

ANTHOLOGY OF ESSAYS BY FACULTY OF DRAMATIC ARTS 20

# DRAMATIC AND POSTDRAMATIC THEATER TEN YEARS AFTER

Conference Proceedings

Editor

Ivan Medenica, PhD

**DRAMSKO I  
POSTDRAMSKO  
POZORIŠTE  
DESET  
GODINA  
POSLE** 

Frljić Lehmann  
Feldman Janežič  
Blažević  
Juers-Munby Pavis  
Fuchs Kireńczuk  
Tasić Schimmelpfennig  
Pejović Đorđev Vujanović  
Jovičević Richter Ilić  
De Marinis Valentini  
Sacchi Medenica



# DRAMATIC AND POSTDRAMATIC THEATER: TEN YEARS AFTER

*Conference Proceedings*

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# DRAMSKO I POSTDRAMSKO POZORIŠTE: DESET GODINA POSLE

*Zbornik radova sa konferencije*

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## UVODNIK

### Postdramsko pozorište – globalne dileme i lokalna recepcija

Ovaj zbornik radova rezultat je konferencije „Dramsko i postdramsko pozorište: deset godina posle.”<sup>1</sup> Povodom desetogodišnjice prvog izdanja knjige *Postdramsko kazalište* Hans-Tisa Lemana (Verlag der Autoren, D-Frankfurt am Main 1999)<sup>2</sup>, koja je u međuvremenu prevedena s nemačkog na mnoge svetske jezike i postala važna referenca u studijama pozorišta i studijama izvođenja, hteli smo da analiziramo aktuelan odnos između dramskog i postdramskog pozorišta, te postdramskog i izvođačkih umetnosti u celosti. Konkretno, ciljevi ove konferencije bili su da se, s jedne strane, ispita uticaj ove knjige na savremenu pozorišnu praksu i teoriju, kako globalno tako i u pojedinačnim kontekstima, i da se, s druge strane, razmatra dalji razvoj drame i pozorišta, bilo da se on zasniva na iskustvu postdramskog ili da ga problematizuje.

Pošto je knjiga prevedena ne samo na poljski, francuski, engleski, slovački, japanski, farski, portugalski i španski jezik, već i na slovenački i hrvatski, može se zaključiti da su njeno prisustvo i uticaj na prostoru nekadašnje Jugoslavije osetni. To je prvi razlog zašto smo odlučili da baš u Beogradu razmatramo budućnost pozorišta u odnosu prema *nasleđu* ili *iskustvu* postdramskog. Drugi razlog je taj što je festival Bitef, koji je zajedno s Institutom Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti organizator Konferencije, mesto na kome se već decenijama promovira umetnički najsmeliji poduhvati savremenog teatra, a koji se, gotovo bez

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<sup>1</sup> Konferencija je održana 16. i 17. 09. 2009. na Fakultetu dramskih umetnosti u Beogradu, u saradnji Fakulteta i Bitefa i u okviru festivalskog programa.

<sup>2</sup> Pošto je knjiga prevedena na hrvatski, njen naslov ostaje na hrvatskom, ali fenomen istog naziva navodi se u srpskoj verziji.

izuzetka, nalaze u katalogu postdramskih pojava i autorâ s početka Lemanove knjige.

U ovom uvodniku želeo bih da pokrenem neka osnovna pitanja i dileme vezane za fenomen postdramskog i njegovog nasleđa, a koje se mogu iščitati iz prispelih radova i/ili apstrakata učesnika ovog skupa, kao i iz polemika koje su na ovu temu vođene poslednjih godina u nekim od vodećih svetskih pozorišnih časopisa, pa i na samoj konferenciji. Ovo bi, dakle, bio jedan mogući rezime pristiglih radova i apstrakata ponuđen, paradoksalno, u obliku uvodnika. Ovde moram da istaknem da nismo, i pored svih napora, uspeali da dobijemo završne verzije izlaganja svih učesnika konferencije. Zato ću na ovom mestu navesti bar sva njihova imena: Hans-Thies Lehmann, Patrice Pavis, Elinor Fuchs, Marco de Marinis, Karen Jürs-Munby, Lada Čale-Feldman, Aleksandra Jovićević, Ana Vujanović, Marin Blažević, Annalisa Sacchi, Ana Tasić, Tomasz Kirenczuk, Falk Richter, Roland Schimmelpfenning, Tomi Janežič, Oliver Frlić, Katarina Pejović, Bojan Đorđev, Vlatko Ilić i Ivan Medenica. Neki autori, kao Patrice Pavis, za objavljivanje su poslali drugi rad umesto onoga koji su predstavili na Konferenciji.

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Formulacija „deset godina posle” iz naslova konferencije podrazumeva sumiranje s „istorijske distance”, nekakvo podvlačenje crte, te istovremeno otvara pitanje i onoga što dolazi „posle”.

Prva dilema koja se ovde nameće jeste da li je *posle* odgovarajuća kategorija kada je reč o postdramskom. Da li o postdramskom pozorištu treba uopšte razmišljati u *istorijskim kategorijama*; da li je ono samo naziv za određenu, vremenski omeđenu pojavu u razvoju savremenog umetničkog teatra koja će onda nužno biti zamenjena nečim novim, drugačijim – onim „posle”? U nekim rezimeima prispelim pre Konferencije ovakva se pretpostavka odbacuje, s obrazloženjem da je još prerano i za razvoj novih tendencija i, pogotovo, za njihovu teorijsku konceptualizaciju. Ističe se, takođe, da se tim stavom negira činjenica da se u knjizi ne razmatra istorija pozorišta, već savremena scenska praksa koja je još aktuelna, i to na tako širok i demokratičan način da je obuhvaćena cela „panorama” (kako je nazvano i jedno poglavlje knjige) umetnički najradikalnijih pojava, funkcija i odlika savremenog pozorišta.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ovo su teze Marina Blaževića, čije izlaganje u završnoj verziji, nažalost, nismo dobili.

Oštro protivljenje stavu da je *rano* govoriti o onome što dolazi posle postdramskog prepoznaje se u smeljoj tvrdnji da je sama ova paradigma došla *kasno*. U trenutku kada je ona formulisana u istoimenoj Lemanovoj knjizi, dramski teatar je uveliko bio istorijska pojava, dok je *scenom* već vladalo mnoštvo raznorodnih izvođačkih praksi. Njih je teško, gotovo nemoguće, objediniti *jednom paradigmom*, koja, po prirodi stvari, deluje samo kao novi stupanj u linearnoj istoriji pozorišta.<sup>4</sup> Ova tvrdnja, međutim, ne dovodi u pitanje značaj Lemanovog istraživanja. Naprotiv, ovde se postdramsko vidi kao poslednja velika pozorišna paradigma, čija je glavna vrednost u njenom ničeanski herojskom *neuspehu*: ne uspevajući da se opravda kao paradigma, postdramsko je istovremeno prva važna teorijska platforma za razumevanje teatra i izvođačkih praksi *izvan* svake paradigme i, tako, najprimerenija svom do bezobličnosti heterogenom predmetu.

Upravo postavljanje postdramskog u linearnu istoriju pozorišta legitimizuje ispitivanje – koje se takođe javlja u radovima s Konferencije, ali i u ranijim polemikama na ovu temu – odnosa predramsko–dramsko–postdramsko, a u analogiji s totalizujućim *hegelijanskim* razvojem umetničkih formi na relaciji simboličko–klasično–romantično. U jednoj od najburnijih polemika o ovoj knjizi, konkretno o njenom engleskom izdanju, Elinor Fjuks tumači postdramsko kao „pokret” u kome su objedinjeni doslovno svi najznačajniji pozorišni autori iz tri i više poslednjih generacija (cela druga polovina 20. veka).<sup>5</sup> Time se, prema njenom mišljenju, vrši drastično uopštavanje kojim se, s jedne strane, neki značajni reformatori mimetičkog pozorišta, kao što je Breht, neopravdano ostavljaju u polju dramskog, dok se, s druge strane, ostvaruje hegelijanska ambicija totalizovanja u doba kada je dekonstrukcija takve ambicije uveliko „razlomila u parčad”.

Leman je sistematično polemisao s ovim tezama, ističući da Hegelova sistemska istorija „svetske umetnosti” nema nikakvu metodološku vezu s njegovim razlikovanjem razvojnih tendencija u evropskom teatru; da je pravljenje oštrog reza između „hegelovske totalizacije” i „dekonstrukcijskog razlaganja” redukcioniističko i, paradoksalno, sasvim u skladu baš s hegelovskim binarnim opozicijama koje se „bore za primat”; da postdramsko nikako nije „pokret”, jer se u knjizi insistira na raznorodnosti pojava koje se podvode pod ovaj pojam.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ovo su teze Ane Vujanović, čije izlaganje u završnoj verziji, nažalost, nismo dobili.

<sup>5</sup> Elinor Fuchs, bez naslova (prikaz knjige *Postdramsko kazalište*), *TDR: The Drama Review* 52: 2 (T 198), 2008, New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 179.

<sup>6</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, „Lost in Translation?”, *TDR: The Drama Review* 52: 4 (T 200), 2008, New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 15.

Primedbu da pojam „*post-dramsko*” treba jasno da projektuje ono u odnosu na šta (nasuprot ili posle čega) se artikuliše – a to je, dakle, dramsko pozorište – te da to nije urađeno u knjizi, Leman prihvata. Slaže se s Elinor Fjuks da je pojam „dramsko pozorište” uopšten i stoga neprecizan, i sam dodaje da se razvoj moderne drame ne poklapa uvek s njenom scenskom tradicijom, da su inscenacije u renesansi i baroku bile otvorenije i slobodnije – s naglaskom na pesmi, igri i vizuelnim efektima, a ne na literaturi – od građanskog teatra 18. i 19. veka. Drugim rečima, Leman prihvata primedbu da se koncept postdramskog zasniva na redukcioniističkom shvatanju dramskog pozorišta, u kome se ponegde kriju tekovine mnogo bliže radikalnim scenskim praksama iz druge polovine 20. veka nego buržoaskom književnom pozorištu 19. veka.

Pomenute teze o preuranjenosti i neadekvatnosti razmišljanja o onome što dolazi posle postdramskog i, nasuprot njima, o zakasnelosti i neprimerenosti ove paradigme koja pokušava da totalizuje krajnje raznorodnu scensku praksu, samo su dve krajnje tačke u razmatranjima na temu „pre i posle post-dramskog”. Nasuprot njima, u većem broju „postdramsko” se definitivno sagledava samo kao jedna faza u istoriji pozorišta i izvođačkih umetnosti, te se tako prepoznaju još novije pojave, makar i samo u vidu nekih duhovitih kovanica – *postpostdramsko* ili *novodramsko*. Ovi novi pojmovi još nisu jasno artikulisani; ne znamo čak ni da li ih njihovi autori ozbiljno shvataju, ali se u njima, ipak, već naslućuje šta bi bila nova faza. Reč je o povratku teksta u pozorište. Čim se izgovori ili napiše, ova tvrdnja pokreće lavinu dvoumljenja i mogućih nesporazuma koje, dakle, treba odmah preduprediti.

Pre svega, kao što je jasno svakom ko je u treznom stanju čitao Lemanovu knjigu, postdramsko *nije pozorište bez teksta*. Takva paradoksalna tvrdnja javila se, saznajemo iz jednog izlaganja, u jednoj „stručnoj” recenziji knjige u Australiji.<sup>7</sup> U anglosaksonskim akademskim krugovima ovakvo uprošćavanje opstaje, međutim, i onda kad postoji jasna svest, nasuprot navedenom slučaju, da Leman nikada nije pisao o postdramskom kao o pozorištu bez teksta: „bez obzira što Leman nikad nije izričito povezivao dramsko s tekstualno-zasnovanom a postdramsko s netekstualno-zasnovanom praksom, ja ću dokazivati da njegovi zaključci, upravo zato što nemaju prirodu zaključka, izvesno mnogo više potvrđuju nego što ruše ovu postojeću binarnu opoziciju”<sup>8</sup>.

Postdramski teatar, onako kako ga Leman postavlja, razgrađuje klasičnu dramsku formu (s pripadajućim joj pojmovima mimezisa, figuracije, naracije,

<sup>7</sup> Karen Jüers-Munby, “The vexed question of the text in Postdramatic Theatre in a cross-cultural perspective” (rad objavljen u ovom zborniku).

<sup>8</sup> Liz Tomlin, *ibid.*

likova...) i klasične koncepte vezane za scenski život drame (rediteljsko tumačenje, recimo), ali ne odbacuje svaki tekst za pozornicu. Različiti nedramski tekstovi ili, kako ih naziva Gerda Pošman – „ne više dramski pozorišni tekstovi”<sup>9</sup> – zauzimaju značajno mesto i u postdramskom pozorištu, ali oni više ne dominiraju predstavom, već su samo jedan od ravnopravnih i često samostalnih scenskih jezika. Takvi tekstovi nisu više predmet *tumačenja*, već oni ostvaruju različite, netradicionalne i osamostaljene oblike scenske egzistencije: mogu da budu izricani kao politički pamfleti, pevani kao pesme, nabacivani kao polje slobodnih asocijacija... Drugim rečima, u postdramskom pozorištu se bitno menja i vrsta, ali i scenski status tekstova.

Pavis, takođe, odbacuje zabludu da konceptom postdramskog Leman „tekstualnom pozorištu” suprotstavlja „pozorište bez teksta”. On pak smatra da se dramskom tekstu koji prethodi predstavi i koji treba „scenski postaviti” suprotstavlja, u postdramskom teatru, tekst nastao tokom proba, putem improvizacija u kojima, manje ili više, učestvuju cela ekipa.<sup>10</sup>

Zato, osnovno pitanje može da bude upravo kakvi su, zaista, ti tekstovi kojima se – u naslućenim konceptima *postpostdramskog*, *novodramskog* ili kako god nazvali ovu pojavu – pozorište danas, navodno, vraća. Da li to mogu biti i drame, u tradicionalnom ili nešto izmenjenom obliku, ili je reč o tim radikalno drugačijim komadima zasnovanim na iskustvu postdramskog? Pod pojmom „postpostdramsko”, koji ovlašno i neobavezujuće plasira, Pavis misli na tekstove koji, iako se ne vraćaju na tradiciju „dobro skrojenog komada”, ponovo pričaju priče, prikazuju elemente stvarnosti, stvaraju efekte dramskog lika. Iako na prvi pogled ne deluje tako, ovaj zaokret nije, ističe Pavis, „reakcionarna restauracija; on je jednostavno prihvatanje svesti da svako delo i svaki ljudski govor uvek nešto pripovedaju”<sup>11</sup>.

Teško je reći da li Elinor Fjuks negira ovu „retro-tendenciju” ili je potvrđuje onda kada naslućuje, na primerima iz savremenog američkog pozorišta, da je moguće istovremeno i razrušiti i prigrliti kosmos dramske fikcije. Ono što na prvi pogled i u duhu postdramskog može delovati kao rasturanje kosmosa fikcije zapravo je, smatra ona, samo njegovo „komplikovanje”: upotreba postdramskih procedura može da pokrene upravo onakve emocionalne i

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<sup>9</sup> Gerda Poschmann, *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext: aktuelle Bühnenstücke und ihre dramaturgische Analyse*, Tübingen 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Patrice Pavis, « Réflexions sur le théâtre postdramatique » (rad objavljen u ovom zborniku).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

imaginativne procese kakve tradicionalno vezujemo za dramsko pozorište.<sup>12</sup> Da li je ovo negiranje postdramskog ili, naprotiv, potvrđivanje stava da je ono, postdramsko, ostavilo veoma dubok trag na dramsko pozorište koje je, s tim apsorbovanim novim iskustvom, ipak „preživelo” i nastavilo dalje jer – „fiktionalni je kosmos teško ubiti”<sup>13</sup>?

Nemački dramski pisac i reditelj Falk Rihter, koji je učestvovao na beogradskoj Konferenciji<sup>14</sup>, govori o *novodramskim* komadima: to su tekstovi koji imaju postdramske strukture, ali nude više energije i emocija. U jednom intervjuu koji sam radio s njim, Rihter je na pitanje da li je njegov komad *Unter Eis* postdramski, razvio upravo takvu tezu: „Ne, više *novodramski*. Iako se koriste postdramske strukture, mislim da taj komad nudi mnogo više energije i emocija”.<sup>15</sup> Reklo bi se da se time postdramski tekst i teatar izjednačavaju s nekakvom hladnom, ironičnom, intelektualnom i visokokonceptualnom umetnošću? Verujem da se Lehmann ne bi složio s takvim tumačenjem.

Dileme i pitanja koje pokreće postdramsko ne tiču se samo odnosa scene i drame. Pored ovih, javljaju se i nesporazumi u tumačenju odnosa postdramskog i performansa, ili uopšte izvođačkih umetnosti. U već navedenoj polemici, Elinor Fjuks tvrdi da je u Lemanovoj knjizi zamagljena granica između savremenog performansa i postdramskog pozorišta, da se ti pojmovi mogu međusobno zameniti, da autorova teza o tome da je postdramsko presek između pozorišta i performansa znači to da je umetnost performansa podgrupa postdramskog.<sup>16</sup> Njene argumente Leman određuje kao pogrešno tumačenje, čak možda i svesno pogrešno, razvijajući detaljnije svoju tezu o „preseku” (overlap). To što je celo pozorište kao takvo samo jedan deo izvođačkih praksi u koje, pored njega, spadaju i rituali, sport, političke i srodne manifestacije, ne znači da ne treba pozorišne pojave koje imaju naglašeno performativni karakter (koje se preklapaju s umetnošću performansa) tretirati u njihovom zasebnom referentnom okviru, a po Lemanu je taj okvir upravo postdramski teatar.<sup>17</sup> „Ovdje se može raditi samo o tome da se imenuje područje na kojemu

<sup>12</sup> Elinor Fuchs, “Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the ‘Fictive Cosmos’: A View from America” (rad objavljen u ovom zborniku).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Većina umetnika koja je učestvovala na ovoj konferenciji (Falk Richter, Roland Schimmelpfenig, Tomi Janežič, Katarina Pejović i Bojan Đorđev) nije poslala završne radove za objavljivanje.

<sup>15</sup> Ivan Medenica, „Kriza je dobra (razgovor s rediteljem i piscem Falkom Rihterom)”, *Teatron*, 146–147, Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, Beograd 2009, 118.

<sup>16</sup> Elinor Fuchs, bez naslova (prikaz knjige *Postdramsko kazalište*), op. cit., 180–181.

<sup>17</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, op. cit., 14–15.

se presijecaju kazalište i umjetnost performansa, jer to područje pripada diskursu postdramskog kazališta, a ne o bilo na koji način dostatnoj analizi same umjetnosti performansa.”<sup>18</sup>

Kada se govori o Lemanovoj upotrebi pojma i koncepta „performativnog”, treba izdvojiti i Pavisovu primedbu. Polazeći od osnovne hipoteze da postdramsko pozorište u potpunosti napušta mimetičko zarad performativnog (umesto dramskog predstavljanja, putem teksta i glumačke igre, fikcionalne radnje i sukoba, postdramsko izlaže/razlaže govorne mehanizme, tretira tekst kao zvučni objekt), Pavis iznosi tvrdnju da u elaboraciji performativnog, ono – postdramsko – ne ide daleko, ne uzima u obzir, recimo, savremene feminističke studije na ovu temu.<sup>19</sup>

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U prvom delu ovog uvoda, posvetio sam više pažnje jednom od dva cilja beogradske Konferencije koja su, formulisana u pozivnom pismu, ponudila moguće polazište za izlaganja učesnika i njihove završne radove. Moja pažnja je ovde više bila usmerena na pitanje današnjeg globalnog odnosa postdramskog i dramskog pozorišta, odnosno postdramskog i umetnosti performansa, i to zato što su ove teme, obrađivane s različitih pozicija i s različitim stavovima, prevladavale u većini izlaganja. Nasuprot tome, pitanje recepcije knjige u pojedinačnim kulturnim kontekstima, njenog uticaja na lokalne umetničke prakse i teorijska razmišljanja, bilo je znatno manje zastupljeno u prispelim radovima, te mu je zato i ovde dato manje prostora. U drugom delu ovog uvodnika, a posle pokušaja da skiciram mrežu glavnih pitanja, pokrenutih i u izlaganjima na Konferenciji i u ranijim bitnim polemikama na temu postdramskog, biram da se lično posvetim, u širem obimu, upravo pitanju recepcije ove paradigme u lokalnom, srpskom kontekstu.

Stav Vlatka Ilića<sup>20</sup> o prihvatanju paradigme postdramskog na lokalnoj, prevashodno beogradskoj sceni, objektivan je i celovit, jer se ističu i doprinos i ograničenja ovog prodora. Neusmjenjiv doprinos nalazi se, prema njegovom mišljenju, u tome što je postdramsko legitimizovalo brojne hibridne izvođačke prakse, one koje ne spadaju u tradiciju pozorišta zanovanog na „dominantnosti

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<sup>18</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramsko kazalište*, CDU i TKH, Zagreb, Beograd 2004, 180.

<sup>19</sup> Pavis, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Vlatko Ilić, “Everyone repeats the same rhetorical question: do we still need theater? Notes on one theatrical scene and one work of theater” (rad objavljen u ovom zborniku).

dramskog teksta i njenoj ideologiji jedinstvenog i dobro uređenog mikrosistema<sup>21</sup>. One su se i ranije probijale, ali ne na tako „vidljiv” način kao danas kad imaju uporište u Lemanovoj teoriji. Pored legitimizacije nedramskih izvođačkih praksi, te demokratizacije „pojma pozorišta”, paradigma post-dramskog ponudila je i odgovarajući, konkretan i razvijen teorijski aparat za dubinsko istraživanje i suštinsko razumevanje ovih praksi. Ograničenja ove paradigme jesu, prema Ilićevom mišljenju, zanemarivanje činjenice da se kulturne okolnosti razlikuju od sredine do sredine (skrivena totalizujuća ambicija post-dramskog), i to što je, bar u srpskom kontekstu, njena primena prisutnija u tumačenju nego u kreiranju scenske prakse.<sup>22</sup>

S većinom ovih argumenata u potpunosti se slažem, ali mislim da neki od njih traže dodatno problematizovanje. Tačno je da je proboj paradigme post-dramskog bitno doprineo teorijskom promišljanju i kulturnom prihvatanju različitih izvođačkih praksi u našoj sredini. Doprinos teorijskom mišljenju ostvaruje se, kao što je i primereno ovakvom diskursu, prevashodno u okviru naučnih istraživanja, skupova, publikacija. Veći izazov od ovoga, pa stoga i bitniji rezultat, jeste najšire „kulturno prihvatanje” paradigme koje se odvija, između ostalog, i u kritikama pozorišnih predstava u medijima opšteg tipa i sličnim kontekstima koji nisu usko naučni. Taj vid lokalne recepcije postdramskog ovde bih ukratko razmotrio, i to na konkretnom i primerenom uzorku: kritikama postdramskih predstava iz programa dva poslednja Bitefa objavljenim u srpskim medijima.

U jednoj rekapitulaciji 44. Bitefa, protestuje se protiv neodgovarajuće lokalne recepcije rada poznatog flamanskog autora Jana Lauersa (predstave *Izabelina soba* i *Kuća jelena*), s nespornim argumentom da je „apsurdno posmatrati njegovu detaljno promišljenu, postdramsku poetiku iz tradicionalističkog ugla, u sistemu dramskog pozorišta, te suditi o njemu kao o amateru, što je, u dobroj meri, kod nas bio slučaj”<sup>23</sup>. Ova tvrdnja se, verovatno, zasniva na usmenim komentarima koje je kritičarka čula, jer se u objavljenim kritikama, bez obzira na to da li se u njima izričito pominje postdramsko ili ne, prepoznaje da Laures koristi upravo ovakve, a ne dramske principe. Izuzetak je samo jedna kritika (o predstavi *Kuća jelena*) u kojoj se performerski „razlabavljena” glu-mačka igra, zasnovana na razgradnji dramskog lika, određuje kao neprofesionalna: „ispod nivoa ozbiljne predstave”<sup>24</sup>. U većini drugih kritika prepoznaju

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ana Tasić, „Oprečni stavovi publike”, *Politika*, 27. 09. 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Aleksandra Glovacki, „Krajnosti”, *Večernje novosti*, 20. 09. 2010.

se i ističu – bilo esejistički i intuitivno bilo teorijski razrađeno i utemeljeno – one karakteristike Lauersove poetike koje su upravo postdramske: izostanak naracije, inferiornost govora kao sredstva komunikacije, eklektični spoj plesa, muzike i teatra, izričito ukidanje scenske fikcije.

Sličnu kritičku recepciju doživele su, godinu dana ranije (43. Bitef) i izrazito postdramske predstave švajcarske trupe Rimini protokol, ovom prilikom podeljene u dva tima i projekta: *Aerodromski klinici* (Štefan Kaegi, u saradnji sa „spoljnom” koautorom Lolom Arijes) i *Kapital* (Danijel Vecel i Helgard Haug). Možda i zbog ranijeg iskustva s radom Rimini protokola (nastup na jednom od prethodnih Bitefa s predstavom *Kargo Sofija*), nijednom srpskom kritičaru nije palo na pamet da za izvedbu „eksperata” – kako autori zovu ne-profesionalne izvođače svojih projekata – tvrdi kako je „ispod nivoa ozbiljne predstave”. Naprotiv, prepoznavali su i isticali dokumentarističke principe njihovog rada, ukidanje mimezisa, „provalu realnog”... Postdramske principe kritika je pronalazila i u specifičnoj upotrebi videa: ta upotreba u potpunosti odgovara onom što Leman, u svojoj klasifikaciji, zove *konstitutivna funkcija*<sup>25</sup> medija u pozorištu – kada su video-prenos ili montaža snimljenog materijala nužni, strukturni činilac predstave.

Na primerima ovih nekoliko izrazito postdramskih predstava izvedenih na poslednja dva Bitefa (2009. i 2010), videli smo da je srpska kritika tumačila njihove odlike i ocenjivala njihove domete, čak i onda kad nije koristila odgovarajuću terminologiju i argumentaciju, imajući bar najopštiju predstavu o radikalnim scenskim tendencijama koje su objedinjene ovom paradigmom. Kada se tom najopštijem vidu prihvatanja postdramskog – kritikama konkretnih (i zaista postdramskih) predstava – doda i primeren teorijski diskurs, a čija je potvrda i ova konferencija, onda se, zaista, može braniti tvrdnja da je u lokalnom kontekstu „postdramsko pozorište” već prilično prihvaćeno kao paradigma koja konceptualizuje i legitimizuje brojne nedramske, raznorodne izvođačke prakse.

Ima, međutim, i izvesnih problema u interpretacijskoj upotrebi ove paradigme. U navedenim primerima pokazali smo kako se s razumevanjem primenjuju postdramski principi u kritikama predstava koje, izvesno i nedvosmisleno, pripadaju ovoj vrsti pozorišta. Ima, međutim, i obrnutih slučajeva. Dešava se da se Lemanova paradigma nasilno učitava i prepoznaje kako bi se pronašla neka rediteljska namera u predstavama koje nisu postdramske, već su samo haotične, neartikulisane, nerazgovetne; jednom rečju – loše... U kritikama upravo tih projekata, a ne Lauersovih, mogla je da stoji primedba da umetnički nivo ne odgovara „ozbiljnoj predstavi”.

<sup>25</sup> Hans-Thies, Lehmann, op. cit., 305.

S ovakvim učitavanjem, a u cilju afirmacije predstava koje žele da sebe prikažu kao postdramske, često je povezan i odgovarajući vrednosni sud. Pojam „postdramsko” postaje tako kriterijum u proceni umetničke vrednosti, pa sve ono što pod njega ne može da se podvede postaje klasično dramsko pozorište, što u ovakvim analizama poprima osetan negativan prizvuk. To pojednostavljeno razdvajanje s vrednosnim prizvukom može se osetiti i u navedenoj izjavi da postdramsko legitimizuje izvođačke prakse koje se ne baziraju na „dominaciji dramskog teksta i njoj imanentnoj ideologiji jedinstvenog i dobro uređenog mikrosistema”. Istina je, međutim, da pozorištu koje, nasuprot postdramskom, i dalje čuva međuzavisan odnos drama–scena, onom koje se i dalje svodi na tumačenje teksta, *nije nužno* imanentna „ideologija jedinstvenog i dobro uređenog mikrosistema”.

Na primer, Leman određuje pojam „dekonstrukcija” kao postdramsku strategiju, ali je dekonstrukcija – u smislu deridijanskog otvaranja teksta za brojna, nejedinstvena, nehijerarhizovana i protivrečna tumačenja, s ukinutom ili *bitno odloženom* sintezom – podjednako odlika i dramskog teatra, onog koji i dalje ima ambiciju da „čita” tekst. Samo što je to čitanje sada mnogo složenije, nimalo „jedinstveno i uređeno”. Tu mislim, pre svega, na savremene *dekonstrukcijske* režije dramske klasike, one u kojima se suočavaju, ali i zadržavaju, sasvim različite vremenske (istorijske) perspektive, izvorne i sadašnje, a bez poravnavanja, bez svođenja na samo jednu od njih.<sup>26</sup> Drugim rečima, aktiviranje deridijanske *différance*, koja razgrađuje „jedinstven i uređen mikrosistem”, nije na delu samo u postdramskom pozorištu, već i u dramskom, pod uslovom da ono teži nečemu što je *netotalizujuće*, ali i dalje – čitanje teksta.

Razlog za ovakvu situaciju u lokalnoj recepciji i upotrebi sintagme „postdramsko pozorište” nalazi se, prema mom najdubljem osećanju, u jednoj osobenosti ne samo ove već i svake druge „male kulture”: one koja nastaje u (*na*) jeziku koji nije međunarodni i u kojoj ne postoje sistemski i strateški izdavački planovi u nauci. Posledica je ta da su polja naučnog rada sužena i/ili nemerodavna. U tim okolnostima mogući su, međutim, i krajnje paradoksalni slučajevi: da se prevede neka bitna i na međunarodnom planu uticajna studija, ali da se ona prima bez uvida u njen širi kontekst. Zato se dešava da se takve studije, pogotovo ako imaju auru „modernih”, nekritički prihvataju, pa i dogmatizuju. Krugovi u kojima se one dogmatizuju su, po pravilu, elitni, kosmopolitski, progresivni i ofanzivni, što rezultira podjednako snažnim i nekritičkim otporom najšire stručne javnosti, one koja ne prati najnovije domete u nauci i umetnosti, koja je okrenuta nacionalnom i tradicionalnom. Paradoks

<sup>26</sup> Na ovu temu videti: Ivan Medenica, *Klasika i njene maske: modeli u režiji dramske klasike*, Sterijino pozorje, Novi Sad, 2011.

je u tome što tako nauka – u kojoj treba da vlada objektivno kritičko mišljenje – postaje poprište neprimerenih sukoba, često i ideološki obojenih. U tim sukobima najviše strada sâm povod: te knjige prema kojima se zauzimaju oprečni stavovi, a da obično nisu dobro shvaćene, ni one ni njihov kontekst. U Srbiji se, u pozorišnoj teoriji i, posledično, umetnosti, to dešavalo sa *Čitanjem pozorišta* An Ibersfeld osamdesetih godina prošlog veka, a danas – u neuporedivo manjoj meri, doduše – i s *Postdramskim kazalištem* Hans-Tisa Lemana.

Recepcija knjige *Postdramsko kazalište* na lokalnoj sceni je, ipak, generalno dosta uravnotežena. Ekstremne pozicije – nekritičko odobravanje i nekritičko odbacivanje – postoje, ali su izolovane i retke, dok i u naučnom i u kritičkom diskursu prevlađuje iznijansirana, obazriva i nedogmatska primena ove paradigme. Najbolji primer te lokalne težnje da se postdramsko pozorište kritički i sveobuhvatno prouči jeste – ako nije neumesno da baš ja to tvrdim – konferencija, čiji je rezultat ovaj Zbornik.

### Rezime:

U uvodniku Zbornika radova s naučne konferencije „Dramsko i postdramsko pozorište: deset godina posle”, predsedavajući nudi mrežu osnovnih i/ili najpolemičnijih pitanja o postdramskom pozorištu koja se pokreću u završnim verzijama izlaganja, a koja su ovde objavljena, rezimeima prispelim pre skupa, ili ranijim bitnim polemikama na ovu temu. To su pitanja odnosa postdramskog pozorišta i drame; dilema da li se ova paradigma može izjednačiti s pozorištem oslobođenim svakog teksta; vizija/projekcija povratka tekstu u novim („postpostdramskim”) tendencijama, bilo da je reč o renesansi dramske forme i njenog fikcionalnog kosmosa ili o daljem razvoju dramske fikcije, ali sada na sasvim novim, postdramskim iskustvima. Autor izdavanja i dilemu da li se uopšte može govoriti o postdramskom u istorijskim kategorijama, kao o fazi u razvoju pozorišta. Povodom tog pitanja suočavaju se suprotni stavovi – rano je govoriti o onom što dolazi posle postdramskog, jer je reč o najsavremenijim scenskim praksama a ne o istoriji teatra, odnosno, sama paradigma je došla kasno, kad više nije bilo moguće sistematizovati vrlo hibridnu izvođačku praksu. U drugom delu rada, autor se fokusira na pitanje recepcije paradigme postdramskog na lokalnoj, srpskoj sceni, i to u različitim kontekstima – u nauci i u kritici. Zaključuje da je paradigma sve zastupljenija u analizi najradikalnijih, hibridnih scenskih formi, i da je njena recepcija, i pored nekih ekstremnih tendencija i u jednom i u drugom pravcu, relativno uravnotežena i objektivna.



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Postdramatic Theatre – Global Dilemmas and Local Reception**

These Proceedings are the result of the conference “Dramatic and postdramatic theatre: ten years after.”<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first edition of Hans-Ties Lehmann’s *Postdramatic Theatre* (Verlag der Autoren, D-Frankfurt am Main 1999), which had in the meantime been translated from German into many languages as a major reference for theatre and performance studies, we wanted to analyse the actual relation between dramatic and postdramatic theatre, as well as between the postdramatic phenomenon and the performing arts in general. Concretely, the aims of this conference were, on the one hand, to explore the influence of Lehmann’s book on contemporary theatre practice and theory, both globally and in particular contexts, and, on the other hand, to reflect on the further developments – based on the postdramatic experience or problematising it – of drama and theatre.

Since the book has been translated not only into Polish, French, English, Slovakian, Japanese, Farsi, Portuguese and Spanish, but into Slovenian and Croatian as well, we may infer that its presence and influence on the territory of the former Yugoslavia have been considerable. That was the first reason to choose Belgrade as the place for a discussion on the future of theatre in relation to the heritage or experience of the postdramatic. The second reason is the fact that the BITEF Festival, co-organiser of the conference with the Institute of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, is a place where, already for decades, some of

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<sup>1</sup> The Conference was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of September, 2009, at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, in collaboration between the Faculty and Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF), as one of the events at the Festival.

the artistically boldest ventures of contemporary theatre have been promoted; and almost all these events are included in the catalogue of postdramatic phenomena and authors at the beginning of Lehmann's book.

Here I would like to summarise some important questions about the postdramatic and its heritage discussed in the papers and/or abstracts of the participants in the conference, as well as in the recent polemics in some of the leading theatre journals and at the conference itself. So, this would be a possible summary of the contributions, offered, paradoxically, in the form of an introduction. Despite all our efforts, we could not obtain the final versions of papers from all participants. At least here I shall mention all their names: Hans-Thies Lehmann, Patrice Pavis, Elinor Fuchs, Marco de Marinis, Karen Jürs-Munby, Lada Čale-Feldman, Aleksandra Jovičević, Ana Vujanović, Marin Blažević, Annalisa Sacchi, Ana Tasić, Tomasz Kirenczuk, Falk Richter, Roland Schimmelpfening, Tomi Janežić, Oliver Frljić, Katarina Pejović, Bojan Đorđev, Vlatko Ilić and Ivan Medenica. Some authors, like Patrice Pavis, sent a different text from the one presented at the conference.

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The phrase "ten years after", appearing in the title of the conference, implies a summing up from an historical distance a kind of final balance, and simultaneously raises the question of what comes "after".

The first dilemma arising here is whether "after" is an appropriate category when the postdramatic is considered. Should we think about the postdramatic theatre in historical terms, i.e. is it only a name for a specific, temporally limited phenomenon in the development of contemporary artistic theatre, which will necessarily be replaced by the new and different – by an "after"? In some of the abstracts that arrived before the conference, such an assumption was dismissed with the argument that it is too early even for the development of new trends, let alone for their theoretical conceptualisation. It has also been stressed that this assumption ignores the fact that Lehmann's book is not about the history of the theatre, but about contemporary, still actual stage practice, which is as broad and democratic as to include the whole "panorama" (the title of a chapter in the book) of the artistically most radical phenomena, functions and features of the contemporary theatre.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> These are the theses from Marin Blažević's presentation; regrettably, we did not get the final version of his paper.

