



world drama on the threshold of the 21st century:
tradition and avant-garde

le drame mondial au seuil du XXI^e siècle

das drama der welt an der schwelle zum XXI jahrhundert

el drama mundial en el umbral del siglo XXI

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Return of the Human? Some Remarks on the Drama of the 1990s

BENEDIKTS KALNAČS

When I sent my proposed paper for the *Conference "World Drama on the Threshold of the 21st Century"*, there was a question mark at the end of the first sentence — *Return of the Human?* The question mark somehow got lost and, as I worked on my paper, it seemed more and more inevitable that I had to find arguments to support my thesis. After the completion of my research I am of the opinion that there certainly was a trend (not to say: the trend) in the drama of the 1990s to deal with the uniqueness of the human personality and a tendency to reveal the richness of human experience and its creative possibilities.

From the perspective of comparative literature I will focus on four plays or, more specifically, on two pairs of plays, each pair including a play by a Latvian and a play by a British playwright. In conclusion I will comment on some general trends in the development of Latvian drama during the last two decades.

The first two plays I am going to discuss are Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* and Māra Zālīte's *Margaret*. There is a striking similarity between the two dramas, particularly in the juxtaposition of two different realities. The events of Stoppard's play take place in a large country house in Derbyshire. There are two different stories, one taking place at the beginning of the 19th century (two years are mentioned — 1809 and later 1812); the other story referring to the beginning of the 1990s (the play was first staged in 1993). Both stories are independent and at the same time closely interrelated. In the sequence of scenes the present always follows the past (and finally in the last scene the two are directly mixed together). We

see the efforts of modern people — a writer and garden historian Thomasina Jarvis, a scholar Bernard Nightingale, a mathematician Valentin Coverly — trying to restore the flow of events that took place two centuries ago. They find themselves in the same place, the same room. Characteristically, Scene 2 (Act I) is introduced by the author as follows: *The lights come up on the same room, on the same sort of morning, in the present day, as is instantly clear from the appearance of Thomasina Jarvis; and from nothing else.* (Stoppard 2000: 9)

The two universes are thus not mutually exclusive; they are interrelated and comment upon each other. From the perspective of the 'present day', different territories of the past are being re-examined. Thomasina devotes herself to historical changes in garden architecture; Nightingale looks for the evidence that Lord Byron had had a romantic encounter here, fought a duel and fled from the house and the country; Valentin examines the mathematical theories of a teenage girl who turns out to be a hidden genius. The real story of Thomasina, her tutor Septimus Hodge, and the minor poet and latter day botanist Ezra Chater develops as an independent parallel line. We hear a distant pistol shot at the end of Scene 4, but instead of following the events of the 19th century, we are exposed to explanations given by our contemporaries.

The people of the 'present day' at first seem more narrow-minded and dull when compared to the sensibility of an earlier age that experienced a move from the rationality of the enlightenment to the romantic universe of feelings. Priorities of the modern world are closer to the age of reason. But one of the most important strategies used by Tom Stoppard is the emergence of a story of passionate relationships behind the rational facade of modern existence. Valentine, Thomasina and Bernard provide a match for Thomasina, Septimus and Ezra. Bernard's passion, even if scholastic and comic in its devotion to minor details, is to restore the histories of human lives. In this, he is joined in his efforts by those of Thomasina and Valentine, though from a different perspective. All of them become involved in a sort of human contest. Thomasina's passion for Bernard, hidden until almost the

very end of the play, grows out of her hate inspired by his malicious review of Thomasina's recent book.

Valentine's passion for Thomasina and his interest in the things she is working on inspire him to look more deeply into the events linked with the fate of Thomasina.

Major figures in the aforementioned story gradually become more and more elusive. Ezra is reported to find his death on a distant island. Septimus becomes a hermit about whom there is not much left to be discovered. And Thomasina, as history tells us, dies in a fire that breaks out on the night before her seventeenth birthday.

But at the end of the Stoppard's play, when the two stories are brought together on stage with an effect of simultaneity, still two dancing couples remain, one pair being Thomasina (aged 16) and Septimus. Perhaps, as they dance, they escape the limitations of time and space, and find themselves on the verge of a new life, to be lived (by others, possibly) almost two hundred years later. Even if the names are different, the stories irresistibly indicate a continuation of human life as well as a never-ending search for happiness.

In Māra Zālīte's *Margaret* we find a different story. Moreover, the text is written in poetry. Nonetheless, the similarities are striking. (It should be noted, before we proceed further, that *Margaret* was written in 1998, the year when *Arcadia* was produced at the Riga New Theatre.)

Margaret is an imaginative sequel of Goethe's *Faust*, picking up the story of Margaret left behind in a jail and later forgotten by everybody for a long period of time. The perspective of the play is again that of the 'present day'. There has been an accidental delay in the case which is expected to be solved now. Margaret in Zālīte's play is about forty years old (Thomasina in Stoppard's play is in her *late thirties*) — two decades equal to two hundred years if we take into account the year — 1808 — when the first part of Goethe's drama was published. The year is astonishingly close to the 1809 and 1812 of Stoppard's play. The six scenes of *Margaret* represent different days of one week — an Easter week. The dynamic of Thomasina's story, where love grows out of denial

and hate, seems to be repeated in Margaret's current story, as is also the teenage experience of Thomasina mirrored in Margaret.

