

# **LE TABLEAU VIVANT. ON INTERMEDIALITY IN THEATRE**

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**Abstract:** *As a form of manifestation that is an extension of what we might call inter-arts, intermediality entails not only the reconfiguration of theatre's status but also that of its structural elements. Thus, presence becomes an unavoidable theme in analytical approaches to theatre. It is a presence that an actor's body rewrites in the sense of those multiply-integrative meanings of the on-stage media that are on the same level with the established art of the theatre. In our study we will attempt to point out some of the elements whereby intermediality transforms the theatrical image into a "composition" with paradoxical meanings and significances.*

**Keywords:** *theatre, postdramatic, intermediality, presence, otherness*

Intermediality, a concept of choice in many recent studies and researches, has roots that go deep down in history, its presence having been attested since the advent of the alphabet<sup>42</sup>. A favourite trope in the poetics of Romanticism, given its highlighting of the connections between the arts, intermediality became, in the 1990s, one of the constant concerns of cultural and philosophical exegesis. However, whereas sustained research has been devoted to exploring

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<sup>42</sup> V. Derrick DE KERCKOVE, "A Theory of Greek Tragedy", in: *Substance*, no. 29, May 1981, pp. 23-25; Jean-Marc LARRUE, "Théâtre et intermédialité: une rencontre tardive", in: George BROWN, Gerd HAUCK, Jean-Marc LARRUE (sous la direction de), *Intermédialités: histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques*, Centre de recherche sur l'intermédialité (Presses de l'Université de Montréal), no. 12, 2008, p. 13.

most arts from the vantage point of intermediality, theatre has remained somewhat overlooked, perhaps because of its syncretism of the arts, a syncretism that spectators have subconsciously adopted as a prerequisite and as an implicit function of stage performances. On the other hand, the ever more aggressive interference of the new technologies – in an art that piques itself on the force of the unmediated, natural rapport between spectators and actors – has triggered the most radical currents and counter-currents of opinion.

### *The body – presence and utopia*

The fact that the actor's body and voice tend to be associated with a certain "mechanics" of the stage or that they have been placed under the authority of the new intermedial culture has led to the notions of *presence* and *presentification* being passed through special understanding filters. It appears that *mimesis*, considered to be unnecessary in post-dramatic theatre, is one the factors most affected by this. Intriguingly, *presence* became visible (in the sense that it began to be taken into account, reflected upon, pondered) only when the integrity and enshrined values of performance started to be threatened, when the new media came to the forefront of performance, claiming, sometimes with excessive zeal, their right to assert themselves:

In theatrical parlance, presence usually refers either to the relationship between actor and audience – the actor as manifestation before an audience – or, more specifically, to the actor's psychophysical attractiveness to the audience, a concept related to that of charisma. Concepts of presence are grounded in notions of actorly representation; the actor's presence is often thought to derive from her embodiment of, or even possession by, the character defined in a play text, from the (re)presentation of self through the mediation of character, or, in the Artaudian/Grotowskian/Beckian line of thought, from the

archetypal psychic impulses accessible through the actor's physicality<sup>43</sup>.

Because it is heterogeneous, theatrical space must by necessity – at the very moment of assuming the ontological discourse (explicitly or not) – modify the coordinates of performative thinking, of the *mise-en-scène*, of the performance or representation as a whole. The relation between theatrical and quotidian space retains the *heterotopia* of re-presentation, even though the paradigm may appear, at times, to have been wilfully violated (with a view to a retractile homotopia). The concept of heterotopia was consecrated by Michel Foucault in a by now famous conference of 1967, entitled *Of Other Spaces*:

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another<sup>44</sup>.

By heterotopia, Foucault affixes the concrete space of regional utopias and, with it, that of fiction, providing the theatre with an effective means of preserving (as well as engaging) its fundamental data (pertaining to its relations), which are reflected in twofold – real and imaginary – manner, being deterritorialized<sup>45</sup>,

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<sup>43</sup> Philip AUSLANDER, *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1993, p. 37.