In sharp opposition to the claim that it is too *early* to think about what comes after the postdramatic, is the claim that the paradigm itself comes too *late*. When postdramatic theatre was formulated in Lehmann's book of the same title, dramatic theatre was largely a historical phenomenon that gave way – to many heterogeneous performing practices on the stage. It is hard, even impossible, to encompass them all by a single paradigm, which would, moreover, seem to be only a new stage in the linear history of theatre.<sup>3</sup> However, this does not put into question the importance of Lehmann's research. On the contrary, the postdramatic is seen here as the last big theatre paradigm, the main value of which is its heroic failure in the Nietzschean sense: unable to justify itself as a paradigm, the postdramatic is, however, the first significant theoretical platform for – understanding of theatre and the performing practices *beyond* every paradigm, and thus, most adequate to its subject, which is so heterogeneous to the point of being shapeless.

It is exactly the situating of the postdramatic in the linear history of theatre that legitimates an exploration, present also both in the conference papers and in earlier polemics on this topic, of the relation of the predramatic-dramatic-postdramatic in analogy with the totalizing Hegelian development of art forms through the stages of symbolic-classic-romantic. In one of the most heated polemics about Lehmann's book, Elinor Fuchs interprets the postdramatic as a “movement” containing literally all the major theatre authors from three or more generations (the whole second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>4</sup> In her opinion, this leads to a drastic generalization, which on the one hand leaves some important reformers of mimetic theatre (e.g. Brecht) in the field of the dramatic, while on the other, it realizes the Hegelian ambition of totalizing at a time when deconstructionism has condemned such projects to failure.

Lehmann has systematically polemicized with these theses, emphasizing that the Hegelian systematic history of “world art” has no methodological relation with his own distinction between developmental tendencies in the European theatre; that making a sharp cut between the “Hegelian totalization” and “deconstructionist breaking down” is reductionist and, paradoxically, quite in harmony with Hegel's binary oppositions that are “fighting for primacy”; that the postdramatic is by no means a “movement”, because Lehmann in his book insists on the heterogeneous nature of the phenomena subsumed under this

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<sup>3</sup> Theses from Ana Vujanović's presentation; regrettably, we did not get the final version of her paper.

<sup>4</sup> Elinor Fuchs, untitled (the review on *Postdramatic theatre*), *TDR: The Drama Review*, 52: 2 (T 198), 2008, New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 179.

concept.<sup>5</sup> Lehmann accepts the objection that the concept of “*post-dramatic*” should clearly project the phenomenon in relation to which (as being opposed to it or coming after it) it is articulated – i.e. dramatic theatre – and that he failed to do this in his book. He agrees with Fuchs that the concept of “dramatic theatre” is too generalized and thus imprecise, and adds that the development of modern drama does not always coincide with its stage tradition, that the *mise-en-scène* in the Renaissance and Baroque was more open and free – with emphasis on song, dance and visual effects, and not on literature – than the bourgeois theatre of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In other words, Lehmann accepts the objection that the concept of postdramatic is based on a reductionist view of dramatic theatre, in which sometimes are hidden achievements much closer to radical practices of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than to the bourgeois literary theatre of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The aforementioned thesis on prematureness and inadequacy of reflections about what comes after the postdramatic, as well as that about the belatedness and inadequacy of this paradigm which is trying to totalize an extremely heterogeneous stage practices, are only two extreme points of the reflections on “before and after the postdramatic”. In contrast to them, there are quite a few works in which the postdramatic is seen only as a phase in the history of theatre and the performing arts, and some newer phenomena are recognized, even if only in the form of witty neologisms like *postpostdramatic* or *neodramatic*. These new concepts have not yet been clearly articulated; we do not even know whether their authors take them seriously; however, they give us a certain idea of what the new phase would be like. It would be about the return of the text to the theatre. No sooner said or written than this statement provokes an avalanche of dilemmas and possible misunderstandings that need to be forestalled right away.

First of all, as it must be clear to anybody who has read Lehmann’s book in a sober state, that for this author the postdramatic theatre does not mean *theatre without text*. As we have learnt from one presentation at the conference, such a paradoxical claim appeared in an “expert” review on the book in Australia.<sup>6</sup> In Anglo-Saxon academic circles, this simplification persists in spite of the full awareness that Lehmann has never written about postdramatic theatre as theatre without text: “While Lehmann never explicitly aligns dramatic with text-based and postdramatic with non-text-based practice, I will argue that his

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<sup>5</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, “Lost in Translation?”, *TDR: The Drama Review* 52: 4 (T 200), 2008, New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Karen Jürs-Munby, “The vexed question of the text in Postdramatic Theatre in a cross-cultural perspective” (included in these proceedings).

conclusions, inconclusive as they are, are ultimately more likely to consolidate than to fracture the existing binary.<sup>7</sup> Postdramatic theatre, as Lehmann posits it, deconstructs the classic dramatic form (with its accompanying notions of mimesis, figuration, narration, characters...) and classic notions related to the stage life of drama (e.g. director's interpretation), but it does not discard the text for the stage as such. Various non-dramatic texts or, as Gerda Poschman puts it, "no longer dramatic theatre texts"<sup>8</sup> – occupy an important place in postdramatic theatre as well; however, they do not dominate the play, but figure as one among other equal, often independent stage languages. Rather than being subjects of *interpretation*, such texts now realize various non-traditional and autonomous modes of stage existence: they can be enunciated as political pamphlets, sung as songs, spilled as a field of free associations... In other words, not only the type, but also the stage status of texts is undergoing a major change.

Pavis also discards the erroneous claim that Lehmann opposes "theatre without text" to "textual theatre". But he maintains that, in the postdramatic theatre, dramatic texts that precede the play and have to be "staged", have been replaced by texts generated during rehearsals, through improvisations in which the whole company participates.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the main question could be: how to define these texts to which – with the vaguely articulated concepts of postpostdramatic, neodramatic or whatever we wish to call it – the present theatre allegedly returns? Could they include dramas in a traditional or somewhat modified form, or are they radically different plays based on the experience of the postdramatic? By the term "postpostdramatic", applied in an off-hand, non-mandatory way, Pavis means texts that, although not returning to the tradition of a "well-made play", continue to tell stories, to present elements of reality, to produce the effects of dramatic characters. Though at first sight it might seem otherwise, this return is not, as Pavis emphasizes, "a reactionary restoration, but simply the awareness of the fact that every work and all human speech are always narrating something."<sup>10</sup>

It is hard to tell whether Elinor Fuchs is negating or affirming this "retro tendency", when she suggests, using instances from contemporary American theatre, that it is possible both to break and to embrace the cosmos of dramatic

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<sup>7</sup> Liz Tomlin, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Gerda Poschmann, *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext: aktuelle Bühnenstücke und ihre dramaturgische Analyse*, Tübingen 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Patrice Pavis, « Réflexions sur le théâtre postdramatique » (included in this book).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

fiction simultaneously. What at first sight, and in the spirit of the postdramatic, might seem to be a dismantling of the cosmos of fiction, is actually, according to Fuchs, its “complication”: the use of postdramatic procedures can launch the same kind of emotional and imaginative processes we traditionally associate with the dramatic theatre.<sup>11</sup> Is this a denial of the postdramatic or, on the contrary, an affirmation of the position that the postdramatic has profoundly influenced the dramatic theatre, which, having absorbed the new experience, has “survived” and gone on, because “the fictive cosmos is hard thing to kill”?<sup>12</sup>

The German writer and director Falk Richter, who participated in the Belgrade conference<sup>13</sup>, speaks about *neodramatic* plays. These are texts that have the postdramatic structure, but offer more energy and emotion. Richter used a similar formulation in an interview he gave to me, answering the question whether his play *Unter Eis* is postdramatic: “No, it is, I would rather say, *neo-dramatic*. Although postdramatic structures have been used, I believe that this play offers much more energy and emotion.”<sup>14</sup> One could infer from this that the postdramatic text and theatre are thus identified with a cold, ironic, intellectual and highly conceptual art. I believe that Lehmann would not agree with this interpretation.

The dilemmas and questions posed by the postdramatic do not concern only the relationship between the stage and drama. Misunderstandings also appear in interpretations of the relationship between the postdramatic and performance or the performing arts in general. In the above mentioned polemic, Elinor Fuchs claims that in Lehmann’s book the line between contemporary art of performance and postdramatic theatre is blurred, that these concepts can exchange their places, that the author’s thesis of the postdramatic as an overlap between theatre and performance actually means that the art of performance is a subgroup of the postdramatic.<sup>15</sup> Lehmann characterizes her argument as a misinterpretation, maybe even a conscious one, and goes on to develop his “overlap” thesis in more detail. The fact that theatre as a whole is just a part of performing practices in general (which also encompass rituals,

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<sup>11</sup> Elinor Fuchs, “Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the ‘Fictive Cosmos’: A View from America” (included in this book).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The majority of artists participating in the Conference (Falk Richter, Roland Schimmelpfenig, Tomi Janežić, Katarina Pejović and Bojan Đorđev) have not sent the final versions of their papers for publishing.

<sup>14</sup> Ivan Medenica, „Križa je dobra (razgovor s rediteljem i piscem Falkom Rihterom),” *Teatron*, 146–7, Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, Beograd, 2009, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Elinor Fuchs, untitled (the review on *The Postdramatic Theatre*), op. cit., 180–181.

sport, political events etc.) does not mean that theatre phenomena with a pronounced performing character (i. e. overlapping with the art of performance) should not be treated in their separate referential framework, and according to Lehmann the postdramatic is precisely that framework.<sup>16</sup> “The only point here is to name a field where the theatre and the art of performance overlap because that field belongs to the discourse of the postdramatic theatre, and not to analyse the art of performance in any depth.”<sup>17</sup>

When Lehmann’s use of the notion and concept of “performativity” is discussed, an objection by Pavis deserves to be mentioned. Starting from the hypothesis that the postdramatic theatre completely abandons the mimetic for the performative (instead of dramatic presentation through text, actors’ playing and fictional plot and conflicts, the postdramatic deconstructs the mechanisms of speech and treats the text as an acoustic object), Pavis claims that the postdramatic does not go very far in the development of the performative, e.g. that it does not take into account contemporary feminist studies on this subject.<sup>18</sup>

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In the first part of this introduction, I have paid more attention to one of the two aims of the Belgrade conference, formulated in the invitation letter and thus offered as a possible starting point for the participants’ presentations and final texts. My attention was more focused on the question of the actual global relationship between the postdramatic and dramatic theatre and between the postdramatic and the art of performance, because these subjects, elaborated on from various positions and with different attitudes, prevailed in the majority of presentations. On the other hand, the question of the book’s reception in particular cultural contexts, of its influence on local artistic practices and theoretical reflections was significantly less discussed in the contributed texts and, consequently, it has received less attention here. For the second part of this introduction, following my attempt to outline a network of the key questions initiated both in the presentations at the conference and in earlier relevant polemics about the postdramatic, I have decided to discuss in more detail the question of the reception of this paradigm in the local Serbian context.

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<sup>16</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, op. cit., 14–15.

<sup>17</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramsko kazalište*, CDU i Tkh, Zagreb, Beograd 2004, 180.

<sup>18</sup> Pavis, *ibid.*

Vlatko Ilić's view<sup>19</sup> of the reception of the postdramatic paradigm on the local, particularly the Belgrade scene, is objective and coherent as he discusses both the contributions and limits of this influence. For him, an unquestionable contribution is that the postdramatic has made legitimate numerous hybrid performing practices that do not belong to the theatrical tradition based on the "the dominance of a dramatic text and its ideology of a unique and well-ordered micro-system".<sup>20</sup> They had been emerging before, but not in such a "visible" way as now, when they have a strongholds in Lehmann's theory. Beside this legitimization of non-dramatic performing practices and a democratization of the "concept of theatre", the postdramatic paradigm offered an appropriate, concrete and developed theoretical apparatus for in-depth research into and substantial understanding of these practices. In Ilić's opinion, the limits of this paradigm are, first, neglect of the fact that cultural circumstances vary from one milieu to another (a hidden totalizing ambition of the postdramatic) and that its implementation, at least in the Serbian context, is more present in the interpretation and less in the creation of the stage practice.<sup>21</sup>

With most of these arguments I completely agree, but it seems to me that some of them require an additional problematization. It is true that the breakthrough of the postdramatic has significantly contributed to the theoretical reflections and the cultural reception of various performing practices in Serbian milieu. The contribution to the theoretical reflection is mostly realized, as is appropriate to this discourse, through scientific research, conferences and publications. A larger and more important result is the widest "cultural reception" of the paradigm through, among other vehicles, reviews of theatre performances in the general media and similar, not strictly scientific contexts. Here I would like to consider briefly that aspect of the local reception of the postdramatic with a concrete and representative example: the criticism of the postdramatic performances in the programme of the two last BITEFs published in the Serbian media.

In a recapitulation of the 44<sup>th</sup> BITEF, the author protests against the inadequate local reception of the plays *Isabella's Room* and *The Deer House* by the Flemish author Jan Lauwers, with the irrefutable argument that it is "absurd to watch his meticulously designed, postdramatic poetics from the traditionalist angle, i.e. in the system of dramatic theatre, and to regard

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<sup>19</sup> Vlatko Ilić, "Everyone repeats the same rhetorical question: do we still need theater? Notes on one theatrical scene and one work of theater" (the paper included in this collection).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

him as an amateur, which, to a significant degree, was the case here.”<sup>22</sup> This statement is probably based on oral comments that the critic had heard, for the authors of the published reviews, whether they explicitly mentioned the term “postdramatic” or not, recognized that Lauwers had applied such principles and not dramatic ones. The exception is one review (on *The Deer House*), in which the “loosened” playing of the actors, based on the deconstruction of the dramatic characters, was qualified as non-professional: “below the level of a serious play.”<sup>23</sup> The majority of critics recognized and emphasized – either in an essayistic and intuitive or theoretically elaborated way – the postdramatic features of Lauwers’ poetics: the absence of narration, the subordinate position of speech as means of communication, the eclectic combination of dance, music and theatre, and the explicit revocation of the stage fiction.

A year before that (during the 43<sup>rd</sup> BITEF), the performances of the Swiss company Rimini Protokoll, which for this occasion was divided into two teams and projects – *Airport Kids* (Stefan Kaegi in collaboration with “external” co-author Lola Arias) and *Das Kapital* (Daniel Wetzel and Helgard Haug) – met with the same critical reception. Perhaps because of the earlier experience with the Rimini Protokoll (at one of the previous BITEFs, *Cargo Sofia* was presented), not a single Serbian critic qualified the performance of the “experts” (the term that the authors use for non-professional performers of their projects) as “below the level of a serious play”. On the contrary, they recognized and stressed the documentary principles of their work, the revocation of mimesis, the “outburst of the real”... The critics also found the postdramatic principles in the specific use of video, a use that fully fits with what Lehmann, in his classification, calls the *constitutive function*<sup>24</sup> of media in the theatre – when a video-transmission or editing of recorded material is a necessary, structural factor of the performance.

With the examples of these few unmistakably postdramatic plays performed at the two last BITEFs (2009 and 2010), we have seen that Serbian critics captured their features and assessed their achievements even if they did not use theoretical arguments and terminology. At least, their reviews offered a general idea of the radical theatre trends encompassed by this paradigm. When to this most general aspect of the reception of the postdramatic – the criticism of concrete performances (and *positively* the postdramatic ones) – an adequate theoretical discourse is added (as at this conference), then it is

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<sup>22</sup> Ana Tasić, „Oprečni stavovi publike”, *Politika*, 27. September 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Aleksandra Glovacki, „Krajnosti”, *Večernje novosti*, 20. September 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Hans-Thies Lehman, op. cit., 305.

possible to defend the claim that the “postdramatic theatre” has been fairly accepted in the local context as a paradigm that conceptualizes and legitimates numerous non-dramatic, hybrid performing practices.

However, there are certain problems in the interpretative use of this paradigm. In the above examples, we have shown how postdramatic principles are justifiably implemented in critical reviews of performances that certainly and unequivocally belong to this kind of theatre. But, there are reverse cases. Lehmann’s paradigm is sometimes inappropriately read into a performance or recognized in it with the aim of finding the director’s intention: in plays that are not postdramatic, but merely chaotic, inarticulate, incoherent – in one word, bad... Reviews of these projects – as opposed to projects by Lauwers – could indeed include the remark that the artistic level does not meet the requirements of a “serious performance”.

A value judgement is often implied in interpretations of such performances that attempt to pass themselves off as postdramatic. Thus, the concept of the postdramatic becomes a criterion of artistic value, and all that does not fit into it becomes classic dramatic theatre – a qualification that, in these analyses, has perceptible negative overtones. This simplified demarcation, with its overtones of a value judgement, may also be felt in the quoted statement that the postdramatic makes legitimate those performing practices which are not based on – “the dominance of a dramatic text and its ideology of a unique and well-ordered micro-system”.

For instance, Lehmann defines the concept of deconstruction as a post-dramatic strategy, but deconstruction – in the Derridean sense of the opening for the numerous, non-unique, non-hierarchical and contradictory interpretations, with a cancelled or significantly postponed synthesis – is just as much a trait of dramatic theatre, the theatre that still has the ambition to “read” the text. Only this reading is now much more complex and by no means “unique and ordered”. Here I have chiefly in mind contemporary deconstructionist productions of the classic dramas, those in which quite different temporal (historical) perspectives – the original and contemporary – are both confronted one with the other and preserved without flattening, and without reducing one to the other.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the activation of the Derridean *différance*, which deconstructs the “unique and ordered micro-system”, is not at work only in the postdramatic, but also in the dramatic theatre that pursues a non-totalizing reading of the text – which is still the *reading* of the text.

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<sup>25</sup> See: Ivan Medenica, „Klasika i njene maske: modeli u režiji dramske klasike”, Sterijino pozorje, Novi Sad, 2011.

The cause of such a situation in the local reception and use of the syntagm “postdramatic theatre” is to be found, according to my deepest hunch, in a particular quality of this – or any other – “small culture”: a culture which develops in a language which is not international, and which does not have systematic and strategic publishing plans for scientific texts. The consequence is that the fields of scientific work are narrowed and/or made irrelevant. However, in such circumstances, there are also paradoxical cases, such as, for example, a highly relevant and internationally influential book being translated, but its reception unaccompanied by any insight into its wider context. Thus such studies – particularly if they have the aura of “modern” – are being uncritically received, acclaimed and even dogmatized. The circles that dogmatize them are, more often than not, elitist, cosmopolitan, progressive and domineering, and they provoke an equally strong and uncritical opposition among other professionals in the field, those who are turned rather towards the national and traditional and do not follow new developments in science and art. Thus, paradoxically, science – which is supposed to nurture objective and critical thinking – becomes a battlefield for unbecoming, often ideologically coloured conflicts. The victims of the conflicts are usually the very agents that provoked them: that is to say, books in relation to which opposite attitudes have been formed, although they and their context have not been well understood. In Serbia, in the field of theatrical theory and practice, such a destiny befell in the 1980s *The Reading of Theatre* by Ann Ubersfeld, and today, although to a much lower degree, *The Postdramatic Theatre* by Hans-Thies Lehmann.

Even so, the reception of *The Postdramatic Theatre* on the local scene is generally rather balanced. Extreme positions – uncritical acclaim and equally uncritical denial – do exist, but they are sporadic and isolated, while in the scientific and critical discourse a nuanced, cautious and non-dogmatic implementation of this paradigm is prevailing. This has been confirmed not only by the example of Ilić’s discussion, but also by the majority of reviews on postdramatic plays performed at the BITEF festival. The best example of the local tendency towards a critical and comprehensive study of the postdramatic is – if it is not improper for me to say so – the conference resulting in this book.

## Summary

In the Introduction to the Proceedings of the Conference “Dramatic and Post-dramatic Theatre: Ten Years After”, the Chairman offers a map of the basic and/or most debated questions on postdramatic theatre arising in the final versions of the presentations published here, abstracts received before the conference and some relevant earlier polemics on this topic. Those are the questions of the relation between postdramatic theatre and drama; the vexed question of whether this paradigm can be identified with the theatre emancipated from all text; the vision/projection of the return of the text in new (“postpostdramatic”) tendencies, whether the issue be the renaissance of dramatic form and its fictional cosmos or the further development of dramatic fiction now enriched by the newest, postdramatic experiences. The author also highlights the question of whether it is possible to talk about postdramatic in historical categories, as of a stage in the development of theatre. This question provokes confrontations: some claim that it is too early to talk about what comes after the postdramatic, because it includes the latest stage practices, while others claim that the postdramatic paradigm came too late, when it was no longer possible to systematize the very hybrid performing practices. In the second part, the author centers on the question of the reception of the postdramatic paradigm in two contexts of the local Serbian scene: science and criticism. The conclusion is that this paradigm is increasingly present in the analysis of the most radical, hybrid stage forms, and that its reception, despite some extreme tendencies in opposing directions, is relatively balanced and objective.

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## **“Postdramatic Theatre”, a decade later**

It is a special pleasure and an honour for me to be present at this meeting, since a number of experts, highly esteemed colleagues and friends have gathered in order to shed light on the latest developments in the art of theatre and performance, and have chosen the ‘anniversary’ of a book I published a decade ago as the occasion for the gathering. I wrote it in an attempt to be of help for those who were trying to find and apply concepts, words and serious attention to so much of the inspired experimental artistic work in theatre and performance which I had witnessed over decades and which I wanted to be understood and evaluated in better ways than was usually the case. The book has in fact sometimes been read as an unqualified justification and defence of all kinds of really or seemingly destructive, deconstructive, fragmentary, non-literary performances – which it was not intended to be. The “poetics”, if you like, of postdramatic theatre, which is constituted by its description, is one thing, the artistic quality (even if it is no longer easy to make use of this term without much precaution), another.

The study was written for practitioners, therefore at some points lengthy and detailed theoretical elaborations were passed over. Consequently, a number of theoretical issues were left open to further discussion. It also paved the way for a series of downright misunderstandings – that the postdramatic is non-textual, that the postdramatic ends all drama and so forth – in spite of the fact that the opposite views are clearly stated in the book. The word ‘postdramatic’ describes aesthetics and styles of theatre practice, and thematizes writing, written drama, or theatre text only in a marginal way. There is postdramatic theatre with dramatic texts – in fact, with all kinds of texts. Also, there is a description in the book of a variety of theatre forms, from a de-dramatized presentation of dramatic texts all the way to forms which do not rely at all on a pre-given

dramatic text. There are a number of important new styles of writing which have emerged since or were already present in 1999, but I do not see a “return” to dramatic figuration as a strong movement.

Ten years is a long period of time nowadays, with developments in the arts and in theatre happening at a brisk pace. Much of what was marginal and hotly disputed in the 1980s had already become more common in the 1990s, and has now become part of the ‘mainstream’. Some of the emblematic protagonists of postdramatic theatre like Jan Fabre and Jan Lauwers, whose work is influenced strongly by dance and performance, continue to create strong and controversial work and have come to be accepted as authentic and even decisive gestures of contemporary art and theatre. You would not have guessed in 1999 that Lauwers would be presenting at Salzburger Festspiele, or Fabre be chosen as curator in Avignon. Robert Wilson’s aesthetics have become commercialized for a long time and his work is enjoyed now by a wide audience. In Italy, an artist like Giorgio Barberio Corsetti became director of the theatre Biennale in Venice. No doubt the techniques of visual dramaturgy often tend now to become mere spectacle in the big houses and are presented as entertaining stimuli in many productions. In other words, postdramatic is no longer a term necessarily denoting deviant, oppositional or radical practices. Elements of postdramatic practice have become generally accepted and define much contemporary theatre practice as such – not without often losing edge in the process.

Let me now shortlist in the first part of my paper a number of interesting developments and aspects of the “languages of the stage” (Patrice Pavis), mainly in the German theatre. Some of them continue developments which began to be felt already in the 1980s and 1990s, others introduce new accents.

In the second part, I will reflect on some issues and aspects which seem to be important for a further theorizing of the postdramatic “paradigm” or “styles”.

### *Groups*

In 1995, Heiner Müller and in 2001, Einar Schleef passed away, and in recent years also Jürgen Gosch, Peter Zadek, Klaus-Michael Grüber, Pina Bausch, and Christoph Schlingensiefel. For many observers, these deaths are a sign and symbol of profoundly changing times. These were all great creators, representing the best of German Regietheater (Director’s Theatre). They cultivated new ground for the theatre: working on the edge of performance (like Gosch), creating a cross-over between theatre and dance (Pina Bausch),

a playfulness (Zadek) and, every time, a radically individual vision of theatre (like Grüber). Even the untimely early death of Christoph Schlingensiefel may be seen in this perspective: a highly provocative, radical and radically idiosyncratic personality, even if he was an inspirator, and animator more than a theatre director in the classic sense. The new development is marked – this is the first aspect – by a shifting emphasis from the individual genius on top to collaboration or group work off and on the institutions. In spite of the breakdown of a number of important venues for experimental work, we observe a broad scene of young and semi-or non- institutionalized performance and theatre work – mostly by groups which experiment with all kinds of positioning of the spectator, redefining theatre in different ways beyond the dramatic model. You cannot call it exactly “an underground”. It is a scene where names like She She Pop, Gob Squad, andcompany&Co., Hoffmann and Lindholm and others, as well as the acclaimed Rimini Protokoll, indicate only the top of the iceberg. Authors who direct their own writings like Rene Pollesch or Falk Richter, and the close collaboration of authors, dramaturgs and stage designers are frequent now. There is definitely a renewed spirit of the collaborative working style, albeit in a mood which differs from the times of the “creation collective” some decades ago – if only for its less utopian idea of entirely collective work.

Working in a collaborative style, if certainly not without the dominant voice and inspiration of one artist, the “pop-theatre” of René Pollesch has gained wide resonance and paved the way for other similar forms of theatre. Barbara Weber, now director of the Neumarkt Theatre in Zurich, is a case in point here, with her “unplugged” evenings and also with her fresh renderings of classical texts – *The Lears* for example, where King Lear was associated with the question of the family. The feminist group “She She Pop” also referred to Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, when they asked their fathers to appear together with them on stage and then initiated some animated debates about the respective positions of fathers and daughters.

In this milieu, we find many an original production which can be called in one way or another ‘site specific’. Spectators are invited to visit private living places, to enter some special environment for a couple of hours, to experience an uncommon situation where some performance, reading or presentation takes place. A situation of exploration, even research, and of uncommon encounters is the goal. There is a profound interest in working in and with urban and other public or half-public spaces. The urban space, the architectural and social realities of the urban environment, are explored (as with Rimini Protokoll, but also less known groups like Arty Chock in Frankfurt, who invest public places in order to highlight in theatrically creative ways some political

or sociological significance of the site). Projects of this sort work often with video, or transform a given “place” into a newly defined and artistically/politically invested “space”. Richard Maxwell and others may perform in a hotel or private apartment.

The work of Pollesch has become more and more political in a sophisticated way, no longer thematizing only the problems of the virtual dimensions of work, but basic concepts of the capitalist style of living. Among the titles of his productions we may now find *Darwin-win* or *Calvinism Klein*. He is generally recognized as one of the most creative producers of politically relevant work – and of comedy. In a party atmosphere or club ambience, the speaking ‘characters’ (who are in fact collective instances of speech and not individual *dramatis personae*) develop theoretical issues on stage, often in the form of directly theoretical discourse transformed from the third to the first person. This can produce ambiguous playful “dialogues”, which in fact constitute not real dialogues but a chorus divided up into voices, presenting sociological and political issues and denouncing in a satirical vein the ideologies of representation, “subjectivity”, identity, or desire pre-coded by the power of cultural and social norms.

#### *Dialogue between theatre and society*

Pollesch’s development is significant for a second strong impulse in the theatre of the first decade of this century: namely, the impulse to re-open the dialogue between theatre and society by taking up more directly political and social issues. It is fair to say that in the enthusiasm of finding (and experimenting with) the new postdramatic artistic means – visual dramaturgy, media, fragmentation, performance-like acting, opening of real and virtual spaces – this dialogue had to a certain degree been lost in the postdramatic work described 10 years ago. In 2000, Bonnie Maranca and Gautam Dasgupta, in an interview in *Theater der Zeit* expressed utter disappointment at finding the German theatre different from what they had seen it to be in the 1970s: less politically, philosophically and artistically daring, presenting too much spectacle and showing little “dialogue with the society”. The motives for a certain re-entry of the political and social dimension since then are rather obvious: Nine-Eleven 2001, new wars, the rise of rightist populist leaders in Europe, the restructuring of the whole ideological and political field after the “Wende”, and last, but not least, new social problems of different kinds. Theatre definitely felt and feels a need to deal more directly with political issues, even if there are no solutions or perspectives to offer. We have to do with much politically

motivated theatre, but rarely in the sense of offering a specific ideological viewpoint. There are plays – in fact, a wave of plays – about managers, started by Urs Widmer’s *Top Dogs*, and with Falk Richter’s complex *The System* as a high-point. We find not so much a return to socially engaged drama as to all kinds of mixtures, re-elaborations of documentary work, aesthetics of performance, theatrical actions and activities – all with a remarkably steady focus, in dance as well as in theatre, on the exploration of everyday life. (The popularity of authors like Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé is significant in this respect.) Theatre and performance are more about research into the everyday life which we only think we know well. Their techniques are more presentation than representation, more an artful exposure of realities and creation of theatres of situation than a representation of dramatic fictions about them – although this practice certainly has not entirely vanished.

The aesthetics of physicality, just like high tech, computer, internet and video, can become the tools and the milieu for the reawakened social and political interest. The work of Rimini Protokoll without professional actors, where the encounter with “real” people is more important than the dramaturgy of a fiction, has gained widespread visibility, but there are a large number of smaller works in the spirit of documentary, which, inspired by Rimini Prokoll, often use non-actors for manifold explorations of everyday life. Thus, Hans Werner Krösinger, for example, and others stage political documents and material in sophisticated ways. Or we find theatre about the personal history of individuals in a political context – inspired by the techniques of oral history from the academic field.

The main artistic problem in many of these works is not simply the choice of the presented material, but the question of how to develop what Marianne van Kerkhoven would call dramaturgies of the spectator. The postdramatic dramaturgy of the spectator implies a heightened awareness of and continued reflection upon the position of spectating as such. Understandable as the desire to “thematize” social and political issues may be, we must not forget that the truly social dimension of art is the form, as the young Georg Lukács observed. As long as the forms of conventionalized ways of spectating are not interrupted, the conventional mode of reception in theatre (and film) tends to reduce to insignificance even the most daring documentation and political criticism. Therefore, it remains essential to acknowledge that the truly political dimension of theatre has its place not so much in the thematizing of politically burning subject matters (which, by saying this, are not, of course, excluded!) as in the situation, the relation, the social moment which theatre as such is able to constitute. Theatre must be considered as a situation, and its aesthetics

must be derived from this basic concept. It seems, however, that postdramatic strategies continue to be seen by many theatre practitioners as more suited to dealing with social issues (unemployment, violence, social isolation, terrorism, issues of race and gender) than the traditional model of socially engaged drama. In fact, there arose a conspicuous movement in roughly the first five years of the new century: the New Realism, proclaimed by some directors with reference to the English tradition of realist and socially critical work. But, notwithstanding the international renown of Thomas Ostermeier, this wave has cooled down a lot. I do not have the impression that many people expect interesting new revelations of the theatre in this direction. In fact, the strongest impact of the “in-yer-face” movement was the reception of Sarah Kane, whose writing turned more and more away from the remnants of drama in her first plays like *Blasted* and, with *4. 48 Psychosis*, came close to being a perfect example of postdramatic texture.

### *Chorus*

In 2001, the German theatre lost Einar Schlee and with him the director who had rediscovered the power of the chorus as a tool and basic element of theatre. Inspired by his work, there is now much theatre which makes ample use of choral structure in different ways. This development merits being mentioned as a tendency in its own right. It is obvious that the interest in the chorus further undermines the basic structures of dramatic representation. Since antiquity, the chorus has been a theatrical reality which opens and breaks up the fictional cosmos of the myth or dramatic narration and brings into play the presence of the audience here and now in the theatre – in the “theatron”. (This is one of the reasons why the chorus could not find a place in the *Poetics* of Aristotle, whose main focus was the closure of the work of art, its autosufficient totality and completeness.) It might have seemed that Einar Schlee was only a solitary figure in reanimating the chorus, but since the years when his productions provoked huge debates in Germany, the use and the discussion of the chorus did not end but gained ground. Here could be mentioned the works of Volker Lösch, who works with a direct address to the audience and with choruses – for example, of the unemployed and citizens of the area, in order to articulate social and political issues. His work raises polemic reactions – and in fact, often provokes the suspicion of mainly profiting from social misery for spectacular effects without reflecting on and questioning the theatre apparatus which it makes use of. But it is not only in the domain of such immediately “political” theatre that a return of the chorus can be observed. It is a telling fact

that a director like Nicolas Stemann also presents *The Robbers* of Schiller in choric style (performers sharing and changing roles, creating with voice and gesture a “word-concert”, as Stemann terms it, in the manner of a jazz or rock band).

### *Dance*

Another tendency – after the collaborative way of production, the dialogue with society, the return of the chorus – is the enormous and widespread interest in dance, the spreading of theoretical and practical work with, in and on dance.

William Forsythe is exploring the cross-over between dance, installation, performance, festive event, interactivity and political reference, in works like *Human Writes*. Meg Stuart combines on the one hand dance and minimal exploration of gesture in combination with huge settings and theatrical spectacle, with, on the other hand, small scale poetic works. Constanza Macras and others politicize dance theatre, crossing freely between dance, performance, physical theatre, acting and installation. Dance has become a practice which is much more widely received and has exerted influence in many fields of theatre practice. The cultural politics of the German state has been eager over a number of years now to support dance with a huge financing project, called Tanzplan. Dance is also an essential factor in the reconsideration and reshaping of theoretical notions of what might be an adequate criticism and academic discourse, namely, the reflection of choreographers about their work within the “cultural field”, in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense (Xavier Le Roy, Boris Charmatz, Thomas Lemen). Dance, like theatre practice in general, is constantly – and much more so than in the 1990s – criticizing, reflecting, exhibiting its own problematic status as aesthetic or nothing-but-aesthetic practice, rejecting often the seemingly naïve production of a closed aesthetic fiction presented for contemplation.

Authors and directors are increasingly experimenting with the possibilities of dance and choreography, integrating dance into their work. Falk Richter, for example, has collaborated repeatedly with the Dutch choreographer Anouk van Dijk – in *Trust*, for example, where problems of social, financial and individual credibility, the themes of “the weariness of the self” as discussed by Alain Ehrenberg, are articulated in a new form of “dance theatre” created by a literary author in collaboration with choreographer and dancers during the process of rehearsals. Laurent Chétouane, earlier renowned for his seemingly exclusive concentration on word and text, has been working for some years

now with the co-presence of actors and dancers, while at the same time staging strong texts (Hölderlin, Lenz, Büchner, Brecht). He invites spectators to share a state of collective being on stage without the “masks” of highly stylized form or easy emotional identification. In such work we do not find by any means a return of the “Tanztheater” of the 1980s (where dance had the unquestioned lead), but a new practice where dance becomes an integral part of the wider projects of an author, a director or an author-director in collaboration with choreographers and dancers. The point here is the postdramatic exploration of a “choragraphie” in every direction – gesture and dance coming into play as silent commentary on and questioning of the spoken word; the word entering into new forms of dialogue with the space and the gesture of the present and dancing body. In this stage-landscape, the individual subjectivity tends to become part of a larger horizon. Heiner Müller: “In every landscape the ‘I’ is collective.”

We may relate the general interest in dance to the heightened interest in the choreographic aspects of *mise-en-scène*. There are the choreographed spaces, the movements and little dances in Christoph Marthaler’s work, mostly with Anna Viebrock; there are the strong elements of choreographical, rhythmic and gestural patterns in the productions of Michael Thalheimer, who often realizes an interesting separation – between strong gestures and body movements and a strict standstill of the body, when the actors deliver their text, often at high speed. We can speak here of a rupture with naturalizing representation. While traditional dramatic representation from Lessing to Stanislavski tries to create an impression of “natural” behaviour, this logic is here abandoned in favour of the principle of a somewhat Brechtian conscious exposition of an often highly artificial language and – in parallel – a repertoire of precise gestures and body movements.

#### *Narration and Theatre of the speech act*

Another tendency – number five – can perhaps disperse some prejudices concerning the role and importance of the word. The language of the body is not all. A new importance can now be observed of text, of word, of narrative above all, which had been superseded in the 1980s and early 1990s by visual explorations, even if the verbal dimension had never really vanished. There are now a large number of theatrical works based on epic texts, on novels. Directors often prefer epic texts, narration, even historical commentaries or theoretical texts, to explicitly dramatic texts. Theatre has developed numerous ways of telling stories without falling back into the tradition of realist dramatic

impersonation and closed fiction. Sometimes the reference to film narration comes into play here. A director like Robert Lepage makes a sophisticated use of cinematic style, video, film, epic narration, collage and other technological devices. In Poland Grzegorz Jarzyna made *Das Fest* from the Dogma Film by Vinterberg; several theatres in Germany did this too. Peter Greenaway in 2001 presented a production called *Gold* in Frankfurt am Main. It is interesting to note that Angela Schanelec from the New Berlin School of Filmmakers also works in the theatre – the so-called Berlin School concentrates on a style of narration which is consciously dedramatized and emphasizes patient non-dramatic observation of everyday activities. It can be argued that such new tendencies in cinema and postdramatic theatre are related to each other in ways which still have to be explored theoretically.