In Zālīte's play, not the events but the textual structures are juxtaposed. An Advocate arrives in the jail cell to discuss past incidents. Both he and Margaret use passages of text extracted from Goethe's drama referring to earlier events. It is evident that she quotes from memory, while he draws on the two volumes of the 'case files'. The seemingly naive, old-fashioned language of earlier times is replaced by the much more sophisticated and formal communication of 'present day' (especially at the initial stages of the play). However, the story gradually changes its course, as Margaret remembers and to a great extent regrets the events of the past which resulted in the deaths of her beloved mother and brother, and possibly also her new born child. The relationship between her and the Advocate develops as he abandons his initial formal manner and gets emotionally involved in her story. Disclosure of several important details (the fact that the child was kept alive; the similarity of the Advocate's appearance to that of Faust) point toward the reality of the meeting of mother and son. A new meaning and love is thus brought into Margaret's life. The most important aspect of the play (that also includes political speculations where the Advocate represents a new type of an internationally adaptable officer who is about to make an international career in Brussels) is that of a gradually changed feeling of sensibility in the relations of the heroes. And at the end of the drama Margaret does not allow her son (the Advocate) to take on the challenge of a diabolic figure of the jail clerk to sign an agreement in his blood. Instead, she opens her veins and offers her own life as a sort of human support as well as a symbolic sign of the suffering that inevitably shall afflict every one of us (and the nation as a whole) on our way towards a deeper or, perhaps, simply a more universal humanity. We could perhaps disagree with the ideological implications of this final scene (as was actually the case when the play was reviewed in Latvia following its production in 2001). But simultaneously the events undoubtedly point towards Margaret's spiritual change.

From a girl subjugated to Faust's erotic desires Margaret becomes an independent person for whom the destiny of another is

more important than hers. It is not the intensity of feelings but their complexity that has changed. It is interesting to note that Thomasina at the beginning of Stoppard's play is 13, while Margaret is 14 years old when she meets Faust. But towards the end of both plays a different level of maturity has been reached. The dialogue of desire and surprise (Stoppard's play also begins with Thomasina asking Septimus about the meaning of the expression 'carnal embrace') gives way to much more profound communication.

In Zālīte's play, it is again only partially possible for the dramatis personae to evaluate the events of the past. Margaret, for example, is only aware of those details of Faust's life that she has learned from direct communication. On the other hand, the Advocate, despite the fact that he has access to much more information from his reading of both volumes of case files, seems to have understood only part of the story. But still, some sort of meaning can be re-established. This is the case in Stoppard's play as well. Contrary to his drama of 1966, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, where two minor characters of Shakespeare's famous play suddenly appear in the middle of events, which for them do not have any decipherable meaning, in *Arcadia* Stoppard abandons this theatre of the absurd tactic. Instead, possibility and passion for exploration becomes central.

An important feature in Stoppard's (and to some extent Zālīte's) play is the necessity to include characters from different strata of society and the various, mostly intellectual professions. The experience and knowledge of Thomasina, Bernard and Valentin (Septimus and Thomasina as well) complement each other and provide different explanations that help to get a deeper insight into the human psyche.

This is one of the reasons why recent plays dealing with (or at least including) seemingly very specific scientific discussions have won acclaim from the general public.

This also applies to the next two plays I have chosen to discuss. Both Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* and Mārtiņš Zīverts' *A Dialogue in Copenhagen* deal with a historically documented event: a meeting between two physicists, Nils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg that took place in the fall of 1941. This is a dialogue

between two people, close colleagues and friends, at the moment when they stand on two different sides of the invisible frontline created by the events of the Second World War. It is a conversation between two scientists who appreciate that the creation of a terrible weapon of human destruction — the atomic bomb — is near at hand. Zīverts commented on the first public reading of his play that the audience *immediately caught the dramatic agenda of this conversation on a scientific subject*. (Zīverts 1989: 533)

Fraysn's play, first performed in 1997, is written from a post-life perspective of the heroes. Three people — Bohr, his wife, and Heisenberg — meet again, *all dead and gone*, to talk once more about that crucial meeting of a long time ago and to find the real story behind external appearances. It is almost impossible not to see in this group of figures an echo of Sartre's famous *inferno* play, *No exit*.

The basic assumption in Fraysn's play is that the secret conversation on vital issues which probably took place during Bohr's and Heisenberg's walk was very short and almost immediately interrupted by Bohr. The question remains what was the topic discussed and what were Heisenberg's real motives. The range of possibilities is certainly wide, ranging from a proposed collaboration with the Nazi scientific efforts in a laboratory led by Heisenberg to a secret agreement (to be shared with other physicists) not to continue to work on or just imitate further efforts to create a bomb.

In his postscript, which in its full version consists of more than 30 printed pages, Fraysn comments upon the ongoing scholarly debate on Heisenberg's objectives. The postscript, as interesting for the reader as the play itself, reveals many doubts (expressed by different authors) about the honesty of Heisenberg's motives, as well as his position during the war. Fraysn arrives at the conclusion that *there had been a fatal lack of zeal* (Fraysn 2000: 118) that to a great extent determined the failure of the efforts to design the bomb which Heisenberg was forced to continue even if he believed that the bomb was not possible because of his faulty mathematics. Nonetheless, the choice becomes a crucial element of history.

Exactly the same can be argued about Bohr's sudden withdrawal. The question about his motives remains unanswered as well. Yet the final proposal provided by Frayn's play allows for some speculations. After a lively debate concerning the technical details of atomic theory that occurs in the middle of Act II, there is a sudden moment of stillness, after which the two men try to become even closer to each other by raising issues of human responsibility. Perhaps in Bohr's choice we above all find appreciation of the fact that it is their communication that has always moved both of them forward in their scientific work. And if the aim is to stop development, the best possible way is not to communicate. For reasons of humanity Bohr pretends not to have understood Heisenberg's attempt to reach a rational agreement. And at the same time, as Heisenberg's final remark in the play suggests, *their children and their children's children were preserved, just possibly, by that one short moment in Copenhagen. By some event that will never quite be located or defined.* (Frayn 2000: 94) An event lived through with high intensity by two souls.

In Mārtiņš Zīverts' play *A Dialogue in Copenhagen*, already written at the beginning of the 1980s and first published in 1982, we face exactly the same situation. Zīverts' play is more tradition based. It is constructed in a linear form, consisting of a conversation which, however, is theatrically quite ingenious. Bohr's initial reservations and later change of mind during a conversation with his former disciple leads to a more open and direct discussion. Bohr counters Heisenberg's proposal to boycott any attempts that could lead further to an atomic bomb with the argument that during wartime physicists are *citizens of their countries*, the same as every other person. Any form of collaboration with an enemy, for whatever reason, implies abandonment of some of the fundamental principles of existence of a human being, specifically those of responsibility towards his or her fellowmen.