<sup>44</sup> See Michel FOUCAULT, “Of Other Spaces”, translated by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986), p. 24: “L’hétérotopie a pour règle de juxtaposer en un lieu réel plusieurs espaces qui normalement devraient être incompatibles. Le théâtre qui est une hétérotopie fait succéder sur le rectangle de la scène toute une série de lieux étrangers.” (Michel Foucault, *Des espaces autres*, in: *Dits et écrits*, tome IV, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1994, pp. 75-76.)

<sup>45</sup> We use the concept of deterritorialization in the sense defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in *L’Anti-Œdipe* (as *decontextualization*, therefore), but also in that described in *Mille Plateaux*, where the reference is to the “body without organs”. As a verb and as movement, the theatre partakes of the “flux” of writing: “Desire no longer dares to desire, having become a desire of desire, a desire of the despot’s desire. The mouth no longer speaks, it drinks the letter. The eye no longer

retrieved from their original matrix and placed in the novel space of fiction. In addition to this, it may be claimed that having consolidated its heterotopic constructs, today's theatre may demand an activation of the signs that were scattered or abandoned amidst the marginality of the real in the early twentieth century, in the place where we could encounter those barely comforted outcasts, buffoons, melancholics and, not infrequently, the artists of the avant-gardes.

However, theatrical creation opens the path to philosophical exercise outside pure, strictly intellectual thinking, through a sensitive, tangible, immediate representation. All of us who are *in the midst* or *in the proximity* of the acting area (actors, spectators, machinists, etc.) are urged by the stage to broaden our sphere of spiritual concerns, to make visible –either by identifying with the character (with the Other) or by the Brechtian “distancing effect” – our own human nature, as well as to reveal the unseen or, at times, dissimulated dimension of the self. Thus, through theatre, philosophy affords a moment in which it represents (or renders at the level of concreteness) not only everything it may imagine or envisage, but also everything that would otherwise appear to be irrational in relation to the norms of contingency. This is the moment when repressed feelings are excised, when (albeit fleetingly) the clouds brought forth by our unbearable, unconfessed, forbidden options are dispelled, and when absolute freedom is asserted.

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sees, it reads. The body no longer allows itself to be engraved like the earth, but prostrates itself before the engravings of the despot, the region beyond the earth, the new full body”, in Gilles DELEUZE, Felix GUATTARI, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalisme and schizophrenia*, translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, preface by Michel Foucault, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983, p. 205: “Le désir n'ose plus désirer, devenu désir du désir, désir du désir du despote. La bouche ne parle plus, elle boit la lettre. L'œil ne voit plus, il lit. Le corps ne se laisse plus graver comme la terre, mais se prosterne devant les gravures du despote, l'outre-terre, le nouveau corps plein.” – Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. L'Anti-Œdipe*, Paris, L'Éditions de Minuit, 1972, p. 244.

A complex paradigm is therefore outlined in which the theatre – in its original form, *ab origine* – undergoes a radical transformation. Thus, the stage performance or representation emerges as a multimedial “fabric”, in which the actor’s body and “vivid” voice represent mere components of a heterogeneous complex, participating, along with the imaginal and sound *presences* of the mechanical, electrical, digital means, etc., in the overall performance phenomenon. As a result, the *media*<sup>46</sup> of the corporeal – its perception, the interpretation it demands – appears distorted by the other media. The stage production – or, rather, the theatre performance legitimizes intermediality as a (mutually advantageous) relationship between the most diverse of signifiers. We might say that, as of now, the performance distinguishes itself through *relational* or *intermedial signifiers*, including, above all, words, gestures, sounds (verbal, musical, etc.) and images as a whole: in other words, stage composition. Like the phenomenon of theatre within theatre, that of picture/painting in theatre catalyses not only the self-referential function of the staged event, but also that of paraphrasing, of remedialization<sup>47</sup>, in the sense that it steers the performance onto other arts, which it commingles, encapsulates and converts into hybrids. Finally, through a “defeat” that it insistently portrays as a “triumph”, the theatre may be described as a differentiated, multimedia construction, with tensions that are hardly ever offset, the most relevant example being that of the postdramatic representation, in which – to sponge on Hans-Thies Lehmann’s concept – an “interstitial field” is at work. We may therefore say that:

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<sup>46</sup> We are using the Latin term *media* herein to denote the space that underlies the origin of the representation.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jay David BORTER, Richard GRUSIN, “Remediation: Understanding New Media”, in: *Configuration*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, vol. 4, no. 3 (1996), p. 338.

Duration, momentariness, simultaneity and unrepeatability become experiences of time in a form of art that no longer restricts itself to presenting the final outcome of its secret creative process but instead valorizes the temporal process of becoming a picture as a “theatrical” process. The task of the spectators is no longer the neutral reconstruction, the re-creation and patient retracing of the fixed image but rather the mobilization of their own ability to react and experience in order to realize their participation in the process that is offered to them<sup>48</sup>.

*The “inner enlightenment” of the body*

The “visor effect” Jacques Derrida referred to in one of his seminars in 2001, a metaphor of the “wolf” mask (*loup*) worn at the masked balls, was once enjoyed by the spectator of the theatre *à l’italienne*. The spectator hides himself from the world and gives rise, on his own, inner stage, to a “metonymic substitute”, a “simulacrum” or a “fantasy.” After the lifting of the curtains, the spectator, unseen by anyone, delegates his unspoken feelings, concealed, as they are, from the gaze of his fellow human beings, and enacts them “on stage”, evoking them softly, urging them to triumph in the dialogue with and in the struggle against himself and the others; in other words, he subjects them to metamorphosis, so that he may *fabricate* another, augmented existence, which is sometimes ennobled, sometimes debased. Lest he should put on the image of a Leviathan (like the one described by Thomas Hobbes), or, at least, without being aware of such a metamorphosis, the spectator takes on the features of the Derridean *sovereign human*:

Well, man, who is the most eminent living creation of God, the art of man that is the most excellent replica of the art of God, the art of this living being, man, imitates the art of God but, being unable to

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<sup>48</sup> Hans-Thies LEHMANN, *Postdramatic Theatre*, translated and with an introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby, Routledge, London/New-York, 2006, p. 187.

*create, fabricates* and, being unable to engender a natural animal, fabricates an artificial animal<sup>49</sup>.

To put it differently, through the actor, the stage and the props onto which he directs his creative gaze, he endeavours to give life to artefact and set it “into motion”, into acting. Today, on the verge of postdramatic theatre, the spectator unconsciously approaches the space of acting when his own reasoning no longer suffices, when no longer has assumptions and when the past can no longer provide him with valid considerations. For him, the creation he encounters on stage – and in which he recognizes himself, stripped of quotidian artificiality – is the very Derridean *supplement*. Without being that something which can set his existence aright, the supplement represents the “addition” of his own life, to the extent that he wins the chance to originate (in the sense of conceive) his own imagination and fantasy, as well as, eventually, his entire being:

The question is of an originary supplement, if this absurd expression may be risked, totally unacceptable as it is within classical logic. Rather the supplement of origin: which supplements the failing origin and which is yet not derived; this supplement is, as one says of a spare part [une pièce], of the original make [d’origine] [or a document, establishing the origin]<sup>50</sup>.