The renewed emphasis on narrative combines with the renewed interest in text and word in yet another direction. Some of the most impressive moments in contemporary theatre highlight the metaphorically (and sometimes actually) naked actor or performer, and seem to be driven by the desire to make us aware of the wonder, so to speak, of the pure act of speaking, the physical and also mental confrontation of the spectators with a speaking body in its basic simplicity (which constitutes in fact a complexity of the highest order). In some works we find a strong impulse toward the actor as performer, an impulse which is paralleled by a resistance to all simple theatricality: décor, costume, well-studied gesture, reinforcement by music and lighting effects. I propose to call it a *theatre of the speech-act*. We may think of Dimiter Gotscheff who, inspired by Heiner Müller, “de-theatricalizes” theatre and marks the scene with a concentrated textual presentation in radically minimalist settings – spaces often conceived by Mark Lammert. Speech, text and word establish here and in other cases an intimate relationship which overcomes the fourth wall, allowing the theatre to become a space for thinking and reflection, interrupting the purely aesthetic apprehension by a provocative “implication” of the spectators, who are forced to go along with this radical reduction of theatricality and enter into an unusually intense relation with the “pure” speech act of the performer. The reduced and minimalistic works of Laurent Chétouane provoke audiences by a hyperbolic concentration on text and the act of speaking. Spectators find no drama or identification with fictive character, but have to deal instead with the real presence of the actor(s). This kind of theatre allows the spectators to experience a deep “relation” with the actor/performer – though many leave the theatre disappointed because they have been denied the expected spectacle. But works of this kind do not in any way indicate a return of the theatre to a conventional dramatizing or a simple return of the text – even if they are easily

misunderstood in exactly this way. They are instead comprehensible only as an intrusion of elements of performance practice into the theatre, which may sometimes overshadow but may also, as in these cases, highlight the textual material. It is the physical and mental reality of the act of speaking, or of the performance as speaking and of the performance of speaking, which is at the centre of this theatre. It is about the physical, real speech act, about the situation of performer and spectator in their intimate confrontation; it is about performance – not about an exclusive or predominant concern with the text. It is therefore a logical development that Chétouane has for some time now incorporated dance and danced gesture into his work, creating a mutual echo space for the word and for the dance.

I will stop here with my cursory overview of the five tendencies in the last decade which I find significant, and will come now to the first of some questions for the raising of which there is every good reason.

1) Taking into consideration the developments since 1999, is there a need to revise essentially the notion of postdramatic theatre? My impression is: no. I feel that the categories used in the book continue to hold true for the description of much of the new work. Armin Petras, Nicolas Stemmann, Falk Richter, Sebastian Hartmann, Stefan Pucher and so many others – all depart from the frontal situation of literary theatre, adopt the chorus or the completely open space, practices which may imply dramatic elements but make ample use of overwriting dramatic story and readable signification by performance, physical theatre, interactivity, opening the fictional space to the theatron. The work of Heiner Goebbels is taken by many to be representative of the current state of affairs in theatre language, and his work is quite obviously postdramatic, and includes painting, philosophy, music, bridging theatre and installation, as in *Stifters Dinge*.

In Germany, the term has meanwhile come close to signifying contemporary “Regietheater”. The word appears in dictionaries and in theatre criticism. The leading German theatre journal put the word in bold type on the front page three times and engaged in a critical discussion of it, claiming in an edition of 2009 that the catchword “postdramatic” has dominated the discussion in the last ten years. Some artists refer explicitly to the term (on their homepage, Rimini Protokoll have called their work “postdramatic”) and some directors accept it for their productions. And I observe with pleasure that *Postdramatic Theatre* also seems to be helpful for new tendencies in theatre pedagogy.

A report on the French theatre scene by Bruno Tackels in 2006, in *Theater der Zeit*, stated right from the start that he would take Postdramatic Theatre as

a guide line for his report. To my surprise, critics, scholars and practitioners in Japan, Latin America, Australia, Poland, Spain and in the Balkan region found and continue to find the book helpful. Translations continue to be published (fifteen so far), and there is a widespread reception and discussion of the term and the book even in areas where I did not at all expect such interest: for example Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Columbia. "Performing Literatures", the issue of *Performance Research* of March 2009, offers ample proof that the term, as it is theorized in the book, has retained a certain "use value". It is a point of reference in many articles, and used to analyze performance and writing (Tim Crouch, Jelinek, Kane); it can be productively used, questioned and criticised in exploring the complex drama-theatre relation. In academic, as well as critical discourse, the term "postdramatic" is used quite regularly, often in close connection with performance and/or experimental theatre in general.

In spite of criticism of a different kind, it is, I suppose, generally accepted that the notion has been useful and productive:

- in pointing to a "dramatic" enlargement of the possibilities, technologies and aesthetics of theatre practice;

- in pointing to the central importance of overcoming a far too close association in the minds of spectators and critics of theatre with the literary genre of drama;

- in widening the perspective on theatre/performance as a practice which transcends the divisions between art, social practice and theatre, and which is best analyzed as an "edge of art".

So I do not see the necessity of speaking of a post-postdramatic theatre or the like.

2) The theoretical problem of the interplay and conflict between *theatre and drama* remains, as I see it, a tool with which to re-think the European tradition of dramatic theatre, as well as the European tradition of its theory. My proposal of the sequence predramatic, dramatic and postdramatic, although sometimes seen as a kind of Hegelian process, is no more than an attempt to rethink the development of European theatre from the perspective of contemporary practice. The inner tension and even, as has been said, the "contradictio in adjecto" between drama and theatre in the notion of "dramatic theatre", is an issue which needs and merits further elaboration. As was argued in *Postdramatic Theatre*, the Hegelian definition of beauty is already in his own dialectics questioned, disturbed, broken, where "drama" is concerned, by an irreducible element of chance, non-beauty, a predominance of the "particular" over the "general" – be it only in the person of the actor who is wearing a

mask and appropriating the beautiful to his own idiosyncratic and particular personality. Postdramatic theatre is in this respect theatre in the age of the self-reflection of the concept of the beautiful, and to be considered as an “edge of art”, consciously questioning its own status as an object of contemplation and becoming an element in different kinds of practice (social, political, pedagogical, documentary...). The proposal of Jean-Pierre Sarrazac was that the notion of “rhapsodic theatre” might be more helpful for understanding the general movement of contemporary theatre practice. This notion refers to Brecht, the Brechtian actor, and to Bernard Dort. As useful as the term is for a number of approaches to theatre where the textual dimension remains in the centre, the idea of the rhapsodic seems to be rooted too much in the dramatic and Brechtian tradition and, as far as I can see, does not adequately account for all those dimensions of theatre which bring it close to non-literary or less literary aspects, like performance, installation, dance and so forth. So, I see no need to replace postdramatic by rhapsodic.

3) As the book failed to make sufficiently clear, the term “postdramatic” is to be understood in terms of historical reflection on two levels. On the one hand, the word “postdramatic” was supposed to function as a critical and polemical term which would distinguish a number of theatre practices which I had studied (roughly since the 1970s, and surrounded as well as permeated by the advent of a culture of predominantly mediated performance), from those practices which were and often still are guided by the idea of a theatre centred around dramatic structure in the sense of the tradition of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Since within a rich and influential (and often still very creative) landscape of institutionalized theatres in Europe, the dramatic tends to be taken as “the” natural model of what theatre should be, it remains necessary even 10 years later to point out that numerous practices which deviate more or less radically from this model can make the legitimate claim to represent the living, authentic and significant theatre of today. “Postdramatic Theatre” is not simply about the “death” of the drama (or the text or the author...), but about a shift of view point on contemporary theatrical realities.

At the same time, the book clearly indicates (by implication rather than argument) the thesis that the “dramatic mode” of theatre – in the precise sense which we can give to the notion behind this term “dramatic”, building on Hegel, Szondi, Brecht and others – is very unlikely to be reanimated in the future. There are numerous arguments to be made in favour of this thesis, one of them being that the idea of the dramatic does not in fact point to some eternal anthropological given, – which is probably the case with theatre – but refers only to a very specific, historically limited, particularly European concept of theatre

which is possibly – I would say probably – on the verge of losing its ground. On this level, the term "postdramatic" echoes the notion of the predramatic which I used for ancient Greek tragedy, and implies that the historical pre-conditions for the dramatic mode are disappearing in a more fundamental way. In this sense, the word "postdramatic" indicates not the sum of theatrical aesthetics from the 1970s through into the 1990s, but all theatre, in earlier as well as future forms, which is no longer dominated by the dramatic model. As to whether the concept in this sense may be found useful in the analysis of more general cultural patterns or habits beyond theatre, is a question which has surfaced in the mean time, but which I would like to leave to sociology, psychology and cultural studies.

4) On the other hand, there is disagreement about the use of the term "theatre", a dispute which brings into play the relation between postdramatic theatre and performance, and sometimes, on an institutional level, between theatre studies and performance studies. I remain unconvinced that it makes much sense to give up the term "theatre" and subsume all theatrical practice under the term "performance". Whatever we take as the defining criterion of performance, it is obvious that theatre, like other advanced artistic practices, has adopted elements of performance (self-referentiality, deconstructing meaning, exposing the inner mechanism of its own functioning, shifting "from acting to performing", questioning the basic structure of subjectivity, avoiding or at least criticising and exposing representation and iterability . . .), while inversely, performance has become 'theatricalized' in many ways, so that with most important contemporary artistic manifestations it is unproductive to quarrel about their definition as performance or theatre. And there are some dimensions of postdramatic theatre which simply are not performance: visual dramaturgy, hybrids of theatre, installations and others. Thus, without taking up here the debate about performance, where Rose Lee Goldberg, Elinor Fuchs, Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander, Josette Féral and others have intervened, I will just state in a summary way that there is in my view no need to draw a sharp dividing line between theatre and performance. Theory of performance and theory of theatre operate on common grounds. Depending on your point of view, you gain different insights about this common ground. Many a study about the presence and also *The Future of Performance* are important contributions to the understanding of theatre and performance alike, but in no way need they entail subsuming all theatre under the notion of performance. It may well be that a European thinker is biased in favour of the notion of theatre, confronted as they are with the rich "dramatic" tradition and the experimental vigour of contemporary theatre, but on the other hand, it may also be that in cultures

where theatre is experienced mostly in its really outdated and/or commercial forms, there may occur a certain distortion of perception leading to a temptation to discard much too quickly theatre altogether, in favour of performance. Even if theatre may be abstractly defined as a branch or sub-genre of performative activity in general, it deserves and needs to be studied in its own right, and not only in the light of Schechner's "broad spectrum approach". And this implies, especially in our times of quick loss of historical consciousness, an insistence upon historical reflection and awareness. The term "postdramatic theatre" has the advantage of pointing to the fact that, even today, theatre and performance artists alike are confronted with enduring norms and ideals of the dramatic tradition, and also in their own consciousness and practice they are, if only in an unconscious way, haunted by the backdrop of the drama. And only if in some future time or cultural space there would be left over no trace of memory whatsoever of the dramatic theatre then, indeed, a notion like post-dramatic would loose its meaning.

There is another terminological question lingering in the background of these disputes: the proximity of the notion "performance" to the wider concept of "performativity" in general. I confess to a certain scepticism with regard to the concept of the performative. This is why I referred in *Postdramatic Theatre* to Hamacher's notion of the "afformative". The term performative cannot be completely separated from the idea of a successful functioning, a positive doing, an achievement of a goal – there is an activist bias connected to the notion. And this from the very start: "How to do things with words." This bias does not, of course, keep the notion from being useful for describing many features of art practice. But it also tends to conceal one aspect of art in general and theatre/performance in particular which, in my view, is of extreme importance: a certain passivity, a not-doing in the spirit of Bartleby's "I would prefer not to". To say the least, much performance/postdramatic theatre constitutes an articulation of a deep doubt about doing, achieving, realizing, performing. Performance has become, as has been convincingly demonstrated, the new paradigm of disciplinary society – "Perform or else..." (Jon McKenzie). And one of the most productive aspects of the concept was Judith Butler's analysis of the performative production of (gendered) identity. Even if performance may be a reflection of a society where performance has become a dictate, I do not see the necessity to let go of the paradigm "theatre", which does not imply an association with this activist bias (and allows us even better to account for critical practices of ironic subversion of the established patterns of performativity as envisaged by Judith Butler).

5) One last issue: a basic reality of postdramatic theatre is obviously the shift of attention and emphasis away from representation, or “*Darstellung*” of a work or process, to the creation/presentation as part of a “*Situation*” where the relation between all participants of the event becomes a major object of the artistic concept and research. The notion of the “*dramaturgy of the spectator*” points to this development. Theatre is following a movement which in the visual arts has been established for decades. Michael Fried’s notorious polemics against “*theatricality*” in some modern art aimed at exactly this point: the dependence of the work upon the spectator. This observation, deprived of its polemical intention, is useful for the description of postdramatic practice, which often tends to focus upon the relation of the event to the spectators (and the relation of the spectators among each other) as the basic material of the artistic elaboration. Nicolas Bourriaud writes that in such art, which he has described as “*relational*”, social relations can constitute the living material for some of the practices in question” (“*Precarious Constructions. Answer to Jacques Rancière on Art and Politics*”). It is interesting to find that Bourriaud describes a general shift in the idea of art under the heading of “*relational aesthetics*” which is very similar to postdramatic theatre: many contemporary artists think of their practice not so much as giving form to an object but as constructing a form for possible human relations. Even if I would criticize that Bourriaud emphasizes too one-sidedly the harmonious aspects, the “*convivialité*” in these art practices which aim at proposing other possibilities for our inhabiting of a common world, his ideas are important and useful for further theoretical and practical elaboration of postdramatic theatre as a theatre of situation. After taking into consideration the elements of conflict, distancing and polemics in such constructed spaces of relation, which in Bourriaud are somewhat underrepresented, “*relational aesthetics*” contributes to a better understanding of comparable phenomena characteristic of postdramatic theatre.

“*Relational aesthetics*” does not, as far as I can see, necessarily deprive art of its “*artistic*” aesthetic dimension, as Jacques Rancière argued. In a comparable way, postdramatic theatre does not lose its aesthetic dimension as art if it gives up the notion of its autonomy and negotiates hybrid alignments with social, political, and other practices. These debates confirm the idea of postdramatic theatre as a laboratory for imagining, inventing, investigating other kinds of human relations when it explores new ways of spectating and invents different kinds of positions for spectators. This may indeed constitute its truly political character, even if the intention of the individual work is not consciously political.

**Summary:**

The text outlines major tendencies of experimental theatre practice in the past decade: emphasis on group work, dialogue between theatre and society, return of the chorus, narration and theatre of speech-act. In the second part, some theoretical issues are briefly discussed in relation to these observations. Does the concept of the 'post-dramatic' still prove to be useful? In what way does the tension and interplay between drama and theatre remain a tool for understanding contemporary theatre and performance practice? The text ends with an outline of three major fields of discussion: the concepts of pre-dramatic, dramatic, and post-dramatic; theatre and performance; and the notions of 'theatricality', relational theatre and the autonomy of the aesthetic field.

**Hans-Tis Leman****„POSTDRAMSKO POZORIŠTE”, DESET GODINA KASNIJE****Rezime:**

Ovaj tekst skicira glavne tendencije prakse eksperimentalnog pozorišta u prošloj deceniji: isticanje grupnog rada, dijalog između pozorišta i društva, povratak na upotrebu hora, naraciju i teatar govornog čina. U drugom delu rada, ukratko se razmatra nekoliko teorijskih pitanja u vezi s pomenutim opažanjima. Da li se koncept postdramskog još uvek potvrđuje kao upotrebljiv? Na koji način napetost i međuzavisnost drame i pozorišta opstaju kao sredstvo za razumevanje savremenog pozorišta i izvođačke prakse? Tekst se završava skicom tri glavana polja istraživanja: konceptâ pred-dramskog, dramskog i post-dramskog; teatra i performansa; pojmova „teatralnosti”, relacionog pozorišta i autonomnosti estetskog polja.

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## Réflexions sur le théâtre postdramatique

Plus de dix ans après sa parution en 1999, le livre de Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Das postdramatische Theater* (PDT), publié par le Verlag der Autoren, continue d'animer les débats sur le théâtre contemporain. Aucun autre terme n'avait été proposé depuis celui de 'théâtre de l'absurde' dans les années 1950 pour englober une grande partie de la production théâtrale expérimentale, ou 'de recherche'. Cette 'umbrella notion', ce terme général, qui recouvre un peu tout, sorte de moulinette universelle qui réduit la complexité à quelques idées simples et digestes, ne laisse personne indifférent ; elle suscite autant les polémiques que les contre-propositions ou des correctifs à l'importante réflexion de Lehmann. Celui-ci corrige certaines de ses thèses dans des articles plus récents ou dans son livre *Das politische Schreiben* (*Theater der Zeit*, n° 12, 2002).

### I. ORIGINES DE LA NOTION ET DU TERME

A. Si Lehmann n'a pas forgé le terme de théâtre postdramatique (TPD), il lui revient le mérite de l'avoir systématisé et fondé sur un ensemble d'observations et d'hypothèses. Avant lui, Andrej Wirth, dont Lehmann fut l'assistant dans le tout nouveau département de *angewandte Theaterwissenschaft* (théâtrologie appliquée) de l'université de Giessen dans les années 1980, se référait au « théâtre parlé (qui) aurait perdu sa place de monopole au profit des formes post-dramatiques du collage de sons, de l'opéra parlé et de la danse-théâtre » (cité par Christel Weiler, « Postdramatisches Theater », *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, 2005 : 245). Wirth, qui selon Elinor Fuchs (*The Drama Review*, 52 : 2 (T 198), pp. 178–183) aurait utilisé ce terme à New York dès les années 1970, s'est toujours montré sensible aux oxymores qui traversent le TPD. Lorsque Richard Schechner emploie le terme, ou celui de 'posthumaniste', c'est uniquement de manière

superficielle et journalistique, en écho aux thèses antihumanistes de Michel Foucault alors en vogue aux Etats-Unis, sans effort pour qualifier l'avant-garde en train, selon lui, de disparaître, au même moment. Sans employer le terme de TPD, mais celui de postmoderne, dès 1985, Helga Finter (1985) se montre beaucoup plus précise et constructive que Schechner ou Wirth, peut-être parce qu'elle fait le lien entre le PD et le postmoderne (PM), alors que Lehmann, comme d'ailleurs la déconstruction de Jacques Derrida, établit une différence tranchée entre le PM et le PD (ou la déconstruction).

B. Quoi qu'il en soit, le terme PD semble calqué sur celui de PM, et ce à un moment où la théorie a du mal à se renouveler, à rendre compte d'expériences nouvelles et où elle choisit donc la solution de facilité du 'post', de ce qui vient après, un peu au sens de l'expression française d'« après moi le déluge ». 'Tactique' d'ailleurs qui s'est depuis généralisée avec des notions cumulatives comme 'post-structuralisme' (après 1968), 'posthistoire' (après 1989), 'post-humain' (après 1999, avec Catherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, University of Chicago Press). Ce principe du 'post' conduit vite à une accumulation paratactique de pratiques que Lehmann regroupe, parfois rapidement, souvent au détour d'une phrase ou dans des inventaires à la Prévert. Il est presque plus facile d'identifier les bêtes noires de Lehmann : le théâtre littéraire et logocentrique dont la mise en scène n'est qu'une formalité décorative ; le théâtre politique qui souligne ses thèses et qui n'est qu'« un rituel de confirmation de ceux qui sont déjà convaincus » (1999 : 451) ; le théâtre interculturel, car on ne devrait pas « espérer trouver dans l'interculturalité un nouvel espace de remplacement pour l'opinion publique politique » (453).

C. Ces exclusions, rares et d'autant plus radicales et remarquables, ne vont toutefois pas sans une certaine ironie que l'on retrouve dans 'l'appellation contrôlée' TPD. Un humour involontaire caractérise cette étrange trinité :

1) Le 'post' ne dit jamais si le rejet est temporel ou s'il est purement théorique, tel un congé donné au structuralisme et à la sémiologie. Lehmann en fait un principe de non contradiction : « The affirmation that postdramatic theatre existed, so to speak, from the beginning and the affirmation that it defines a specific moment of theatre after/beyond drama do not exclude each other but coexist » (*Contemporary Drama in English*. Vol. 14, *Drama and/after Postmodernism*, Trier, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2007 : 44).

2) Le 'dramatique' étant justement ce qui est laissé derrière, voire rejeté, on peut s'étonner que Lehmann le reprenne, même dans sa négation, ce qui peut laisser à penser qu'aucune autre catégorie – l'épique, le lyrique, le philosophique, etc. – ne pourrait lui succéder même sous des formes diverses.

3) Le mot 'théâtre' n'est certes pas obscène, mais son origine grecque et son emploi exclusif dans le monde occidental ou occidentalisé le rendent suspect et peu opératoire lorsqu'on s'intéresse à des pratiques culturelles extra-européennes et surtout des manifestations culturelles non esthétiques et non fictionnelles, qui dépassent l'horizon du théâtre d'avant-garde et de recherche.

## II. SENS ET OBJET DE LA NOTION DE TPD

A. L'objet du TPD semble infini, en étendue comme en compréhension. Lehmann promet de définir les critères du PD, mais il oublie vite sa promesse dans l'enthousiasme de la découverte de formes toujours nouvelles : « Ce n'est qu'au cours de l'explication même que nous aurons à donner une justification, même partielle, des critères qui ont guidé nos choix. » (1999 : 19). On constate que ses choix dépassent de beaucoup les frontières de la culture savante et littéraire, qu'ils le conduisent vers une culture populaire ou médiatique, vers des arts visuels et les spectacles en tout genre. La danse, le nouveau cirque, l'art vidéo, les arts plastiques et les installations, le théâtre musical y trouvent refuge<sup>1</sup>.

Quoiqu'il distingue du TPD les expériences des années 1950 et 60 comme le *happening*, la performance, l'*environmental theatre*, le *body art* ou l'actionnisme viennois, ces formes ont tôt fait de se faufiler à travers les larges mailles du filet PD. Là encore, on serait malvenu de reprocher à Lehmann l'absence de définition limitative, compte tenu de l'immensité du champ et l'hybridité des objets. On constate simplement que les critères se définissent d'abord comme ce contre quoi le TPD s'insurge, ce qui donne ensuite quelques perspectives sur les nouvelles valeurs et les domaines prisés par le PD.

B. L'ennemi principal, c'est la représentation, à savoir l'ancienne volonté du théâtre dit dramatique de représenter par le texte ou le jeu une action fictive, un conflit entre deux personnages, un lieu et un temps distincts de ceux de l'événement scénique dans sa singularité. Au lieu de figurer ce dont parle le texte, le TPD préférera exhiber, exposer les mécanismes du langage, traiter le texte comme un objet sonore, ne pas se soucier de la référence des mots. Il s'efforce ainsi de remettre en question le fragile équilibre du théâtre entre le

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<sup>1</sup> Selon Jerzy Limon, le théâtre postdramatique aurait un ancêtre lointain, mais certain dans la représentation de masque (Stuart Masque) au début du dix-septième siècle. Cf. « Performativity of the Court : Stuart Masque as Postdramatic Theatre », *The return of Theory in Early Modern English Studies* (Paul Cefalu, Bryan Reynold, eds.), Palgrave, London, 2011.

mimétique et le performatif, ce que Martin Puchner nomme « theater's uneasy position between the performing and the mimetic arts ». En effet, poursuit Puchner, « as a performing art like music or ballet, the theater depends on the artistry of live human beings on stage. As a mimetic art like painting or cinema however, it must utilize these human performers as signifying material in the service of a mimetic project. » (*Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002: 5).

Le TPD privilégie le principe performatif, sans pour autant l'appliquer aux *Cultural performances*. Celles-ci restent en effet, pour le TPD, des actions symboliques extérieures à la sphère esthétique du théâtre.

C. Il en résulte une nette préférence du TPD pour un théâtre joué, « performed », un théâtre qui s'est émancipé du texte dramatique et qui prône une absence de hiérarchie entre les systèmes scéniques, les matériaux utilisés, et notamment entre la scène et les textes. Ces textes seront non pas 'scéniques' (censés être facilement joués et parlés), mais au contraire réfractaires à la scène, voire écrits contre elle. Et, en effet, les auteurs souvent cités par le PD comme Müller, Jelinek, Goetz, Polesch, Kane, Crimp, Duras, Bernhard, Vina-ver, Fosse, Lagarce, etc. sont considérés comme n'écrivant pas pour la scène, mais contre ou, au mieux, malgré elle : celle-ci n'a pas à illustrer et expliciter le texte, elle doit proposer un dispositif qui ouvre aux textes des perspectives nouvelles : non pas une situation socio-psychologique, mais un dispositif de jeu, d'impulsions gestuelles et visuelles qui fera découvrir le texte en même temps que la scène, incitera à confronter l'un avec l'autre. Certains metteurs en scène ou auteurs sont connus pour leur fascination pour les structures rythmiques : Wilson, Régy, Kriegenburg, Thalheimer, Etchells, Lauwers, Fabre, Castellucci, Lepage pour les metteurs en scène ; Koltès, Lagarce, Gabilly, Handke, Foreman, parmi les auteurs.

D. L'objet introuvable du TPD se situe donc davantage dans la pratique scénique que dans un type d'écriture, même s'il est parfois difficile de savoir si nous sommes dans une recherche d'écriture ou dans le jeu de l'acteur. Peut-être est-ce d'ailleurs la raison pour laquelle Lehmann parle rarement de 'mise en scène', jugeant certainement cette notion trop liée à l'ancienne écriture et à la manière 'classique' de mettre en scène, à la manière de Copeau par exemple. Cette mise en scène 'classique' examine le passage du texte, censé être stable, à la scène, censée être instable et imprévisible. Elle se prétend l'œuvre d'un metteur en scène à la fois créateur et fidèle au texte. Selon Lehmann cependant, la mise en scène du théâtre moderne « n'est que généralement déclamation et illustration du drame écrit », une position qui paraît très injuste et simplificatrice à Jean-Pierre Sarrazac (*Etudes théâtrales*, 2007 : 9), et non sans

raison. La radicalité de Lehmann s'explique en partie par la lassitude envers le *Regietheater* allemand des années 1960 à 70, un style jugé souvent comme trop centré sur l'ego de l'artiste metteur en scène (Zadek, Stein). Dans d'autres pays, cependant, comme la France et l'Italie des années 1970, la mise en scène était pourtant déjà conçue comme le meilleur moyen de déconstruire une pièce ou un spectacle : Vitez, dans une série d'exercices puis de spectacles sur les classiques (Molière, Racine) ; Carmelo Bene, à partir de ses réécritures radicales de Shakespeare dans son style de jeu histrionique, ont, bien avant l'heure PD, su déconstruire le texte, mettre la scène avant/au-dessus du texte, proposer un dispositif simple mais radicalement déstabilisateur pour les acteurs comme pour la réception des spectateurs. Ils ont ainsi contribué à exposer, à exhiber la textualité, comme s'il s'agissait d'une installation ou d'une œuvre plastique. Au lieu d'observer en quoi le théâtre imite, représente une réalité, le TPD et la mise en scène déconstruite et 'déconstructiviste' avant la lettre, se demandent ce que fait l'acteur avec les textes et les actions, dans quel dispositif il intervient.

E. L'acteur et son double PM et PD, le performer, nous aident à mieux cerner les différences entre le dramatique et le PD :

THEATRE DRAMATIQUE	TPD
Acteur	Performer
Dialogues	Choralité, dispositif
Dialogue de conversation	Adresse impersonnelle au public
Dialogues et échanges	Adresse et récepteur incertains
Représentation	Présentation, présence
Corps exprimant les émotions et les interactions	Corps neutralisé
<i>Einführung</i> (identification)	<i>Ausführung</i> (dés-identification)
Illusion théâtrale	Performance sportive

(D'après Jens Roselt, « In Ausnahmeständen. Schauspieler im postdramatischen Theater », *Text und Kritik*, 2004, pp. 166–176)

L'acteur PD est un performer : ce dernier ne tente pas de construire et d'imiter un personnage, il se situe au croisement de forces, dans une choralité, dans un dispositif qui regroupe l'ensemble de ses actions et de ses performances physiques. Il vaut comme simple présence de la personne ayant évacué le personnage, ou comme compétition d'endurance vocale ou physique (Pollesch, Castorf). Il n'a plus à entrer dans les émotions du spectateur à travers

l'imitation ou la suggestion de ses propres émotions (*Einführung*), mais, selon l'heureuse formule de Roselt, il doit sortir de l'identification (*Ausführung*), quitter le marécage des émotions simulées, pour retrouver les siennes propres, tel un sportif, un interprète musical, un choriste, un technicien au service non d'une imitation humaine et d'une illusion théâtrale, mais d'un collectif d'énonciation.

### III. MOMENT HISTORIQUE DE L'APPARITION DU TPD

En quête des origines du PD, du moment historique où apparaissent la notion ainsi que la pratique de la scène, il est difficile de distinguer la notion théorique et l'objet concret qu'elle est censée décrire. Le changement de la production s'explique par des raisons historiques, la théorie PD n'est qu'une réaction à ces changements. Et pourtant pour les percevoir, il faut justement mettre au point un appareil conceptuel aussi précis que possible.

A. Le changement, Lehmann a pu l'observer dans les spectacles et les performances qu'il a vus, dans les années 70 et 80, notamment à Francfort (Theater am Turm), en Allemagne, aux Pays-Bas et en Belgique. Ces spectacles font corps, car ils sont créés en réaction contre la littérature de l'absurde, essentiellement liée à une philosophie et à une littérature qui n'ont pas induit une nouvelle pratique de la scène, mais se sont situées dans le prolongement du drame et dans le symbolisme de la pensée. Beckett forme une sorte de transition entre littérature dramatique et pratique abstraite et non symbolique de la scène. Quant aux esthétiques purement visuelles (Wilson, Kantor, plus tard Tanguy, Gentil, etc.), elles se constituent autant en réaction contre le théâtre d'art ou de mise en scène que contre la littérature dramatique.

Pourtant cette dramaturgie conserve, dans d'autres pays comme la France, une certaine autonomie avec le renouveau des écritures et de l'édition théâtrale dès les années 1980 (Vinaver, Koltès, Novarina) ou 1990 (Gabilly, Lagarce). Des théoriciens du drame, comme Vinaver (et ses grilles d'analyse du théâtre universel) ou Sarrazac (avec sa conception du théâtre rhapsodique) ne s'inscrivent nullement dans une réaction anti- ou post-dramatique. Ils conçoivent encore la mise en scène comme un levier pour déconstruire, déplacer, détourner les textes canoniques classiques. Dès lors, ils laissent au TPD le champ libre pour passer des alliances avec les médias, les arts plastiques, les spectacles populaires et les variétés. Ils conservent leur confiance aux pouvoirs de la mise en scène, dans le prolongement des années 1960 et 70. La seule chose qu'ils partagent avec le TPD, c'est un certain aveuglement, voire une indifférence affichée, envers les expériences interculturelles et

l'élargissement des études théâtrales aux Performance Studies et à l'étude de toutes les *Cultural performances*.

B. Cette évolution historique coïncide avec les changements de méthodes, voire d'épistémologie, de 1968 à 1980 : fin des analyses dramaturgiques d'inspiration brechtienne, fin de l'impérialisme sémiologique, débuts de l'ère poststructuraliste. L'œuvre d'Adorno, sa *Théorie esthétique* (1970), ou son « Essai de comprendre *Endgame* », constituent des repères essentiels pour qui veut suivre le développement de ce TPD. Ainsi son idée que la forme n'est pas autre chose que du contenu sédimenté nous aide à comprendre la théorie de l'évolution des formes, le rapport entre forme et contenu. Avec le dramatique tel que défini par Szondi ou le PD par Lehmann, la difficulté n'est pas de repérer et de décrire les formes textuelles ou scéniques, la difficulté est de saisir et d'analyser les contenus sociaux et philosophiques de notre époque qui ont miraculeusement trouvé refuge dans ces formes dramatiques et théâtrales. Le PD joue de cette difficulté pour ne plus chercher à théoriser, il renonce à saisir toutes ces vues sur le réel que les formes théâtrales ne parviennent plus à couvrir. Mais peut-on le lui reprocher ?

C. Il est encore une dernière et fondamentale raison à cet essor sans précédent du théâtre PD en Allemagne, puis sous d'autres noms en France et ailleurs : ce théâtre de recherches, fortement subventionné par les villes et par l'état, soutenu artificiellement, ne survivrait pas sans cette aide. En Allemagne, les *Stadttheater* (théâtres municipaux), très puissants et riches, l'ont vite adopté, renforcé, institutionnalisé. D'où, avec le retrait de l'Etat et des institutions, le risque, voire la probabilité, que le TPD disparaisse ou se transforme en un produit plus commercialisable, qu'on revienne à un théâtre 'plus accessible', à une pièce 'bien faite', une performance 'bon chic bon genre' ou à un boulevard intelligent (Reza, Schmitt). Cette restauration se dessine d'ailleurs dans bon nombre de nouveaux spectacles.

Ainsi le TPD est peut-être déjà une espèce en danger, alors que l'on commence seulement à en apprécier objectivement les vertus, sans en méconnaître les problèmes et les défis.

#### IV. PROBLEMES ET DEFIS DU PD

##### A. Quelques problèmes :

Le projet inachevé de Peter Szondi est le point de départ de la réflexion PD. Dans sa *Théorie du drame moderne* (1956), Szondi étudie la dramaturgie

européenne de 1880 à 1950, il explique l'évolution de la dramaturgie par une crise du drame (II), des tentatives de préservation de la forme dramatique (III), puis des tentatives de solution. Dans la conclusion de son survol historique, Szondi imagine ce que devrait ou pourrait être « un style nouveau ». En ce milieu du XXème siècle, la forme dramatique, estime Szondi, mais aussi la tradition elle-même, est devenue problématique, « si bien qu'il serait nécessaire, s'il s'agissait de recréer un nouveau style, de trouver une solution à la crise, non de la forme dramatique seulement, mais aussi de la tradition. » (*Théorie du drame moderne, L'Age d'homme*, 1983 : 135). Par 'tradition', Szondi entend : le jeu, la manière de jouer transmise par la tradition ; il se rend donc compte que le théâtre à venir devra désormais être théorisé non seulement comme un texte dramatique, mais comme une pratique scénique. Or, il n'y a plus alors de tradition conservée, de modèle général, de style de jeu uniforme. Car cette tradition figée du jeu disparaît précisément avec l'apparition de la mise en scène, vers 1880, et sous une forme renouvelée, postclassique, voire postmoderne, vers 1950–1960. *A fortiori*, avec le PD, aucune tradition de jeu et d'interprétation n'est là pour garantir une quelconque stabilité. La mise en scène n'est pas un simple habillage traditionnel, elle est déterminante dans la production du sens du spectacle. La mise en scène postclassique, celle d'après Copeau, qui n'hésite pas à détourner et décentrer les textes, devient une pratique signifiante autonome de plein droit, une manière de fabriquer, jouer et faire comprendre le théâtre : le TPD ne dit pas autre chose, sauf qu'il n'étudie pas en détails, ou rarement, les procédés de la mise en scène.

C'est en tout cas le facteur de variation de la mise en scène qui fait évoluer le théâtre, et non plus, ou plus seulement, les changements dans la dramaturgie comme c'était le cas jusqu'à la moitié du siècle passé. Désormais, l'écriture dramatique n'a de sens que dans son rapport à la scène, à la mise en scène définie comme production et réglage du sens, comme mise en jeu de potentialités textuelles ou de pratiques extérieures activées par l'acteur, le metteur en scène et tous les collaborateurs.

### B. Plusieurs défis :

Le TPD présente bien des défis qui sont autant d'encouragements :

1) L'hétérogénéité : le dramatique et le scénique sont clairement imbriqués ; il en résulte un objet artistique et une notion théorique (le PD) passablement hétérogène, mais pourtant adaptée aux œuvres et au monde que nous côtoyons. Aucune théorie des genres dramatiques, et encore moins des pratiques scéniques, ne saurait inclure tous ces spectacles.

Les différents spectacles (performances) du PD ne se définissent pas par une essence ou des caractéristiques communes, mais par des pratiques scéniques et sociales radicalement différentes. Non seulement la représentation est la somme hétérogène des arts, des matériaux ou des discours, mais ceux-ci sont eux-mêmes hétérogènes et non-spécifiques : « cette intervention des arts extérieurs participe de cette pulsion rhapsodique qui travaille la forme dramatique? » (J.-P. Sarrazac, *Etudes théâtrales*, n° 38–39, 2007 : 16)

2) L'objet spectaculaire, ou performatif, est tout aussi insaisissable : impossible de distinguer à présent entre texte dramatique, mise en scène, *devised theatre*, action politique ou militante, sans parler des mille *cultural performances* de la planète.

3) Le PD ne fait pas de différence de nature entre théâtre de texte ('text-based') et théâtre sans parole. La différence serait plutôt entre, d'une part, le texte préexistant à monter, à 'mettre en scène' tel quel, et, d'autre part, le texte créé au cours des répétitions par toute l'équipe plus au moins encadrée par le meneur de jeu voire par l'auteur, ou les deux à la fois (technique du '*devised theatre*'). Il s'agit ensuite d'examiner le statut du texte dans la mise en scène.