Zīverts wrote *A Dialogue in Copenhagen* when he was almost eighty years old. However, during his exile in Sweden subsequent to the events of World War II, for about a decade and a half he was in touch with modern trends in European drama and theatre and experimented a lot. In his last plays, nonetheless, we again observe

a clear trend toward preserving and distilling the most important, basic moral values.

Can this move to some extent be seen as representative for the development of modern drama? In the context of Latvian drama of the 1980s Zīverts (who already was more than eighty years old), of course, was not the playwright on whom attention was focused. Instead, it was a new generation of playwrights (Jānis Jurkāns, Lelde Stumbre, and Māra Zālīte among them) who were responsible for the most intensive challenge to traditional forms of dramatic writing. The disillusionment of an individual and the absurd mechanisms of society were the most characteristic themes of their first dramas. In terms of historical development, what we find here is perhaps a late revival of the stylistic features of modernist drama with its techniques of fragmentation, marionette figures, juxtapositions of an individual against a crowd of narrow-minded people. The moral crisis of the late Soviet era is unquestionably one of the messages here. Strategies of disillusionment were developed through the use of post-modern approaches during the first part of the 1990s. However, it is possible to discern a change of mood during the last four or five years. Two women dramatists, Stumbre and Zālīte, whose work during this period of time was most consistent, have again become more sensitive towards individual fate dealt with from the complex perspective of a developing society. Although sometimes controversial, in her plays Māra Zālīte has become particularly interested in the universality of human feelings.

There are also attempts of quite a new generation of Latvian dramatists where a much more pessimistic worldview is being expressed. I think, here we again see development moving in certain circles. What were a revelation and a challenge for a new generation two decades ago have by now given way to a more balanced evaluation of things in their work.

If we today look at a play like that of Michael Frayn, we also get the impression that he was perhaps three or four years ahead of his time. At the very beginning of the 21st century the normality of our lives has again been subjected to a serious threat. There is no other way to try to restore normality again except through our involvement and through human passion.

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**Theatre of the Mind:
Spectators and installation
in *H. G.* by Robert Wilson, London 1995**

IMRE ZOLTÁN

The dominant practice of Western theatre is treated and regarded by both practitioners and audiences as a disciplinary system (Kershaw 1999: 31–33), a space of domination (Lefebvre 1991: 49–52), and a combination of factory and store in one building. (Schechner 1994: 161) The spectator in that practice is modelled on the late 20th century consumer described by Michel de Certeau as ‘a voyeur in a showbiz society’ (de Certeau 1984: xxi) whose perception is considered as maximal development of passivity. What is actually found in audience research, reception research, and books on etiquette, is that people in the theatre, if once they are there, usually (and presumably) play the game the theatre institution instructs them to play. Analysing Robert Wilson’s installation, *H. G.*, taking place in the semi-darkness of the vaults below the medieval Clink Prison, London, in 1995, I will demonstrate some of the methods and means with which the traditionally passive strategy of the spectator’s perception can be transformed into a (self)creative, (self)reflective, and performative process by the mechanism of a postmodern installation. In order to show that mechanism, I re-structure the territory of *H. G.* through Erving Goffman’s treatise on regions (Goffman 1959); re-construct its working method through Frederic Jameson’s notion of postmodern installation (Jameson 1991); and re-focus its main themes through Elinore Fuchs’s concept of Presence and Absence (Fuchs 1985).

Structuring *H. G.* by Goffman's regions

Having defined "region" as 'any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception' (Goffman 1959: 92), Erving Goffman differentiated between three types of such regions as front, back and outside in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. The front region can be regarded as a place where a performance at a cocktail party, at a wedding ceremony, or when shopping for example is given to such audiences as guests, visitors, and consumers. Here performance is organised, maintained and embodied by certain standards, concerned with how the performer treats the audience while engaged in oral and gestural communication with them, referring to these in terms of matters of politeness; and how the performer comports oneself within the visual and aural range of the audience according to moral and instrumental requirements. (Ib. 93) The front region is thus for presentation and conscious (self)management where performers carefully organise and deliver their actions in order to keep up the appropriate appearance and make the intended impression; where activities are expressively accentuated; and where an audience's presence is noted and calculated. Thus the front region is associated with front behaviour, consciously produced for an audience, and can also be conceived as the territory of officialdom.

The back region is considered as a place 'where actions occur that are related to the performance but inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the appearance'. (Ib. 117) For Goffman, the back region thus functions as a place where

the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; [where] illusions and impressions are openly constructed. Here stage props and items of personal front can be stored in a kind of compact collapsing of whole repertoires of actions and characters. Here grades of ceremonial equipment ... can be hidden so that the audience will not be able to see the treatment accorded to them in comparison with the treatment that could have been accorded them. ... Here costumes and other parts of personal front may be adjusted and

scrutinised for flaws. Here the team can run through its performance, checking for offending expressions when no audience is present to be affronted by them. ... Here performers can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character. (Ib. 97)

For Goffman, the back region is, on one hand, reserved for opportunities of openness, where behaviour can be relaxed, informal and familiar; and for those aspects that are usually not performed as front behaviours. On the other, Goffman points out that the back region offers opportunities for regression of publicly not tolerated and accepted behaviours, secrets and hidden desires. Thus the back region is associated with back behaviour, produced in privacy, and operated as a place for (self)liberation and secrecy.

To the two kinds of bounded regions Goffman adds a third one: the outside. He defined it as 'all places other than the two already identified' (ib. 117) and explained its use and meaning through another spatial example. He described a building where various rooms are used as front and back respectively, while the place outside the building can be regarded to an outside position in respect to these places and the performances within these places.

