orientated critics not only influenced the departure of both artists from Lithuania, the spread of modern theatre aesthetics was also suspended on the Lithuanian stage until a younger generation of directors appeared. Ironically, all of them were students of Žilinskas.

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*Asta Ališauskaitė*

## LIETUVOS TEATRO KRITIKA TARPUKARIU: TARP NACIONALINIO TEATRO IR INOVACIJŲ

### S a n t r a u k a

Šiame pranešime aptariami kai kurie tautininkų ideologijos aspektai, pasireiškę tarpukario lietuvių teatro kritikoje. Teatro tautiškumo idėjos plėtra ypač išryškėja po 1926 metų, prasidėjus autoritariniam Antano Smetonos valdymui. Šio tarpsnio teatro kritikų tekstuose galima nesunkiai atsekti svarbiausius tautiniais pagrindais kurtino teatro koncepcijos elementus: nacionalinio identiteto puoselėjimą ir sklaidą scenoje, etninės kultūros paveldo integravimą spektaklyje ir ypač rezervuotą požiūrį į scenos inovacijas (kurios tradiciškai perimamos iš kitų kultūrinių terpių). Tokias nuostatas atskleidžia Liudo Girus, Vinco Rastenio, Fausto Kiršos ir kitų, teatrą suvokusių kaip kovos už nacionalinį savitumą tęsinį, tekstai.

Teatro suvokimo strategijos nacionalizmas sustiprėjo Andriaus Olekos-Žilinsko ir Michailo Čechovo darbo Kaune metu. Šių novatoriška modernaus teatro dvasia persiėmusių kūrėjų veikla buvo griežtai



- kritikuota, neretai kritikų vertinimus grindė ne estetiškos nuostatos, o neigiamas požiūris į „užsienietišką“ menininkų kilmę.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** Lietuvos teatro istorija, teatro kritika, nacionalizmo ideologija, nacionalinis teatras, Michailas Čehovas, Andrius Oleka-Žilinskas.

**KEY WORDS:** Lithuanian theatre history, theatre critique, nationalist ideology, national theatre, Mikhail Chekhov, Andrius Oleka-Žilinskas.

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## ACROPOLIS ACCORDING TO WYSPIAŃSKI BY GROTOWSKI: NEW INTERPRETATION AND ANOTHER UNDERSTANDING OF THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL ARCHETYPE

In 480 B.C., shortly after their defeat, the Persians destroyed the temples and statues on the Acropolis, the sacred hill above Athens, which had been a fortified site since Mycenaean times. During the later 5<sup>th</sup> century the rebuilding of Acropolis under the leadership of Pericles bore the most significant works of art representing the Classical phase of Greek art in its full maturity. The Parthenon is the greatest edifice, dedicated to the virginal Athena, the matron deity in whose honour Athens was named. Henry Janson presents its eventful biography as follows:

“The history of the Parthenon is as extraordinary as its artistic significance — it is the only structure we know that has served four different faiths in succession. The architects Ictinus and Callicrates erected it in 448-432 B.C. In Christian times, the Virgin Mary displaced virginal Athena, the Parthenon became first a Byzantine church, then a catholic cathedral, and finally, under Turkish rule, a mosque. It has been a ruin since 1687, when a store of gunpowder the Turks had put into the cella exploded during a siege. Much of the sculpture was removed during the years 1801-1803 by Lord Elgin; the Elgin marbles are today the greatest treasure of the British Museum”<sup>1</sup>.

It is widely accepted that the Parthenon is considered to be the perfect embodiment of Classical Doric architecture; a system based on the column

and its entablature. As for the column, it is an approximately cylindrical, upright architectural support, usually consisting of a long, relatively slender shaft, a base and a capital. Generally, the Doric order is characterised as rigid and precise while a Doric column consists of the shaft, marked by the shallow vertical grooves known as flutes; the capital, which is made of the flaring, cushion like echinus, and a square tablet called abacus does not have a base and stands directly on the stylobate. The plastic decoration of the Parthenon represents various deities in sitting or reclining poses who are witnessing the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus. Janson admires the “spaciousness, the complete ease of movement of these statues”<sup>2</sup> that evokes *poetry of being* deprived of violence and pathos or specific action of any kind. Phidias, (c. 500-432) was the great master, who designed them in cooperation with a large number of masters involved. The Phidian style is famous for the rhythmic grace of its design, particularly striking in the spirited movement of the groups of the horsemen while thin and soft draperies veiling the goddesses seem to share the qualities of a liquid substance as it flows and eddies...the marble figures refuse to accept their physical limits as if they created their ‘own aura of space’.