4) Le texte et son analyse sont à réévaluer : les outils de la dramaturgie classique devront être adaptés, et non simplement inversés. Il convient de ne pas confondre les niveaux : le texte dramatique n'est pas la fable, ni le récit, ni l'épique, ni la narration. La difficulté ultime et principale est de comprendre le lien des formes dramatiques, ou postdramatiques, à la réalité, car, comme le constate à raison Lehmann on assiste à un « drifting apart of dramatic form and social reality » (« un écart grandissant entre la forme dramatique et la réalité sociale ») (2007 : 41). Mais sommes-nous encore capables d'établir un lien entre des formes dramaturgiques ou scéniques et nos analyses de la réalité ?

Ces défis posés et relevés par le PD nous indiquent en tout cas que les problèmes soulevés par Lehmann sont bien réels et qu'ils rejoignent toutes les interrogations sur le théâtre contemporain. Si l'on relie la notion de PD à celles de PM et de déconstruction (ce qui ne va certes pas dans le sens de Lehmann), on est en mesure de confirmer quelques-unes de ses thèses et de les vérifier à la lumière de la déconstruction.

5) On ne trouvera pas un ensemble conceptuel adapté aux nouvelles expériences scéniques et extra-scéniques d'après 1970 : ni structuralisme, ni sémiologie, ni esthétique de la réception. L'œuvre étant elle-même fragmentée, déconstruite, inachevée, le spectateur ou le théoricien ne dispose plus de concepts ou d'outils à la fois larges et pertinents. La seule chose que le PD de Lehmann puisse faire, c'est de recourir de manière ponctuelle et éclectique

à des notions empruntées à des philosophes français comme Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, Baudrillard ou Rancière. Il procède souvent par oppositions de concepts: événement/situation, parataxe/hiérarchie, espace/surface, représentation/présence, etc. Ces concepts en contraste l'aident à organiser la masse des observations, à vérifier la grande dichotomie dramatique/PD. Cette partition binaire est cependant réductrice pour expliquer des phénomènes échappent à une dichotomie tranchée.

## V. VERS UNE MISE EN SCÈNE PD ET DECONSTRUITE ?

Lehmann fait souvent référence à la déconstruction selon Derrida, sans toutefois clairement la différencier de sa propre conception du PD. Or, il semble nécessaire de les distinguer, quand bien même PD et déconstruction, chez Lehmann comme chez Derrida, se démarquent tous deux explicitement de la pensée PM.

On pourrait définir la déconstruction comme la manière dont une mise en scène s'élabore et se défait tour à tour devant nous. Elle repère et induit sa propre fragmentation, met en évidence ses dissonances, ses contradictions, son décentrement. Un détail de la représentation peut déconstruire la structure narrative globale, ruiner toute prétention de la mise en scène à représenter le monde ou à construire un personnage. Il s'agit là d'opérations sur le sens et pas simplement de procédés stylistiques superficiels. Ici réside d'ailleurs toute la différence avec le PM, lequel se reconnaît à son goût pour le mélange des registres, des genres, des niveaux de style, pour l'hybridité des formes et une intertextualité très poussée (Pavis, 2007 : 159–160).

Au-delà des cas d'école comme les exercices de Vitez, des travaux du Wooster Group, des séances de tournage sur scène de Katie Mitchell (*Some Trace of Her*, 2008), des mises en scène de Shakespeare par Jan Decorte dans les années 1980 ou par Jan Lauwers dans les années 1990 ou encore par Ivo van Hove (*Tragédies Romaines*) en 2007, de l'adaptation scénique des romans de Proust et Musil par Guy Cassiers, on trouve assez peu d'exemples de déconstruction *stricto sensu* se réclamant de ce procédé philosophique inspiré par Derrida. Toutefois, quelques principes reviennent souvent, donnant à l'ensemble une assez forte identité :

1) Décentrement de la mise en scène : on n'a plus de discours global, de discours de la mise en scène, du moins explicite et clair. Le metteur en scène n'est plus l'auteur, le sujet central contrôlant tout. L'acteur, le groupe tout entier, la technologie et les médias n'ont plus à obéir à un artiste démiurge.

2) L'éclatement de la mise en scène classique d'autrefois, due à la fragmentation du sujet s'explique par une nouvelle méthode de travail : 'collaborative production' et 'collaborative reception', selon les termes de Puchner (*Stage Fright. Modernism, Anti-Theatricality and Drama*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002 : 176).

3) La mise en vue d'un processus, la présentation performative d'un événement se substitue à toute représentation, figuration, parfois même signification.

4) Toute mise en scène, *a fortiori* toute mise en scène déconstruite, est une « Poétique du dérangement » (*Poetik der Störung*, Lehmann, 1999 : 266), ce qui n'exclut pas, au contraire, l'idée de réglage.

## VI. LE RETOUR DE LA MISE EN SCÈNE ?

A. Si la déconstruction de Derrida fournit au TPD son armature conceptuelle, elle encourage aussi les généralités philosophiques et elle quitte souvent le sol des analyses concrètes des spectacles. Le livre de Lehmann et les réflexions de ses élèves ou des artistes se réclamant du PD gagneraient à revenir à des descriptions plus précises et techniques des spectacles, à se recentrer sur une notion ancienne, mais déjà en passe d'être oubliée ou négligée : la mise en scène. Car la mise en scène est encore le seul lieu concret où théorie et pratique s'affrontent. C'est aussi ce qui permet de choisir, d'affiner et de corriger les exemples de TPD.

B. A côté de la mise en scène, au sens 'continental', on doit cependant prendre en considération la notion et la pratique de la performance, faire jouer l'opposition entre les deux modèles (Pavis, *La Mise en scène contemporaine*, Armand Colin, 2007 : 43-71). Ces deux paradigmes structurent en effet le champ international des spectacles, notamment le monde européen 'continental' et le monde anglo-américano-anglophone : ces deux univers s'ignorent encore un peu. Et pourtant, ces manières différentes, voire opposées, de voir et d'analyser le théâtre convergent dans une pratique hybride : ne va-t-on pas vers une sorte de 'performise', de 'mise en perf' ?

Le TPD qui voudrait abandonner complètement le mimétique pour le seul performatif, en laissant derrière lui fable, histoire, action, personnages, a bien du mal à s'imposer. L'autoréférence s'épuise, la mimesis revient, le personnage renaît de ses cendres. Du reste, la théorie PD ne pousse pas très loin sa réflexion sur le performatif, elle ne tient pas compte des travaux sur la performativité des années 1990 à 2010, notamment des différents féminismes de

Judith Butler à Elisabeth Grosz. Or, la question des identités de toutes sortes permettrait sûrement de mieux cerner la façon dont sont fabriquées et incarnées toutes les composantes d'un spectacle.

C. En rapprochant et en associant l'esthétique générale du PD et l'histoire récente de la mise en scène, n'assure-t-on pas ainsi les fondements d'une théorie de la mise en scène déconstruite (ou postdramatique) ? A condition toutefois de veiller aux tâches suivantes :

1. Historiciser les pratiques scéniques, les contextualiser, les relativiser, les inscrire plus clairement dans de grands ensembles, comme une théorie des médias ou des pratiques culturelles.

2. Analyser leur stratégie, leur combinatoire, leur valeur polémique, leur dimension culturelle. Il faut se souvenir que dans chaque contexte culturel et linguistique, l'indentification des exemples PD et l'évaluation du TPD est différente. C'est ainsi que le rapport au texte classique est très différent en Hollande, en France ou en Angleterre.

3. Actualiser les exemples, qui datent de 30 voire 40 ans, et que Lehmann a analysés la première fois il y a plus de 20 ou 30 ans. La pratique a évolué, les expériences se sont diversifiées, même si certains artistes comme ceux de Rimini Protokoll s'attribuent l'étiquette de PD, tandis que d'autres, tel Ostermeier, prennent leurs distances : « Le théâtre postmoderne correspond à une époque décadente et rassasiée, qui est aujourd'hui révolue. Le spectateur que j'étais au début des années 1990, à Berlin, n'en pouvait plus du cynisme de ce théâtre qui se faisait par exemple à la Volksbühne, que la critique définissait comme 'déconstructiviste' et qui considérait que les 'grands récits' n'avaient plus rien à nous dire. » (*Thomas Ostermeier*. Introduction et entretien par Sylvie Chalaye, Actes Sud-Papiers, 2006 : 53).

D. Le dualisme dramatique/PD ne peut-il pas aussi être dépassé ? Nous sommes loin de l'opposition frontale entre dramatique et épique, telle que Brecht pouvait encore la théoriser dans les années 1920, dans la tradition de l'opposition platonicienne entre *mimèsis* et *diégèsis*. Le PD peut contenir des éléments tantôt dramatiques et tantôt épiques, naturalistes ou théâtralisés. L'opposition entre le refus moderne de la théâtralité et l'acceptation PM de cette théâtralité ne tient plus : une même mise en scène n'hésitera pas à passer de l'un à l'autre, en vertu du principe PM de l'hétérogénéité.

Un dualisme comparable, et tout aussi 'dépassable', est celui d'un style réaliste (cachant les marques de la représentation) et d'un style théâtralisé (les accentuant). Un metteur en scène comme Chéreau fait par exemple alterner moments psychologiques et moments très théâtralisés, stylisés et intensifiés ('heightened').

## CONCLUSIONS GENERALES : LE CAS DE L' ECRITURE DRAMATIQUE

Avec la fin d'une époque marquée par la disparition d'artistes irremplaçables comme Cunningham, Bausch, Grüber, Zadek, Gosch ou Schlingensiefel, sommes-nous entrés dans une ère nouvelle, post-PD ? Peut-on sortir du PD ? N'est-ce pas aussi difficile que de sauter par dessus son ombre ? Sortira-t-on du PD en revenant au dramatique ? C'est peu probable !

Il est bon en tout cas de revenir *in fine* sur la question que sous-entend le terme de PD lorsqu'on le prend à la lettre : quelle écriture, quelle dramaturgie après le dramatique ?

A. Il n'y a probablement pas grand sens, ou en tout cas grande pertinence, à parler d'écriture contemporaine PD, dans la mesure où la plupart des auteurs ont intégré et absorbé les grandes tendances anti-textuelles du TPD, tout en restant lisibles, non pas au seul sens de 'déchiffrables', mais de publiables comme peut l'être la littérature dramatique. Ainsi Koltès a en partie intégré dans son écriture l'esthétique scénique, ce mélange d'authenticité mimétique et d'artificialité théâtrale de son metteur en scène Chéreau, lequel, à son tour, a su détecter dans l'écriture cette dichotomie, que les autres metteurs en scène des années 1980 à 2000 n'avaient pas toujours perçue, faisant de ses pièces des documents naturalistes sur la jeunesse marginale. Cette circularité de l'écriture et de la mise en jeu est devenue fréquente dans la production théâtrale, non seulement dans le '*devised theatre*' – théâtre conçu sans texte ou script préalable au cours des improvisations en ateliers – mais dans la manière conjointe d'écrire et de mettre en scène: un auteur comme Falk Richter, dans son travail avec Stanislas Nordey (*My secret Garden*, à Avignon 2010), écrit, puis met tout de suite en jeu son texte, après une traduction immédiate, avant de réécrire certains passages et de les confier de nouveau à la traductrice puis au metteur en scène et aux acteurs.

B. Pareille circulation dure aussi longtemps que le permettent les conditions de production et la patience des artistes ; elle réaffirme l'imbrication pratique et théorique du texte et du jeu, elle nous renvoie à la réflexion sur les mécanismes de la mise en scène ; elle nous rappelle accessoirement que le texte, qu'on nommait, il y a trente ou quarante ans, le « texte théâtral qui n'est plus dramatique » (titre du livre de G. Poschmann, 1997) redevient le texte « de nouveau dramatique », pour ne pas dire 'post-post-dramatique'. Après la phase de 'retrait de la représentation' (Lehmann, 1999), les textes, sans être redevenus des pièces bien faites, racontent de nouveau des histoires, représentent des éléments du réel, se prêtent à des effets de personnage. Ce retour n'a rien d'une restauration

réactionnaire, elle est simplement une prise de conscience que toute œuvre et tout discours humain racontent toujours quelque chose. Le théâtre, notamment contemporain, est toujours, selon Sarrazac, ‘rhapsodique’. La notion de rhapsodie est « liée au domaine épique : celui des chants et de la narration homériques, en même temps qu’à des procédés d’écriture tels que le montage, l’hybridation, le rapiécage, la choralité. » (Sarrazac, *Lexique du drame moderne et contemporain*. Circé, 2005 : 183–184). Applique-t-on cette notion à l’ensemble de la mise en scène et l’on se situe alors sur le plan du PD.

La différence toutefois est que la théorie des textes contemporains et surtout son mode d’analyse restent à établir. Cette théorie analytique se doit d’intégrer des paramètres du dramatique et du PD. Les outils comme l’action, la dramaturgie, l’intrigue, la fable, l’idéologie restent pertinents, ne serait-ce que pour constater leur absence ou leur mutation. (Pavis, *Le Théâtre contemporain*, Paris, Nathan, 2002).

C. Le TPD bloque-t-il à présent l’évolution de la dramaturgie, de l’écriture, à cause de ses nouvelles normes, sa nouvelle *doxa* ? Selon Sarrazac, le blocage est réel, car le PD méconnaît l’écriture dramatique et son évolution intrinsèque, non soumise aux aléas de la scène. Sarrazac appelle de ses vœux une réaction contre le PD, il lui oppose une ‘reprise’ : « ce moment – qui est le contraire d’une restauration – où le drame se reconstitue, se revivifie sous l’influence d’un théâtre qui est devenu son propre Etranger » (2007 : 17). Il y a bien, en effet, un risque réel : le retournement complet de la relation texte-scène. Autrefois dominée par le texte et le logocentrisme, cette relation, sous le ‘scéno-centrisme’ du PD, se retrouve entièrement soumise au plateau et à la pratique scénique, ne laissant au texte aucune chance d’être lu ni même d’ailleurs rédigé par un auteur dramatique. Le nouveau maître n’est plus le metteur en scène, jugé encore trop logocentrique, mais ‘l’écrivain de plateau’, qui est censé être autant et à la fois metteur en scène et créateur de l’ensemble texte et scène, donc un être hybride, un athlète complet des planches et des pages, (ré)écrivant ses textes à la lumière des projecteurs du plateau.

D. Cette ‘écriture de plateau’ (Tackels) qui tend à devenir fréquente sinon dominante dans le théâtre de recherche, ressemble comme deux gouttes d’eau au TPD. L’idée est que toute création part de la scène, à partir du travail concret avec les acteurs dans l’espace et le temps concrets de la scène. En ce sens, cette ‘écriture de plateau’ (au nom hélas pas très heureux, puisqu’il ne s’agit ni d’écriture ni de scène traditionnelle !) rejoint la tradition britannique du ‘*devised theatre*’, lequel a lui aussi la fâcheuse tendance à phagocyter les autres formes du théâtre de recherche, notamment l’écriture dramatique et le ‘*director’s theatre*’, le théâtre de mise en scène inspiré de la tradition

continentale. Au fond, les trois types d'expérience – TPD, *devised theatre* ou écriture de plateau – se rejoignent pour éviter, si ce n'est liquider, la tradition de la mise en scène d'art, fondée sur la relecture des pièces, le plus souvent classiques. Comme les *Stadttheater* allemands ne peuvent aussi facilement renoncer au répertoire classique réclamé par un public plutôt traditionnel et petit bourgeois, ils intègrent les recherches du PD en les faisant appliquer un peu mécaniquement par les metteurs en scène invités ou attachés au théâtre. Ceci s'est produit autrefois avec Robert Wilson, à présent avec des anciens avant-gardistes PD comme Jan Lauwers, Jan Fabre, Luk Perceval ou Thalheimer. Ces mêmes structures puissantes et établies, en Allemagne comme ailleurs, qui ont encouragé dans les années 70 et 80 les débuts des PD, sont peut-être à présent en passe de les récupérer, de les adapter, de les commercialiser et de les achever, dans tous les sens du terme. L'avenir du théâtre réside probablement plus dans le système des subventions que dans l'élaboration de nouvelles formes, qu'elles soient dramatiques ou PD.

Grâce à la réflexion de Lehmann, de ses élèves et à présent de nombreux artistes qui se réclament de lui dans le monde entier, le TPD a eu l'immense mérite de formaliser tout un courant vivant et régénérateur du théâtre mondial, avec certes les contradictions et les imprécisions de notre temps, avec un scepticisme aussi cynique que désespéré envers les dogmes du passé et les promesses faciles de l'avenir. Le TPD est loin d'avoir livré son secret : ni style, ni théorie, ni méthode, il est une ruse pour déplacer les contradictions bloquées. Sa survie ou sa disparition ne dépendent nullement d'un retour du dramatique et d'une dramaturgie néo-classique, mais plutôt du renforcement d'une écriture qui n'a pas complètement coupé les amarres avec l'art et la littérature dramatique. Dans sa bataille contre le PD, il n'est pas dit que le dramatique ait dit son dernier mot.

## Résumé

L'article est une mise au point sur la notion de postdramatique (PD) et une réflexion sur le Théâtre postdramatique (TPD), tels que défini par Hans-Thies Lehmann. Après une recherche sur les occurrences et les origines du terme depuis les années 1970 (avec Wirth et Schechner), on examine le sens et l'objet du TPD : on envisage autant son objet que ses ennemis ou ses bêtes noires ; on en cherche la trace plus dans la pratique scénique que dans l'écriture, on compare quelques propriétés du texte dramatique et PD. Après avoir établi le moment historique de l'apparition de l'objet TPD et du terme dans les années 1970 et 1980, on aborde les problèmes et les défis du PD. On prend l'exemple

de la mise en scène « déconstruite » pour proposer quelques caractéristiques : décentrement, éclatement, mise en vue des processus. La comparaison de la mise en scène au sens ‘continental’ et de la performance comme concept issu autant de la linguistique performative que des *performance studies*, permet de mieux cerner ‘l’hésitation’ du PD entre le modèle de la tradition continentale de la mise en scène et celui de la performativité, développé dans les pays anglophones.

**Patrice Pavis**

## RAZMIŠLJANJA O POSTDRAMSKOM POZORIŠTU

### Rezime

Tekst je doradeno razmatranje pojma postdramskog (PD) i razmišljanje o postdramskom teatru (TPD), onako kako ove pojmove definiše Hans-Tis Leman. Posle istraživanja pojava i porekla ovih pojmova od sedamdesetih godina (sa Virtom i Šeknerom), ispituju se značenje i predmet TPD-a: razmatraju se kako njegov predmet tako i njegovi protivnici i ozloglašeni aspekti: trag mu se traži više u scenskoj praksi nego u pisanju, upoređuju se svojstva dramskog teksta i PD-a. Posle utvrđivanja istorijskog momenta pojavljivanja i predmeta TPD-a i samog pojma u sedamdesetim i osamdesetim, pristupa se problemima i izazovima PD-a. Uzima se primer „dekonstrukcijske” režije da bi se ponudile karakteristike kao što su: decentriranost, raspršenost, razotkrivanje procesa. Poređenje režije u „kontinentalnom” značenju i performansa kao koncepta koji proizlazi koliko iz performativne lingvistike toliko i iz studija izvođačkih umetnosti (studije izvođenja) omogućava bolje sagledavanje „kolebanja” PD-a između modela kontinentalne tradicije režije i modela performativnosti razvijenog u anglofonskom svetu.

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## Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the “Fictive Cosmos”: A View from America

Of all the theories of new theater advanced in the near half-century since the beginning of the epoch of “performance theater”— that is, theater variously liberated from (or, as some would say, deprived of) text, of dialogue, of plot and character – Hans-Thies Lehmann’s theory of theater cut loose from the “fictive cosmos” of drama has been the most far-ranging.<sup>1</sup> According to Lehmann, theater became “postdramatic” on giving up the comprehensive trait that makes drama dramatic, a fictional world that aligns all dramaturgical elements into a synthetic whole. Lehmann’s critical gesture made connections visible amongst widely different styles of so-called “avant-garde” theater work, relating them vertically through time as well as horizontally across diverse theater cultures. The connecting link he sees in this great range of styles, effects, and affects, is that since some time in the 1960s, works of theater have declared independence from the story-telling and integrated illusory “world” of traditional drama. Lehmann places his argument in a lineage of dramatic theory and criticism that extends from Aristotle through Hegel to Peter Szondi. In *Theory of the Modern Drama*, Szondi describes the era of the dramatic as beginning in the Renaissance and intensifying in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London and New York: 2006), hereinafter abbreviated as PDT, p. 33 and *passim*. The term “performance theater” has occasionally cropped up in the critical vocabulary struggling to distinguish certain forms of contemporary theater from conventional dramatic theater. I thought I coined it in *The Death of Character* (Indiana, 1996, p. 79), then discovered it in Michael Vanden Heuvel, *Performing Drama/Dramatizing Performance* (Michigan, 1991). Apparently independently of Vanden Heuvel and Fuchs it appears in Gay McAuley, “Performance Studies: Definitions, Methodologies, Future Directions,” *Australasian Drama Studies* 39 (2001), 17. More common adjectives used to describe this range of hybrid theatrical performance are *avant-garde*, *experimental*, *alternative*, *devised* and *postmodern*.

victory of dialogue over all other forms of stage communication. Thus, follows Lehmann, Attic theatre with its reliance on the Chorus is pre-dramatic and Racine is dramatic. But at the end of the 19th<sup>th</sup> century, a crisis of the dramatic, witnessed in the failure of “absolute dialogue,” begins to emerge, preparing the way for the “postdramatic.” Szondi discusses the work of several modern playwrights as “tentative solutions” to this crisis, among which is Brecht’s Epic Theater. Thus Brecht becomes, among others, a kind of boundary marker of the dramatic form.

Lehmann broadens Szondi’s archaeology of drama to follow not only the decay of dialogue, but the mutual estrangement of drama and theater. While Brecht offers insight into this process, Lehmann does not see him as an usher at the funeral of drama. Rather it is after “a whole line of theater that led from Artaud and Grotowski to the Living Theatre and Robert Wilson” (PDT 30) that theater comes uncoupled from the fictive cosmos of the play and attaches directly to the “situation” of actual performance.

Lehmann’s term “postdramatic” – not his sole invention though he is responsible for its definition and elaboration – seemed to portend, if not exactly predict, the end of the dramatic form.<sup>2</sup> The critical debate swirling around the term has been substantial, and I do not propose to review it here. Rather I want to weigh the question: What has happened to this looming portent? A decade and more after the publication of Lehmann’s book, is the dramatic form closer to exhaustion?

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Postdramatic theater begins in the American neo-avant garde of the 1960s. It was led by the Living Theatre and Joseph Chaikin, followed in the late 1960s by Robert Wilson’s School of Byrds and Foreman’s Ontological Hysterical theater, then Mabou Mines in 1970, and the Wooster Group in 1975. This movement was soaked in European influences, whether directly (for instance, the Living Theatre’s origins in Piscator’s New School classes attended by Judith Malina and Julian Beck, and Mabou Mines’ 1969 *Wanderjahre* abroad), or indirectly, for instance Wilson’s training in architecture and painting, and Elizabeth LeCompte’s in fine art. Wilson’s work was famously hailed by Louis

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<sup>2</sup> According to Christel Weiler’s entry on *Postdramatisches Theater* in Erika Fischer-Lichte, Doris Kolesch and Matthias Warstat, eds., *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie* (Berlin, 2005), the term “postdramatic” was first used by Andrzej Wirth, founder and director of the program in Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft at the Justus Liebig University in Gießen.

Aragon as the fulfillment of Surrealism’s dream of a surrealist theater. The American work was already in part European.

Cast with amateur performers and working against vast visual panoramas often encompassing the history of planetary life, with no through narrative line, Wilson’s early pieces released the components of drama into a weightless suspension. Or in Lehmann’s words:

*When it is obviously no longer simply a matter of broken dramatic illusion or epicizing distance; when obviously neither plots, nor plastically shaped dramatis personae are needed; when neither dramatic-dialectic collision of values nor even identifiable figures are necessary to produce ‘theatre’...then the concept of drama – however differentiated, all-embracing, and watered-down it may become – retains so little substance that it loses its cognitive value. (PDT, 34)*

Lehmann’s study owes its inception to his encounter in the 1980s with Wilson, whose influence in Europe, and especially Germany, can scarcely be exaggerated. Yet in identifying Wilson as the germinal impulse of the postdramatic, Lehmann may be overstating the demise of the dramatic impulse in contemporary performance theater, especially that emanating from the United States. Less than a year after the premiere of Wilson/Glass’s *Einstein on the Beach*, the Wooster Group – eventually perhaps even more influential than Wilson on succeeding generations of postdramatic theater artists – began to introduce *Three Pieces in Rhode Island*, the performance pieces created from Spalding Gray’s autobiography. For all their exhilarating experimentation, these and the pieces that soon followed also displayed LeCompte’s early attraction to dramatic texts. For instance, Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* was a constituent of *Nayatt School*, Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* of *Route 1&9*, Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* of *Point Judith* and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* an element of *L.S.D. ...Just the High Points*, until Miller denied the group the rights. While most of these play texts were used as “material,” and not as drama, we might today see these early citations as harbingers of the Group’s return to staging full dramatic texts, for instance their version of Racine’s *Phedre* (*To You, the Birdie!* [2002]) and *Hamlet*, in 2007. After fifteen years of staging his own works, Wilson staged *King Lear* (1985), and since then, in addition to opera, has staged plays by Ibsen and Strindberg, among others. Lee Breuer has had global successes with his productions of *Gospel in Colonnus*, based on *Oedipus at Colonus*, and of *The Mabou Mines Dollhouse*, exuberantly faithful to the text of Ibsen’s *A Dollhouse*.

This canonical turn, visible too in Germany despite the fact that the canon and theatrical experimentation have a long linked history there – confronts one with something of a contradiction in regard to Lehmann’s central premise. The *Mabou Mines Dollhouse* (2003), with its freak show references, wild dances, jokes, direct address to the audience, falling melodrama silks, opera riffs, and live pianist winking at the actors who in turn wink at the audience, fit many criteria of Lehmann’s postdramatic. Yet, with characters, plot, dialogue, and a strong sequential story line, this *Dollhouse* was just as surely dramatic.

Can the “fictive cosmos” be shattered and embraced at the same time? As one surveys the many younger groups in New York that have been influenced by the first generation of ‘sixties and ‘seventies avant-garde theater artists, there is no single answer to this question. Some create a Wooster-like dialectic, some create a species of variety show, some work with “exploded” dramatic texts in the German manner of a “nach” production. All turn the performance out to the spectators without retreat into a closed dramatic world. Yet a return by whatever circuitous route to the embrace of narrative, what Lehmann describes as the “highly traditionalist” *Fabel-Theater*, theater of story, invades much contemporary postdramatic work (PDT, 33). The tendency is striking enough that the sense of a break in theatrical culture that pervades *Postdramatic Theatre* should be re-examined.

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One can see this return to narrative not only in the stagings of dramatic texts by American experimental theater directors, but in the great range of “performance pieces” that constitute Lehmann’s central investigation. Again, my examples are American. Anne Bogart’s *Bobrauschenbergamerica*, while essentially plotless, purports to follow a group of neighbors from sun-up to sundown in an “our town”-type back yard on the Fourth of July. The Nature Theater of Oklahoma’s live and video show, *Rambo Solo*, tells the comic story of an aging actor’s futile longing to play the original Rambo from the David Morrell novel, *First Blood*, if only in his own tiny New York apartment. The piece centrally relies on a passionate retelling of the story. As a case study of the renascence of narrative in experimental theater, however, I offer only one extended example, albeit a significant one. In the six years since its first 2005 open rehearsal, the Elevator Repair Service’s *Gatz* has toured the world, played triumphantly in New York, and become a legend of the second generation American “avant-garde” theater.

A Wooster-inspired collective, the Elevator Repair Service (ERS), was founded in 1991 by director John Collins and a group of actors. For the past several years, the group has based its pieces around verbatim readings of iconic American novels, first *The Great Gatsby*, then the opening section of Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, and presently Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*. Though the Wooster Group earlier introduced the idea of a verbatim recitation of a central text, for instance their lightning-speed delivery of Miller’s *The Crucible*, the ERS has made the actual reading of a work of fiction the central continuous thread of the performance. Further, their engagement with the Fitzgerald narrative is not “exploded,” or based on a pun, or intended to separate the audience from the easy pleasures of plot and character. Its mordant irony seems not a distancing device aimed at the text, but rather an interpretation of the world of the text. Notwithstanding the dislocations I will describe, the affective life of *Gatz* takes place in the realm of narrative realism. The answer to the question “What are we following?” is the plot and characters of Fitzgerald’s novel, and the ERS audiences do so, rapt, for hours.

At first one might think that *Gatsby*’s “fictive cosmos” had been jettisoned entirely. The ERS doesn’t set its visual performance of *Gatz* on a bucolic image of the North Shore of Long Island, but in a dingy urban office space of the early 1980s. Framed in by open shelves groaning with paper files, the furnishings include a worn fake leather sofa, tattered desk chairs on wheels, and a center work table bearing an old Olivetti typewriter and a first generation desktop computer.

The first office worker to drift in, played by the prodigious Scott Shepard, an actor who moves back and forth between ERS and the Wooster Group, flips on the lights and boots up the recalcitrant computer. Hidden in his Rolodex is a copy of *The Great Gatsby*. He reads aloud, idly, passing time, as workers arrive and the day at the office begins. So begins Shepard’s seven-hour reading of the entire novel, with office workers swirling into the story, performing the central roles in snatches of dialogue or mime, then falling back into the motions of office routines. With help from a rich sound score, scenes from the novel are conjured up out of air, it seems, and just as lightly dispersed. Again and again we convert the shabby scene before us into a shimmering idyll of the mind as we “see” *Gatsby*’s parties, the Buchanan estate, and the sunset over the water..

Why the office setting? This is the audience’s problem to explain, or ignore. One could suppose that the group began rehearsals in an old office, and was presenting its process in the public show. Or one could speculate, for instance, that the iconic American setting of the workplace serves as counterpoise to

the iconic setting of American wealth and privilege; that the office stands to the book as the opposing worlds of the book stand to each other: Tom and Daisy's world of unconscious privilege and Jay Gatz's humble midwestern origin; Gatsby's glittering parties and Willson's shabby auto repair shop; the unattainable world of "old money" and the corrupt world of fast money. Whichever, or neither, the office becomes a kind of projection screen for the imagination, with each poor door, cubicle, or chair, standing in for a luxurious or scandalous other.

But the *Gatz* experience in the theater exceeds this model of a doubled experiential world as the spectator's visual, aural, and readerly imaginations are engaged on discrete tracks. This is "poor theater" with a baroque dramaturgy, and still these tracks converge in support of a single grand fiction.

Does the Elevator Repair Service offer the spectator a shattered fictive cosmos, as theorized in *Postdramatic Theatre*, or a layered one; the explosion of a fictive cosmos, or its further complication? Many aspects of this production can be identified in Lehmann's index of postdramatic theater traits, such as its marathon length and its "musicalization". Yet the Fitzgerald narrative stirred in its audience the kind of emotional and imaginative engagement generated by the fictive cosmos of traditional theater, here a cosmos of the imagination.

One might argue that *The Great Gatsby* is so familiar to American audiences that it will recreate its world under whatever pressure. Several months before the ERS offered its first performances of *Gatz*, the *New York Times* in a community reading experiment printed the entire novel in weekly installments. The ERS could assume its audience's familiarity with the settings, figures, and plot of Fitzgerald's novel. As was arguably the case with such familiar texts as *Dollhouse* or *Hamlet* or the Rambo story, a presumption of audience familiarity with the underlying text was built in to the production. A "fictive cosmos", at least at the level of the spectator's imagination, came pre-installed. The same could not be said, by comparison, for the Wilson "operas" that launch the postdramatic epoch, and not even for the Racine of LeCompte's *To You, the Birdie!*, which leaves its audience in admiration of the Wooster Group's virtuosity, but not in mourning, as in *Gatz*, for its victims of fatal passion.

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So, are there holes in the cosmos of no-cosmos? What is the status of the theoretically superannuated "dramatic" in such an example? Are we up

against an absolute contradiction, such as that faced by the Billionaire's Son in Kaiser's expressionist *Gas I*, whose gas factory explodes and is reduced to rubble despite the Engineer's assurance that "the formula is correct"? I see two ways out of this impasse. One is that the formula is correct, and drama and theater have gone their separate ways. Yet Lehmann's definition of "drama" from which theater departs is so restrictive (he at one point restricts it to a "century-old fixation with moving human fortunes" [95]) that most of the dramatic tradition is excluded as not in fact dramatic. The realist definition of the dramatic saves the "formula", yet it also shrinks Lehmann's portent of a millennial transformation to a fluctuation. If the "fictive cosmos" in its ideal, closed form can be shrunk to fourth-wall realism almost everything traditionally regarded as drama is "outside the box".

The other is that the formula even on its own terms is not correct. Anglo-American critical tradition, less exacting than the German, is willing to admit the ancient Greeks, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century English of the religious plays, and the Elizabethans into its tent of the "dramatic". My argument admittedly rests on this more inclusive and evolutionary view of the dramatic form. But even within Szondi's distinct if narrower boundaries, a contradiction lurks. I return to the variation that Lehmann works on Szondi's positioning of Brecht in 20<sup>th</sup> century dramatic form.

As is well known through his famous comparative chart, Brecht saw epic dramaturgy as a break with Aristotelian tradition. Szondi concedes Brecht's innovations. "Epicization" was one way out of the "crisis" of the dialogic tradition. Lehmann follows Szondi in foreshortening the dramatic, but in turn extends its life. Thus Brecht is no longer a border guard.

*What Brecht achieved can no longer be understood one-sidedly as a revolutionary counter-design to tradition. In the light of the newest developments, it becomes increasingly apparent that, in a sense, the theory of epic theatre constituted a renewal and completion of classical dramaturgy. (PDT, 33)*

This repositioning of Brecht within the purview of the dramatic not only undermines Szondi but opens Lehmann's thesis too to the canker of historicization. If Brecht was once viewed as radically *other* to the dramatic, and is now absorbed within it, a shift in perspective could also lessen the distance between drama and its departed twin, theater. Or rather, the two may display, over time, as perhaps suggested by my American examples of the return of narrative theater, a new rapprochement after the divide that Lehmann describes.

I incline to this gradualist view. As Lyotard argued in seeming paradox, the postmodern precedes the modern, the more radical precedes the accommodation. Just as dramatic elements, at least from my American examples, have crept back into performance theater, elements of performance – surrealist flights, Dada explosions, direct address to the audience – appear in the work of many contemporary American playwrights, even on Broadway. This latter route of tentative merger was followed by atonality in classical music, which came to coexist with the tonality it was thought to have banished, and by cubism and abstraction in painting and sculpture, which at one time were thought to spell the end of figurative art. Belatedly following the trajectory of these other arts, theater and drama may at last have absorbed 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism, and show signs of a mutual, renewed, accommodation.

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I myself shared in the enthusiasm for radical breaks in culture fostered by Foucault and other post-structuralists in my study of theatrical postmodernism.<sup>3</sup> Fifteen years later, the term “postmodernism” is historically dated, partly because what was new in postmodernism has now been naturalized, and partly because what was *not new*, but not then recognized as *not new*, has been revealed to be not the end of the world as we knew it, but another face of modernism.

At the time of that writing, I paid a visit to the eminent American philosopher, art critic, and latter-day Hegelian, Arthur Danto. In his office at Columbia University I asked him whether he saw theatre following the same trajectory that he had written about in “The End of Art.”<sup>4</sup> Danto floats there the Hegelian thesis that art in the modern period becomes conscious of itself *as art*, and strives to realize the logic of its own process and materials, of which Andy Warhol’s Brillo Box becomes the fulfillment. When I suggested that a similar process could be identified in 20<sup>th</sup> century theater, Danto didn’t agree. “Unlike the fine arts,” he told me, “theatre isn’t progressive, but has oscillated historically between realism and various types of formalism.”

I remembered this conversation on reading Hans-Thies Lehmann’s *Postdramatic Theatre*. Was theatre, like art in Danto’s reading, shedding

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<sup>3</sup> See Fuchs, *The Death of Character: Reflections on Theater After Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 1996).

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of the permutations of Danto’s multiple publications on this theme, see John K. Bramann, “Understanding the End of Art” at <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/forum4/htm>.

representation for good, or would the dramatic re-absorb these departures and carry on in altered form? A decade on after the publication of *Postdramatisches Theater* and almost fifty since the inauguration of the contemporary theater of performance (as against the theater of text) evidence suggests that a fictive cosmos is a hard thing to kill. I write this with some disappointment. I sense a tinge of anticipatory nostalgia, too, in Lehmann’s verdict on his own enthusiasms.