Goffman was very careful with the concept of region as he drew attention to the flexibility and relational relation of these terms. In respect to a particular ongoing performance as a point of reference, those who are outside can be persons for whom the performers actually or potentially put a show on, anticipating them as audience. Goffman drew the attention that outside is only temporary, relational and situational. The outside decoration and appearance of a building for instance 'must in part be seen as an aspect of another show; and sometimes the latter contribution may be the more important one.' (Ib. 117–118) The expectations of the front region are thus predicted on the information gained from outside decoration by an outside position.

The theoretical background of Goffman's book is in general located in theatre; Goffman also drew his three-party spatial model on the arrangement of a proscenium arch theatre building. The comparison of Goffman's model to such a theatre building reveals

how Goffman's model differs from it, and also the way how he utilised the difference. In a proscenium arch theatre, backstage, stage, auditorium, incorporating the foyer, and other territories for the spectator, and the outside world can be differentiated from the point of view of the performer. In Goffman's model, however, there are only three regions: front, back, and outside. When Goffman's model is applied to a proscenium arch theatre, it is revealed that from the theatrical performance's point of view, the front can be identified with the stage, the back with backstage, while outside can refer either to the auditorium or to the territory outside the building. What is fascinating in Goffman's model is that he emphasised that there can be an ongoing performance in the auditorium and on those territories that are reserved exclusively for the spectators. In the former case, from the theatre spectators' point of view, while the spectators watch a theatrical performance, the front can thus be identified with the auditorium, the back with the foyer and lavatories, and outside can refer to either the stage or to the territory outside the building. In the latter case, front can thus be identified with the foyers, the staircases, and the buffet; back with the lavatories, and outside can refer either to the stage or to the territories outside the building. Therefore, Goffman, instead of separating, fused the territories of stage and auditorium both in his front and back regions. In Goffman's model on regions, the stage/auditorium is the boundary where two fronts — the performer's and the spectator's — collide and where spectator theoretically can any time switch to performer and performer to spectator. Thus Goffman did not only emphasise the theatrical quality of human behaviour, and treated their means as theatrical props, and their places as settings, but made the rigid theatrical concept of performer and spectator, stage and auditorium flexible and interchangeable. Hence, the analogue model of the proscenium arch theatre was turned into an interactive model in Goffman's treatise.

Here, I apply Goffman's concept of regions to the places of Robert Wilson's installation that was consciously produced for an audience. I do not intend to foster its theatricality through the reading of its front region from its back, but rather I constantly re-

contextualise its elements through each other within each region, between its regions, and its regions and the outside.

Having spent a relatively short time *outside* on the street, the spectators entered one by one the site through a brown wooden front door with the initials, HG on it, suggesting that *H. G.* can thus be structured as a private region like a flat. It also suggested a contemporary theme park atmosphere, conjuring up the image of *H. G. Wells*, the author who lived in the late nineteenth century. As expected, the spectators found themselves in a front region: an elaborately designed Victorian-style dining room with stuffed animals, dark oil paintings, mirrors and medical charts. That strengthened the theme park atmosphere and fostered an impression that the installation could be read as a theme park on *Wells*, and late Victorianism. What contradicted that reading is that the items on display did not refer only and exactly to *Wells*, and there were also items that did not fit into the picture of Victorianism. These contradictions revealed that the world of the installation was constructed beyond the theme park.

The initials on the door implied that when the spectator enters the territory of *H. G.*, one is to expect a person, the possessor of these initials and territories. Apart from the fact that the spectator was in the position of a fictional intruder in someone else's territory, one's initial expectation was contradicted as one found only traces of supposedly *H. G.* and his(?) dinner partners: the room was lit by two half burnt, dripping candles, placed at both ends of a spectacularly decorated and properly laid table with fresh flowers, while the food on the plates were half eaten, appeared to have only just been finished, and the diners could not be seen. That was a region which was supposedly designed for presentation; made for performing and seeing, and where performers could handle and deliver their actions, giving various appearances and impressions; and where their audience would be clearly present, while constantly changing their roles.

After a short encounter with the front region, the spectator was led to a small lobby, furnished with a Victorian-type drawer and a stuffed bull's head on the wall. From here, a small staircase led downstairs to the back region, characterised as a dark, waterish, smelly, unevenly surfaced space where only traces were again

displayed. There the space was suddenly widened and the major part of the installation was taken place there.

The territory of *H. G.* can thus be structured into three major regions: the outside — London, the front — the dining room which served as an introduction to and representation of the back, and the back — the vaults, serving as the territory of the installation where the spectator spent most of his/her time, and which can be characterised according to Goffman as a place with opportunities for openness, relaxation, suppression, secrets and hidden things. Even the short encounter with the front region offered various topics and questions, concerning time, space, dimensions and definitions for exploration in and through the connection with its back region, while forcing the spectator to reflect on one's constantly changing physical and mental positions in the regions of the installation. The front region fostered the theme park atmosphere, while consciously contradicting it with its own displayed elements, drawing the attention of the spectator/visitor to recognise and thematise these contradictions. The front region thematised *H. G.*'s private, though publicly displayed, representations while contradicting the spectators' initial expectations of finding someone present. That absence also deconstructed one's initial "outsider" position, and transformed him/her from an outsider/spectator into an insider/spectator. *H. G.* was thus an 'emptied region', waiting for discovery and fulfilment during the visit of the installation by the spectator.

Postmodern installation

In his article, "Utopianism After the End of Utopia", Frederic Jameson drew the attention to a new type of spatial art called postmodern installation. Postmodern installation was described as a sort of collection in which the problems and traumas of the post-contemporary world are displayed, using high-tech reproductions of their traces. Its source goes back to concept art and was described by Jameson as a 'Kantian procedure whereby, on the occasion of what first seems to be an encounter with a work of art of some kind, the categories of the mind — normally not con-

scious, and inaccessible to any direct representation or to any thematizable self-consciousness or reflexivity — are flexed ...' (Jameson 1991: 157). Jameson calls these pieces intellectual infernal machines in which the viewer can experience such mental processes — Lyotard called them perceptual paradoxes — which, probably unnoticed otherwise, but if not, cannot be imagined and solved by conscious abstractions. For the observer, the material object, exhibited in a given space, and considered traditionally as a materialised form of artefact, just the pretext for a mental process realised as a perceptual paradox which thus becomes the artefact itself.