Prior to cognitive experiences (that is, before noetics or, in Kant, prior to “intellectual apprehension”), the body was the one that

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<sup>49</sup> Jacques DERRIDA, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Volume I, translated by Geoffrey Bennington, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, p. 26: “L’homme, qui est la plus éminente création vivante de Dieu, l’art de l’homme qui est la plus excellente réplique de l’art de Dieu, l’art de ce vivant qu’est l’homme imite l’art de Dieu, mais, faute de pouvoir *créer*, il *fabrique* et faute de pouvoir engendrer un animal naturel, il fabrique techniquement, prothétiquement, un animal artificiel.” (*Le souverain bien – ou l’Europe en mal de souveraineté*. La conférence de Strasbourg, 8 juin 2004, Cités, 2007/2, n° 30, p. 135).

<sup>50</sup> Jacques DERRIDA, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1997 (1967), p. 313: “Il s’agit donc d’un supplément originaire, si cette expression absurde peut être risquée, tout irrecevable qu’elle est dans une logique classique. Supplément d’origine plutôt: qui supplée l’origine défaillante et qui pourtant n’est pas dérivé; ce supplément est, comme on dit d’une pièce, d’origine.” (Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, p. 442).

assumed the role of thinking not only one's own world, but also the world next door or elsewhere. Occupying a central position in the economy of the performance (anthropomorphizing the specific vision of theatre as an art), the actor's body shifted from the *natural* to the *artificial*, without sacrificing the valences of its organic vitality, but adding those of a subjective kinaesthesia. The theatre is thus entitled to make recourse both to the represented *subject-in-itself* and to the image outside the body-sign or, in other words, to use Douglass W. Bailey's term, to the corporeality at the core of dramatic action, that which serves as a counterpart to the *real* world of the self. In light of Aristotle's attempts to operate a conjunction between the two axes of the *nous pathetikos* (which is related to the senses, to matter, being active and intelligible, in the sense of being able to conceptualize) and *nous superior* (pertaining to reason), we can say that the construction of the role leads to a reconfiguration of the actor's body, which vacillates between the status of an *object* and that of a *being*; this entails a moulding of the very idea of *thinking* and *knowing* through the character embodied on the stage and the theatrical art.

Now is the time for a reintroduction of the spectator "into (the game of) acting", as its function is activated and the relationship between looking and being looked at is thus brought into question. Therefore, in constructing his role (of the character, of the hero), the actor re-discovers his body, in a manner similar to that described in Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalytic theories, but also the way in which, long before them, a "doctor mirabilis" of the kind Roger Bacon was, believed that the only genuine experience was related to inner enlightenment; only the world within us can allow things to reveal themselves in bare form, that is, to present them in the light of *truth*. The use of motricity in a specific way, distinct from that of everyday life, sheds light on the above-mentioned staged *corporeality*, marking a return to the primitive ways (in the best sense of the word) of expressing the self. A means and an end, at the same time, the actor's body triggers cognitive, emotional

manifestations etc., through subjective gestures, which take precedence over the deceitful word, stuck in prefabricated meanings. Through self-representation, we discover a mechanism *au rebours* for the construction of identity: the actor's self "enwraps" his body, conveying it thus as the subject of Being. In other words, through representation, somewhat paradoxically, the body-object can give the actor the status of a *subject* in relation to another. In *Writing and Difference*, Derrida states that Levinas separates the self from an other in order to give a chance to the otherness of the other. Indeed, the author of *Totality and Infinity* considers that:

It is other with an alterity constitutive of the very content of the other. [...] The absolutely other is the Other. He and I do not form a number. The collectivity in which I say "you" or "we" is not a plural of the "I." I, you – these are not individuals of a common concept<sup>51</sup>.

Derrida's approach is different, as it follows "the passage and departure toward the other; the other itself as what is most irreducibly other within it: Others."<sup>52</sup>

In this regard, the body marks the in-between point between the subject and representation (and the other), confirming, in phenomenological terms, the meaning and significance of being another. Consequently, it becomes capable of developing the stages of self-knowledge and knowledge of the other or, in other words, of assume its identity. Even if he cannot relinquish consciousness or

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<sup>51</sup> Emmanuel LEVINAS, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Duquesne University Press, 2011 (1961), p. 39: "Autre d'une altérité constituant le contenu même de l'Autre. [...] L'absolument Autre, c'est Autrui. Il ne fait pas nombre avec moi. La collectivité où je dis « tu » ou « nous » n'est pas un pluriel de « je ». Moi, toi, ce ne sont pas là les individus d'un concept commun." (Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infini. Essais sur l'extériorité*, Paris, Kluwer Academic, Le Livre de Poche, 2003, p. 28).