Originally, the Acropolis functioned as the ancient citadel of Athens built on the hill in the centre of the city to shelter refugees seeking for safety

and protection in time of war. Nevertheless, in the multilayered European cultural awareness the meaning-laden sound of the Greek word *akropolis* invariably elicits a moving resonance. It is not only a deep aesthetical experience linked to categories of the ancient Greece art such as harmony, order and proportion ruled by the golden section, *tout court*, the elements founding the classical sense of beauty but also the aura of religious awe embodied by the Parthenon with its cella housing the huge ivory-and-gold statue of the goddess Athena. The mental image of the *acropolis* recurring constantly in the history of the world art emerged once more in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the drama by Stanislaus Wyspiański (1869-1907) bearing the name of the Greek hill as its title. The Polish artist took one of the greatest motif of Mediterranean cultural mythology to create a visionary picture of the philosophy of history that unfolds on the Polish *acropolis* equivalent — the Wawel Hill.

The term 'wawel', put down in writing in the 12<sup>th</sup> century is undoubtedly of Slavic linguistic origin, likely signifies a knoll in water and marshes. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century it was a seat of the Slavonic Vistula tribe ruled by some potent leader, a legendary Krak. Dynamic settlements on the hill through successive centuries formed the centre of the Polish state and became one of the principal sources of emerging national culture and spirituality. The body of a cathedral and a castle mounting over the Vistula River has been, for time immemorial, a symbol of national and cultural identity for the Poles in their very often bitter and eventful course of state history. The catholic cathedral, originally dedicated to Jesus Christ praised as *Salvator Mundi*, is presently under the invocation of Saint Vaclaus and Saint Stanislaus. Aesthetically, it is a Gothic edifice with some Romanesque remains and many Renaissance, Mannerist and Baroque re-shapings and annexes. It is not a surprise that in one of the darkest periods of Polish history when the nation lost its independence and the state territory was partitioned in three, Poles turned their heads and hearts to the Wawel Hill, where national dignity and the sense of Polishness seemed to have been buried in tombs of their rulers and heroes. One of those dreaming about a free country was Stanislaus Wyspiański. Born in Krakow, he used to play in his father's sculpture studio at the feet of the Wawel Hill. Gifted for arts, the future painter, poet, play-writer and theatre reformer, assigned to the Wawel Hill the same role for Poles that the *Acropolis* had for the Greeks. In 1903–1904 he wrote a four-act drama entitled *Acropolis* that was published soon after, but staged in Krakow in 1926.

It is also called *A song about the Wawel* and presents an innovative and precursory literary structure built up of several threads intertwined with lyrical and musical insertions. The plot starts at midnight after the Resurrection service at Wawel Cathedral and lasts till the dawn of Easter Sunday. [The drama opens this way: "It is happening on the Wawel on the Great Night of Resurrection"<sup>3</sup>]. In the first act authentic cathedral statues are called into being, in their dialogues they confirm the biological resurrection, the victory of life over death and the power of love. Acts II and III are based on tapestry motifs (the 17<sup>th</sup> century tapestries come from the Flamand factories and decorate the cathedral interior). The acts are performed on the Wawel walls transformed by Wyspiański's syncretic imagination into Trojan walls with a history of Paris, Helen and Hector. Such a mythological metamorphosis is to symbolise forces of love and sexual instinct as stronger as and higher than moral laws. Helen confesses: 'I know I act unjustly, I know I do wrong, wrong, but I love and I feel desire...' In the third act Wyspiański brings to life tapestry characters from the Old Testament, those of Jacob and Esau. They are transferred on the chapel stairs which is transformed into a ladder where Jacob is fighting with an Angel. The final act, still carried out in the cathedral, is filled by the Harper's songs which announce a national independence set to happen on the visionary-symbolical level.

At twilight *Salvator Mundi* is heard and appears as Apollo arriving in his golden chariot. The cathedral, a symbol of tradition and the past, falls into ruin, and new life rises.