Analysing Robert Gober's installation, Jameson pointed out that postmodern installation "draws its effects from a place not above the media but within their system of relationships [---]." (Ib. 163) The elements of the installation do not represent an outside reality, moreover it renounces reference as such "in order to elaborate an autonomous vision which has no external equivalent." (Ib. 179) All that is achieved with the practice that there is no „representation" in the sense that would offer observance in itself as the objects, used in Gober's installation, are not such objects which would otherwise draw the observer's special attention. Though the installation as the combination of these objects as a unified exhibition within the space of the museum

awakens representational anticipations and impulses, and in particular emits an imperative to unify them perceptually, to invent the aesthetic totalization from within which these disparate objects and items can be grasped [---]. This is an imperative, ..., which is systematically thwarted by the "work" itself [---]. (Ib. 165)

That frustration is achieved not only by the heterogeneity of its physical materials and the difference of its abstract contents and the difference between the temporal and even the spatial dimensions of its objects, but it is also doubled by social heterogeneity, that is, that the collective, mental artefact does not propose a generalised stylistic and cultural politics.

For Jameson, that process, characterised by split and gaps, led to the reappearance of allegory and allegorical interpretation in which only one thing can be certain, that there is no single thought and theory that could grasp and unite all its elements. Allegory is thus horizontal rather than vertical, and its objects are connected to and built up by their relations to each other. Allegorical interpretation is thus a sort of 'scanning that, moving back and forth across the text, readjusts its terms in constant modification [---]. (Ib. 168) Thus interpretation becomes a constant movement which constantly modifies and alter its signs and their meanings. For Jameson that movement can only be described, 'if it is understood that any direction and any starting point are possible and that what is here offered is only one of the varied trajectories and combinations logically possible (and perhaps one of the more obvious ones)'. (Ib.)

Gober's installation did not attempt to achieve a systematic synthesis as the very "system" 'on which the older synthesis was based has itself become problematical, along with the claim of any one of the individual fine arts to its own intrinsic autonomy or semiautonomy.' (Ib. 172) Jameson called that „mixed media”, defined in opposition to Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk, and described as in which 'the "mix" comes first and redefines the media involved by implication a posteriori.' (Ib.) The re-definition of its elements are achieved by deconstructing their traditional place and meanings, and re-contextualising them along their splits and gaps.

Consequently, postmodern installation brings out the visitor's creative and performative actions and interpretations. Before I propose a reading of Wilson's *H. G.* through Jameson's concept of post-modern installation and allegorical interpretation, I will focus on the deconstructed and constantly deferred centre of postmodern installation: Absence which constantly conjures up and immediately defers Presence.

Presence Vs Absence

In her article, "Presence and the Revenge of Writing" Elinore Fuchs argued that though drama is a form of writing it has been associated with the illusion that it is organised by spontaneous speech, therefore it is supposed to be in direct connection with Presence. Fuchs pointed out that theatrical Presence — based on two fundamental components as the unique self-completion of the spectacle and the circle of heightened awareness flowing from actor to spectator that sustains the world — may always have been associated with theatre but it was given absolute value only in the late sixties and early seventies by both theorists (Timothy Wiles, Michael Goldman, etc.) and practitioners (Julian Beck, Richard Schechner, Joseph Chaikin, Peter Brook, etc.). These theoreticians' and practitioners' aim was to reach the centre of human experience through a self-exploration of such intensity that would redefine the self.

Fuchs drew the attention to the fact that by the middle of the seventies a new generation of theatre artist was challenging the absolute value of Presence, and around the 1980s, 'the work of this next generation of theatre artists and theoreticians has increasingly marked by an aesthetics of Absence.' (Fuchs 1985: 165) Though Fuchs set up a binary opposition between presence and absence, preferring the latter, she did it partly to draw the attention to the failure of the theatre of Presence, and partly to emphasise the limits of the logocentric concept of theatre. As she argued in her conclusion, theatre is realised by the collective play with presence and absence as "theatre is ever the presence of the absence and the absence of the presence." (Ib. 172)

Installation basically differs from theatre (of Presence especially) as it hardly ever uses the presence of performers. Instead, it installs objects in a given space. Even the presence of these objects is not important in themselves as they would be in an exhibition, but their relations are realised in mental processes in perceptual paradoxes, and derived, conjured up, but not possessed by the objects. Installation is built on the participation of its visitor. Installation can thus be regarded as the theatre of the absent and present relations in mental processes, created in and by the

spectator. Installation is thus conceived as the par excellence form of theatre, realised by the presence of the absence and the absence of the presence, both taking place in the spectator's mind.

Seen through Fuchs's concept, *H. G.* was based on the aesthetic of absence in general, while it was concerned with presence and absence in particular. In its outside region, the initials on the door already conjured up the expectation of (someone's) presence; the dining room affirmed it, while it dissolved its realisation. In *H. G.*, absence was imagined as (non)presence, thus absence was materialised in objects as the absence of presence, drawing the attention to their absent presence. Both their absence and presence were realised, perceived, and apperceived by the visitors. Therefore the visitors were supposed to realise that they had become performers, namely SPECT-ACTORS¹, through their journey to the front and back regions of *H. G.* The tension between the continuous (non)-present of absent bodies and the continuous lateness of the visitors' presence, in the already happened and in the always missed, provided the space and time dimensions of the visitor's performance, in which the hunt for achieving the absolute present-ness and its continuous deferral could be experienced. Consequently, the visitors as specta(c)tors were characterised as pseudo-archaeologists, searching for meaning in and relations between consciously left and displayed present of the objects and their invoked absence.