*Perhaps in the end postdramatic theatre will only have been a moment in which the exploration of a “beyond representation” could take place on all levels. Perhaps postdramatic theatre is going to open out onto a new theatre in which dramatic figurations will come together again, after drama and theatre have drifted apart so far. A bridge could be the narrative forms, the simple, even trivial appropriation of old stories and (not least of all) the need for a return of conscious and artificial stylization in order to escape the Naturalist glut of images. Something new is going to come... (PDT, 144)*

### **Summary:**

It is Hans-Thies Lehmann’s bold argument that postdramatic theater arrives when the “fictive cosmos” of the dramatic work no longer coheres. The dramatic work shreds into its component parts, and the interest of the theatrical event shifts towards the “situation” of the live performance in the present moment. More than ten years after the publication of his book, has the post-dramatic continued to make inroads into narrative theater? The “view from America” over the past decade suggests that “advanced” theater work, such as Lee Breuer’s “Mabou Mines Dollhouse”, or the Elevator Repair Service’s “Gatz”, may clearly be postdramatic yet at the same time retain the organizing principle of the fictive cosmos. What then happens to the theory of the postdramatic? Just as the once-sharp distinction between the tonal and the atonal in 20<sup>th</sup> century music has melted away into a range of available musical styles, it may be that the dramatic is re-absorbing the great period of 20<sup>th</sup> century experimentation and continuing in an altered form. The fictive cosmos is a hard thing to kill.

**Elinor Fjuks****POSTDRAMSKO POZORIŠTE I ISTRAJAVANJE „SVETA FIKCIJE”,  
POGLED IZ AMERIKE****Rezime:**

Postdramsko pozorište pojavljuje se kada je „svet fikcije” dramskog dela razgrađen, smela je tvrdnja Hans-Tisa Lemana. Dramsko delo raspada se na svoje sastavne delove, a fokus pozorišnog događaja pomera se na „situaciju” izvođenja uživo, u sadašnjem trenutku. Više od deset godina posle objavljivanja njegove knjige, da li je postdramsko nastavilo da zadire u polje narativnog pozorišta? Pogled iz Amerike na poslednju deceniju sugerise da „napredna” pozorišna ostvarenja, kao što su *Mabou Mines Dollhouse* Lija Bruera ili *Gatz* trupe Elevator Repair Service, nesumnjivo mogu da budu postdramska, a da pri tome zadržavaju organizacione principe sveta fikcije. Šta se onda dešava s teorijom postdramskog? Kao što je i nekada oštra razlika između tonalne i atonalne muzike u 20. veku nestala u nizu postojećih muzičkih stilova, moguće je da dramsko apsorbuje veliki period eksperimenta iz 20. veka i nastavlja dalje u izmenjenoj formi. Svet fikcije je teško ubiti.

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## La prospettiva postdrammatica: Novecento e oltre

### I. La prospettiva post-drammatica

Non è più tempo di guerre di religione, pro o contro il testo drammatico, o di scontri ideologici astratti fra drammaturgisti e spettacolisti (come vennero chiamati nei primi anni Ottanta).

Il problema vero non è più *testo sì/testo no*, cioè scegliere fra un teatro che si serve del testo (e, quasi sempre, serve il testo) e un teatro che fa a meno del testo. Da tempo, ormai, il problema vero, sia a livello teorico sia sul piano delle pratiche, è quale testo, scritto come, e poi, soprattutto, quale uso scenico del o dei testi.

Qui interviene utilmente la nozione di “teatro post-drammatico”, lanciata più di dieci anni fa da Hans-Thies Lehmann.<sup>1</sup> Ma, a questo proposito, in primis non possono essere trascurati i contributi offerti da Claudio Meldolesi, purtroppo scomparso qualche mese fa, che da anni parlava di “dopo dramma”, “forma sospesa del dramma” e, più di recente, di “drammaturgie individualizzate” (senza dimenticare il suo fondamentale libro sul *Dramaturg*, composto insieme a Renata Molinari, e apparso nel 2007).<sup>2</sup>

In secondo luogo, non per rivendicare primogeniture sempre dubbie in questo genere di cose, mi piace ricordare come sia Valentina Valentini che lo scrivente parlassero già di “post-drammaturgia” nella seconda metà degli

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, Frankfurt am Main, Verlag der Autoren, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. almeno “Con e dopo Beckett: sulla forma sospesa del dramma, la filosofia teatrale e gli attori autori italiani”, in *Teatro e Storia*, 27, 2006, pp. 269–292; *Il lavoro del dramaturg. Nel teatro dei testi con le ruote*, Milano, Ubulibri, 2007.

anni Ottanta.<sup>3</sup> Lo facemmo entrambi per nominare un fenomeno che si stava verificando allora nell'ambito della nuova scena italiana.

In particolare, il mio contributo aveva per oggetto il ritorno (anomalo) al testo e alla parola da parte dei gruppi leaders dell'avanguardia teatrale italiana in quegli anni: Magazzini (da un certo momento, non più Criminali), La Gaia Scienza, Teatro della Valdoca e altri. La sua tesi consisteva nel sostenere che questo ritorno fosse caratterizzato da modalità nuove, anomale appunto, di scrittura drammatica e di utilizzazione teatrale del testo:

- a) testo concepito come pensiero-idea, e/o come pura materia fonica, suono-voce, piuttosto che come significato-intreccio-personaggio;
- b) sperimentazione linguistica, fino alla proposta di lingue inventate, come la Generalissima della Societas Raffaello Sanzio;
- c) ricorso a testi non drammatici (come quelli di Kafka, per La Gaia Scienza di Giorgio Barberio Corsetti).

Ripeto. Ricordo questi precedenti italiani (ma chissà quanti altri nel mondo ce ne saranno stati) senza l'intenzione di voler sminuire minimamente la novità e l'originalità del libro di Lehmann, che del resto parla di teatro post-drammatico e non di post-drammaturgia. Ammetto di conoscere il lavoro di Lehmann solo nella edizione francese.<sup>4</sup> Lo ritengo un'opera molto importante ed è davvero strano e deplorabile che non sia ancora stata tradotta in italiano. Ne parlerò più approfonditamente nella seconda parte di questo intervento.

Per ora, per parte mia, come nozione storico-critica, preferisco servirmi di quella di "prospettiva postdrammatica", per indicare una prospettiva attiva lungo tutto il Novecento, e oltre, a tre livelli principali: la composizione drammatica, la messa in scena, gli studi.

1. *Il livello della composizione drammatica.* Qui la prospettiva post-drammatica coincide in buona sostanza con la radicale presa d'atto contemporanea della crisi della forma-dramma e dei suoi statuti classici-tradizionali. Questa prospettiva è attiva fin dalle avanguardie storiche, fin da Jarry insomma, trova sicuramente in Brecht uno snodo decisivo ma emerge in maniera dirompente solo con il cosiddetto Teatro dell'assurdo e in particolare con Beckett (si può parlare, anche a questo proposito, di un *prima* e un *dopo* Beckett).

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<sup>3</sup> Valentina Valentini, "La drammaturgia del disgelo", in *Frigidaire*, maggio 1986; Marco de Marinis, "Postdrammaturgia: ritorno al futuro?", in *Nuovo Teatro*, 2/3, 1986-1987, pp. 27-30.

<sup>4</sup> Hans-Thies-Lehmann, *Le Théâtre postdramatique*, traduzione di Philippe-Henri Le-dru, Paris, L'Arche, 2002.

Per altro il massimo teorico della crisi del dramma moderno resta Peter Szondi, il cui aureo libretto esce nel 1956 e delimita la sua trattazione fra 1880 e 1950: per questo Beckett, che debutta in scena con *En attendant Godot* nel 1953, ne risulta escluso.<sup>5</sup> Insomma, abbiamo bisogno da tempo di una *Teoria del dramma moderno II* (1950–2000 e oltre), che parta da Beckett e che ancora non esiste (non è questo, infatti, l’obiettivo del libro di Lehmann, come vedremo più avanti). Sicuramente ci stava lavorando Meldolesi e molti suoi contributi dell’ultimo quindicennio rappresentano dei tentativi parziali in questa direzione. Forse potrebbe arrivarci da Jean-Pierre Sarrazac e dalla sua équipe, ai quali dobbiamo fra l’altro un importante *Lexique du drame moderne et contemporain*.<sup>6</sup>

In ogni caso, una *Teoria del dramma moderno II* dovrebbe occuparsi degli esiti recenti della prospettiva post-drammatica sul piano della scrittura, esiti – va chiarito – intermedi o anche altri rispetto alla polarità *salvataggio/soluzione* proposta da Szondi. Ne ricordo soltanto due: a) la soluzione del teatro-narrazione, con il “narratore” solista;<sup>7</sup> b) il depotenziamento-destrutturazione dall’interno della forma-dramma, nell’apparente rispetto dei suoi statuti (dialogo, plot, personaggio, conflitto etc): Martin Crimp, Jean-Luc Lagarce, Richard Maxwell, Tim Crouch, Matey Visniek, Marco Martinelli e altri.<sup>8</sup>

2. *Livello della messa in scena*. Il secondo livello sul quale vedo attiva una prospettiva postdrammatica, fin dal primo Novecento, è quello della messa in scena. Qui essa consiste nel superamento, sempre precario e sempre in discussione, dell’ideologia testocentrica sottesa alle pratiche maggioritarie del teatro di regia.

Spesso si è parlato, in particolare per certe proposte del secondo Novecento, di teatro *senza o contro* il testo, per alludere a esperienze che o fanno completamente a meno della parola (e sono poche, nonostante tutto, se non allarghiamo lo sguardo fino ai bordi del panorama teatrale contemporaneo, per esempio

<sup>5</sup> Peter Szondi, *Teoria del dramma moderno 1880–1950* (1956), Torino, Einaudi, 1962, con un’introduzione di Cesare Cases.

<sup>6</sup> Belval, Circé, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Rimando in proposito ai numerosi contributi di Gerardo Guccini.

<sup>8</sup> Per evitare di appesantire troppo l’apparato bibliografico di questo contributo, mi limito a segnalare, come particolarmente significativi anche da un punto di vista metodologico, due soli contributi, su Visniek e Maxwell: “Piersandra Di Matteo su Maxwell” in *Culture Teatrali* 18, primavera 2008 [ma in realtà 2010]; Gerardo Guccini, “Pensare i corpi. I teatri di Visniec”, in Matei Visniec, *Drammi di resistenza culturale*, Corazzano (Pisa), Tivillus, 2009, pp. 5–65.

verso le proposte della *performance art*) o nelle quali, molto più frequentemente, al posto di un vero e proprio testo drammatico da mettere in scena ci sono dei materiali letterari, magari provenienti da una pluralità di opere, anche non drammatiche (come si è appena visto), e magari non esistenti tutti fin dall'inizio ma, almeno in parte, emergenti nel corso del processo creativo, come risultato di una vera e propria drammaturgia di scena, a cui l'intero collettivo teatrale può collaborare, a cominciare, ovviamente, dagli stessi attori.

In altri termini, la tendenza largamente prevalente della scena contemporanea non è quella all'abolizione della parola o del testo ma, appunto, quella verso una prospettiva post-drammatica, cioè verso il superamento di un teatro interamente ed esclusivamente finalizzato alla rappresentazione di un'opera drammatica, ciò che possiamo chiamare teatro testocentrico, ovvero teatro *dell/per* il testo, e di cui la regia come prassi scenica maggioritaria ha in effetti permesso per la prima volta la realizzazione pratica su vasta scala, dopo secoli di preannunci.

Assistiamo così alla riproposizione di forme e modalità di teatro *col* testo, simili ma non identiche a quelle che avevano già caratterizzato la scena moderna fra Seicento e Ottocento come *teatro delle parti e dei ruoli*. Soltanto simili perché, naturalmente, c'è di mezzo l'avvento della regia, come acquisizione irreversibile e punto di non ritorno, almeno per quanto è dato di capire oggi, anche nelle cosiddette elaborazioni post-registiche, a causa dei cambiamenti profondi da essa prodotti nel gusto, nella sensibilità e nell'immaginario spettatoriali.

Eugenio Barba, parlando del lavoro drammaturgico sotteso allo spettacolo dell'Odin Teatret *Mythos* (1998), ha avuto modo di precisare con grande efficacia le differenze fra queste due fondamentali modalità di lavoro teatrale, del teatro *per il testo* e del teatro *col testo*:

*Ci sono infiniti modi di lavorare in teatro su un testo letterario. Ma possono tutti essere raccolti in due tendenze: lavorare per il testo, lavorare con il testo.*

*Lavorare per il testo significa assumere l'opera letteraria come il valore principale dello spettacolo. Attori, regia, organizzazione dello spazio, accompagnamento musicale vengono usati per far brillare la qualità e la complessità dell'opera, i suoi sottintesi, i suoi legami con il contesto d'origine e il contesto attuale, la sua capacità di irraggiarsi in diverse direzioni e dimensioni. [...] Amo il teatro che segue questa via fino in fondo. Ma lo pratico raramente. Mi limiterò, quindi, all'altra tendenza. [...]*

*Lavorare con il testo vuol dire scegliere una o più opere letterarie non per mettersi al loro servizio, ma per elaborarle come una sostanza che deve alimentare un nuovo organismo: lo spettacolo. Il testo viene usato come uno dei livelli o delle componenti che costituiscono la vita del risultato scenico.*

Esempi eccelsi e paradigmatici di teatro *col* testo in questa accezione sono spettacoli mitici del nuovo teatro della seconda metà del secolo, come: *Il principe costante* (da Calderon-Slowacki), del 1965, e, ancor di più, *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (che per la prima volta aboliva il riferimento unico di partenza), del 1969, entrambi di Grotowski; *Paradise Now* (1968), del Living Theatre, il *Mahabharata* di Brook-Carrière (1985), *Ceneri di Brecht* (1980 e 1982) e *Oxyrinchus Evangeliet* (1985), dell’Odin Teatret (oltre al già citato *Mythos*); *1789* (1970), *1793* (1972) e *L’âge d’or* (1975) del Théâtre du Soleil di Ariane Mnouchkine.

3. *Livello degli studi teatrali.* Il terzo e ultimo livello su cui è attiva da tempo una prospettiva post-drammatica è quello degli studi teatrali. Qui la messa a frutto di tale prospettiva ha comportato soprattutto: a) una profonda ridefinizione del testo drammatico come oggetto storico-teatrale, invece che storico-letterario; b) la drastica revisione in senso non testocentrico dei rapporti dramma-spettacolo nella storia del teatro occidentale (nei secoli dell’avvento e del consolidamento della sua moderna fenomenologia, fra il XVII e il XIX) il teatro occidentale non è stato – come troppo spesso si è detto e ancora talvolta si ripete – un teatro *del/per* il testo ma – lo si è appena ricordato – un teatro *col* testo, più specificamente definibile come teatro delle parti e dei ruoli; c) lo spostamento dell’attenzione dai prodotti drammatici ai processi di composizione drammatica.

In conclusione di questa prima parte del mio intervento vorrei accennare brevemente ad alcune delle nozioni nuove emerse grazie all’avvento di una prospettiva post-drammatica negli studi teatrali e, in particolare, in quelli sulla drammaturgia:

1) La nozione di “spazio letterario del teatro”, proposta da Ferdinando Taviani. Dovrebbe essere ormai evidente a tutti che il rapporto testo drammatico-spettacolo non esaurisce il complesso delle relazioni letteratura-teatro nella nostra cultura. Da qui l’importanza dell’ormai classica nozione di Taviani:

*[...] la nozione di spazio letterario del teatro non è così ovvia come sembra. Non indica solo l’insieme dei testi letterari drammatici, ma tutta quella letteratura che fa teatro anche senza dramma: facendo critica, storia, polemica, memoria e racconto. [...] Lo spazio letterario del teatro comprende*

*tutto ciò che dalla letteratura si riversa nel mondo degli spettacoli e che dagli spettacoli rifluisce nella letteratura. E' un luogo turbolento d'oggetti mutanti, che comprende, come s'è detto, le visioni, ma anche la letteratura degli attori, le loro memorie e autobiografie, la trattatistica, tutto quello che a partire dal teatro diventa racconto cronaca memoria.*<sup>9</sup>

2) La nozione, altrettanto celebre, di “drammaturgia consuntiva”, proposta da Siro Ferrone.<sup>10</sup> Con il passaggio da un punto di vista (esclusivamente) incentrato sul prodotto a un punto di vista (prevalentemente) incentrato sul processo, va in crisi l'idea totalizzante di un testo drammatico a priori (preventivo) rispetto allo spettacolo ed emerge la consuntività come carattere tipico, direi strutturale (anche grazie all'avvento e diffusione dell'editoria teatrale), della drammaturgia europea fra Seicento e Ottocento, con esiti ovviamente, anche in questo caso, radicali, nel Novecento (si pensi, per esempio, ai già citati *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, *Paradise Now* e *Min Fars Hus*). Ha sostanzialmente ragione Guccini a sostenere che, in certo senso, “ogni scrittura drammatica è consuntiva”.<sup>11</sup> Questa consapevolezza ormai diffusa è appunto uno degli effetti sugli studi della prospettiva post-drammatica di cui stiamo parlando. Per altro, è poi decisivo distinguere, sul piano storico, vari gradi e forme di consuntività.

3) La nozione di “drammaturgia dell'attore”, sviluppatasi nell'ambiente dell'ISTA.<sup>12</sup> In effetti, grazie allo spostamento d'ottica di cui sto parlando, la drammaturgia cessa di essere un affare del solo autore per diventare – come ha scritto molto bene Claudio Meldolesi – “un oggetto mobile fra autore e attore”<sup>13</sup>. A questo proposito, è ormai appena il caso di precisare che per “drammaturgia dell'attore” non dobbiamo intendere soltanto la scrittura drammatica

<sup>9</sup> Ferdinando Taviani, *Uomini di scena, uomini di libro. Introduzione alla letteratura teatrale italiana del Novecento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995, pp. 13–15.

<sup>10</sup> La nozione di “testo consuntivo” è stata proposta da Ferrone a partire dalla metà degli anni Ottanta (cf., in particolare, *l'Introduzione a Commedie dell'Arte*, 2 voll., Milano, Mursia, 1985) ed è una di quelle alla base delle sue ricerche successive. Si veda, ad esempio, lo scritto “Drammaturgia consuntiva”, in AA. VV., *Non cala il sipario*, Bari, Laterza, 1992. Comunque, per parte mia, già dal 1982, parlavo di testi drammatici a posteriori, chiamandoli “testi-residuo” (cf. *Semiotica del teatro. L'analisi testuale dello spettacolo*, Milano, Bompiani, 1982, pp. 32–36).

<sup>11</sup> Gerardo Guccini, *Pensare i corpi*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Marco de Marinis (a cura di), “Drammaturgia dell'attore”, *Porretta Terme*, I Quaderni del Battello Ebbro, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Claudio Meldolesi, *Fra Totò e Gadda. Sei invenzioni sprecate dal teatro italiano*, Roma 1986, p. 67.

dell'attore-autore ma anche, più ampiamente, il lavoro attoriale sulla parte, visto appunto come un vero e proprio lavoro drammaturgico, di invenzione-composizione di azioni fisiche e vocali, basato su tecniche fisiche, espressive e di montaggio, *analoghe* se non *omologhe* a quelle della scrittura letteraria drammatica.

## II. Teatro postdrammatico di Lehmann

Ho già sottolineato sopra i meriti e l'importanza di quest'opera del teatrologo tedesco uscita nel 1999. Si tratta adesso di fornire alcune pezze d'appoggio al riguardo, che servano anche, possibilmente, a fare chiarezza sui non pochi fraintendimenti che questo libro, o piuttosto la nozione che esso lancia fin dal titolo, ha provocato nei dieci anni trascorsi dalla sua prima apparizione.

La prima precisazione non può non riguardare il fatto che, a ben guardare, si tratta di *tre libri in uno*:

1) *Il Teatro postdrammatico* è stato letto soprattutto come un'ipotesi critica e teorica sulla più stretta attualità, cioè sulle tendenze in atto nel campo teatrale, meglio: nell'ambito delle performing arts, alla fine del secolo, negli anni Novanta. Invece si tratta di un libro anche e soprattutto storico, che si occupa del *passato* (sia pure recente). Non ha un sottotitolo ma se lo avesse potrebbe essere: *un bilancio del Novecento teatrale*. Ovviamente un bilancio orientato, soggettivo, parziale, come tutti i bilanci che siano ragionamenti storico-critici e non puri e inerti accumuli di dati e di nomi.<sup>14</sup>

2) Naturalmente in questo libro c'è anche il tentativo di leggere-interpretare delle tendenze in atto negli anni in cui è stato scritto, cioè nel *presente*.

3) Infine esso contiene delle previsioni-scommesse sul *futuro* (prossimo), cioè sugli sviluppi successivi e gli esiti possibili di alcune tendenze in atto nel momento in cui è stato scritto e pubblicato. Naturalmente i dieci anni abbondanti ormai trascorsi dalla sua pubblicazione originaria invogliano a verificare in quale misura queste previsioni, o scommesse, risultino azzeccate.

Seconda precisazione importante. Com'è ovvio, anche per le ragioni appena dette, Lehmann non ha inventato la *cosa*, il teatro post-drammatico, ma solo il *nome*. Un po' com'è avvenuto con Martin Esslin per il Teatro dell'assurdo o, per fare un esempio di tutt'altro genere, con Eugenio Barba per l'Antropologia teatrale. E tuttavia, come sappiamo bene, dare un nome a un

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<sup>14</sup> Il sottotitolo in questione appartiene a un libro dello scrivente, uscito l'anno dopo quello di Lehmann, e che propone una prospettiva storico-critica diversa ma non incompatibile rispetto a quella dello studioso tedesco: cf. *In cerca dell'attore. Un bilancio del Novecento teatrale*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2000.

fenomeno culturale, o a una tendenza artistica, contribuisce inevitabilmente a influenzarli o, almeno, a influenzare il nostro modo di leggerli (Heisenberg: principio di indeterminazione). E' comunque innegabile che la definizione-formula in questione abbia fatto e faccia tendenza, come si suol dire, da dieci anni, sia sul piano pratico che su quello critico-teorico (come altre definizioni-formule fortunate: teatro epico, teatro-immagine, terzo teatro, *fisical theatre*, teatro-danza, teatro multimediale etc.)

Terza precisazione importante. Molti altri equivoci rispetto a questo libro sono nati dall'aver supposto che esso si occupasse esclusivamente, o principalmente, delle conseguenze, nel teatro contemporaneo, della crisi novecentesca della forma-dramma. Ora, nonostante il titolo, non è così.

Certo, il libro di Lehmann si occupa anche di questo, cioè delle conseguenze della crisi della forma-dramma (riassumibili nell'emarginazione del testo e della parola in ampi settori dello spettacolo teatrale contemporaneo); ma esso si occupa non meno della crisi della forma-rappresentazione e della forma-messa in scena.

In altri termini, il vero oggetto di questo libro non è il superamento del testo e della parola ma il superamento, nel teatro contemporaneo, della rappresentazione e della messa in scena: un superamento – è il caso di precisarlo – che è in realtà, molto spesso, un autosuperamento messo in atto dall'interno della messa in scena contemporanea, e cioè del teatro di regia in buona sostanza, sulla base ovviamente di numerose e forti sollecitazioni esterne: danza, performance art, arti visive, sperimentazioni musicali, cinema, media e new media.

Per superamento della messa in scena e della rappresentazione intendo quel fenomeno molto ampio e articolato in base al quale la composizione scenica, cioè la drammaturgia o scrittura dello spettacolo, ha cercato di modellarsi su principi e procedimenti nuovi: anti-narrativi, anti-mimetici, anti-illustrativi, che hanno messo in crisi, sia pure in misura diversa a seconda dei casi, i capisaldi della rappresentazione teatrale, sia registica che pre-registica: la compiutezza e unitarietà diegetica, insomma la fabula, il personaggio, la finzione stessa. Lehmann li chiama dispositivi post-drammatici: frammentazione, incompiutezza, discontinuità, simultaneità, sospensione del senso, opacizzazione dei segni etc.<sup>15</sup>

Questi procedimenti o dispositivi (o segni) indubbiamente si sono molto avvantaggiati dell'abbandono di un testo drammatico preventivo e quindi

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Le Théâtre postdramatique*, op. cit., in particolare, il capitolo "Segni teatrali postdrammatici", parzialmente tradotto in *Biblioteca Teatrale*, 74-76, 2005, pp. 23-47, con il titolo *Segni teatrali del teatro post-drammatico*.

appaiono più evidenti laddove la creazione scenica ha eliminato o marginalizzato il dramma.

Tuttavia, si rifletta sui seguenti due punti:

- 1) non sempre l'abbandono del testo e della parola ha garantito e garantisce, di per sé, esiti postdrammatici in ordine al superamento della rappresentazione e della messa in scena;
- 2) per converso, tali esiti postdrammatici spesso sono stati e vengono tuttora raggiunti continuando a lavorare *su di un o a partire da un* testo drammatico. Registi come Robert Wilson, Luca Ronconi, Vasiliev, Necrosius, Ostermeier, Castellucci, Emma Dante, per non citare che pochi nomi illustri, mi pare lo dimostrino *ad abundantiam*.

D'altro canto è ben noto che, nel corso del Novecento, anche gli autori hanno messo in atto, a livello della scrittura drammatica, dei procedimenti post-drammatici, destabilizzando i cardini della forma-dramma (secondo Sarrazac: dialogo, favola, mimesi e personaggio). Rinvio a quanto ho detto in proposito sopra, nella prima parte di questo intervento.

Quando oggi si parla, forse un po' affrettatamente, di *ritorno dell'autore e all'autore*,<sup>16</sup> bisognerebbe subito aggiungere che non si tratta quasi mai, almeno nei casi più interessanti, di un puro e semplice restauro della forma-dramma. Negli autori oggi più interessanti vediamo infatti all'opera – sulla scia dei "pionieri" Brecht, Beckett, Ionesco e poi Genet, Pinter, Müller, Koltés,

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<sup>16</sup> Il tema è stato posto da qualche tempo, con rigore e pertinenza, sulla rivista "Prove di Drammaturgia", diretta fino alla sua scomparsa da Claudio Meldolesi insieme a Gerardo Guccini, ma, manco a dirlo, esso è da anni il cavallo di battaglia di una teatrologia nostrana di estrazione storico-letteraria, che ha il suo punto di riferimento nella rivista "Il Castello di Elsinore". Importante mi sembra, in ogni caso, la riflessione che vi ha dedicato recentemente Gerardo Guccini, *Pensare i corpi*, op. cit., pp. 11–12. Guccini scrive fra l'altro, partendo da una citazione da un saggio di Ruffini del 1988: "Nel 1988 la teatrologia ha riconosciuto 'che le teorie teatrali sono fatti del teatro nella storia, al pari di altri fatti, come la produzione drammaturgica, le rappresentazioni, i modi recitativi degli attori, ecc.'. Ora, dopo vent'anni di continuo distanziamento ideologico del dramma testuale dal teatro, sarebbe opportuno invertire i termini della considerazione, ricordando che anche le produzioni drammaturgiche sono fatti del teatro nella storia, al pari delle teorie teatrali" (ibid.). Tutto giusto. Ma andrebbe ricordato che il distanziamento ideologico di cui parla Guccini, e che per la verità data dagli anni Settanta almeno, era stato messo in atto (con qualche eccesso, lo si può tranquillamente riconoscere adesso) contro le pretese testocentriche della vecchia teatrologia, alla Silvio d'Amico per intenderci, per la quale la produzione drammaturgica non era – correttamente – *un fatto del teatro nella storia ma tout court il teatro nella storia*. Sulla questione può essere ancora utile il mio "Il testo drammatico: un riesame", in *Visioni della scena. Teatro e scrittura*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2004, pp. 95–102.

Copi, Bernhardt, Jelinek, Fassbinder, Schwab- dei ben precisi procedimenti postdrammatici, miranti ad esempio – come si diceva in precedenza – al depotenziamento della parola e alla debilitazione dall'interno della forma-dramma, nell'apparente rispetto dei suoi statuti e cardini: dialogo, favola, personaggio, mimesi: *Forced Entertainment*, Richard Maxwell con i New York City Players, *Sarah Kane*, *Mark Ravenhill*, oltre a quelli già citati sopra.

### **Sommarrio:**

Se guardiamo al Novecento e oltre, ci accorgiamo che la prospettiva postdrammatica è attiva su tre livelli principali: 1) quello della composizione drammatica, dove coincide in buona sostanza con la radicale presa d'atto della crisi della forma-dramma e delle sue convenzioni plurisecolari; 2) quello della messa in scena, con il superamento dell'ideologia testocentrica nel teatro registico; e post-registico; 3) quello degli studi teatrali. Per quanto riguarda questi ultimi, la messa a frutto della prospettiva postdrammatica ha comportato una profonda ridefinizione del testo drammatico come oggetto storico-teatrale, la drastica revisione in senso non testocentrico dei rapporti dramma-spettacolo nella storia del teatro occidentale, lo spostamento dell'attenzione dai prodotti drammatici, i testi, ai processi di composizione drammatica, la messa in campo di nozioni innovative come il "teatro-in-forma-di-libro" e "lo spazio letterario del teatro", che si debbono entrambe a Ferdinando Taviani.

### **Marko de Marinis**

#### **POSTDRAMSKA PERSPEKTIVA: XX VEK I GODINE KOJE SLEDE**

##### **Rezime:**

Ako posmatramo dvadeseti vek i godine koje slede, primećujemo da postdramska perspektiva deluje na tri osnovna nivoa: 1) na nivou dramske kompozicije, gde se u suštini podudara s radikalnim suočavanjem s krizom dramske forme i njenih viševekovnih konvencija; 2) na nivou režije, gde dolazi do prevazilaženja tekstocentrične ideologije u rediteljskom i post-rediteljskom pozorištu; 3) na nivou studija pozorišta. Što se ovog poslednjeg nivoa tiče, postdramska perspektiva dovela je do suštinskog redefinisanja dramskog teksta kao istorijsko-pozorišnog predmeta, do drastične revizije, u smeru suprotnom od tekstocentričnog, odnosa drama-predstava u istoriji zapadnog pozorišta, do pomeranja fokusa s dramskih proizvoda, tekstova, na procese dramskog komponovanja, do pojave inovativnih pojmova kao što su „pozorište-u-obliku-knjige” i „literarni prostor pozorišta”, za koje je zaslužan Ferdinando Tavijani.

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## **The vexed question of the text in Postdramatic Theatre in a cross-cultural perspective**

It is interesting to observe how Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatisches Theater* (1999) and its various translations have intervened – or have been *perceived* to have intervened – in the particular debates and institutional situations of theatre in countries outside of Germany. In Britain, *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) has mostly been highly welcomed – especially by experimental theatre practitioners who have seen it as legitimating their practice and as a new way of describing their work to audiences and funding bodies alike.<sup>1</sup> Yet, it has also been hotly debated, for example at a Leeds conference on “Performing Literatures” in 2007.<sup>2</sup> One of the most contentious and vexed issues in the British reception of *Postdramatic Theatre* has been the question of the text and how Lehmann's theory relates to “new writing” for theatre and performance. Thus, Liz Tomlin, a theatre academic and practicing playwright, has recently claimed that the reception of *Postdramatic Theatre* has inadvertently reinforced a pre-existing binary distinction between “text-based” and “non-text-based theatre” in Britain, in such a way that dramatic theatre has usually been associated with “text-based” and postdramatic with “non-text-based theatre”. Tomlin argues that Lehmann's

*Postdramatisches Theater lent an academic authority to the segregation of dramatic text from 'non-text-based' practice that had previously been expressed through a range of different, but related, binary oppositions. By the*

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<sup>1</sup> This appreciation of the new discourse and vocabulary provided by *Postdramatic Theatre* also seems to be the case, for example, in Australia. See Margaret Hamilton (2008) on “Postdramatic Theatre and Australia”.

<sup>2</sup> See the special issue “Performing Literatures”, *Performance Research*, Vol. 14. 1 (March 2009), which emerged from this conference.

*time the English translation was published in 2006, the new binary of dramatic and postdramatic was common currency in British university departments, giving significant legitimacy, and a new vocabulary, to bolster further, and define more clearly the boundaries already in place. While Lehmann never explicitly aligns dramatic with text-based and postdramatic with non-text-based practice, I will argue that his conclusions, inconclusive as they are, are ultimately more likely to consolidate than to fracture the existing binary.* (Tomlin 2009: 58)

Similar to the British binarizing reception, an Australian review of *Post-dramatic Theatre* by Denise Varney at one point even (mis-)understands the book to say that “if dramatic theatre is ‘subordinated to the primacy of the text’ and the ‘making present’ of speeches and deeds in the mimetic space of the stage, then postdramatic theatre is *theatre without text*” (Varney 2007: unpaginated, my emphasis).

This is clearly not the perception in Germany, where it is generally recognized that a significant body of postdramatic theatre has evolved out of new and often irreverent directorial treatments of pre-existing texts. The so-called *Regietheater* (directors’ theatre), which regards the text as only one element of the staging and which, as Gerda Poschmann states, in its most radically deconstructive form of the so-called *Klassikerzertrümmerung* (demolition of the classics) even understands itself as a “theatre *against* the text” (Poschmann 1997: 20), has been an important driving force for postdramatic theatre forms since the late 1960s. At the same time, new dramaturgical methods of postdramatic theatre have evolved in response to challenging *new* texts for the theatre by writers like Peter Handke, Heiner Mueller, Elfriede Jelinek, Ginka Steinwachs and others, which Gerda Poschmann described early on as “no longer dramatic texts” (Poschmann, 1997).

### **Institutional and infra-structural differences**

In part, this different perception certainly has to do with the different institutional situations for theatre practitioners and writers in Britain and Germany. Britain – like Germany, but unlike countries such as Belgium – has a long national tradition of literary, dramatic theatre, which takes place mostly in commercialised repertory theatres. Only a handful of theatres, such as the Royal Court and the Bush Theatre, foster new writing. At the same time, a parallel tradition of collaboratively devised, experimental performance theatre has grown up at the ‘fringe’, which has often come out of the historically young

university theatre departments and usually been toured in independent arts centres and touring venues, and at festivals like the Edinburgh Festival.

In this institutional division, which is only slowly changing, the single author of formally innovative texts can find him – or herself – marginalized despite the success of the British new wave of ‘In-Yer-Face’ playwriting in the 1990s. David Barnett, a British scholar of German theatre, has argued that the comparatively lavishly funded theatre system in Germany can better support the sustained theatre work with difficult texts:

*One specific result of the heavy subsidy and the decentralized system in Germany is that theatres are able to work with difficult texts in a productive fashion. Plays may be written in such a way that they openly expose themselves to the imaginations of their realizers [...], the system actively encourages plays that are not easily performable and thrives on the challenges they pose. (Barnett, 2010: 155)*

As Barnett further states, this productive encounter is facilitated not only by comparatively generous production budgets and an infrastructure of extensive and varied training opportunities but by the collaborative work of committed permanent ensembles over long rehearsal periods and with the creative input of “production dramaturges” (Produktionsdramaturgen), who form close working partnerships with directors and ensembles (ibid., 154).

By contrast, theatres in England traditionally tend to employ “literary managers” instead of dramaturges. Their job description involves the selection and development of new plays in collaboration with the authors, and they rarely help to workshop and rehearse plays (see Luckhurst, 2006: 205). While this picture is currently changing in England (ibid., 206), there are still structural and infrastructural hindrances to formally innovative texts. Thus Barnett quotes a British playwright, Simon Stephens, who had trouble getting his new play about the London bombings staged in Britain: “I’ve been told that the play is far too German”, he reported (Barnett, 2010: 150). Like other formally innovative British texts, Stephens’ play, *Pornography* (2007), which consists of six texts unattributed to specific characters, was successfully staged in Germany – in four different productions no less – before finally being shown in Britain at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

At the same time, however, independent British experimental theatre companies have for a long time cultivated innovative writing and the inventive use of text in performance – a fact that is sometimes overlooked. Companies such as Forced Entertainment, Uninvited Guests, Lone Twin, Apocryphal Theatre

and Proto-type Theatre all work with original (single-authored) texts, as well as with texts developed by the company in improvisation or sourced from sites such as the internet. This independent “scene” of experimental practice is arguably more developed and certainly of longer standing than the *freie Szene* of independent companies in Germany, and often emerges from the context of university drama and theatre departments, which are overwhelmingly practice-oriented in Britain. To name just one example of an experimental use of text that came out of this “scene”, we could think of Forced Entertainment’s show *Speak Bitterness*, which was first presented in 1994 and revived in 2009 in its six-hour durational version at the PACT Zollverein in Essen. The show consists of seven performers reading confessions from sheets of paper strewn across a long, brightly lit table. As a text, *Speak Bitterness* is a kind of reinvention of Peter Handke’s *Sprechstück* (speaking play) *Self-Accusation* (*Selbst-bezichtigung*, 1966) and, as such, testament to the fact that there is more traffic between the world of “playwriting” and the world of ‘devised theatre’ than first meets the eye. The twist in Forced Entertainment’s performance is that the confessions, collectively written by Tim Etchells and the company, are not simply memorized and then spoken, but are visibly present as written texts from the very outset, demanding to be addressed and confessed to, either whispered reluctantly, shouted out loud, or proudly proclaimed. A major scenographic element on stage, the text confronts the performers as material to be worked with and contextualized in the live situation. Although this is clearly an example of postdramatic theatre, as there is no dramatic story represented by characters, it is just as clearly anything but “theatre without text”.