*Acropolis* anticipated by twelve years the national resurrection (1914), when Poles regained their independence having suffered 123 years (1795-1918) of disgraceful partition. Wyspiański symbolised the regained freedom in the figure of the Wawel Hill overlapping its local significance with universal cultural dimension of the Greco-European *Acropolis*. Thus, the solid marble-like structure of the ancient Greek archetype standing for sacrum, culture and national dignity changed substantially and in matter into a softer fresco-like body or the Flemish tapestry densely interlaced with vicissitude of the European civilisation. Then the World War II broke. Poland was one of its bloodiest sacrificial altars, with Poles serving as scapegoats together with Jews and other equally tormented nations in the Nazi intellectual aberration and emotional degeneration. Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) was a six-year old boy at that time and was forced to cope psychologically and physically with the human disaster. Brought up in a one-parent family, was introduced by his educated mother into the world of classical and Polish literature and, with time,

naturally became an actor, a theatre director and eventually a reformer of 20<sup>th</sup> century world theatre. In 1962 he directed his *Acropolis according to Wyspiański* transferring the place of action from Wawel Hill to an extermination camp. Józef Szajna a Polish stage designer who survived a concentration camp in Poland, designed costumes and made the stage design. We see Wyspiański's characters talking his poetic language but dressed in camp clothes, carrying camp props and moving in a hectic, aimless tempo. The role of Helen is played by a male actor. The acting space is reduced to such an extent that it reminds us of a narrow punishment cell in Auschwitz.

I argue that a spectator of the Grotowski's performance underwent a destruction and re-construction of the cultural archetype of *acropolis* in the process of a dynamic aesthetic experience while watching this theatre performance. In Jungian psychology an 'archetype' signifies a collectively inherited unconscious idea, pattern of thought, or an image universally present in an individual psyche. It is built up through accumulative experience of hardly distinguishable successive generations. The word derives from a Greek *archétypon*: a model, or a pattern.

Having an aesthetic experience according to materialist aestheticians involves perception followed by understanding and interpretation.

The plastic image of the ancient Greek *acropolis* is perceived by an average European in a variety of ways; during school education, in an individual pursuit of art, and finally, through the world of mass-media and advertising. As a part of our cultural heritage it becomes continuously ingrained in the matrix of the personal unconscious producing classical oriented aesthetic and ethical *qualia*. Hegel holds that *being* is logic, that is necessary and changeable in its nature hence it is an evolving its evolutionary phenomena (that can be measured temporally). Thought is primordial, things are secondary and they emerge out of it. A perennial content of the archetypal reality of a notion *acropolis* makes itself present in the course of European history to meet definite cognitive needs of the knowing self as they are thrown in

the liminal conditions of both personal and national existence. Wyspiański preceded Grotowski not only with his own avant-garde drama that teaches how to be free and courageous in the creative process. He also shook a traditional benevolent and loving image of the God Father. One of the Angels in the Wawel cathedral says "He is both my creator and executor". A few decades later Peter Brook recognised Grotowski's *Acropolis* to be a black mass, meaning his account of the existence of evil. Jerzy Grotowski, in his Hegelian dialectical interpretation of history, makes sense through absurdist and grotesque aesthetics that opposes the unmovable and mythical symbol of *acropolis* — read from the debris of post war civilisation. One participates in it having a complex aesthetical experience staged successively by perceiving, understanding and interpreting. Perceiving leads to understanding which combines old cognitive structure with new significance imposed by theatre reality which turns the old image upside down. It is destroyed to give space to a new cognitive and aesthetic entity imbedded in new existential experience that breaks through the previous inadequate forms of human expression. According to John Dewey the very meaning of an important new movement in art is that it expresses something new in human experience, some new way of interaction of man with their surroundings and hence the release of powers previously cramped or inert<sup>4</sup>.

The fall of European civilisation marked World War II. From our modern perspective we might see that apocalyptic disaster in terms of a Hegelian contradiction in the dialectical structure of *being*. Such a method of historical interpretation helps the human mind reconcile inhuman and extreme war experiences on *qua* a higher level of truth. Following a Hegelian train of thought, every single event is necessary and logical. Such an attitude makes us cope with nonsense, and the absurd and calamitous nothingness of any totalitarianism (as well as with its opposites). Therein, we miss the placating content of the Hegelian triadic framework of historical process. Does a new *Acropolis* exist that feeds itself on the deepest sense of our time? Do we really need it now?