Visitor/performer — perception/performing

The hunt for that archaeological experience was organised and thematised by the perception and apperception of perceptual paradoxes, intertextualities, de/re-constructions, and de/re-contextualisation.

In one of the first places of the back region, a perceptual paradox was set up in which the central position of the visitor was deferred. There, there were columns and wooden beams, and dust

¹ The concept of the spect-actor derives from Augusto Boal's Invisible Theatre. (see Boal 1979 and Delgado and Heritage 1996: 15–35)

and hay covered the floor. It was fenced in by wire that was only revealed when the spectator approached it, as the place behind it was lit by flashing lights and a search beam. As one moved along the fence one could discover a shadow on one of the walls. Moving a bit further in that direction, one caught sight of a cat, carefully placed in the way of the beam, the wooden beams, the wall and one's position. The visitor's play between perception and apperception in *H. G.* was based on a method usually applied by postmodern theatre. As Arnold Aronson argued that these are 'dissonant reminder[s] that no single point of view can predominate, even within a single image [and thus] the spectator is constantly made aware of the experience of viewing and, ..., of the whole history, contexts and reverberations of an image in the contemporary world.' (Aronson 1991: 2) These installed pieces were connected in and through the visitors' wandering mind. As they changed their position of observance, they were to realise that their senses and predictions were deceived and misplaced. It was revealed that the performance of *H. G.* was realised between the installed objects, noises, music, light(s) and one's walking and observing mind. The visitors could not stay in a safe position, waiting for the images, objects, scenes coming and passing in front of their eyes like in a proscenium theatre. Rather they were to be part of the environment. Their perception of the present and the apperception of the absent elements of *H. G.* realised *H. G.*. Therefore, one's (ap)perceptions in the regions of *H. G.* created one's own performance of *H. G.*.

That performance was based on intertextuality². The objects of *H. G.* were natural, created, and 'found objects', the act of their placement, emphasised also by lighting made them objects waiting for and exposed to signification. Apart from that, each specta(c)tor was to realise that the performance incorporated not only the installed objects, be it 'real', 'false' or 'found'; noises, music, lights and his/her walking and observing mind, but also his/her own body. It was also put on display along the other spectators' bodies. It was as much a walking object installed as the other

² For one of the best treatise on intertextuality see Genette (1982) and its application to theatre see Carlson (1994).

visitors' for him/herself. Therefore, the central position of the specta(c)tor was deferred by the play of intertextuality between objects and performers.

The method of continuous de- and reconstruction can be demonstrated by another perceptual paradox. In a place, provisionally titled as "The ruins of the Temple", there were columns left and right, running parallel to each other, with stones and golden arrows above, flying from right to left. But again, there was no one to be seen. The moment was frozen when the arrows were just above the temple. It can be conceived as the representation of a moment of culture struggle frozen, recycled and seen from a specific position — a square stone, one was to step on and from this, peeping through a small crack. That was a particular view/point in time and space, offering a particular view without assurance whether it was inside or outside the "temple". The undecidedness between these situations drew the specta(c)tor's attention to the fact that the scene was organised in the style of historical films and/or interactive museum displays as "imagined" and/or "remembered" history. That strengthened the recognition that historical memory is organised from and by the present and from the point of view of the survivors. The playfulness of the undecidedness between positions made obvious the danger envisaged in every perception and interpretation: if one's own position is declared as the only and exclusive one, one's individual perceptions would be designated as the omnipotent ones. Therefore, the perceptual paradoxes referred to the fact that there is no history in itself, as the retrospectively organised narratives on certain events are always someone's (hi)story in which the narrator is also narrated parallelly with a certain combination of the events.

Like a hermeneutic spiral, even the genres of exhibition and installation were deconstructed and re-contextualised. In a space, reprints of old and famous paintings were placed at random distance from each other on the dirty waterish floor onto which water was poured. The space also incorporated a Disney-like Snowwhite-type dwarf standing in the semi darkness, and a real pine tree at the back, lit with a bare bulb from below. From the reprints, faces of wealthy men and women of various previous periods stared at the visitor/performer through dirt and water.

Tension was caused as these reprints conjured up their originals in galleries where they hang on walls, properly lit, and with small tags attached to their side, containing appropriate information about their title, author, and the person depicted, giving enough information and museum-atmosphere to appreciate them as masterpieces. As their reprints were placed on the floor, the museum-context was deconstructed and the (original) artefacts were recontextualised immediately as ordinary objects, exposed to time, nature and decay. Their placement in the darkness of the vault questioned not only the authoritative power of the institutions like museums, galleries, etc. At the same time it drew the specta(c)tors' attention to the authoritative position of seeing as their eyes were placed directly above them.

Within the same space, the entire question of art, masterpieces, and classics was recontextualised again (from a quite humorous perspective) by the plastic dwarf. The connection between the dwarf as kitsch and the paintings as masterpieces introduced elements of play in the interpretation, while made the convention of appreciation and its constructed and consensual nature conscious since there was no ontological difference between them as they both are man made objects. Moreover, it was recontextualised again as these pictures were not the 'real' paintings, but only their reproductions. From this point of view, the reproductions of famous paintings, however, are arguably themselves kitsch, and indeed these reproductions are likely to be regarded as social *faux pas*.

The time of appreciation was again recontextualised from the pine tree as it was also subject to time, but it is very rarely appreciated through that quality. It is very rarely appreciated because its perfect features, except at Christmas. As time passed, its perfect shape, gloom and shine were fading away. It was dying. For the pine tree, the passage of time did not make it more precious as the paintings or even the dwarf, but just the opposite. Its liveness emphasised both presence and its limit and the necessary end of dying as absence. Thus the centre (of observance, living, and history) was deferred continuously by the play of misreading.