<sup>52</sup> Jacques DERRIDA, *Writing and Difference*, translated, with an introduction and additional notes by Alan Bass, London and New York, Routledge Classics, 2005 (1967), p. 103: "une passage et une sortie vers l'autre; l'autre lui-même en ce qu'il y a de plus irréductiblement autre : autrui." (Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1967, p. 123).

give up the tools of the self, the actor uses the latent power of his body to communicate to the transfigured character what the text, the playwright, the director, etc. convey to him. He enters, like primitive man, a metaphysical-physical-metaphysical cycle that makes the “voices” of the past (or of the imaginary) be heard *through* representation. An interface between the world here and the world there, the body expresses the Being of the actor in its ideality or, rather, it (re)asserts the latter’s unconscious. The creative act that takes place metonymically restores the gesture of the originary representations and, in this way, it compels us to an ethic of the self that is founded on the principles of *mimesis*. It is in this sense that we can better understand the place the art of the stage occupies in the Western metaphysics of art. In *L’écriture et la différence*, Derrida captures, via Artaud’s theatre, the limits of representation, managed through the imitation of an unrepeatable reality:

The theatre of cruelty is not a representation. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable. Life is the nonrepresentable origin of representation.<sup>53</sup>

In his time, concerned with the vividness and vitality of the theatre, Luigi Pirandello felt acutely the changes triggered by the new technologies of the stage, and then challenged the seventh art, cinema – this “new entertainment” of his era, whereby the actor allegedly had to assume the condition of the exile of a confusing, strongly anti-theatrical art. Moreover, according to the Italian author’s opinion, the newly emerged film caused a pernicious separation of the actor’s being from his ontological, identitarian data, which appeared to have transformed the *hic et nunc* into an unclear, dubitative principle. Whereas in the *inter-arts* regime, the body is preserved as an *organism*, in the regime of intermediality the body image is fragmented, multiplied, separated from the non-functional

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 294: “Le théâtre de la cruauté n’est pas une représentation. C’est la vie elle-même en ce qu’elle a d’irreprésentable. La vie est l’origine non représentable de la représentation.” (Jacques Derrida, *L’écriture et la différence*, p. 343).

“ingredients” of existence. The body is subjected to vivisection, being decomposed into elements that seem to invoke Artaud. In postmodern theatre, relations are not obscured, but brought to light – the relationship is established as presence; the “materiality” of (dramatic) discourse makes possible the interaction and spontaneous transfer of *objectual* data from one artistic *medium* to another. As of this moment, in theatre, *presence* takes the form of *co-presence*, in the sense that it describes itself as a synchronous manifestation of states of facts with multiple references. We are no longer dealing with a *citation*, in the pure sense of the word, but with the overlapping of media (artistic, previously) formulas, with a view to producing the *effect* of an integrative *meaning*. Unless it is assumed aesthetically (that is, unless it is conceived in the process of creation), any gap can generate a reversal of the entire meaning regarding the performance and the *artefacts* that inhabit it.