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## AKROPOLIS PAGAL WYSPIAŃSKĄ IR GROTOWSKĄ: NAUJA EUROPIETIŠKOS KULTŪROS ARCHETIPŲ INTERPRETACIJA

### S a n t r a u k a

Kultūrinėje Europos sąmonėje graikiško žodžio *akropolis* skambesys visais laikais buvo susijęs su gilia estetinė patirtimi. Remdamasi neopragmatine estetinės patirties samprata, straipsnyje analizuoju, kaip kintančiame socialiniame kontekste istorija keičia amžinuosius kultūros archetipus ir kaip juos patiria žiūrovai interaktyvaus suvokimo metu. Akropolio įvaizdis, nuolat išskylantis meno kūrinuose, XX a. pradžioje dar kartą pasirodė Stanisławo Wyspiańskiego (1869–1907) dramoje „Akropolis“. Lenkų menininkas pasitelkė šį vieną garsiausių Viduržemio jūros kultūrinės mitologijos motyvų kurdamas įsivaizduojamą istorijos filosofijos paveikslą. Veiksmo vieta čia tampa lenkų akropolis, t. y. Vavelio kalva ir katedra, kuri yra ne tik nacionalinė šventovė, bet ir Lenkijos kultūros paminklas. Wyspiański'o dramoje, prieš 12 metų išpranašavusioje antrąją Lenkijos nepriklausomybę (1914 m.), Vavelio kalva tapo atgautos laisvės simboliu, o jos lokalus įvaizdis persipynė su universalia kultūrine graikiškojo - europietiškojo akropolio dimensija. Kita akropolio įvaizdžio transformacija sietina su 1962 metais Jerzy'io Grotowskio (1933 –1999) pastatyto spektakliu „Akropolis pagal Wyspiański“, kuriame veiksmo vieta iš Vavelio buvo perkelta į koncentracijos stovyklą. Dinamiškos Grotowskio spektaklio estetikos poveikis žiūrovui tapo būdu revizuoti kultūrinį akropolio archetipą, kurio daugiasluoksnis turinys dar kartą aktualizavosi liminalinėse asmeninės ir nacionalinės egzistencijos aplinkybėse. Dialektiškai interpretuodamas istoriją, Grotowskis, priešingai nei numato mitologinis akropolio įvaizdis, savo spektaklio prasmes kūrė pasitelkdamas absurdo ir grotesko estetiką. Žvelgdamas iš pokario civilizacijos griuvėsių perspektyvos, režisierius laužė senas mentalines struktūras tam, kad jos užleistų vietą naujos egzistencinės patirties sąlygotai kognityvinei ir estetinei realybei.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *Lenkijos teatro istorija, Akropolis, kultūros archetipas, Stanisław Wyspiański, Jerzy Grotowski.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Polish theatre history, Acropolis, cultural archetype, Stanisław Wyspiański, Jerzy Grotowski.*

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## NEW FORMS OF LITHUANIAN THEATRE: THEATRE COMPANY KARMAN

Contemporary culture, politics and new developments in theatre form, institutions and technologies have redefined alternative theatre and its relationship to the mainstream. That alternative theatre both reflects and reacts against mainstream obsessions is apparent in its concern with spectacle, new technologies, the body, performance/performativity, the notion of 'event', but there are also shared interests in terms of issues, such as multi-culturalism and globalisation, environmentalism, gender, nationalism/ nationhood, identity, disaffection with traditional politics and questions around bodily modification and interventions, cybernetic and virtual bodies.

The importance of identity, body/gender/sexuality, hybridity, spatiality, crossing boundaries, nomadism has increased in the context of contemporary theatre. The Norwegian theorist of post-modern theatre Knut Ove Arntzen talking about new theatre forms emphasises post-mainstream and visual theatre. Post-mainstream, according to Arntzen, can be used as a concept to describe what happens when mainstream movements are exhausted. It mixes styles and traditions that were not possible to combine in a mainstream paradigm, because of aesthetic purity or trend fixation<sup>1</sup>. According to the author, "visual theatre can be described in relation to the concept of putting means of expression on an equal footing. Thus one can talk about equiva-

lent elements in visual theatre. Juxtaposition or equivalence can be described in the following way: space, frontality, textuality and visuality are put on an equal footing"<sup>2</sup>. Arntzen underlines the main features of non-hierarchical theatre: using actors without any traditional training background, undefined space, using of tableaux or installations in relation to acting style, prearranged projection which can be understood as a preparation to giving a line for a working process involving the actors, pictorial orientation.<sup>3</sup> Thus non-traditional theatre forms reject the concept of mainstream theatre and start to emphasise non-hierarchical structure as well as the importance of different social and cultural discourses increased.