### **Heterogeneous trajectories for postdramatic performances**

As the above glimpse of a spectrum indicates, postdramatic theatre can emerge in all sorts of contexts and by many different trajectories. The distinction between dramatic and postdramatic – which is *not a binary opposition* in any event, but a dynamic relationship in which the postdramatic continues to engage with the dramatic – cannot be reduced to such distinctions as “text-based” versus “non-text-based” (avant-garde) theatre, or “verbal” versus “physical” theatre, as Lehmann himself stresses (2006: 145). The point is that there are many heterogeneous ways of arriving at performances that could be described as postdramatic.

If you will excuse my pseudo-scientific diagram, one could schematically illustrate this as follows:



“Text-based” postdramatic performances can result when directors stage traditional dramatic texts in such a way that a ‘de-dramatization’ occurs in performance, as Lehmann argues for Klaus Michael Grüber’s work with classical texts, which emphasizes the temporality and spatiality of the scenic process and relegates the dramatic plot to the background (Lehmann, 2006: 74).

“Text-based” postdramatic theatre can also be the result of working with “no longer dramatic texts”, as for example in the case of productions based on texts by Sarah Kane (especially *4. 48 Psychosis*) or Elfriede Jelinek that lack a dramatic plot, psychological characters, dialogue form or even assigned speakers (as in Jelinek’s famous – *Sprachflächen*).

Alternatively, postdramatic theatre can be the result of “devised” productions that are not text-based in the sense of using a pre-existing single-authored text, but which *do* use written texts that are spoken in performance and which can subsequently be transcribed and published as ‘texts’. Such was the case for Forced Entertainment’s already mentioned *Speak Bitterness*, which has been published (in Etchells, 2009) and theoretically could now be performed by another collective of people – although it would presumably lose much of the (seemingly) authentic connection with the original performers. Alternatively, the published text can now be read as a kind of “postscript”, conjuring up the language and voices of past performance events.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, postdramatic performances can of course be the result of non-text-based, devising and rehearsal processes that use *no* language. Examples would be the sometimes entirely non-verbal visual productions by Robert

<sup>3</sup> Carl Lavery (2009) has proposed such a reading of text as ‘postscript’ for other devised performances, in his essay: “Is there a text in this performance?”

Wilson or Societas Raffaello Sanzio, or other physical theatre or dance theatre productions (which does not mean that, conversely, physical theatre could not also tell a ‘dramatic’ story!).

It is also possible, however, that physical, non-verbal postdramatic performances are actually ‘text-based’, for example, if they start with a text that essentially consists entirely of stage directions or descriptions, as in productions of Peter Handke’s play *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, which describes hundred of characters crossing a square without a word being uttered.

Finally, there are also a number of hybrid possibilities not covered by my schematic diagram above, for example, the possibility of devised or improvised speech being inserted in a production otherwise working with a pre-existing single-authored text. What would previously have been scorned as ‘add-libbing’ is deliberately encouraged by some contemporary writers and directors.

### **Theorizing the relationship between text and performance**

But, can the theoretical approaches indicated by Lehmann cover all these possible forms of postdramatic theatre? And might his different articulations of the relationship between text and postdramatic theatre throughout the course of the book perhaps have contributed to some of the international (mis-)perceptions in terms of narrow binaries? It is perhaps fair to say that the question of the text is one of the more under-developed issues in the book (more so in the abridged English version), and consequently one of the most vexed areas in the discussions around it – especially for those scholars and practitioners who, like Tomlin, want to engage with the book from the point of view of innovative *new writing and playwriting* for performance. In the following paragraphs, I would like to look at four main formulations or perspectives offered by Lehmann that affect the conception of the role of the text in relation to postdramatic theatre.

Early on in the book, postdramatic theatre is defined by way of its avoidance of teleology and dialectics, and of the dramatic logic of totality and surveyability of Aristotelian drama. Samuel Beckett and Heiner Mueller are mentioned in this context as examples of authors who have avoided the dramatic form because of its implied teleology of history (Lehmann, 2006: 39). Tomlin notes that in this initial discussion of the philosophical ideal of drama,

*the ‘text-based’ medium through which drama has conventionally been communicated is not highlighted, suggesting, at this point, that, for Lehmann,*

*the medium of the written text has merely been the historical vehicle for the philosophy of drama rather than intrinsic to it.* (Tomlin, 2009: 58)

She consequently suggests that a focus “on the philosophical framework as the distinguishing factor between the dramatic and the postdramatic, rather than the particular medium through which the philosophy is conveyed”, could “at least begin to productively problematize the existing opposition between ‘text-based’ and ‘non-text-based’ theatre” (ibid.). Yet, while I agree that this philosophical framework is an important distinction, I would argue that the emergence and consolidation of drama as a form historically went hand in hand with a rise in print culture, so that the printed text as a ‘historical vehicle’ for the philosophy of drama was not entirely coincidental or arbitrary. Likewise, it is not coincidental in my view that the philosophical framework of ‘drama’ is beginning to lose its foothold at a time in the twentieth century when the medium of print is increasingly in competition with other, newer media such as radio, film, television and the internet.

In a second theoretical approach, Lehmann – now taking his cue from Artaud’s critique of Western theatre – goes on to define postdramatic theatre also in relation to the predominance and primacy of the pre-existing text in dramatic theatre. Whereas in dramatic theatre, the text is considered to be a work of language that is ‘complete in itself’ and determines the staging, in postdramatic theatre it is seen as a ‘material’ – and only one element among others. Tomlin argues that this approach, based on what she calls the ‘predicatory’ role of the text, does not map neatly onto Lehmann’s first approach via the philosophical framework of drama. Writing from the perspective of a contemporary playwright, she argues that

*the written text’s originary position in the artistic process does not, of itself, constitute compliance with teleology [for example] on the occasions when the text-world may only appear to be “complete in itself” but, on closer reading, is seen to be merely one, albeit significant, element of the performance text.* (Tomlin, 60)

She quotes Martin Crimp’s play *The City* (2008) and her own *Roses and Morphine* (2005) as examples that have all the *markers* of a traditional dramatic text, but are in fact designed ‘not to comply with the teleological implications of the dramatic but to overturn them’ (60), “to effect an autodeconstruction of their own authority” (62). These kinds of texts, she says, rely for their success on performance strategies that are also often employed by companies such as Forced Entertainment in performances that can signal that the text does not “belong to the speaker” (61) and cast doubt over the reliability of language.

When texts are read for their predicatory function or their dramatic markers, she implies, one might miss their postdramatic potential for performance. Tomlin speaks from personal experience with directors and literary managers trained in the dramatic tradition who have misread her plays. “Lehmann’s own conflation of the functional markers of the dramatic with the logocentric implications of the ‘drama’ is less than helpful in this regard” (62), she concludes.

Yet, I would argue that it is ultimately not part of Lehmann’s intention to judge texts *as text*. A third formulation – and one which Tomlin does not address – makes this clearer, and is, I believe, more productive as a basis for discussion. Here Lehmann clarifies:

*Postdramatic theatre is not simply a new kind of text of staging – and even less a new type of theatre text, but rather a type of sign usage in the theatre that turns both of these levels of theatre upside down through the structurally changed quality of the performance text: it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information. (85)*

This formulation, variously repeated throughout the book, firmly shifts away from what Patrice Pavis calls ‘philological’ positions which ‘appeal to the authority of a text for its interpretation’ (Pavis, 2003 [1996]: 204).

Thus, for Lehmann, the object of study is ultimately the performance text, the whole concrete situation in the theatre, not the text *per se*. This has not kept scholars from studying ‘no longer dramatic texts’ in relation to the postdramatic – and the question is indeed whether there is not still a dramaturgical role in the careful analysis of texts with a view to their postdramatic performance *potential*. In an article called “When is a play not a drama?” Barnett argues that, “the (potentially) postdramatic text suggests itself as a relativized element for performance from the outset and points to its own indeterminacy and status as uninterpreted material” (Barnett, 2008: 16). Elsewhere he has argued (following Poschmann [1997]) that a text can be studied for its “‘new performativity’, one in which the text resists prescriptive interpretive practice in performance” (Barnett, 2003: 140). However, just as Tomlin found that the postdramatic potential in a text could be overlooked by directors, Barnett finds cases where a potentially postdramatic text, in this case Albert Ostermeier’s *The Making of B-Movie* was turned into a “dramatic” reading of the text by the director, Volker Hesse (*ibid.*, 152). While Ostermeier’s text relied for its postdramatic realization on a production that could create tension between

live action on stage and mediated images on film, Hesse's staging consistently harmonized these two worlds and did not allow for "medial indeterminacy" (ibid., 151). Clearly then, there are no guarantees that a 'no longer dramatic text' will also result in a postdramatic performance: "the performative potential of a postdramatic theatre-text cannot be taken as read" (ibid., 157).

The above underscores the fundamental ontological difference between text and performance and brings us to the fourth theoretical articulation offered by Lehmann. Here, in a sub-chapter on "Text" in postdramatic theatre (145), Lehmann considers the conflict between text and scene. As he reiterates in a more recent essay on "Text and Stage", there has always been an inherent latent tension and conflict between text and theatrical practice:

*Small wonder: the text is and remains a literary phenomenon, even if it is drama, and the text proper literally disappears on the stage of the theatre. With the exception of devices for having written words on stage [...] the drama as a literary linguistic reality all but vanishes and makes room for "something completely different": for the paralinguistic dimension, for voices and intonation, rhythm, speed and slowness of speech, sexual and gendered auditive information, gesture and the expressivity of body language in general. (Lehmann, 2007: 37)*

Lehmann goes on to suggest that postdramatic theatre can serve to highlight rather than conceal this inherent tension and turn it into the very principle of the staging. I have found this insight to be enormously productive, for example when thinking about recent German stagings of Elfriede Jelinek's theatre texts. Directors like Nicolas Stemmann have increasingly found the key to their directorial concepts in staging the resistance of *and* to Jelinek's texts, while Jelinek herself has made her texts increasingly open to these productively tension-ridden collaborations: "Do with it what you want", her stage directions will provocatively say (e.g. in *Sportstück*). And just as she frequently writes herself as an author figure into her texts, the written script has also increasingly appeared on stage in Jelinek productions, for example in Stemmann's *Ulrike Maria Stuart* or *Kontrakte des Kaufmanns*, where the actors can be seen, script in hand, to be physically struggling with its enunciation. The text here precisely does *not* disappear as in conventional productions, but makes its re-appearance as a resistant object (see Jürs-Munby, 2009).

As I have discussed elsewhere (Jürs-Munby, 2010), a new wave of a "revenge of writing", as Elinor Fuchs (1985) called it in the mid-eighties, is also observable in much contemporary experimental theatre in Britain – be it in Forced Entertainment's work, or in Apocryphal Theatre's *Besides you lose your*

*soul*, where the author herself, Julia Barclay, sits in the space with her laptop changing her onscreen text (projected onto a larger screen) as the performers improvise with the previously memorized text around her. The openly explored tension between text and stage is thus not a one-way process: while Lehmann tends to emphasize the postdramatic performance's "dispersal of the logos" across bodies and space (Lehmann, 2006: 145), the text as written word can also "reappear" in its own materiality.

In conclusion, I would contend that it is the last two theoretical formulations in *Postdramatic Theatre*, the 'changed quality of the performance text' and the deliberately marked tension and 'mutual disruption between text and stage' in performance (ibid., 146), that are the most productive approaches for considering the question of the text in both British and German contemporary theatre. These two formulations also shed a different light on the first two formulations: when we consider the changed quality of the performance text in postdramatic theatre, we can see that this strong emphasis on the performance situation in itself tends to undermine the construction of a fictive cosmos and hence the development of dramatic teleology and dialectics; and when we consider the performance situation of an exhibited tension between text and performance, we can also see why postdramatic theatre tends to dethrone the "primacy of the text" (its "predicatory" role in Tomlin's words) while at the same time honouring the written text in its very own materiality and dynamic.

Finally, to return to the challenges facing the contemporary British playwright, a firm theoretical perspective on the innovative *performance* of challenging new writing may ultimately be the one thing that can hope to affect a gradual shift of institutional structures and practices in Britain which currently hamper the staging of formally innovative new texts. Furthermore, in this endeavour, the binary opposition of "text-based" versus "non-text-based" theatre is not only unhelpful but increasingly unrepresentative of the existing broad and heterogeneous spectrum of working processes and productions in contemporary European theatre.

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## Summary

This contribution, devoted to the “vexed question” of the text in *Postdramatic Theatre*, has developed in response to a perception that Lehmann’s book has reinforced a pre-existing binary distinction between “text-based” and “non-text-based theatre” in Britain, in such a way that dramatic theatre has usually been associated with “text-based” and postdramatic with “non-text-based theatre” (Liz Tomlin). Considering that this is not the perception in Germany, where innovative productions of “no longer dramatic texts” (Gerda Poschmann) have been recognized as one of the driving forces for postdramatic theatre, I first discuss major institutional and infrastructural differences in British theatre production from that of Germany, which currently hamper creative dramaturgical engagement with challenging new writing for the theatre in mainstream British theatre (as argued by David Barnett). This is contrasted with the work of independent experimental British companies which have developed innovative new uses of text in performance. Against this backdrop, I show that there are many heterogeneous ways of arriving at performances that can be described as postdramatic, a spectrum that cuts across the “text-based” versus “non-text-based” division. Wondering whether Lehmann has inadvertently contributed to a (mis-)perception in international reception through an underdeveloped theorization of the role of text in postdramatic theatre, I then proceed to discuss four theoretical formulations of postdramatic theatre offered by him that affect the conception of the role of the text: 1) the avoidance of dramatic teleology and dialectics, Aristotelian totality and surveyability, 2) the defiance of the primacy of the pre-existing text in determining the staging, 3) the changed quality of the performance text and 4) the openly exhibited tension between written text and performance. I argue that the latter two theoretical formulations might offer the most productive approaches for thinking further about the relationship between text and performance in postdramatic productions, and that Lehmann’s perspective is ultimately always focused on the text *in performance*, not the text *per se*. This is also because the postdramatic potential of a text cannot be guaranteed to result in a postdramatic performance, as Barnett has argued. In conclusion, I propose that a firm theoretical perspective on the innovative *staging* of texts may ultimately also be capable of affecting a gradual shift in the institutional structures that currently hamper the creative engagement with new writing for the theatre.

**Karen Jurs-Manbi**

## **SPORNO PITANJE TEKSTA U POSTDRAMSKOM POZORIŠTU IZ INTERKULTURALNE PERSPEKTIVE**

### **Rezime**

Ovaj prilog, posvećen „spornom pitanju teksta u postdramskom pozorištu”, razvija se kao odgovor na shvatanje da je Lemanova knjiga osnažila već prisutno binarno razlikovanje između tekstualnog i netekstualnog pozorišta u Britaniji, u smislu da se dramsko pozorište obično dosad povezivalo s tekstualnim, a postdramsko s netekstualnim (Liz Tomlin). S obzirom na to da ovakva perspektiva nije prisutna u Nemačkoj, gde inovativne postavke „ne više dramskih tekstova” (Gerda Pošman) bivaju prepoznate kao jedna od pokretačkih snaga za postdramsko pozorište, ja najpre raspravljam o glavnim institucionalnim i infrastrukturnim razlikama u pozorišnoj produkciji između Britanije i Nemačke, koje u ovom trenutku kočé kreativni dramaturški angažman oko provokativnijeg novog pisanja za pozorište u mejnstrim britanskom teatru (kako tvrdi Dejvid Barnet). Suprotnost ovome je rad nezavisnih eksperimentalnih britanskih trupa koje su razvile inovativne upotrebe teksta u predstavi. U ovom radu pokazujem da, nasuprot takvoj postavci, postoje raznorodni načini stvaranja predstava koji se mogu opisati kao *postdramski*, čitav spektar koji premošćuje podelu *tekstualno vs netekstualno*. Postavljajući pitanje da li je Leman nehotice doprineo ovom pogrešnom razumevanju, u okviru internacionalne recepcije, svojom nedovoljno razvijenom teoretizacijom uloge teksta u postdramskom pozorištu, nastavljam da ispitujem četiri teorijske formulacije postdramskog teatra koje nam autor nudi, a koje utiču na shvatanje uloge teksta: 1) izbegavanje dramske teleologije i dijalektike, aristotelovskog totaliteta i preglednosti; 2) otpor primatu preegzistirajućeg teksta u determinisanju izvedbe; 3) izmenjen kvalitet scenskog teksta i 4) otvoreno pokazana napetost između napisanog teksta i predstave. Dokazujem da bi poslednje dve od navedenih formulacija mogle da ponude najproduktivnije pristupe daljem promišljanju odnosa teksta i izvedbe u postdramskim predstavama, kao i da je Lemanova perspektiva ultimativno i uvek fokusirana na tekst *u izvedbi*, a ne na tekst *per se*. Ovo je tako i zato što postdramski potencijal teksta ne može biti garancija da će on i rezultirati postdramskom predstavom, što je tvrdio i Barnet. Izoštren teorijski pogled na inovativne inscenacije tekstova, kako navodim u zaključku, može na kraju da bude kadar da utiče na postepenu promenu unutar institucionalnih struktura, koje su u ovom trenutku prepreka kreativnijem angažmanu u novim pozorišnim tekstovima.



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## **Dramatic versus postdramatic textuality – paradoxes of a false opposition?**

My contribution to the discussion regarding the global destiny and the local echo of the coinage “postdramatic theatre”, following the translation of Hans-Thies Lehmann’s influential study (into Croatian, it was in 2004), picks up the very last question listed by our hosts in their invitation letter, the one pertaining to the adequacy of the remark that the field of the postdramatic – whether in theatre or in theory – excludes any textual analysis for the benefit of performance studies. Indeed, a cursory reading of Lehmann’s introduction to his study could give credit to the aforementioned remark, since there Lehmann acknowledges that his primary concern was to redress the balance of theatre studies in favor of “the constitutive moments of the theatrical situation”, thus intentionally lessening his interest in “the dimension of the text” (Lehmann, 2004, 12). It seems that from the very start of his panorama, Lehmann only contributed to the critical confusion that very often links the practice of postdramatic theatre to an anti-dramatic and therefore also anti-textual, if not even anti-verbal stance. However, when in that same introduction he suggests avenues for further exploration of the field, stating that his book will fulfill its purpose if it encourages “new and risky attempts at doing theatre theory”, the issue of “the status of the text” in postdramatic, live and performance art after “the inherited ways of understanding the text have lost their credibility” (*ibid.*), emerges as one of the key questions left to be reflected upon – preferably, it would seem, along the lines of poststructuralist theory.

The controversy of the text versus performance relationship, which has for so long reigned in various theoretical accounts of drama and theatre, has indeed gained a new momentum by the renewed attention to its historical contingency that was stirred by Lehmann’s book. Nevertheless, various attempts at preserving a general, non-historical view of drama and theatre continue to

reappear, with the seemingly simple intention to correct out-dated notions of these entities as being somehow solely responsible for the confusing distinctions between the inherited and the experimental approach to the use of textual material in performance. Among other neuralgic points of Lehmann's, it is claimed, unreflected assumptions about the character of "dramatic theatre" – such as its irrevocably illusionistic nature, questioned by Dan Rebellato (2009) – the status of the dramatic text is said to continue to haunt the postdramatic as a ghost. According to Andrew Quick (2009), the play text is at the center of Lehmann's contestation of the main tenets of dramatic theatre, since it is to the primacy of the play-text that the German critic attributes the generative force of wholeness, illusion and world representation, no longer wanted on the postdramatic stage.

The latter "accusation" appears, moreover, to stem from the presumed perennial "literary" status of drama, as opposed to its primary "performative" use, both in theatre and the analysis of drama's discursive features. William B. Worthen's article "Antigone's bones" (2008), for instance, extensively "defends" drama, as conceived by its recent theory and criticism, from all allegiance to literature, claiming that Lehmann's historical-poetical distinction between dramatic and postdramatic theatre, like the disciplinary distinction drawn by Diane Taylor between the "archive" and the "repertoire" (the latter being the privileged interest of performance studies), relies on "a range of (mis)conceptions of Western dramatic performance" (ibid., 10) that have finally to be spelled out. Worthen detects the exact period of emergence of these misconceptions in the '50s, during the reign of the New Critical paradigm. "Seduced", as it allegedly was, "by the design of the printed page", this school of thought, according to Worthen, "assimilated the drama to literary studies" and "took the function of the stage as the interpretation of the privileged literary dimension of the drama largely by framing acting as a mode of reproducing the text in speech" (ibid., 12). Worthen, therefore, argues for a return to the "charting" of "the territory of dramatic theory" which had already in the '70s abandoned the New Critical paradigm and started to understand dramatic writing as an entity at "the interface between archive and repertoire, text and body" (13).

Quoting extensively from Michael Goldman's books *The Actor's Freedom* and *On Drama*, in which text and performance are seen as engaging in a "mutually constitutive commerce", indeed, as "generating one another", Worthen further supports his argument with references to such authorities of dramatic theory as Herbert Blau, Stanton B. Garner Jr. and Benjamin Bennett, and insists on the necessity to "contest the literary dimension of drama" by "conceptualizing it as an instrument for performance" (14) and as a "motivation" for a

“range of phenomenological configurations” as well as “complex participations of the dramatic event” – in short, as a matrix in which “doing things with words resists the sense that it’s the words that are doing the doing” (13). Bypassing, consciously or not, the implication that this doing is done instead by embodied “characters”, in a manner already canonically espoused almost a century ago by Pirandello’s famous essay on drama as “spoken action”, Worthen dismisses the pertinence of the idea that the text in postdramatic theatre functions as just another material for performance, asserting that dramatic writing was always designed to “afford specific uses – behavioral, contingent, present *performances* – rather than mere ‘interpretations’”, regardless of the fact that “different repertoires of performances use it, stake its instrumentality, in different ways”, sometimes “asserting the archive’s priority”, sometimes not, but “always (already) altering the text” (15).

The main paradox haunting Worthen’s discussion, in my view, stems from his own misconceptions regarding the concepts of “literariness” and “performativity” which inform the treatment of the text in both postdramatic and performance art. These concepts themselves have radically changed since the era of the New Criticism to which he insistently refers, deploring the fact that even the recent “multiplication of critical practices and perspectives” in literary studies continue to “treat dramatic writing as textuality”, “analyzing, say, the formal, ideological, psychoanalytic contingencies of play’s narrative, strategies of characterization, or fictive world” (13). “Literarity” and “textuality” are here conceived in strict connection to “forms of literary representation”, as if poststructuralist theories of the text – particularly that of Roland Barthes, explicitly invoked in Lehmann’s study, which severely criticized the notion of literature as representation – never existed.

The second misconception permeating Worthen’s discussion pertains to the notion of textual “performativity”, which he seems to conceive as deriving from the aforementioned idea of drama as “spoken action”, as well as from the constitutive indebtedness of dramatic writing to its inherent “exposure to performance”, the very source, as Benjamin Bennett suggested, of drama’s “disruptive position in the archive of literary genres” (21). Here again one should remark that textual performativity in poststructuralist literary studies implies a quite different relationship of the nature of textuality to the tropes of theatre and performance, which has nothing to do with the division among genres, but rather with its explosion in, as Barthes would put it, the general view of the text as “the fact of discourse, without a possible reference either to the contents ... or to the forms” (1968/2002, 58), a discourse producing a verbal play performed on “the stage of language” (1970/2002, 609) and thus “annihilating to

the point of contradiction its own discursive category” (1973/2002, 237). Contrary to Worthen’s persistent exhortations that we keep the notion of drama as writing that “precipitates an event”, “instigates subjects in action, ...process and place” (Worthen, 2008, 26–27), postdramatic textuality, as obviously it must still be insisted, concentrates precisely on the cleavage between this double, the dissociated (if not intentionally) and yet continuously correlated theatricalities, the one of the text, the other of the body.

This cleavage, as Worthen himself beautifully shows in his *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (2005), was produced by the invention and growing circulation of the printed page, which led to an inevitable contestation of the “precipitation” and “instigation” of performance as the effects produced by the dramatic text. This process began, again, with Pirandello, who in his *Six characters in search of an author* already saw irremediable historical rupture and conflict where Worthen continues to see inscribed “interface” and an, if not seamless, then ever negotiable mutual “commerce” on a common ontological and phenomenological ground. In fact, one could claim that contemporary performance welcomes the visual impact of the “printed page” and the linguistic autonomy of “literature”, much more than what Worthen foregrounds as the (performative) arguments for drama’s case: it treats the resistant discourse of the literary text as a kind of alien body which is either visually or acoustically performing on the stage of language, in a confrontation rather than a collusion with the actor’s embodiment on the actual stage. That is why the challenge that came with the postdramatic turn regards not so much the burden of the referential illusion as the very idea of the identity of the text – of its substantial core, of “what the text is” despite its numerous historical alterations, as Worthen puts it (2008, 11) – which in dramatic performance retains the same consecrated status as the idea of the subject, together with its most frequent, one-to-one relationship with the actor’s body as representing the organic confirmation of its unity.

If we follow Barthes’s assumption that the “text has a human shape”, that its figure “is the anagram of the body” (1973), that its identity can be conceived of as predicated on an image just as much as the human subjectivity is predicated on the image of the body (cf. Čale, 2004), we could conjecture that the postdramatic use of textual “material” is on a par with the deconstruction of the idea of the human subjectivity as something residing in the body and generating what Barthes in his *Empire of Signs* denounces as the unifying “anthropomorphism” of the western dramatic performance, in which “the gesture and the word ... form a single tissue, conglomerated and lubricated as a unique muscle that puts expression into play but never divides it” (1968/2002, 37).

Following Morana Čale's interpretation of the analogy of the two "images" through the lenses of Lacan's "mirror stage", we could state that postdramatic theatre treats the text – the material image of structured discourse, either acoustic or visual – as Lacan treats the human body: as an imaginary remainder of the coherence of a textual entity endowed with a sense and a meaning, repressing the fear of fragmentation, castration and founding/ontic duplicity.

I will now draw three different examples from the past 40 years of Croatian theatre practice, in order to comment upon the postdramatic deconstruction of this "somatography of the written sign" (Čale, 2004) from the perspective of the three key theatrical authorial instances that, in the process of devising a new attitude towards the text, were forced to reconfigure their own authorial "deaths": the actor, the director and the playwright. My first example will be a performance that premiered in 1968 and was based on the adaptation of Queneau's *Exercices du style*. The text itself is an Oulipo experiment which reverses the inherited distinctions between story and discourse, between meaning as expressive of psychological interiority or historical reality and meaning as produced by the arbitrary play of language. It also undercuts its own textual identity by an endless proliferation of stylistic variations, that is, by a provisionally, arbitrarily ended succession of precisely 99 different versions of the same banal, anecdotal sequence that purports to represent an insignificant Goffmanian "breach" of proper "behaviour in public places". Adapted primarily to the laws of the Croatian language, infused by references to the Croatian literary heritage and to contemporary local verbal mannerisms, the script re-situated the story in familiar settings of the city of Zagreb, and was performed in the form of the alternate oral narrations of an actor and an actress facing the public in the guise of two very formally dressed, polished citizens.

Confronted with multiple narrations of the same story by unknown speakers, the actors were forced to build their quickly shifting personae in the same way the language in the text built the idiosyncrasies of different versions: through an arbitrary collage of facial and gesturing signs that did not issue from the expressive repertoire of either the character or the actor as a knowable psycho-social entity, but was rather constructing both in turn, exposing the fact that what we tend to perceive as a unique personality is nothing but an intermittent mimicry of facial, vocal and gesturing social stereotypes, floating signs relentlessly returning in other syntactic combinations. The performance was praised for the local imprint on the performances of various "social types", even though a good deal of the performed narrations were absurd and surrealist, retelling the story in Latin and in mathematical formulae, and ending in stuttering and aphasia. However, it has outlasted the most presumptuous

hopes for its duration on stage (it is still being performed by the same actors, after 41 years) precisely because it was one of the first disturbing incursions into the mystique of the emotional, spiritual and even visceral interiority of the actor, now mercilessly given over to the actuality of the encounter with the public. The ontology of the actor's body was here exposed as being what J.-L. Nancy claims any human body is, a self-alienating "excription de l'être" (Nancy, 2000, 20), a spatial ex-scription of being, exposed to the other's reading – literally "word deed", multiplied in the forceful, almost mechanically repeated corporeal enunciation of its alterity to itself, since in the performance it appeared to be expropriated by a preexisting "soul" that would immerse itself in the "soul" of the text, which nevertheless repeatedly and stubbornly proclaimed the "vacancy of any substantial core" (Čale, 2004) under a hilarious succession of artificially induced "images" of style.

My second example is drawn from the rich opus of the director Branko Brezovec, the most striking presence on the Croatian (and not only Croatian) stage from the mid-seventies onwards, whose iconoclastic poetics defines itself in an obvious deconstructive manner as a "non-grammatical theatre", which from its inception intentionally used at least two generically different texts without any common referential points in order either to make them produce unpredictable, "flashing" connections or engender a polyphonic dissociation of Sound and Sense (cf. Blazevic, 2008, 46), engendering a sheer "débordement du signifiant", an overflowing of dramaturgical trajectories that Barthes exalted as one of the outcomes of the indomitable productivity of the text (1973/2002, 448). Putting aside these as well as some other modes of destabilizing the integrity and coherence of the text, such as actors singing it or speaking it in a cacophonous struggle between at least three different languages, one of this director's particularly incisive uses of textual material, from Borges's short story *Emma Zunc* in 1996, for instance, or from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* in 2006, concerns precisely the "seduction by the printed page", which Worthen designates as the main obstacle to a true performative reading of drama. In Brezovec's work, the printed page of the text appears as the very theatricalization of the text's resistant materiality, of its obstinate objecthood as "the phenomenal surface of the literary text" (ibid., 443). The printed page represents precisely the space where the verbal and the visual inextricably collide in the creation of "the image", which "bestows a discursive body carrying a sense and a meaning" (Čale, 2004) to the text, in the same way that the visual projection of the body's surface for Lacan guarantees a Gestalt of the human ego, thus making it "a signifier representing a subject/text for another signifier" (ibid.).

By projecting various typographic shapes of the text onto the stage, sometimes covering the bodies of the actor, sometimes elements of the set, by cutting it into pieces stuck to or written on the cubes of the set variously distanced from the eye of the spectator, or by letting the actors fight with parts of it written in hand-writing on the card-boards in the shape of weapons, Brezovec not only points to the mutual specularly of human bodies-as-texts and texts-as-bodies, offering both of them simultaneously to the public eye for a dubiously legible, duplicitous consumption, but also forces both to face their *aphanisis*, by dismembering them, letting their fragments collide, stir, subside and vanish, thus evading any closure. While reversing the text towards a potentially endlessly generative “amorphous dispersion of pieces, fragments, and traces of discourse” (Čale, 2004), Brezovec provides a kind of hallucinatory, fetishistic pleasure in which the very subject of the director is unmade, enabling the text in the process, as, again, Barthes formulates it, to “show its butt to the *Political Father*” (Barthes, 1973, 2002, 252) and his subtle modes of institutional control, protection and use of textual “rights”.

My last example, the trilogy entitled *The Woman Bomb* by Ivana Sajko (2004), will touch on the most vulnerable position in the postdramatic landscape, the position of the playwright, and of her paradoxical, self-reflexive and perhaps even self-undermining strategies. In Sajko’s case, the textual material is produced for the kind of performance she calls “auto-referential reading”, another performative demonstration of the stubborn impossibility of assimilating the text to any kind of theatrical “translation” that would cut the umbilical cord tying its texture to the playwright’s personal voice and her own *lecture/écriture à haute voix*, evoked by Barthes as the supreme aesthetic realization of textual pleasure (cf. 1973/2002, 260–261). The first piece, *Arche-type: Medea*, combines the tradition of a hybrid lyrical genre called the dramatic monologue with the ostentatious deployment of standard typographic signals for a play-script, such as stage directions. However, they imagine no performance, no setting of “the story”, but rather allow the voice of the author to appear, encouraging or commenting upon her other self as the enunciator of the main text, which also vacillates between the voice of the character and the voice of the actress/performer.

Thus, the entire text, announced in its subtitle as a kind of post-script to a performance already given, as a bunch of scattered, perhaps not even reliable notes taken during its course, suggests the ventriloquistic bravado of an always already performed and therefore for ever unattainable, yet ever-recurring acoustic specularity between the author’s body, the actual producer of the voice itself, and the text she projects as her own acoustic mirror image. The

second part of the trilogy, *The Woman Bomb*, intensifies the plurality of voices that both produce and disturb the coherence of the monologue, and ironically re-reverses the temporal reversal experimented with in *Medea* – between the supposed primacy of the text and the secondary, derivative character of its performance – by means of the high stakes any performance of the *Woman-bomb* entails, that is, the explosion of the performer exactly after the 12 minutes and 36 seconds of her frenetic “last words”. What in *Medea* was the distant yet ever re-appearing scene of the birth of the subject now reveals itself to be the predicate of her death, with the growing tissue of words attacking the body of the subject, over-loaded not so much with their meaning as with their last performative chance of vocally producing the vanishing instance of their enunciation. Sajko’s plays cannot “precipitate an event”, or “instigate subjects in action”. Rather, they mock any use of her textual material that would attempt to proceed with such an understanding of their function: the challenge they confront the theatre with is to start from the very impossibility of following any “instructions for use” – as Anne Ubersfeld once defined the specific structure of the play-text – and to imagine the performativity of these texts anew.

All these examples, therefore, could be said to be working under the assumption that “the imaginary unity of a text, as well as that of the body image representing the subject, is maintained at the price of removing the chaos it sprang from and effacing the doubleness of its identity” (Čale, 2004). That is why the use of textual material that they exemplify insists on “the proliferating bonds of intertextual or, respectively, intersubjective doubleness”, and rejoices in their common “anxiety in front of the possibility to explode under the dividing pressure of an all-encompassing alterity” (ibid.) – this alterity of course being in the case of a play-text primarily the unpredictable, contingent and historically determined realities of the stage – what Lehmann calls “the constitutive moments of the theatrical situation”. To try to tame this unpredictability by envisaging the forms of textuality to come would, I think, not only deny the balance redressed by the German theorist in favor of the substance of theatre, but also be a sign of our incapacity to accept the anxiety that befalls us as critics and that forces us to constantly re-adjust our dearest and most secured notions of what drama, text and theatre are.

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**Summary**

Starting from the assumption that the field of the postdramatic does not exclude any textual analysis for the benefit of performance studies, this paper both addresses the issue of textuality in the polemics surrounding the notion of “postdramatic theatre”, and corroborates the resulting reflection, by referring to the radical change of the status of the text as one of the most controversial features distinguishing Croatian postdramatic production from the rest of the local theatrical landscape.

Hans-Thies Lehmann’s influential study on postdramatic theatre has stirred up a renewed theoretical discussion as regards the lasting controversy about the text versus performance relationship, a controversy that, in the past, often moved around drama’s presumed “literary” treatment as opposed to its primary “performative” use, in both theatre and the analysis of drama’s discursive features. This discussion culminated in William B. Worthen’s (2008) extensive “defense” of drama, as conceived in recent theory and criticism, from all accusations of literarity, and a concomitant claim that Lehmann’s poetical distinction between dramatic and postdramatic theatre, just like the

disciplinary one drawn by Diane Taylor between the “archive” and the “repertoire” (the latter being the privileged interest of performance studies), relies on “a range of (mis)conceptions of Western dramatic performance” that have finally to be spelled out. The aim of my contribution is to demonstrate why Worthen’s arguments, far from succeeding in their plea on behalf of the cause of drama, only confirm the dramatic/postdramatic text divide outlined by Lehmann, who in the introduction to his study calls for a further exploration of postdramatic textuality along the lines of poststructuralist thought. The main paradox haunting Worthen’s discussion, in my view, stems from his own misconceptions regarding the concepts of “literariness” and “performativity” which inform both postdramatic and performance art, since these concepts have themselves radically changed since the era of the New Criticism to which he insistently refers, in deploring the fact that even the recent “multiplication of critical practices and perspectives” in literary studies continues to “treat dramatic writing as textuality”. In fact, one could claim that contemporary performance welcomes “literature” much more than the (performative) arguments Worthen foregrounds in support of drama’s case. The challenge that came with the postdramatic turn has regard, I suggest, to the idea of textual identity that in dramatic performance retains the same sacred status as the idea of the subject. If we follow Barthes’s assumption that the “text has a human shape”, that “it is the anagram of the body” (1973), we could conjecture that the postdramatic use of its “material” is on a par with the deconstruction of the idea of human subjectivity as something residing in the body. Postdramatic theatre could therefore be said to treat the text – the material image of structured discourse – as Lacan treats the human body: as an imaginary remainder of the coherence of a textual entity endowed with a sense and a meaning, repressing the fear of fragmentation, castration and ontic duplicity (cf. Čale, 2004).

**Lada Čale-Feldman**

#### **DRAMSKA SPRAM POSTDRAMSKE TEKSTUALNOSTI – PARADOKSI LAŽNE OPOZICIJE**

##### **Rezime**

Polazeći od pretpostavke da oblast postdramskog ne isključuje nijednu tekstualnu analizu u korist studija izvođenja, ovaj rad istovremeno pokreće pitanje tekstualnosti u polemici oko pojma *postdramskog pozorišta* i potkrepljuje uvid koji iz toga proizlazi upućivanjem na radikalnu promenu statusa teksta kao jednog od najkontroverznijih obeležja koje razlikuje hrvatsku postdramsku produkciju od ostatka lokalnog teatarskog pejzaža.