### *The body-simulacrum and figural language*

One of the key notions of modernism – and, subsequently, of postmodernism – was the *simulacrum*. This theme is pertinently assessed in a study on the *Pygmalion effect* authored by Victor Ieronim Stoichiță. According to the renowned art historian, unlike the copy, the *simulacrum* rejects the pretences of *mimesis*. It aspires to independence in relation to the model and, thus, affirms its own “existence” or ontological status, as Plato also suggests:

An artificial construct, devoid of an original model, the simulacrum is rendered as existing in and of itself. It does not necessarily copy an object from the world, but projects itself into the world. It exists.<sup>54</sup>

Through the simulacrum, the model is relegated in between brackets and is only taken into account to the extent that it serves the interests of retrieving its own reality. In the *Roman de la Rose* (an

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<sup>54</sup> Victor Ieronim STOICHITA, *The Pygmalion Effect. From Ovid to Hitchcock*, translated by Alison Anderson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008, p. 2.

allegorical narrative written by Jean de Meun in around 1275-1280), the emphasis is shifted onto the act of gazing, on contemplation. This time, reading strives to capture the reader's gaze (on which desire is incumbent) and make him witness the initial moment when the ivory statuette comes to life. The same is the case of the theatre.

In his turn, Jean Baudrillard notes the post-modern evolution of the simulacrum, which leads to a supersession of *mimesis*: this loses its specificity, turning reality into a form that is unworthy of creation. Following in Baudrillard's footsteps, Stoichiță states that:

Through the modern triumph of the simulacrum, reality itself is replaced by the simulation of the reality. In the perspective of the history of aesthetic ideas, the simulacrum proclaim the victory of fantasy-artifacts and signals the turn away from the ancient concept of the work as an imitation of a model.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, as Stoichiță states, the myth of Pygmalion appears to underlie the simulacrum (and its fertile deployment in the space of *mimesis*):

The difference lies in the simple fact that in the story of Pygmalion the statue is not imitating anything (or anybody). Pygmalion's statue is the fruit of his imagination and of his "art", and the woman whom the gods gave him for a spouse is a strange creature, an artifact endowed with a soul and a body, but nevertheless a fantasy. A simulacrum, precisely.<sup>56</sup>

Two perspectives are opened in light of the "history" of Pygmalion: the former presents us with a creation that is filled with the creator's erotic desires; the latter takes us outside the object of desire. Through his creation, Pygmalion asserts his need to take possession of the desirable object and, ultimately, to use this power.

Similarly, the staged representation becomes an instrument of the spectator's desire to invest the *image* with the status of reality. In this case, the simulacrum draws close to the *real* defined by

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

Charles S. Peirce as that something whose characteristics appear as independent in relation to what we might interpret. This translates the simulacrum into the space of fiction. In the postdramatic theatre, due to the *hyperreality* to which the latter aspires, the imaginary projection supersedes reality. Thus, the actors' utterance is the form whereby the spectator's spirit is awakened to life, interrogating with full lucidity what the eyes can see. In this way, there may appear a gap between the visually perceived image and the utterance, a rift or a distance that will either facilitate or compromise the interpretation. We can therefore say that the sensations experienced during the performance will definitively shape the trajectory of knowledge and, then, the translation of the artistic message. The sensation becomes a "vehicle of thought" (Peirce).

Between the option of Narcissus and that of Pygmalion there is a fundamental difference: while the former focuses his attention on an illusory, immaterial image, the latter expresses his interest in a material construct, an artifact whose "career" begins as an artwork and ends up as an object of the creator's erotic desire. In the case of Pygmalion, what is foregrounded is fantasy, imagination, mirage, the symbolic message, the fabricated body (*simulatus corpus*). Through his interest in his own work, the author ensures the exit of his own creation into existence and, with it, asserts an ethics of self-representation. This is the very trajectory that we can reconstruct from the phenomenon of inter-arts to that of intermediality.

Postdramatic theatre is subject to transgressive series that have nothing in common with first artistic intentions; above all, it grants representation the vitality of a simulacrum. It begins by creating appearances and ends up by becoming more real than the reality that gave life to it. "Fictional" and "real", the space of the modern stage invokes a privileged ontological status: it opens its doors to the public, in a *trompe-l'oeil* that the actors, refusing to be simple mimetic devices, take advantage of in their attempts to find themselves amongst the audience. The new *media* mixtures, which

the theatre takes into account (those of painterly projections and of photographic art play a dominant role in this respect), aspire to generate – in and through the performance – an *analogon of the performance's being*, which may escape from the net of the ambiguous structures that have given birth to it.