Alternative theatre doesn't have a clearly marked tradition or origin articulated within the political, social and cultural situation in Lithuania. The model of mainstream theatre dominates much more than forms of alternative theatre. Lithuania's cultural, artistic and theatrical position also has changed together with political situation at the end of the 1990s. According to Lithuania's theatre critics, theatrical models have changed and many young theatre directors rejected stable dramaturgical forms, and started to break, parody it or differently express their attitude to traditional theatrical dramaturgical forms. During the period non-institutional, alternative

forms of art, developed next to institutional art. Thus theatre companies and artists of alternative theatre are located in the opposition to the mainstream theatre and usually they are placed at the theatrical periphery. However alternative theatre doesn't have such a well-established tradition, though avant-garde, and "off-off" theatre processes existed in Lithuania National theatre during the Soviet Union period. Different forms of alternative theatre were performed within usual theatrical space and were characterised by specifically established theatrical relations. However it is essential to emphasise the importance of alternative theatre because thanks to it it's possible to define the boundaries between official and non-official cultures. Besides official, institutional theatre represents official culture and thanks to alternative theatre it can make a progress.

There are not so many non-traditional theatre companies in Lithuania. Benas Šarka theatre "Gliukai," "Edmundas studio 3" and theatre company "Karman" are located at the theatrical margins.

Theatre company "Karman" was founded in 2001 in Vilnius by the painter Egmontas Bžeskas and choreographer Karina Krysko. Though the company has been around for four years they have only presented two performances: *Struggle with Gravity Pull* (2001) and *Tabula Rasa* (2004). The company doesn't present the performances very often because the activity of the company is incoherent (there are no constant repertoire, performers, technical staff, and headquarter). The performances were presented in the contemporary dance festival "Dance Factory" (Vilnius, 2001), experimental theatre festival "Off – Beats" (Berlin; 2002, 2004), and a video screening was presented in international theatre festival "Sirens" (Vilnius, 2004).

The performances of the company "Karman" are different in the whole context of the mainstream theatre of the country. The director of the company Egmontas Bžeskas rejects the development of the mainstream performance model, professional actors, and linear narrative structure. Instead, the company prefers compartmental and simultaneous structures, the equivalence of all theatre elements, and the performances have a visual basis. The company denies traditional models of time and space chooses non-professional actors instead of professional ones. Bžeskas emphasises that this is not based on the mainstream performance model which maybe more acceptable to the Lithuanian audience. The artist underlines the combination of MTV styling and elements reminiscent of popular culture. The performances are characterised by: a personal story, subconscious images, and an emphasis of marginal identities.

In his rejection traditional performance Bžeskas tries to erase the boundaries between life and art.

The structure of the narrative is based on simultaneity and fragmentation; it is resolved into many parts. In spite of resolution of the parts existence of the structure does not disappear. The structure of the plot is definite, but it does not correspond to the mainstream performance model: it is not based on logical sequence, continuity and resolution. The structure of the plot of the performances *Struggle with Gravity Pull* and *Tabula Rasa* is resolved into many related parts. The main idea of the performance *Tabula Rasa* is reflection of fantasies and subconscious images of the man, who lives in white quadrangle. The structure of the plot is not linear: the subconscious experience and images are significant. Therefore the main character (Vytautas Pakalnis) and the space of the stage are resolved. The closed space signifies the inner world of the protagonist which is split into two halves: external and internal. One half of it is forced to submit to social norms, the other one plunges itself into strange visions and dreams.<sup>4</sup> These two worlds are presented on the stage at the same moment, using different theatre elements. The internal world of the character is presented on the stage; meanwhile a video projection reflects its connection with external world. Hence the spatial world of the stage is resolved, it is not solid and fixed because of multiplicity of character personality. The parts which are always changing or simultaneous actions and alternation of the characters reflect material and perceptible inner world of the character's personality. And simultaneous actions and characters are presented on the stage that is invisibly related with each other. The performance *Struggle with Gravity Pull* was composed of actions, which were not in agreement with each other on any level — either visually or acoustically. So the micro-model of the world is encompassed in the plot, composed of short episodes, telling the story of human kind.

The director invites various non-professional actors to perform, such as: artists (V. Pakalnis), musicians (A. Raicenok, A. Kauklys), video artists (A. Rugys), dancers (M. Levin, A. Pulkauninkas) and people who have nothing to do with art whatsoever (strippers or boxers). The director explains that he met some people in the street and invited them to perform (for example, Karolina Slekyte, who performs the member of audience in the performance *Tabula Rasa*).<sup>5</sup> Bžeskas maintains that it is more interesting to work with non-professionals; as the performance becomes much more truthful.<sup>6</sup> That's how traditional conception and function of actors are

transformed: the company denies psychological method acting and the characters are not stable and psychologically motivated. Instead, the performer reproduces actions according to exact directorial instructions. In *Tabula Rasa* video artist Andrius Rugys and DJ Andrius Kauklys look after the sound and video technologies — Kauklys maintains that they do not ‘perform’ on the stage. Therefore these performers find themselves in an intermediate sphere, between actor/character and non-actor; or between theatre and reality. The dancer Michail Levin maintains analogically, that his role is to *be* on the stage. Thus the performers are understood as one of structural elements of the performance. Actions of the performers are the part of the whole visual *mise en scene*.