Uticajna studija Hans-Tisa Lemama o *postdramskom* uskomešala je obnovljenu teorijsku diskusiju o dugotrajnoj kontroverzi oko odnosa teksta i izvedbe, kontroverzu koja se u prošlosti često kretala oko pretpostavljenog „književnog” tretmana drame kao suprotstavljenog njegovoj primarno scenskoj upotrebi, i to kako u samom pozorištu tako i u analizi diskurzivnih obeležja drame. Ova rasprava kulminirala je Vortenovom (William Worthen, 2008) obuhvatnom „odbranom” dramskog teksta (kako je shvataju nova teorija i kritika) od svih optužbi za literarnost, i pratećom tvrdnjom da se Lemanovo poetičko razlikovanje dramskog i postdramskog pozorišta – baš kao i podela na osnovu naučnih disciplina koju je povukla Dajana Tejlor (Diane Taylor) između „arhiva” i „repertoara” (pri čemu je ovo drugo privilegovani predmet studija izvođenja) – oslanja na „niz pogrešnih shvatanja zapadne dramske predstave”, koja se konačno moraju jasno artikulirati. Cilj mog priloga je da se pokaže zašto Vortenovi argumenti, daleko od uspešnih u odbrani interesa dramskog teksta, samo potvrđuju podelu na dramski i nedramski tekst koju skicira Leman, koji poziva, u uvodu svoje studije, na dalje istraživanje postdramske tekstualnosti na linijama poststrukturalističke misli. Glavni paradoks koji lebdi nad Vortenovom raspravom, prema mom shvatanju, proizlazi iz njegovog sopstvenog pogrešnog razumevanja pojmova „literarnosti” i „performativnosti” koji prožimaju i postdramsku i izvođačku umetnost, jer su se ovi pojmovi i sami radikalno promenili počev od ere „nove kritike” na koju Vorten uporno referira, ne odobravajući činjenicu da čak i recentno „umnožavanje kritičkih praksi i perspektiva” u studijama književnosti nastavlja da „tretira dramsko pisanje kao tekstualnost”. U stvari, mogli bismo da tvrdimo da savremene predstave prihvataju književnost mnogo više nego (performativni) argumenti koje Vorten stavlja u prvi plan u svojoj podršci „slučaju drama”. Izazov koji dolazi sa postdramskim obrtom odnosi se na, sugerisala bih, ideju tekstualnog identiteta, koja u dramskoj predstavi zadržava isti sveti status kao i ideja subjekta. Ako sledimo Bartovu (Roland Barthes) misao da „tekst ima ljudsko obličje” i da je „anagram tela” (1973), mogli bismo da pretpostavimo da je postdramska upotreba njegovog „materijala” jednaka dekonstrukciji ideje o ljudskoj subjektivnosti kao nečemu što počiva u telu. Za postdramsko pozorište bi se, dakle, moglo reći da se odnosi prema tekstu – materijalnoj slici strukturisanog diskursa – onako kao što se Lakan odnosi prema ljudskom telu: kao prema imaginarnom ostatku koherencije tekstualnog entiteta koji poseduje neki smisao i neko značenje, i koji potiskuje strah od fragmentacije, kastracije i ontičke dvojnosti (up. Čale, 2004).



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## **Signalling through the flames: gesture and memory in post-dramatic theatre**

1. There is a sentence in a gat book on memory that I would like to cite (and citation is indeed the main theme of this essay).

It comes loaded with the details of dissolution, and with the opposing urge to preserve. It is in W. G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, and it is Austerlitz himself who is speaking:

“She was carrying a large bunch of rust-colored chrysanthemums in the crook of her right arm, and when we had walked side by side across the yard without a word and were standing in the doorway, she raised her free hand and pushed the hair back from my forehead, as if she knew, in this one gesture, that she had the gift of being remembered.”<sup>1</sup>

*The gift of being remembered*: is not this one of the deepest desire of the scene? To disperse, to escape from the logics of the archive, and still remaining as a ghost, as a performance remains, as a citable gesture.

2. 2000, Rome: a child, dressed as the Mad Hatter, cuts the throat of another child, dressed as the White Rabbit.

2004, Avignon: Nora draws the gun on Helmer and with an abrupt and resolute gesture shoots him dead.

2005, Venice: a man – his body somewhat advanced from the back wall of the stage – opens his arms, from which emanates a sort of luminescence.

2006, Brussels: a woman takes out a bottle of whiskey from a sideboard and drinks secretly.

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<sup>1</sup> W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, London, Penguin, 2005.

2007, Berlin: a nineteenth century lady crosses the scene of a hippie commune.

Extracted from a personal diary of visions, these are some of the citable gestures of a memory of post-dramatic theatre from recent years.

3. Within the frame of post-dramatic theatre, with the annihilation of the dramatic text as the main resource of the theatrical scene, what has been radically renegotiated is the issue of memory. Unlike readings that see the space of the performance as consistently besieged by disappearance and oblivion, I would like to propose an approach aimed at highlighting those logics which make the stage a place (and often a privileged one) of memory practices, and at the same time takes into consideration the positioning of the spectator.

To remember is, indeed, a reflexive movement, as revealed by the pronominal form appearing, for example, in Italian and in French (*ricordarsi, se rappeller*). To remember is to have memory of oneself, as Augustine already knew: “the memory of ‘things’ and the memory of myself coincide: in them I also encounter myself, I remember myself, what I have done, when and how I did it and what impression I had at that time.”<sup>2</sup>

The citable gesture extracted from the scene, therefore/in this way, does not just demonstrate the possibility of retention of the performance, but becomes an attractor of memory crystals related to the subject’s own intimacy. In the end, the citable gesture signifies the point of collapse into which both individual and collective memory fall, if by collectivity we mean that instantaneous one joined together during the event.

4. a) Within the frame of scenic analysis, Walter Benjamin suggests a concept which is generally overlooked, although it is fertile with implications: the notion of the *citable gesture*, which is to say, the gesture which puts into question the very notion of ephemerality as constitutive of the status of theatre. This topic was introduced by Benjamin in an essay on Bertolt Brecht’s theatre, and it prefigures the memorial imperative which will inform Benjamin’s great work “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, where the task of the historian is to capture an actual image of the past, an instantaneous image that *darts away*, flashing for an instant and disappearing for ever. Likewise, the gesture – particularly in a scene which owes nothing to the dramatic text as a source of tradition and hence of memory, and thus of a possible “retention” according

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<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, 13, 220.

to archival logic – summarizes in itself the precariousness, the perishability of what appears once and is not repeated except by coming back, in the form of image and *citation*, to the stage of memory.

Furthermore, unlike any attempt at notation, reconstruction, filming or recording aimed at preserving the stage event, the citable gesture undermines the continuum of the show and, therefore, the logic of linear orientation which only strengthens the diegetic praxis of text-centered analyses founded on the merely horizontal development of the dramatic text. The citation of gesture, which in itself interrupts the continuity of the performance, pursues a principle of *vivification*, since, by selecting and isolating a particular gesture, the gesture is made topical in the scene of the present memory and thus, in the development of new viable points of view, actualizes the process of history.

In “What is Epic Theatre?” Benjamin defines Bertolt Brecht’s theatre as a gestural theatre, but – what is of more interest – as a theatre of citable gestures. “Making gestures citable, this is one of the essential achievements of epic theatre. The actor must be able to space his gesture as a compositor produces spaced type.”<sup>3</sup> This hint, which is peremptory in its terseness, remains rather obscure: what does “creating spaces between gestures” mean? And what has this to do with citation? To this purpose, Giorgio Agamben reminds us that spacing defines a typographic convention – and not only in German – of replacing *italics* with spacings between the letters of a word that one intends to highlight for whatever reason. “Benjamin himself, every time he uses the typewriter, resorts to this convention. [...] The spaced terms are, so to say, hyper-read, twice read, and this double reading could be, as Benjamin suggests, the palimpsestic reading of the citation.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, spacing the gestures means highlighting them.

The citable gesture is, then, a gesture capable of survival and also, in some cases, of rebirth. The *remainder* it produces are not simply material; rather, they are first a phantasmal and then a living residue (and it is surely not by chance that Rebecca Schneider’s notion of “living remains” recalls Burckhardt’s “lebensfähige Reste”, from which Aby Warburg originated his theory of *Nachleben*. But I will insist later upon this aspect). It is a question of some residual energy impressed upon the memory of the spectator, the historian and the witness; energy which feeds other gestures deployed both on the present scene and in historical writing concerned with the stage.

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<sup>3</sup> W. Benjamin, “What is Epic Theatre?”, in Id., *Understanding Brecht*, translated by Anna Bostock, introduction by Stanley Mitchell, London: Verso, 1983, p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> G. Agamben, *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai Romani*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, (2000) 2005, p. 129.

A concept such as *citable gesture*, which designates an indissoluble intertwining of a movement charge and an iconographic formula, in which it is impossible to distinguish between flux and pose, event and remembrance, originality and re-emergence, suffices to demonstrate that Brecht's thought (at least according to the Benjaminian interpretation that I intend here to take into account, since Brecht's idea of *gestus* is quite different from the one I am considering now) cannot in any sense be interpreted in terms of such oppositions as those between theatre and performance (or theatricality and performativity), dramatic and postdramatic, modernism and postmodernism.

In this perspective, what is unique and significant about Brecht's model is not so much that he adopts a new way of making theatre, as that he seems to direct his research toward the overcoming of the borders of the dramatic theatre. It is as if Brecht were interested in theatre solely to place within it the seed that would cause it to explode.

Thus, if post-dramatic theatre is certainly a post-Brechtian theatre in terms of its treatment of the *fable*, it nonetheless does not exceed Brecht in terms of the logic of gesture. For gesture to be citable it has to interrupt and suspend, in a process of separation, the intentional, teleological movement of the fable itself, arresting, dislocating and reconfiguring it precisely as a gesture.

If we pay attention to this interruption, we can see it to be the basis of the most radical logics of memorization: from the ancient rhetoric with the 'ars memorandi', to the Warburgian concept of *Nachleben*, to Eisenstein's ex-stasis, to the idea of the montage of History proposed by Jean-Luc Godard, to Chris Marker's composition of time, to Bill Viola's citation of the Renaissance, to the composition of the photographic image in Jeff Wall up to Romeo Castellucci's theatre-making methods.

**b)** Analyzing the possibility for the performance to remain, to impress the spectator's memory, Rebecca Schneider has suggested that other modes of remembering exist, which might be situated precisely in ways by which the performance remains, but remains differently<sup>5</sup>. Schneider insists on the memory's retention of gesture, in a network of body-to-body transmission and oral narrations; and, in particular, on the concept of performance as archive *per se*. Indeed, in the post-dramatic theatre, the issue of memory as an organized archive of "originals", or as a collection of written remains becomes complicated – necessarily imbricated, chiasmatically, with the living body. As Schneider has stated: "if theatre refuses to remain, it is precisely in the repeatedly live theatre

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<sup>5</sup> See R. Schneider, "Performance Remains", in *Performance Research*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (2001) pp. 100–108.

or installation space that a host of recent artists explore history – the recomposition of remains”, the citation of gestures. The issue, then, relocates, moving from a logic of post-dramatic theatre that escapes its preservation in the archives towards a consideration of performance itself as archive. It should be useful here to remember that this is the position of historiographers like Pierre Nora, of anthropologists like Carlo Severi (the inaugurator of the anthropology of memory) and of art historians and philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben, Georges Didi-Huberman, Philippe-Alain Michaud, Giovanni Careri and Ackbar Abbas interested in the idea of survival or *living on* proposed by Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin. It is also interesting to remember Michael Taussig’s acknowledgement of his debt to Benjamin’s thought about epic theatre in his understanding and analysis of the Putumayo healing sessions.<sup>6</sup> In this account, theatre studies’ work on the post-dramatic may play a fundamental role, since their objects are constitutively imbricated with the issue of memory remains and re-birth, or better, after-life (*Nachleben*), with citation and transmission other than that of the traditional archive.

As Joseph Roach points out, analyzing the role of the transmission and revision of unwritten history, and coining the concept of “performance genealogies”, these “draw on the idea of expressive movements as mnemonical reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words (or in the silence between them), and imaginary movements dreamed in minds, not prior to language but constitutive of it, a psychic rehearsal for physical actions drawn from the repertoire that a culture provides”<sup>7</sup>. What he calls “expressive movements” are nothing other than citable gestures.

c) A famous and problematic sentence by Peggy Phelan states that: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of

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<sup>6</sup> “What I was being invited to do in those hallucinatory curing sessions of magical practicality on the frontier where Indians cured colonists, was to rethink the mode of work in which I was involved as work better approached from the perspective of the tension involved in the disconcerting experiments in representation tried out by European and (as I later learnt to appreciate) early Soviet Modernism – e.g. Joyce, Cubism, Woolf, Myerhold, Zurich Dada, Berlin Dada, Constructivism, Brecht, Eisenstein, and Benjamin, moving from allegory to the shock of montage and the liberating (messianic) mimetic snapshot of the ‘dialectical/dialectical image’”, M. Taussig, *The Nervous System*, New York–London, Routledge, 1992, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> J. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 26.

representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. Performance... becomes itself through disappearance”<sup>8</sup>.

Hans-Thies Lehmann, in his turn, has stated that *postdramatic theatre is a theatre of the present*.

Citation, on the contrary, is a figure extracted from the past, even if in Benjamin’s reading its action appears in present time, as a salvation and exhibition of the past in the “now”, being at the same time a prefiguration of things to come.

If theatre’s only time is the present, the time of the citation being the past, what is the time of the citable gesture? The specific signature of the citable gesture, I insist, is that it cuts the three instances of temporality – present, past and future – into an intermittent continuity.

In theatre, there are two subjects that create the present, as Lehmann has written – the present of the co-presence. But these two presents are completely different from one another. They differ not in the way in which chronological times or verbal times differ, but, I would want to suggest, in an ontological way.

I would propose that, on stage, the specific time of the citable gesture is the pregnant instant that turns it into an event. It is not by chance that, in his definition of “event”, Deleuze uses the figure of the actor: “The actor’s present is the most narrow, the most contracted, the most instantaneous, and the most punctual. It is the point on a straight line which divides the line endlessly, and is itself divided into past-future.” “The actor maintains himself in the instant in order to act out something perpetually anticipated and delayed, hoped for and recalled.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the present of the actor, which is the present of the esthetical event in theatre, is what *darts away*. The present of the spectator, on the other hand, realizes itself through the capture and recognition of such an event – that is to say, of such a citable gesture. Time rolls itself out in the actor’s gesture when this gesture is citable. The performance event cannot be saved as an objective fact, but it may become substantial as a fact of memory, or as something continuously in movement, in which the citation works on the re-emergence of time, from the actuality of the present to the possibility of the future.

That is why the citational movement of post-dramatic theatre can refer not just to the past, but in referring to the past yet to come, the past to be re-cited,

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<sup>8</sup> P. Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> J. Deleuze, *The Logic of Ssense*, London, Continuum, (2001) 2005, p. 170.

but also point forward to a future that might be otherwise. Looking at the citable gesture impressed in the spectator's memory, the present does not stop to reconfigure itself, looking at the citable gesture produced there in front of the spectator. The past continues to flash out as a constellation of returning signs, while the future gesture marks the spot of an absence that is necessarily our absence: the gesture keeping for itself all its future. The element of duration is in it, not in ourselves.

Even if no gesture comes to be *the* gesture, if no spectacle is ever absolutely completed and done with, gesture still constantly changes, alters, enlightens, deepens, confirms, exalts, re-creates, or creates in advance all the others. If theatrical events are not a possession, it is not only because, like all things, they pass away; it is also because they have almost all their life still before them.

Gesture represents in this way the abbreviated figure, or, better, the recapitulated figure of presence; it draws an obscured view of what will be remembered about that presence, it traces its prehistory and its posthistory. Here a montage is operating: a montage of different times.

5. Or maybe, if *the* citable gesture exists, if the very gesture of postdramatic theatre exists, impressed in *the* postdramatic memory, such a gesture is the only one that fully realizes the great prophecy of Antonin Artaud: a gesture that nobody has ever seen, that has no symbolic meaning, that is a pure *means without an end*, that enacts, in a word, that condition of being like victims burnt at the stake, signalling through the flames.

## Summary

In the era of postdramatic theatre, with the annihilation of the dramatic text as the main resource of the theatrical scene, what is being radically renegotiated is the memory issue. We have to recognize that the advent of postdramatic theatre entails a radical reorientation in the representation and experience of memory, from a text-based culture to an approach more connected with other visual and material logics. As a consequence of the loss of centrality of the written text, artists, scholars and critics, as well as the "generic" audience, have to use particular memory strategies in order to remember the performance. Unlike readings which see the space of the performance as consistently besieged by disappearance and oblivion, my essay proposes an approach aimed at highlighting those logics which make the stage a place (and often a privileged one) of memory practice.

Within the frame of scenic analysis, Walter Benjamin suggests a concept which is generally overlooked, although it is fertile with implications: the notion of the *citable gesture*, i.e. a gesture which puts into question the very notion of ephemerality as constitutive of the status of theatre. This topic was introduced by Benjamin in an essay on Bertolt Brecht's theatre, and it prefigures the memory imperative which will inform Benjamin's great work "Theses on the Philosophy of History", where the task of the historian is to capture an actual image of the past, an instantaneous image that *darts away*, flashing for an instant, to appear no more. Likewise, the gesture – particularly in a scene which yields nothing to the dramatic text as a source of tradition and hence of memory – summarizes in itself the precariousness, the perishability of what appears once and does not repeat, except by coming back, in the form of image and citation, to the stage of memory. The citable gesture is, then, a gesture capable of survival and also, in some cases, of rebirth. The remainder it produces is not simply material; rather, it is first a phantasmal and then a living residue – a residual energy impressed upon the memory of the spectator, the historian, and the witness; an energy which feeds other gestures deployed both in the present scene and in historical writing concerned with the stage.

### **Analiza Saki**

#### **SIGNALIZIRANJE BAKLJAMA: GEST I SEĆANJE U POSTDRAMSKOM POZORIŠTU**

##### **Rezime**

U eri postdramskog pozorišta, koje karakteriše poništavanje dramskog teksta kao glavnog izvora pozorišne scene, ono što se radikalno ponovo ispituje jeste – *pitanje sećanja*. Mora se priznati da dolazak postdramskog pozorišta povlači za sobom radikalnu promenu orijentacije u pogledu reprezentacije i iskustva sećanja, od na-tekstu-zasnovane kulture do pristupa koji je više zasnovan na drugačijim vizuelnim i materijalnim logikama. Kao posledica toga što je pisani tekst izgubio središnje mesto, umetnici, naučnici, kritičari, kao i „generička” publika, moraju da koriste posebne strategije sećanja na predstavu. Za razliku od tumačenja koja prostor predstave sagledavaju kao neprekidno opsednut pitanjem iščezavanja i zaborava, moj rad predlaže pristup koji je usmeren na osvetljavanje logika koje od scene čine mesto (često privilegovano) za praksu sećanja.

U okviru scenske analize, Valter Benjamin predlaže koncept koji se generalno previđa, iako je plodan u svojim implikacijama – pojam *citacije gesta*, tj. gesta koji dovodi u pitanje tezu da je efemernost konstitutivni pojam za status pozorišta. Ovu temu Valter Benjamin uvodi u svom eseju o teatru Bertolta Brehta,

ali ona nagoveštava imperativ sećanja koji će prožeti i Benjaminovo čuveno delo „Teze o filozofiji istorije”, po kojima je zadatak istoričara da uhvati aktuelnu sliku prošlosti, momentalnu sliku koja proleće kao strela, blesne na trenutak i više se ne pojavljuje. Slično tome, pokret – posebno na sceni, koja ništa ne prepušta dramskom tekstu kako bi on bio izvor tradicije i odatle sećanja – sumira nesigurnost, nepouzdanost, prolaznost nečega što se pojavi jednom i nikada više, osim što se vraća, u formi slike i citata, na scenu sećanja. Citacija gesta je, dakle, sposobnost pokreta da preživi i takođe – u nekim slučajevima – ponovo se rodi. Ostatak koji proizvodi nije jednostavno materijalan: pre bi se moglo reći da je najpre fantazmatski, a zatim i živi trag: neka vrsta rezidualne energije utisnute u sećanje gledaoca, istoričara i svedoka, energija koja hrani druge gestove korišćene i na današnjoj sceni i u istorijskim tekstovima o pozorištu.



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## **Live video relay in postdramatic theatre**

I will examine the problem of live video relay in contemporary theatre, using the performance of *Sardinia* as the basis of my research. The show premiered a few months ago at the “Kostolanyi Dezso” Theatre in Subotica (Serbia), directed by Andras Urban. *Sardinia* was based on the contemporary text by Istvan Beszedes, a fragmentary, absurdist, philosophical drama with elements of an extremely grotesque, surrealist humor. The plot is enacted in a prison, and a few stories are interwoven with it: the arrival of the president is awaited, an Unknown whom everyone considers to be a Messiah appears (but it turns out he is a drunken helmsman), a theatre play is prepared etc. These narrative currents provide a frame for different discussions – about the meaning of existence, innocence, sin, guilt, the passage of time, corporality and spirituality, punishment, the function and aesthetics of theatre, power etc. Various modes of technology are used for multiple purposes. On the level of meaning, using live video relay problematizes social control, political totalitarianism and the absence of freedom; it also questions the alienation of the human being in the circumstances of the vast influence of technology and new media in society, and the notion of split identity. On the level of form, which will be my primary concern here, this way of radical technologisation and theatralisation dissolves the theatrical mechanism and indirectly poses questions about the relationship between the live and the mediated play, the very nature of live as well as mediated performance etc.

Live relay of the action on stage, visible or invisible to the audience, implies greater complexity of performance structure. Live video relay is a more complex practice than using pre-recorded video material, since its relation towards live action is more provocative and ambivalent. Because of this complexity, I think that the act of live video relay is always a part of postdramatic practice, even in cases of more or less traditional drama, as in *Sardinia*,

because live relay instantly disturbs the traditional Aristotelian structure, denies illusion, and deconstructs and analyzes the basic premises of traditional theatre language.

In *Sardinia*, the stage is defined by monitors and video screens, of which there are four. Two monitors are at the front of the stage and two larger video screens are at the back. They constantly show the action on stage, its different parts, from different angles; some of them are visible to the audience, some are not. Cameras that are capturing and relaying the action are sometimes visible; but most of the time they are not. In his book *Postdramatic Theatre*, Hans-Thies Lehmann writes that in postdramatic theatre the use of live video relay is frequent.<sup>1</sup> Lehmann poses the essential question: What is the function of giving the audience the opportunity to simultaneously observe live action on stage and its live transmission on screens? His answer is that this practice deconstructs *live* theatre, it reveals theatre as an illusion and as a machinery for creating technical effects. Also, as Lehmann writes, this practice raises questions about the theatricalization of technology – mechanics, reproduction and reproductibility become theatre material, which problematizes the notion of presence.<sup>2</sup>

I think that using live video relay is the stage articulation of the theoretical problem of the relation between live and mediatized performance as well as of the relation between theatre and technological media, which is essential in postdramatic theatre. This problem inspires intense discussions and disagreements among theorists like Philip Auslander, Peggy Phelan, Patrice Pavis and others. They disagree over questions like: should theatre and technological media be partners or rivals? should theatre compete with film and television in the naturalistic presentation of real life or should theatre find its own path and its own means of expression? should theatre act as a place for resistance towards the huge influence and omnipresence of the mass media? and so on. I think that most directors who apply live video relay stand on the side of those who advocate for the synthesis and co-existence of theatre and electronic media, silencing those who dramatically and romantically see theatre as the place of resistance against technology. Peggy Phelan, for example, has pleaded for pure theatre, *uncontaminated* by technology (contamination is the term used by Auslander, who stands on the other side). Phelan stands for the idea that liveness is the great privilege of the performance, a specificity that performance should preserve at any price. She writes that the “performance’s

<sup>1</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramsko kazalište*, CDU i TKH, Zagreb i Beograd, 2004, 295.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically and linguistically, is its greatest strength.”<sup>3</sup> She also writes that the performance’s only life is in the present: “Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance.”<sup>4</sup> In reviewing Phelan’s thoughts on these relations between performance and technology, Steve Dixon remarks that her interpretation is close to Roland Barthes’ views in terms of its humanistic and even emotional approach. Phelan, as Dixon remarks, considers theatre as a diminutive. David fighting the Goliath of mass media and technological capitalism.<sup>5</sup> Peggy Phelan, as well as Susan Sontag, authors who represent the urge for the independence of theatre from technology, considering that this independence is its greatest strength, use Walter Benjamin’s famous essay “The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction” as the starting point for their argumentation: “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be... The presence of the original is the prerequisite for the concept of authenticity.”<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to these attitudes, Philip Auslander denies the existence of a binary opposition between live and mediatized performance, affirming that theatre directors should not run away from using technology on stage, and that using live video relay on stage has a much stronger effect than not using it. His argumentation is in great part based on Benjamin’s essay, but on its different, even somewhat contradictory aspects (it is interesting to observe that, as Steve Dixon in his book *Digital Performance* mentions, both sides in this discussion are using the same essay to defend opposing views). Auslander relies on Benjamin’s thesis: “The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated.” Using this idea of Benjamin’s as the starting

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<sup>3</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, Florence, 1993, 149.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance (A History Of New Media In Theater, Dance, Performance Art, And Installation)*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2007, 123.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction”, online essay on the Internet address <http://design.wishiewashie.com/HT5/WalterBenjaminTheWorkofArt.pdf>, 2.

point of his argumentation, Auslander writes: „The use of giant video screens at sporting events, music and dance concerts, and other performances is another direct illustration of Benjamin’s concept: the kind of proximity and intimacy we can experience with television, which has become our model for close-up perception, but which is absent from these performances, can be reintroduced only by means of their ‘videation’.. Even in the most intimate of performance art projects, in which we may be only a few feet away from the performers, we are still frequently offered the opportunity for the even greater intimacy of watching the performers in close-up on video monitors, as we can experience true proximity only in televisual terms. This points to another of Benjamin’s postulates: that the quality of the original’s presence is always depreciated by reproduction.”<sup>7</sup>

Auslander denies the existence of clear ontological distinctions between live and mediatized events: “Although my initial arguments may seem to rest on the assumption that there are (distinctions between live and mediatized forms), ultimately I find that not to be the case. If live performance cannot be shown to be economically independent from mediatized forms, in what sense can liveness function as a site of cultural and ideological resistance, as Bogosian, Phelan and others claim?”<sup>8</sup> Here I have to mention the necessity of being cautious in understanding and using interpretations as a starting point of further discussions. For example, Auslander misinterprets Patrice Pavis’ thoughts, radicalising and pushing them forward to the extent that they are not Patrice Pavis’ thoughts anymore.<sup>9</sup> Though theorists like Pavis are critical towards using new media in theatre, they are rarely totally exclusive, rarely victims of complete reductionism. But let us get back to Auslander. His idea is to deny the existence of the binary opposition live/mediatized performance. In tending to prove this thesis, he begins from the opposite angle – the existence of such an opposition - which he then overthrows as not valid. In discussing Pavis’ writings, Auslander misinterprets them. Pavis did use the term *contamination* of the theatre by the new media, but he did not define the influence of the new media on theatre as negative. In other words, Auslander’s interpretation of Pavis’ discussions are not true to their original.

Having in mind Pavis’ discussions, Auslander writes: “All too often, such analyses take on the air of melodrama in which virtuous live performance is

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness (Performance In A Mediatized Culture)*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, 35.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> During my presentation at the conference in Belgrade, Pavis himself pointed out this remark, claiming that Auslander’s interpretation of his writings are not really true.

threatened, encroached upon, dominated, and contaminated by its insidious Other, with which it is locked in a life-and-death struggle. From this point of view, once live performance succumbs to mediatization, it loses its ontological integrity.<sup>10</sup> But Pavis never was that reductive. Auslander simplifies, even banalizes Pavis' writings which he uses as the starting point of his theory! In his book *Theatre At the Crossroads of Culture*, Pavis considers the differences between the essence of theatre and the media: "Theatre tends towards simplification, minimalization, fundamental reduction to a direct exchange between actor and spectator. Media, on the other hand, tend towards complication and sophistication, thanks to technological development; they are by nature open to maximal multiplication."<sup>11</sup> Later on, Pavis does indeed write about the technological and aesthetical contamination of theatre, but he never writes about it reductively and melodramatically, as Auslander claims. On the contrary, Pavis asserts that theatre authors should experiment and should find a new scenic language: "In this overview of technological and aesthetic interference between theatre and the media, it has been shown, even if in a rather mechanical way, that theatre cannot be 'protected' from any media and that the 'work of art in the era of technical reproduction' (Benjamin, 1936), cannot escape the socioeconomic-technological domination which determines its aesthetic dimension. Technological and aesthetic contamination is inevitable, whether as effective interaction of media techniques or as the frantic desire to maintain the specificity of poverty of theatre (Grotowski). *The time has passed for artistic protectionism and the time has arrived for experiments with different possibilities*. The most marked influence of the media has been found in aesthetic reflections on the notion of technological progress and mass diffusion; this reflection can thus be materially linked to production, diffusion and reception. Such reflections on these practices of performance and visual representation cannot allow themselves to be overawed by the technical complexity of the media and the socioeconomic phenomena of the culture industry, but should rather examine, from the perspective of an aesthetics of form, the processes of semiotic transformation from one form to another, the emergence of meaning in these contaminations and the dynamism of practices of performance and representation in the media of our time."<sup>12</sup>

The point of these reflections of Pavis is that live performance cannot avoid the influence of the socioeconomic-technological circumstances which constitute our time of technological reproduction. He concludes that it is impossible

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<sup>10</sup> Auslander, op. cit., 41–2.

<sup>11</sup> Patrice Pavis, *Theatre At the Crossroads of Culture*, Routledge, Florence, 1991, 98.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 128–129.

to consider theatre outside of media context: “We would do theatre a disservice by measuring it against media grounded in a technological infrastructure that it has done without; we would also endanger its specificity... There is no point in defining theatre as ‘pure art’, or in outlining a theatre theory that does not take into account media practices that border on and often penetrate contemporary work on stage.”<sup>13</sup> We have made clear that Auslander’s argumentation is highly problematic. He springs from misinterpreted Pavis’ thoughts and the essence of his analysis is proving the opposite. It is absurd to base one’s theory on proving the opposite, if one attempts this by denying an argument that is wrongly interpreted in the first place.

In *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann also recognizes the importance of the problem of the relation between live and mediatized. He points out that theatre directors frequently, implicitly or explicitly, ask the question: Why is the image more fascinating than the reality? In searching for the answer to this question, Lehmann refers to Vivian Sobschak, whom he quotes: “The image is stolen from real life... The image unchains desire from other circumstances, from real bodies, and moves it towards a dream world... That other world is free from the weight of reality... Disembodiment is the important consequence of electronic space.”<sup>14</sup> As opposed to this, as Lehmann suggests, theatre refuses that disembodiment and relief. The confrontation between these two practices, with the live video relay in theatre, indicates the weight of the live body in theatre.

In *Staging the Screen*, Greg Giesekam also analyses live video relay in theatre. While discussing more generally the use of technological media in theatre, he makes the distinction between *multimedial* and *intermedial* practices. According to him, multimedial practice is simpler, and the relation between live and mediatized performance is not as complex as it is in intermedial practice. Intermediality presents multiple meanings, therefore live video relay is an intermedial practice, in Giesekam’s categorization. Giesekam does not mention the term *postdramatic theatre* at all, although his study deals with authors and performances which definitely are, in Lehmann’s sense of the term, postdramatic.

So, Giesekam writes that in intermedial theatre, the play with live and mediatized is always present, which is the result of the essential need of the authors to examine the notion of presence and authenticity: “All this challenges assumptions about authenticity that are frequently found in discussion of performance and problematises notions of the ‘real’ or its representability,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>14</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, op. cit., 295.

an issue which also informs their use of media in the work. It is based on a sense that all performance is an act of mediation and on scepticism about the notion of any performance being immediate... The self-reflexive use of video in several productions operates, then, as part of a general interrogation of representational practices that pervades their work.”<sup>15</sup>

When speaking about this problem of authenticity of performance, which is one of the central issues in performance studies, the notion of *hypermediacy* is very important. It was used by Bolter and Grusin (Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin) to describe the eclecticism, the concurrence of different information and texts in works of art. Hypermediatic work draws attention to the fact that art *always* involves mediation of some sort. At the basis of hypermediality, for theatre artists who use it, is the fact that every medium is a medium. They are playing with this fact. Giesekam writes that hypermediality is an extension of a more general subversion of notions of immediacy.<sup>16</sup>

Live video relay, along with hypermediacy in theatre, imply scepticism towards the notion of immediacy. That scepticism is close to Auslander, whom I will quote here again. He continually denies any binary opposition between live and mediatized, which is the essence of the problem. Auslander writes that live performance always includes mediatized performance, both in the technological and epistemological senses: “Live performance has become the means by which mediatized representations are naturalized, according to a simple logic that appeals to our nostalgia for what we assumed was the immediate: if the mediatized image can be recreated in a live setting, it must have been ‘real’ to begin with. This schema resolves (or rather, fails to resolve) into an impossible oscillation between the two poles of what once seemed a clear opposition: whereas mediatized performance derives its authority from its reference to the live or the real, the live now derives its authority from its reference to the mediatized, which derives its authority from its reference to the live etc.”<sup>17</sup> Auslander adds that the paradigm that best describes the current relationship between the live and the mediatized is the Baudrillardian paradigm of simulation: “Nothing separates one pole from the other, the initial from the terminal: there is just a sort of contraction into each other, a fantastic telescoping, a collapsing of the two traditional poles into one another: an

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<sup>15</sup> Greg Giesekam, *Staging The Screen (The Use of Film and Video in Theatre)*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, 119.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Auslander, *op. cit.*, 38.

IMPLOSION. This is where simulation begins.”<sup>18</sup> The result of this implosion, as Auslander writes, is that a seemingly secure opposition is now a site of anxiety, the anxiety that underlines the desire of many performance theorists to reassert the integrity of the live and the corrupt, co-opted nature of the mediatized (Phelan, Pavis, Bogosian).

I have used live video relay in the performance of *Sardinia* as the starting point for these theoretical discussions on the status, functions and meanings of mediatized performance in theatre. Here, as is obvious, we have almost detached theory from practice, theory becoming a new, almost independent body, with practice being used only as a stimulation and impulse for building a theory which can be applied to understanding the practice. But it also can stand on its own as pure theory, just as practice can surely subsist without this theory. My own belief is that the one influences the other, each giving the other the possibility to grow. As an intermedial and postdramatic performance, *Sardinia* is a search for new possibilities of theatre expression. This kind of theatre is very aware of the radical changes in society due to globalization and the huge influence of the mass media. It confronts them, reflecting on its own position in these changing, different social and cultural surroundings. Contemporary theatre, the theatre which is aware of social changes, understands that it cannot compete with technological media in creating illusion, so it searches for new paths and new meanings, by deconstructing illusion and problematizing technology. The challenge of postdramatic theatre is not the imitation of media language, but the search for new means of presentation, new meanings in a mediatized society.

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## Summary

Live video relay of the action on stage, visible or invisible to the audience, implies great complexity of performance structure. In this paper, I use the performance of *Sardinia* at the “Kosztolanyi Dezso” Theatre in Subotica as the basis for discussing live video relay in postdramatic theatre. Referring to Philip Auslander, Patrice Pavis, Peggy Phelan, Hans-Thies Lehmann and Greg Giesekam, I examine the key problems implied by the use of live video relay in theatre. Using live video relay in theatre is a kind of stage articulation of the problem of the relation between live and mediatized performance, as well as of the relation between theatre and the new media, which is the object of my research in this paper.

## Ana Tasić

### VIDEO-PRENOS UŽIVO U POSTDRAMSKOM POZORIŠTU

#### Rezime

Video-prenos uživo radnje na sceni, vidljiv ili nevidljiv za publiku, podrazumeva veliku složenost scenske strukture. U ovom radu koristim predstavu *Sardinija*

pozorišta Deže Kostolanji iz Subotice kao osnovu za raspravu o video-prenosu u postdramskom pozorištu. Upućujući na Filipa Auslandera, Patrisa Pavisu, Pegi Felan, Hansa-Tisa Lemana i Grega Gisekama, istraživaću ključne probleme koje pokreće upotreba video-prenosa u pozorištu. Upotreba video-prenosa uživo u pozorištu je vrsta scenske artikulacije pitanja odnosa između žive i medijatizovane izvedbe, kao i odnosa između pozorišta i novih medija, a to je predmet mog istraživanja u ovom radu.