Presence and absence were re-contextualised in a space where a *body* was exhibited, lit by a sky-blue beam, as (a representation of)

a 'dead body'. Death as absence and its various representations were one of the underlying themes of *H. G.*. Apart from the spectators, the only living creature of the installation was a lizard. The lizard was not a representation of a lizard, it was what it was, a real lizard. And it *was* just from a short walk from the dead body, from the absent bodies of the dining guests, of the patients, and the (omnipotent) observer. The lizard was placed into a tank. Its territory was restricted in the sense as any observer's territory was restricted. But the lizard was also lit with a sky-blue beam. In this relation, the 'dead body' and the live lizard could be understood as prediction about a cruel and disappointing future. Meanwhile, the result of the present consumerism was presented by huge garbage heaps along the main vault. These heaps contained metal cans, glasses and white animal skulls, seen in that 'desert', made of rubbish as if the rubbish as presence poured over and swallowed the space left by absence.

As the traumas of the near past were also encapsulated in a perceptual paradox, it dissolved the theme park atmosphere of Wells and late Victorianism. There were shoes, slippers, and boots left, labelled and arranged in straight parallel lines in the semi darkness of another room. The possessors of the footwear were absent. Only the spectators' wandering bodies and bare lightbulbs placed at random among the footwear could be seen. The concentration onto one's feet was a reminder of the children's game of hopscotch. Its playfulness was juxtaposed with the seriousness of the deserted old and new footwear, reminders of the twentieth century logically executed mass murders of Auschwitz, of Kosovo, of Nigeria. That juxtaposition was reinforced with a solid wooden pool-table which, an object for games to play, with its green surface and carved legs, was standing in the middle of the space. The contradiction between the ghostly absence of human bodies, represented by the footwear and the massive presence of that object was shocking. It was strengthened with the image that one of the legs of the table was standing, or rather treading, on a bare real lightbulb. The weight and massive structure of the table and the lightness and fragility of the bulb enforced the power and authority of the table. The lack of human weight and its absent

presence were emphasised again by a huge scale, placed just at the corner as a reminder.

Postmodern Installation as Theatre of the Mind

Having spent a relatively short time in the front region, the dining room and its lobby, the visitors/spectators descended to a back region, an unknown territory where there were various possible routes sealed practically by darkness. The lights of the installed lightbulbs retrieved space from darkness, leaving an atmosphere of continuous struggle between light and dark, between life/present and death/absence; and of wandering shadows and clearly seen spectators.

The space to where the spectators descended was without an end goal, therefore without teleology: there was no 'right' order to follow, there was no development, and there was no end to achieve and at which to arrive. The elements used were not ordered hierarchically, but in relation to each other in the same space, to other elements in other spaces, even in the outside world and to the spectator. There was no well-prepared, well-articulated story. There was no continuous narration. There was no character to identify with, just the continuous presence of the absent bodies and the spectator's sense of being late. Moreover, the visitor's entire performance was underlined by a hunt for and apperception of presence: the presence of those who left and originally possessed these objects, of the other spectator's random (dis)appearance, of each spectator's own past and future. There were no built-in connections in advance to be discovered later and decoded by the spectator.

Therefore, the logical structure of time and space was always challenged and deferred. *H. G.* utilised the tactic about which Nick Kaye has said, "the figures and terms out of which the 'postmodern work' is constituted cannot properly be said to be in possession of its 'meanings', for here postmodern occurs as a disruption of this very claim to meaning." (Kaye 1991: 17) That disruption of the claim to meaning resulted in *H. G.* in the play of signifiers,

fragmentation and multiplicity, where meaning was shifting and undecidable.

As Wilson's other theatrical works *H. G.* also refused unity, coherence and therefore metanarrative. It was the spectator who connected the elements on offer, introducing one's own schedule of encounters and interpretation as one moved on and/or returned, introducing one's own meanings, narratives, and connections, continuously deferring and reflecting on his/her viewpoints and connections. Wilson has explained his method as follows:

[My] performances are born in the spectators' head. That is why I offer not simply an interpretation of the text, but such visual and acoustical image-systems which are against the illustration of the text and give the spectators the possibility of associations. (Wilson 1998: 69)

Objects, noises, musical pieces, referring to other objects, noises, and pieces of music which were placed into changed situations and contexts from which the visitors/performers could create their own meanings based on their own associations.

Consequently, *H. G.* was transformed into an individually imagined and created three-dimensional space-structure in the mind of the visitor/performer, adding the fourth dimension of time. Utilising the everyday experience of the visitor/performer, *H. G.* offered a large space for the free play of interpretations, depending on what the visitor/performer wanted and looked for. The visitor/performer was forced by the given opportunity to use his/her own system of intertextual associations when meeting and relating to the objects, noises, and pieces of music. Since it was not a guided tour where one had to start and finish the journey at the same time with the others, strictly following the guide's route, utterances and advice, anyone could turn back and forth, seeing the sights as many times as one wished, making connections and misreadings. That practice disrupted the 'conventional role' of the spectator known from the established theatre, so one was no longer expected to discover 'what the work is about' but to re-frame and re-consider not only the dominant methods of production and reception, but also one's own tactics and rhetoric. The

visitor/performer was incorporated into the installation and his/her interpretation could not be considered no longer as *the* "right" (solely, namely perfect) solution of a puzzle, or *the* "right" decoding of an encoded message, but it was transformed into a (self)creative and (self)reflective performative process. The creation of the performance within the installation and its interpretation were realised as the theatre of the mind and that can be regarded as one of the alternative methods to the dominant practice of Western theatre.

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Discours didascalique et mise en scène

MIHAI DINU

Depuis l'après-midi du 19 août de l'année 14 quand l'empereur Octavien Auguste, s'est adressé *in articulo mortis* aux amis qui étaient venus lui rendre une dernière visite avec les mots: „Trouvez-vous que j'ai bien joué la farce de la vie?", l'analogie entre le monde du spectacle et le monde tout court a fait une belle carrière. L'idée de *theatrum mundi*, cultivée d'abord par les hommes de lettres, s'est insinuée progressivement dans des cercles de plus en plus larges, en pénétrant le langage commun jusqu'à ce qu'un grand nombre de termes dramaturgiques aient acquis des acceptions non-théâtrales. „La scène politique", „les coulisses du pouvoir", „la tombée de rideau sur le dernier acte d'un procès", „la tragédie d'un naufrage" et maintes autres expressions usuelles attestent l'impact considérable que la métaphore du monde en tant que théâtre a eu sur notre perspective sociale.