It is complicate for the performers to convey psychological features of their characters because they are always changing; as each performer plays several different characters. The performer doesn’t empathise with his character (appearing on stage many times, performing different actions). Ilma Cikanaitė performed several roles in *Tabula Rasa*: a woman with floured hair, a ballet dancer with skates and a gasmask, a boy, a beast. Karina Krysko performed a beast, a boy, a ballet dancer, a girl who announces the start of a boxing match. Moreover, other performers perform several roles and do not concentrate on particular character — they are pervious and volatile identities. Besides, the characters are not named, simply titled by their activity as stripper, boxer, and joker. In *Tabula Rasa* Aistė Ptakauskaitė performs non-material characters, which have some definitions (a nurse, a keeper, a cleaner). Ptakauskaitė emphasises that these characters are faces, which are seen or are desired to be seen by the main character of the performance. Her character stresses the boundaries between reality and fiction/thea-

tre and life: as the character that eliminates these boundaries at the same time. Thus the director rejects mainstream performance model and destroys the understanding of theatre as a creator of illusion based on stock characters and characterisations. The audience is offered the possibility of identifying with — not the character — a reflection of a particular identity or phenomenon in the social or cultural context. The text is also sublimated within this milieu, as the whole visual drama takes on the phatic role, and is only used for specific communication with the audience.

A specific attitude towards audience is formed in the performances of “Karman” in which the audience has to be active; it becomes a part of the performance. The relationship among the performance, an actor and an audience is formed. The director tries to surprise, and to shock the audience. Aistė Ptakauskaitė invited audience to come onto the stage and to be the part of the action in *Tabula Rasa*. Karolina Slekonytė who performed a member of audience agreed to come to the stage and to dance striptease. So the audience cannot guess course of the performance but can alter its course to suit. Also the director tries to provoke various emotions of audience. A stripper was invited to participate in the performance *Struggle with Gravity Pull*; some fragments of a pornographic film were shown in *Tabula Rasa*. The director’s purpose was not only to surprise but to shock; it was a trial to look at a woman’s body and sexuality from another perspective — forcing them into a role they do not expect. The director of the company “Karman” emphasises he does not try to hide anything under the veil of art. The company refuses of evaluating which aspects of life are positive or negative. Therein, according to the artists, life is transplanted onto the theatrical stage.

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## NAUJOS FORMOS LIETUVOS TEATRE: TEATRO TRUPĖ KARMAN

### S a n t r a u k a

Alternatyviojo teatro trupės ir menininkai Lietuvoje sudaro opoziciją dominuojančiam teatro modeliui ir egzistuoja kaip periferiniai reiškiniai. Teatro trupė *Karman* yra vienas iš netradicinio teatro pavyzdžių. Trupės režisierius Egmontas Bžeskas atmeta dominuojantį įprastą spektaklio modelį, pagrįstą profesionalių aktorių vaidyba ir linijine pasakojimo struktūra.

Straipsnyje parodoma, kad trupės spektakliams yra būdinga simultaninė naratyvo struktūra, visų teatrinių elementų lygiavertiškumas ir ypatinga vizualumo vertė. Tekstas šiuose spektakliuose praranda centrinę vietą: pasakojimas konstruojamas pasitelkiant video projekcijas, šokį, muziką ir performatyvų veiksmą. Trupės *Karman* spektakliai yra atviri ir įtraukia įvairius socialinius, kultūrinius ir meninius kontekstus: lyties problematiką, identiteto, kūno, seksualumo diskursą, kasdienio gyvenimo fragmentus, populiariosios kultūros elementus, marginalines tapatybes. Vienas iš svarbiausių trupės kūrybos tikslų – įveikti ribą tarp meno ir gyvenimo.

**PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:** *alternatyvusis teatras, simultaninė naratyvo struktūra, vizualumas, marginalinės tapatybės.*

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## Meno istorija ir kritika Art History & Criticism

# 2

### Teatras ir visuomenė: problemos ir perspektyvos

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