By this, we are committed to detaching the methods and the constructs of intermediality from those of intertextuality. Let us recall that, at the level of the relations within the text, a statement interferes with other statements, foreign to its own discourse, through a process of false *opening*, which is in fact a *closing* onto the text. This decreases the chances of asserting the *truth* of what is uttered. Since, in this case, it is also a matter of the existence of the Logos within itself, intertextuality appears to be an extension of intersubjectivity (to which Julia Kristeva also referred, following in the footsteps of Bakhtin's dialogism) or to replace it in the area where the referent used to be located. In theatre, however, to reach intermediality, we should start our analysis from what Brecht achieved through the *distancing effect*, that is, from the critical attitude the representation forces the spectator to adopt, barring the character on stage from any discourse of the self, in an aggressive form, untainted by the principle of "verisimilitude" and preventing the adventure of retrieving the real through a bypassing of the referential routes. Hence, we are led towards a pre-language (a post-language?) that only the theatrical gesture can cope with. In theatre, the reference is on the side of the spectator, conditioning thus the production of meaning. While intertextuality refers to various texts that are enclosed in and connected to the main text, relying, in other words, on an essential mnestic mechanism, intermediality required the ingenuous, undifferentiated gaze of the spectator and allows the event to unfold phenomenologically, through unmediated perceptions and sensations, that is, through a simple *enactment*.

We may also interpret intermediality through the notion of the *figural* advanced by Jean-François Lyotard<sup>57</sup>. Thus, the intermedial construction rests on a series of metonymic operations, to give the staged reality an appearance of *fluidity*, of continuity from one element to another. And in this case, we may agree with the idea of a figurative language that emerges at the very moment of enactment and, hence, with an expression that signifies through a *va-et-vien* between the elements of the representation.

Accepting the fact that the *stage*, in its entire dramatic, aesthetic, ontological, semiotic construction etc. has long ceased to represent a perquisite solely of the theatre, creators have enhanced the elements of identity and artistic specificity, subsuming them to the concept of *theatricality*, in all its hypostases. This caused an unexpected backlash, causing the rallying, into the same pool of the theatrical arts, of the creative means and processes from which it had sought to distance itself, more specifically, those of the new *media*. In any case, by manifesting itself as “anti-realistic”, the theatre has not fallen prey to the obsession of the “anti-real”, as might have been expected, but has preserved its authenticity. In the postdramatic theatre, the real exceeds the contingent and manifests itself through essentialism, saving the *vitality*, *existence* and *humanity* of representation from disappearing from the theatre (that dramatic core that Lehmann refuses to see), a visible process also during the period of the postmodern excesses from the 1970s-80s.

Neglecting the charges of having slipped towards the post-human, the theatre of the previous century (even that promoted by Craig, Meyerhold and Maeterlinck) rebuilt the performance from the ground up, reaffirming it as *presence* and *virtuality* and entwining the past with a possible future. Whereas in dramatic theatre the dialogue of the arts rendered the *medium* in which it occurred as

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<sup>57</sup> Jean François LYOTARD, *Discours, Figure*, Paris, Éditions Klincksieck, 1971. Cf., in this sense, David N. RODOWICK, *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy after the New Media*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2001.

uninteresting, in postdramatic theatre there is a radical change of position: the world is no longer the world of history, of diachrony, of the unfolding in time and space of events with a profoundly signifying message, but a *relation*, a rapport between the elements the event consists of. Theatre becomes a *tableau vivant*, but in an altogether different sense than the one we are familiar with. It is a “living painting”, tangible on account of the intermediality in which the spectators and the actors participate equally. In this case, we no longer need to recognize the contingent amidst the shards of the represented acts, but to search for the real, which, once, at our beginnings, generated the dissimulated reality in which we live.

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