**Oliver Frlić**

Theatre director, Zagreb

## **Postdramatic theatre and political theatre**

Hans-Thies Lehmann's book *Postdramatic theatre* has become a landmark work in thinking on this relatively new subject. Although in the preface of the Croatian edition the author has qualified it as a *do it yourself kit*, it is much more than this. It has influenced many theoreticians and artists in many ways. Its conceptualization of the heterogeneous and waste landscape of new theatre has provided a strong impulse for the constant rethinking of theatre, its potentialities and functions. This book has provided conceptual tools through which the work of a new generation of theatre creators has been filtered and understood, as well as the work of the established theatre artists whose work was the basis for Lehmann's conceptualization. Lehmann's unorthodox statement that the decision as to whether or not an art work belongs to the paradigm of dramatic or postdramatic theatre always depends on the wider context, has given to the concept of postdramatic theatre a certain vividness and the possibility of a constant reevaluation of works that are constitutive for the paradigm of postdramatic theatre.

Reading *Postdramatic theatre* again for the purpose of this conference, after doing it for the first time in 2004, has been a pleasant task. Lehmann's work has confirmed itself as still valid in the field of recent theatrical production. Its categories and concepts are still very precise and useful. So, we could say that time is on the side of this book. However, reading it again I was quite surprised by two points which I obviously did not examine closely in my first reading. These points arise where Lehman explicitly speaks about the political in postdramatic theatre. I will first quote one of these points:

*Theatre abandons any attempt directly to anticipate or accelerate a revolution of social relations – not, as is carelessly imputed, due to an apolitical cynicism, but because of a changed assessment of its potential efficacy.*

The second point is a little bit longer:

*Nevertheless, in a reality brimming with social and political conflicts, civil wars, oppression, growing poverty and social injustice, it seems appropriate to conclude with a few general reflections on the way in which one could theorize the relationship of postdramatic theatre to the political. Issues that we call 'political' have to do with social power. For a long time, issues of power have been conceived in the domain of law, with its borderline phenomena of revolution, anarchy, state of emergency (Ausnahmezustand) and war. In spite of the noticeable tendency towards a juridification of all areas of life, however, 'power' is being organized increasingly as a micro-physics, as a web, in which even the leading political elite – not to mention single individuals – have hardly any real power over economico-political processes any more. As a result, political conflicts increasingly elude intuitive perception and cognition and consequently scenic representation. There are hardly any visible representatives of legal positions confronting each other as political opponents any more. What still attains an intuitable quality, by contrast, is the momentary suspension of normative, legal and political modes of behaviour i.e. the plainly non-political terror, anarchy, madness, despair, laughter, revolt, antisocial behaviour – and inherent in it, the already latently posited fanatical or fundamentalist negation of immanently secular, rationally founded criteria of action in general. Since Machiavelli, however, the modern demarcation of the political as an autonomous plane of argumentation has been based on the immanence of precisely these criteria.*

These two quotes raise the question of the political in postdramatic theatre. How is it possible to think politics and political theatre within the postdramatic paradigm? What kind of politics are we talking about when we talk about theatre? What about the political dimension in theatre after all the projects for the direct politicization and repoliticization of theatre that we witnessed from the historical avantgardes to Brecht, and from Brecht till recent days?

In the first quote, Lehmann denies theatre's possibility to revolutionize social relations. As he says, "not due to an apolitical cynicism", "but because of a changed assessment of its potential efficacy". In these words we hear the reverberation of Lehmann's earlier conclusion that theatre in collision with new and newer media has lost its central social position. Moreover, in it the representation of the political has changed and cannot be proceeded with in the same way. As Lehmann says:

*That politically oppressed people shown on stage do not make theatre political.*

We could add: “Not anymore.” Losing its monopoly of representing the wholeness of social reality, theatre has turned to its implicit politics. Concentration on processuality and the development of alternative models of decision-making, opposite to the dominant ones in our society, has caused a shift in the aspirations of postdramatic theatre. Lehmann is simply registering this situation. Turning to its inherent politics, invisible labor, process, the production of the new collectivity etc. are worthwhile efforts, but it seems that the question of theatre within the field of the macrophysics of power is not anymore on the agenda. Abandonment of theatre’s representational role as duplicator of an already existing non-theatre reality, has meant also the abandonment of the idea of theatre as the generator of overall social changes.

But let’s make a short detour in order to get closer to our problem. In *The meaning of Sarkozy*, Alain Badiou says:

*The communist hypothesis as such is generic, it is the basis of any emancipatory orientation, it names the sole thing that is worthwhile if we are interested in politics and history. But the way that the hypothesis presents itself determines a sequence: a new way for the hypothesis to be present in the interiority of new forms of organization and action.*

Talking about sequence, Badiou has in mind that there have been two great sequences in the communist hypothesis. The first one was that of its setting up. It ran from the French Revolution to the Paris Commune. It spanned the period of time from 1792 to 1871. Through it, all kinds of entirely new political phenomena were introduced into a wide range of countries across the world. This sequence was closed by the striking novelty and radical defeat of the Paris Commune. Its closure showed the extraordinary vitality of its formula, but also the limits of this same formula.

*For it was unable to give the revolution a national scope, or to organize effective resistance when the counter-revolution, with the tacit support of foreign powers, succeeded in bringing to bear a competent military response.*

The second sequence ran from 1917 (the October Revolution) to 1976 (the end of Cultural Revolution in China). It was dominated by the question: how to organize the new power, the new state, in such a way as to protect it from destruction by its enemies. The problem of this sequence “was no longer the existence of a popular working-class movement acting on the basis of the communist hypothesis, nor was it the generic idea of revolution in its insurrectionary form. The problem was that of victory and duration.” So, the basic distinction between the first and second sequence is that the latter one was concerned

with the realization of the communist hypothesis that had been formulated during the first one.

It would be interesting to examine what was happening in the thinking and praxis of theatre during the first and second sequence of the communist hypothesis and how these two areas were reflecting on each other, but that is a task that still awaits fulfillment. Badiou proceeds with the analysis of the second sequence, detecting the reasons for its failure:

*As was only normal, the second sequence in its turn created a problem that it lacked the means to resolve, by the very methods that had enabled it to resolve the problem handed down by the first sequence.*

Regardless of the accuracy of these historical correspondences, a similar movement of the hypothesis on theatre regarding its role as generator, anticipator or accelerator of revolution in social relations could be traced. If we just glance briefly over the formulation of this hypothesis in different periods of the history of theatre, we see a similar logic of its appearance and failure. The formulation of the hypothesis by the historical avantgarde came together with their demand to erase the border between art and life. Theatre, within the broader conception of art, was recognized as a means for revolutionizing social relations. The formulation of this hypothesis in theatre as a first sequence was followed by an attempt at its realization. The work of Bertold Brecht could be singled out as the most serious and most articulate in this field. But in the end, the problems which were in a way handed down to him by the historical avantgardes, situated in the broader context of Aristotelian dramaturgies, created new problems, which he lacked the means to resolve. Brecht's dependence on fable (story) as the *sine qua non* of his dramaturgy inhibited the further development and realization of the hypothesis of theatre as a generator, anticipator or accelerator of revolution in social relations. The theatre that came after Brecht abandoned "the political style, the tendency towards dogmatization, and the emphasis on the rational we find in Brechtian theatre." If we take Brecht's theatre as the last big sequence of this hypothesis, in the sense that it had clearly defined political aims and aimed at a revolution of social relations, then the question is, where are we now with this hypothesis in the present time and state of theatre? Drawing the parallel with Badiou's account of the communist hypothesis and its present situation could be helpful again. Badiou says:

*In this respect, we are closer to a set of problems already examined in the nineteenth century than we are to the great history of the revolutions of the*

*twentieth century. We are dealing, as in the 1840s, with absolutely cynical capitalists, ever more inspired by the idea that it is only wealth that counts, that the poor are simply lazy, that Africans are backward, and that the future, with no discernible limit, belongs to the 'civilized' bourgeoisies of the Western world. All kinds of phenomena from the nineteenth century are reappearing: extraordinarily widespread zones of poverty, within the rich countries as well as in the zones that are neglected or pillaged, inequalities that constantly grow, a radical divide between working people – or those without work – and the intermediate classes, the complete dissolution of political power into the service of wealth, the disorganization of revolutionaries, the nihilistic despair of wide sections of young people, the servility of a large majority of intellectuals, the determined but very restricted experimental activity of a few groups seeking contemporary ways to express the communist hypothesis... Which is no doubt why, as also happened in the nineteenth century, it is not the victory of the hypothesis that is on the agenda today, as everyone knows, but its conditions of existence. (...) First of all, to make the hypothesis exist.*

In Badiou's description of the situation in which the re-establishment of the conditions for the existence of the communist hypothesis is on the agenda, we find echoes of the same need for theatre today. Lehmann's abandonment of theatre's role as anticipator or accelerator or, why not, generator of a revolution in social relations should be abandoned. Instead, the conditions for the reappearance of the hypothesis of theatre as a generator of overall social changes should be found. This is not an easy task and it requires a lot of experimentation. The widespread depoliticization of theatre in terms of denying it the possibility of formulating and efficiently achieving political goals is essential for it within the logic of the neoliberal capitalistic market. Within this context, and as an ideological apparatus, it functions massively and predominantly by ideology. We can see the crystallization of neoliberal ideology in the tyranny of parliamentary democracy, which, as Morad Farhadpour says in his text "Secularism and politics in Iran", overpoliticizes people "in order to achieve a de-politicized society with free markets, a small state and minimum tension, where people can immerse themselves in their private lifestyles." He proceeds as follows:

*The main paradox of democracy is that it is not itself democratically produced. The origin of democracy, whether in a long process of reform or a sudden violent change, remains external to it. Democracy itself is never put to the vote.*

In the depoliticized society of the free market we cannot expect theatre to avoid this depoliticization. It enters the same process of commodification as any

other product. Its political potential has become a commodity like any other, and it has a certain value in the process of overpoliticization in the service of a depoliticized society. When Lehmann says that:

*Theatre abandons any attempt directly to anticipate or accelerate a revolution of social relations – not, as is carelessly imputed, due to an apolitical cynicism but because of a changed assessment of its potential efficacy,*

his conceptualization of theatre's depoliticization, wrapped in a thesis of the sober estimation of its potential efficacy, is actually a contribution to neoliberal peaceful coexistence and potential appropriation of any ideas as long as they do not attack its main ideological basis: the particularization of interest, private property etc.

It should not be overlooked that Lehmann's postdramatic paradigm has also entered the process of commodification. It has become a norm in the evaluation and categorization of recent, but also past theatre production. As Mr. Lehmann said yesterday, it is a label that makes some productions more saleable on the artistic market. Rimini Protokoll knows this very well, and they label themselves as postdramatic.

Back to the question of the political in theatre. I think, as I said before, that theatre will have to make the conditions for the reappearance of the hypothesis of the political in theatre. Maybe this hypothesis has changed since the presence of the political in ancient Greek theatre or since Erwin Piscators' political theatre. Maybe it should be reformulated, along with its tasks and goals. Maybe it should be rethought in relationship to new political paradigms. Today, as Brian Holmes has shown, we hear of globalistic fundamentalism, and theatre should reexamine its position within this field of the different bifurcations of the macrophysics of power. Within it, the reestablishment of conditions for the reemergence of the hypothesis seems crucial for the postdramatic paradigm. Lehmann says:

*It is not through the direct thematization of the political that theatre becomes political but through the implicit substance and critical value of its mode of representation.*

If I try to avoid the normative side of Lehmann's theory comprised in this utterance, I would like to finish by posing two questions: "Does today's theatre have the strength to create a political reality instead of a mere representation of social reality and critical valuation of its mode of representation? And what should this political reality be?"

## Summary

This paper examines the concept of the political in postdramatic theatre, as the issue has been posed by Hans-Thies Lehmann. By analogy with the “the communist hypothesis”, elaborated by Alain Badiou in his book *The meaning of Sarkozy*, this text problematizes Lehmann’s view that contemporary postdramatic theatre is not able directly to change social relations, and that its political potential is realized only through developing alternative (non-hierarchical) forms of collaboration, human relations and decision-making within the artistic process as such – forms which are different from those dominant in society. In the sense of Badiou’s argumentation, one should find new prerequisites for the revival of the hypothesis of theatre as a generator of overall social changes, which is a very hard task, requiring many further experiments. Lehmann’s conception of the depolitization of theatre resulting from a rational estimation of the political inefficacy of theatre in the contemporary media and consumer society, could become just a form of adaptation to and/or coexistence with the logic of the liberal capitalist market.

## Oliver Frljić

### POSTDRAMSKO POZORIŠTE I POLITIČKO POZORIŠTE

#### Rezime

U ovom radu se ispituje koncept političkog u postdramskom pozorištu, onako kako ovaj problem postavlja Hans-Tis Leman. Po analogiji s „komunističkom hipotezom” koju formuliše Alan Badju u knjizi *Značenje Sarkozija*, problematizuje se Lemanov stav da savremeno, postdramsko pozorište nije kadro da direktno menja društvene odnose i da se njegov politički potencijal ostvaruje samo razvojem alternativnih (nehijerarhijskih) oblika saradnje, odnosâ i donošenja odluka u samom umetničkom procesu kao takvom – oblika različitih od onih koji preovlađuju u društvu. U duhu Badjuovog razmatranja, trebalo bi naći uslove za povratak hipoteze o pozorištu kao generatoru sveukupnih društvenih promena, što je težak zadatak koji zahteva mnoge eksperimente. Lemanova koncepcija depolitizacije pozorišta, uslovljena racionalnom procenom političke (ne)efikasnosti pozorišta u savremenom medijskom i potrošačkom društvu, može da postane vid prilagođavanja i/ili koegzistencije s logikom liberalnog kapitalističkog tržišta.



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**“Everyone repeats the same rhetorical question:  
do we still need theater?”<sup>1</sup>**  
**Notes on one theatrical scene and one work of theater**

When in 2004 the complete translation of Lehmann’s *Postdramatic Theater* started to circulate throughout the regional academic and artistic scene, the prevailing impression was that, finally, we might have received the answer to the question: what kind of theater is possible, and, furthermore, needed with regard to contemporary social life? Today, more than ten years after Lehmann’s book was published in Germany (1999), and five years since the issue of its Croatian translation, it is necessary to requestion the effects of the introduction of the postdramatic paradigm, as well as of the actualization of the dramatic and postdramatic theatrical heritage. In the following notes I will try, as a theater director, to examine the specific principles – the ones that I recognize as being sensitive and/or potent in relation to my own work – which present the axis of a theatrical paradigm that I identify as characteristic of the local scene.

**1.**

The local theater scene should be considered alongside the current processes of its inclusion into the global order of cultural organization. Confronted with the problems of theoretically, ideologically, politically imprecise articulation, and invisibility in terms of the international art map and/or global market, as well as the absence of locally dominant referential apparatus, its agents are trying to exploit this transitional potential (in the social, but also the economic sense) of their own cultural space. Or, in other words, the weak

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<sup>1</sup> Jerzy Grotowski (Grotovski 1976: 35).

discursive ground of domestic centres of (theater) power present a unique challenge. Instead of tactical subversive actions that would above all trouble their positions, it is possible to perform and/or develop hybrid and context-sensitive artistic projects. Hence, Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater* served, and often still serves as the axis of those ideological attempts to establish a critical, creative and theoretical, or productional and interpretative theatrical paradigm.

## 2.

The process of generating an art scene in a particular cultural space is a constant work in progress, as a consequence of which, it is hard to evaluate its success. However, ten years after Lehmann's book came out, it seems necessary to re-examine the *postdramatic* paradigm in regard to the current contextual circumstances (above all, domestic ones). This should be done not only in order to review it critically, but also to develop further the possibilities of responsible participation in those processes of constructing, performing and constituting a theatrical scene – in a way that would present it as a socially relevant one, in spite of the market mechanisms of depolitization which are, within the local context as well, already gradually taking over the cultural organization in general.

## 3.

In terms of the local scene, the paradigm of postdramatic theater has played a crucial role as the legitimating discourse that has included various performative actions into the body of theatrical discipline, along with which the needed referential apparatus has been staged. In other words, the dominance of a dramatic text and its ideology of a unique and well-ordered micro-system as the only legitimate one had been thoroughly brought into question, as a result of which the borders of theatrical arts territory have become more permeable. Now, it would be naïve to assume that hybrid practices had not managed to penetrate into the operative logic of the world of theater before; however, Lehmann provided them with visibility, whilst re-territorializing one entire field of art practice and theory. Instead of a centralized and hierarchically structured model (of art creation and perception), a new theoretical infrastructure was established – one that enabled the recognition of hybrid acts of theater production and reception. In this way, the language game, or

the suitable *images* of theatre (Wittgenstein, 1996), have been significantly re-defined.

#### 4.

Nevertheless, the usage of the postdramatic interpretive apparatus and/or poetics has been facing certain problems. During the last ten years, the context of theater work production and reception has altered considerably. The current art world is highly influenced by the operative market logic, as well as by its mechanisms of spectacularization (Crary, 1997), which present the decisive conditions for the standpoint from which we have to review it critically. Hence, Lehmann's in-depth theorization today shows at least two weaknesses. The first one is the probability of its general, that is, un-critical application. The particular cultural circumstances are being overlooked, owing to which, the postdramatic paradigm could also be understood as a new uniting, or *grand* (hegemonic) universalizing project, in regard to the current market principle 'anything goes'. The second problem in the application of the postdramatic paradigm, in terms of the local context, is its post-procedural character, that is, its mostly interpretive usage, and the weakness of its intervention into the very processes of practicing theater, or its methodology.

#### 5.

Thus we can conclude that today, in Serbia, because of the heritage of dramatic and postdramatic theater theory and practice, it is necessary to establish a context-sensitive platform that would (continuously) provide us with strategies and/or tactics for critical artistic theater work, despite the gradual *cooling* of its traditional media.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The current unfavorable status of traditional artistic media could also be understood in terms of their *cooling* in the context of McLuhan's conceptualizations of 'hot' and 'cool' media. In his opinion: "A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in 'high definition'. High definition is the state of being well filled with data" (McLuhan, 2008: 25). McLuhan formulated his thesis with regard to assumptions concerning processes of informatization of society and culture, while today, it is possible to understand *high definition* as 'the state of being well filled' in terms of *spectacle* (in the way that Debords refers to it), or images, auraticity, desire. In other words, it is possible to conclude that the *cool* (traditional) artistic media are being slowly abandoned on account of the *hot* new-media experiences.

## 6.

If the traditionally established operative principles of theater arts have become inefficient as such (Ilić, 2009), and if the postdramatic ones have proved to be too general (regarding the particularity of one art scene), should we completely abandon these disciplinary self-regulations, or should we still work with/ on them? In one of his essays, Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 1986) theorized and demonstrated a possible methodological interference in an order of knowledge. Derrida based his intervention on the assumption that we inevitably act in relation to the heritage, while its processing raises the questions of *critical relations* and *critical responsibility*. In his opinion, the way in which we address the heritage carries subversive potential, because it is through our approach that we penetrate into the very logic of understanding, or the acts constituting a specific order of knowing. Therefore, following Derrida's thesis, if we use existing notions as instruments, while refusing to attach to them the value of *truth*, and if we are ready to reject them at any moment, then their relative efficiency is being exploited, since they are destroying the old machinery to which they belong and of which they are parts. In this way the language of human knowledge criticizes itself. In other words, if we want to re-question critically, and furthermore, to act contrary to a certain (dramatic and/or postdramatic) paradigm, we must do that by re-using its own notions, logic, principles, that is, its own *language game*.

## 7.

How, then, should we approach specific artistic media? If we want to establish a theatrical paradigm that challenges the assumptions of its autonomy and ineffectiveness in the context of concrete cultural actions, we should think of and perform contemporary theatre as a post-disciplinary practice. By mobilizing the term 'discipline', we oblige ourselves to work on/within the existing territory of theater arts, that is, the "body of knowledge in the framework of the division of scientific work and academic specialization" (Bennett, Grossberg, Morris, 2005: 89), as well as with the operative principles of their procedures, which could be understood as "the group of regulations that defines the way in which the order of a collective is being maintained" (Mićunović, 1988: 42). On the other hand, following Lyotard's writings on postmodernism, the prefix 'post-' suggests "something like a conversion" (Lyotard, 2001: 363), which, among other things, implies an illegal appropriation of property belonging to another. Thus, we could conclude that by using the prefix 'post-'

we create an opportunity for a wide variety of legal and illegal (hybrid, overturning, guerilla, and other) relations towards the heritage and the operative logic of the field of action within which it is being activated; whilst all those relations are, at the same time, being named as legitimate. In other words, with the prefix 'post-' we reject (as naïve) the presumption of the production and reception of art beyond and independently from a role that was traditionally prescribed to it by a culture; instead of which, we confront it differently, by using the existing language, notional apparatus and operative principles.

## 8.

Following Derrida's thesis, the understanding of local theatrical practices as postdisciplinary practices would ask for a new reading and/or creation of a new operative logic within the existing protocols and their principal procedures of performing, signifying, and *affectation*. Otherwise put, a performance should be based on the following:

(i) the calling into question of the ideology of the dominant theatrical master-protocol; since the principle of *coherence* (or well-ordered unity) does not have to rely on the narrative pattern – the *story* (which is closed in terms of meanings); moreover, if we transpose this principle to the entire event (for instance, by including the place and time of the show within the unities of time and space), as well as to the audience, it is possible to base a performance on a structure opened for various 'readings', in which case the spectators become an integral part of it. Thus, it is possible to consider *coherence* in terms of categories such as event, communicational exchange, active participation of the audience, and others.<sup>3</sup>

(ii) the re-distribution of the work organization, which is traditionally based on the autonomy of its phases. In this way, we could undermine the ordered sequences: text – directing – performance, or producers – artists/performers – audience, while aiming to question those mechanisms of hierarchical structuration that are inherent to the theater, or, in other words, the performance and representation of power positions (in terms of race, gender, class, etc). In other words, it is possible to apply the principle of consistency (which is typical for the dramatic paradigm) to the entire machinery of a theater show – by making it visible (as a body that does not hide, but rather exhibits its machine-

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<sup>3</sup> The example of this sort of intervention is the scene of the 'auction' of used, almost worthless objects, which are being bought by the audience during Rene Pollesch's show "Pablo in der Plusfiliale", which was performed in Belgrade at the 39<sup>th</sup> Bitef festival.

organs and their functioning), and/or by inscribing open references to specific outer circumstances into the very body of a performed piece.<sup>4</sup>

(iii) the conceptualization of the *effects* of each particular performance, since the principle of *plausibility* can also be understood as the impossibility of an identical repetition of the show, due to the unpredictability of performances. Here, we are addressing the constitutive role of each particular performance, contrary to the presumption of their neutral repetitions. The principle of *plausibility* therefore does not need to be based on the assumption of the plot's probability and/or the possibility of an identification with an analogous image of the world (Ranciere, 2005), but rather on the recognition of concrete cultural roles and patterns, realized during the game in which we participate as players entitled to by the artistic practice and/or regime by which it is identified.

Thus, a theater work which would deal critically with its own disciplinary heritage could consider a certain (conclusive) thought, but should not be led by the mechanisms of representation (*mimetics*). Instead, in a relation to the particular situation, it could problematize its own event-ness and the experience of it. Hence, once again, the needed action is not the one that would be directed towards a new model of art production and reception, but rather one that would be focused on the re-articulation of the operative principles of its own media.

## 9.

In order to further examine the suggested interventions, I will look more closely at one theater work, which I prepared and performed together with visual artist Vojislav Klačar during the period of December 2008/January 2009: *X Parliamentary Elections in the Kingdom of Koreta*, performed at the Dom Omladine Gallery in Belgrade.<sup>5</sup> For that occasion, Klačar and I used the theatrical regimes of performing, signifying, and effects which were invested into the gallery space. This piece was realized over a period of 14 days, and in a following way: the first day was dedicated to the announcement of pre-electoral, electoral, and post-electoral events and processes, and was followed by the

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<sup>4</sup> The projections of the interviews with all participants in the process of a theater production, emitted during the performance of "Life no. 2" (written by Ivan Vyrpaev, directed by Anja Suša, performed at the Belgrade Drama Theatre in 2007) could be understood as the principle of *consistency* applied in this way.

<sup>5</sup> See the publication issued under the same title: Klačar, V., *X Parlamentarni izbori u Kraljevini Koreti*, Belgrade 2008.

congresses of political parties and coalitions, as well as the reports from those congresses (10 days for 10 electoral lists); on the election day, the results were publicly announced; while the last exhibiting day was dedicated to the post-electoral comments. The space of the gallery had been divided into three units: the first one was the entrance, and the second consisted of a small number of seats and the screen (with the recordings of the conversations that took place in the third unit). The third unit (or the "stage"), which was not visible to the audience but into which the viewers could peek (through the narrow gaps in the wall dividing the second and third units), was the place in which the artist (Klačar) held a conversation (one per day) with a different member of the audience (who was randomly chosen) about the announced themes (reports from the congresses, electoral results, etc.). The gallery was open every day during a certain period of time (one hour), while during the rest of the day (when the space was closed to visitors) this piece was created; the inner-party and parliamentary elections were also performed inside the gallery.

## 10.

At first glance, we could say that this was a visual artwork (which was suggested by its appearance inside a gallery). However, this work chose the theatrical medium as its primary instrument. All the conventions that traditionally constitute a theatrical work were present: the space was divided into the space of the audience and the space of the 'fiction'; the piece had a fixed timing (one hour), and formally it was repeated (the camera that recorded the conversations, which were emitted in parallel, was static, while the chosen frame was the same every night); then, there were the performers and their lines, etc. On the other hand, if we decide to "read" this work literally as a theatrical work, the following trespasses are occurring:

(i) A dramatic narrative is undoubtedly present.<sup>6</sup> The piece starts with the announcement of the events that will follow (*exposition*), and it culminates through congresses (particular different *peaks*) until the parliamentary elections (the *moment of ultimate tension*). Should we choose to follow one character, his/her political destiny depends upon his/her position achieved after his/her party congress, as well as the outcomes of other party/coalition congresses; while finally, the possibility of him/her getting into the government depends upon the results of the entire parliamentary elections. However, this potential

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<sup>6</sup> The paradigmatic example of the traditionally established *valid* construction of a dramatic plot is certainly Freytag's pyramid (Đokić, 1987: 445).

dramatic entity, independently from the evening performances that are being 'repeated', is stretched out across all 14 days of the exhibition. The audience is provided with the experience of the entity only if it visits the exhibition every day, during which the experience itself has been moved from the space of the scene (*fiction*) towards the field of reception. In other words, each member of the audience decides upon how many particular performances s/he will visit, and on what days, by which s/he re-constructs his/her own entity (it is possible that the visitor chooses one political party and/or coalition, attends the report from their electoral congress, and then, in accordance with that choice, follows/reads the other electoral results).

(ii) Not only were the usual working phases not carried out as autonomous units, but they were performed within a single time and space framework. The text of the show was only partially prepared. It was also created during the performance, with an unprepared guest (a member of the audience), and since it depended upon the conversation, the questions as well as the cultural role which that guest (either more or less deliberately) invested became a part of it. The staging (or *directing*) was based on the selection of the camera's position, that is to say, on the *frame* itself, while the possibility of control as well as the preparation of the show (the rehearsal phase) was minimal. At the same time, the transparency of that act (the choice made) was achieved with the presence of the screen, due to which the assumed invisibility of the director, had also been, as such, rejected.

(iii) The particularity of each performance, contrary to the assumption of neutral repetition, was achieved by means of different topics, but also through the high level of *permeability* – the audience was allowed to access the space of the scene (*to trespass*), and furthermore, the material appearance of the work (which was emphasized with the screen as the final point of the performance, and the recording as the only material trace of the piece) depended directly upon the guest – his/her questions during the conversation, but also her/his looks, rhythms, gestures. The guest was thus the constitutive element of the performance. S/he influenced his/her partner (one of the rules of the stage), s/he was present at/by the screen (the visitor inscribed him/herself into the piece) and what is more, without him/her, or the audience, that single evening event, as the segment of the entity, could not have happened – it would not have been postponed, but irreversibly unperformed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For more information visit: [http://koreta-making.info/eng\\_x\\_parliamentary\\_elections.html](http://koreta-making.info/eng_x_parliamentary_elections.html)

11.

Going further, we could say that, whilst looking at *X Parliamentary Elections in the Kingdom of Koreta*, we could examine more carefully the effectiveness of remaking those traditional theatrical conventions gathered around the principle of *plausibility*.<sup>8</sup> One of them is the conception of *the fourth wall* which is characteristic of the representative, or *mimetic* theatre and the proscenium stage – in other words, that ideology and practice of signifying which we identify as ‘realistic’. *The fourth wall* stands for the missing wall (in terms of the space, this conception refers to the portal and proscenium lines that together form the frame of the partition), and therefore, it enables the performers’ play, by providing them with the possibility to forget the presence of the audience (Gadamer, 2001). On the other hand, according to the key hypothesis of theoretical psychoanalysis, *the fourth wall* can also be understood as the screen for the projection of the phantasmatic borders of the meaning. Either way, it presents a unique ideological and political construction. It is the line of separation between the space of the stage and the auditorium, or between the orders of fiction and of reality (the imaginative and the real) – being that which is constitutive for both of these (separated) spheres. Thus, *the fourth wall* presents the axis of the inclusion / exclusion of artistic skills in terms of the general division of social activities. And, as such, it is the precondition of a successful exchange – the investment and consumption of a desire and pleasure.

In the above mentioned work, this borderline is not absent (visibly deleted), but its effects are carried to their extremes. The wall, as a real physical obstacle, was placed in the middle of a gallery space. What is more, at the same time it blocked the gaze (peeking through the gaps on both sides of the wall required an effort) and enabled it (the screen was hanging on it). Thus the wall, as the line of the separation and place of the juncture of two simultaneous orders (of fiction and reality), was not only materially present, but was also the central site of the event, since the act of trespassing had been its very

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<sup>8</sup> It would also be interesting to think of *X Parliamentary Elections in the Kingdom of Koreta* in terms of visual media. Briefly, in accordance with the tradition of organizing exhibitions, the only objects present inside the gallery were the walls (which were dividing the space) and the technical equipment (a television screen, a camera, a microphone, etc.), while the material trace of the work was present there only as a segment of the performance (the recordings were not replayed). Hence, it is possible to conclude that this piece, from the viewpoint of visual artistic disciplines, was based on spatial re-organization (of the actual space of the art gallery and/or art institution), or its re-ideologization and re-politicization.

condition. Hence, we could conclude that the entire investment of the artistic practice had been, in this case, organized around that wall, as the screen of the projections of the desires that were coming from both sides – the one seducing, by watching, and the other seduced (on the other side of the wall, where the screen was hanging, the camera was placed as the technological / media extension of the human eye). In other words, the performance of the entire work had been directed towards the challenge and accumulation of the unspendable surplus of the pleasure of transgression.<sup>9</sup>

## 12.

Different issues gathered around the assumed importance of *plausibility* were addressed by the participants at this artistic event. The *role* (to follow theatrical language) of the author, source of *Koreta*, was performed by the artist himself, and the role of the guest, by the member of the audience – of that very audience. These auto-performances obtained the status of *representations* thanks to the camera, for which the play was performed, and the screen which enabled the transmission, that is, for the viewers for which the recordings were emitted. *Plausibility* was thus achieved as the effect of an image/gaze, rather than of a technique.<sup>10</sup> It was imposed as ‘literal’, which brought other conceptions into question – those of *plausibility* as an artistic category and/or value. The questions of fictionalization and representation of identities became (seemingly) irrelevant, on account of the taking over of those already existing and active cultural roles. Altogether, it seemed as if the mechanisms of recognition and identification were happening by themselves, free of the machinery which, in the case of a traditional theatrical show, enables them. However, the performance of *X Parliamentary Elections in the Kingdom of Koreta* did not refer to the conceptions of documentary material in the arts (with a denoted order of signifiers). It was plausible as a result of a literal usage of the disciplinary language within which it operates, while it appeared simply as what it is – an artistic practice. It was as if the practice provoked the regime of art perception to invest the beliefs immanent in real life, while aiming to outplay it during

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<sup>9</sup> According to Bataille, a successful and completed trespass/ is one that “perserves the prohibition in order to enjoy it. The inner feeling of eroticism asks from the one who is experiencing it to feel, in an equal measure, the anxiety that is the base of the prohibition and the desire that leads to its neglect.” (Bataj, 2009: 34).

<sup>10</sup> In his essay on Schumann, Barthes writes about virtuosity: “virtuosity is an image rather than a technique” (Barthes, 1991: 294).

their mutual crossing, due to the un-readable surplus produced during the act of exchange, that is, during the very experience of it.

### 13.

If we aim to achieve critical impacts by postdisciplinary actions, in spite of the imperatives of arts translation into new media formats, in what way could we apply those assumptions once we approach artworks that we consider traditional, such as institutional repertory theatre? Even the places of soft resistance (in terms of one particular work, or the local scene in general) to the current regime of signifying/reading theater shows, are important, and independently from the intentions that are causing them and/or their capacity to overturn. They are important because they point to the body and borders of the existing disciplinary territory, while the act of noticing them is shown to be a symptom of a need for a (new) paradigmatic shifting. We could neglect them, by accepting them as necessary obstacles, or we could comprehend the potential subversive effects of the uncertainty of a live performance in general. In other words, those suggested interventions could be understood as the effects of *stitching* (*point de caption*),<sup>11</sup> or else, as Šuvaković writes, as the intervention of a newly introduced signifier that by itself does not bring meaning, but for that reason exactly – as a signifier without a signified – effects a miraculous reversal of the entire field of meanings, and redefines its readability. Or, as Žižek puts it: “The fundamental effect of the *point de caption* is that miraculous shift (...) by which the thing which was the very source of the chaos becomes the proof and the testimony of a triumph” (Žižek, 2008: 143). Nonetheless, the signifiers without the signified (due to their non-representative character, that is, their resistance to inclusion in the field of representation) often fall under the register of excessive experiences, and the current dominant paradigm is only strengthened by overcoming them. Therefore, it is necessary to create a specific atmosphere, one that would not (only) lead to structural changes and/or changes in terms of the content,<sup>12</sup> but which would initiate the re-ideologization of the gaze directed towards those coming and/or already performed performances, in order to enable the comprehension of the potent experiences of live performances. And by those beliefs that are

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<sup>11</sup> Here, we refer to Lacan’s notion of *point de caption*.

<sup>12</sup> On the local scene, examples of structural re-articulations in terms of the content, and in spite of the institutional repertory organization of the scene, could be the theater shows directed by Ana Miljanić: “The Brothel of Warriors” (CZKD, performed at the Bitef Festival in 2001) and “Pornography” (Belef Festival, 2005).

gathered around and mobilized by the conceptions of “live performance”, we refer here to the actions of (different) interventions of *stitching*, within the already existing (local) field of theatre arts. In other words, what we should aim at is, on the one hand, the comprehension of those miraculous changes when it comes to the experience of art, and their potential clustering around a possible coherent position of art production and perception; and, on the other, the specific operative logic of a postdisciplinary paradigm that would enable a constant shifting, in order continuously to question and examine the conditions and the effects of art event-ness, or which would persistently generate new (unexpected and uncertain) shifts. The postdisciplinary theatrical paradigm should thus enable practices that are, owing to their field, always performed as context-sensitive, or as critical and proactive.

#### 14.

Everyone’s rhetorical question: *Do we still need theater?* is becoming increasingly present owing to current technological and market imperatives. Artistic practices, being un-readable, un-translatable, un-inclusive, appear as the *spectral* surplus of the present world of the (*hot*) new media presence. Nevertheless, exactly because they are un-adaptable activities, they are the ones that reveal critical potential. Hence, it is their heritage we need to mobilize in order to enable radical experiences of the impossible – the problematization and questioning – despite the current neoliberal cybernetic order (Baudrillard, 2001) that aims at, and attains, total control of contemporary social life.

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## Summary

This paper addresses questions of theatrical heritage, while aiming to investigate the possibility of doing and perceiving contemporary theater, as well as art in general, as relevant social practices. When it comes to theater, in regard to contemporary ways of life, it appears that a new platform is needed – one based on the memory of dramatic and postdramatic theory and practice, which would enable strategies and/or tactics of context-sensitive artistic work. While examining the example of one theater work from the local scene, the main focus of this essay is on the effects of the current language game of the world of theater, and the significance and potential of its re-articulations.

## **Vlatko Ilić**

### **„SVI PONAVLJAJU ISTO RETORIČKO PITANJE: DA LI NAM JE JOŠ UVEK POTREBNO POZORIŠTE?“ BELEŠKE O POZORIŠNOJ SCENI I JEDAN POZORIŠNI RAD**

#### **Rezime**

Ovaj rad pokreće pitanja pozorišnog nasleđa s namerom da ispita mogućnosti stvaranja i prihvatanja savremenog pozorišta i umetnosti uopšte kao relevantnih društvenih praksi. Kad je reč o pozorištu, imajući u vidu savremene uslove života, ispostavlja se da je potrebna nova platforma – ona zasnovana na nasleđu dramske i postdramske teorije i prakse, koja će omogućiti strategije i/ili taktike za umetnički rad koji bi bio osetljiv na kontekst. Ispitujući primer jednog pozorišnog rada sa lokalne scene, ovaj esej se fokusira na efekte tekuće jezičke igre sveta pozorišta, te na značenje i mogućnosti njegove reartikulacije.

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