Le mot *théâtre* lui-même est largement utilisé pour désigner l'espace où se déroule une confrontation entre des forces belligérantes. On parle souvent de „théâtre de conflit", „théâtre de guerre", „théâtre d'opérations". L'association d'idées qui explique cet usage part, évidemment, de l'existence d'un noyau conflictuel intrinsèque à l'art du spectacle. Le théâtre est, par excellence, le lieu d'une confrontation qui se déploie sur plusieurs plans, dont l'un est celui de la représentation proprement-dite, terrain de lutte entre trois types de professionnels: le dramaturge, le metteur en scène et l'acteur. Envisagée du point de vue de ce conflit, l'histoire du théâtre moderne pourrait bien être réécrite dans une perspective agonale.

Il est bien connu que le XIX-ième siècle a débuté sous le signe de la suprématie de l'acteur. La figure emblématique de cette période pourrait être, par exemple, le fameux Edmund Kean (1787–1833), dont la biographie est devenue elle-même prétexte de création dramatique sous la plume d'Alexandre Dumas-fils et, plus tard de Jean-Paul Sartre. La personnalité de ce grand acteur illustre d'une manière exemplaire le *star system* de l'époque, qui plaçait les vedettes choyées au dessus de la morale commune en leur permettant des excentricités et fantaisies interdites aux autres mortels.

Jusqu'à l'aube du XX-ième siècle le culte¹ des grands acteurs leur a assuré la prééminence par rapport aux autres coauteurs du spectacle théâtral. Encouragés par les signes permanents d'admiration qu'ils recevaient du public, ils n'hésitaient souvent pas de mépriser superbement les exigences les plus élémentaires de la vraisemblance dramatique. C'est ainsi qu'au cours d'une tournée à Bucarest, à la veille de la Première Guerre Mondiale, la fameuse Sarah Bernhardt, alors septuagénaire, a joué soutenue par des béquilles le rôle de l'adolescent duc de Reichstadt de *L'aiglon* d'Edmond Rostand!

Il s'agissait, c'est vrai, de l'une des dernières poussées d'un type de comportement déjà caduc, car à partir des années '70 du siècle précédent s'était affirmé de vive force un nouveau protagoniste du spectacle théâtral: le metteur en scène. Celui-ci réclamait à son tour le droit de disposer en maître non seulement

¹ Quelle expression plus éloquente de la soumission quasi-religieuse d'un public „captif” que la coutume de délier les chevaux du fiacre qui ramenait à l'hôtel l'acteur préféré pour que les admirateurs s'y attèlent eux-mêmes! Cette forme d'adulation, dont il paraît que le premier objet a été la légendaire Marie Malibran (1808–1836), est restée le long d'une bonne centaine d'années la manifestation „canonique” de la liturgie laïque que les spectateurs consacraient à leurs idoles. Toujours sous l'influence de l'opéra, les acteurs avaient pris l'habitude de „geler” leur rôle pour que le public puisse les acclamer, en s'immobilisant, pendant un intervalle plus ou moins long, à la fin d'une tirade „de répertoire”. L'auteur de ces lignes se souvient avoir assisté dans son adolescence à de scènes pareilles, aujourd'hui totalement disparues.

de toutes les ressources scéniques, mais aussi du texte de la pièce qu'il montait, en usurpant la position traditionnelle occupée par le dramaturge.

L'image du metteur en scène-autocrate, auteur unique du spectacle, qui a été affirmée avec autorité par Gordon Craig rencontra alors la vision musicale du suisse Adolphe Appia, pour lequel les acteurs devaient se contenter d'être des instruments dociles, soumis inconditionnellement à la volonté d'un chef d'orchestre tout-puissant. Le succès incontestable de cette nouvelle tendance a été pleinement prouvé par le fait que, depuis Copeau, Meyerhold ou Max Reinhardt et jusqu'à Peter Brook ou Giorgio Strehler, la renommée des grands metteurs en scène a dépassé de loin celle des interprètes de leurs spectacles. Quelque doués que les acteurs pouvaient être, la bataille pour le contrôle de la représentation était tranchée en faveur des premiers.

De leur côté, les dramaturges ont commencé à se sentir menacés. Bien qu'au début les metteurs en scène aient respecté encore assez les œuvres qu'ils montaient pour ne pas opérer des changements dans le texte proprement-dit (pratique devenue courante de nos jours), les intentions des auteurs pouvaient être falsifiées à l'aide d'un traitement hétérodoxe de la composante non-verbale du spectacle. Dans son important *Art théâtral*, Craig avait déjà plaidé pour l'idée que le texte constitue seulement le corps de la pièce, tandis que l'âme c'est le mouvement scénique. Grâce à celui-ci, le metteur en scène peut conférer à l'œuvre dramatique des significations nouvelles, ignorées par l'auteur lui-même. Or, il était prévisible que les dramaturges ne se résignassent pas à accepter sans réplique la situation humiliante de fournir seulement des prétextes littéraires pour des spectacles dont ils ne contrôlaient pas le message. C'est pourquoi ils ont commencé à accorder une importance accrue au segment, jusqu'alors périphérique, du texte dramatique qui était constitué par les didascalies.

Dans le théâtre classique celles-ci se bornaient à des indications très sommaires, concernant seulement la défilé des personnages sur la scène et certains de leurs mouvements particuliers (poursuite, fuite, lutte) dont la réalisation était indispensable au déroulement de l'action dramatique. La prolifération frappante de ces directives, exactement au moment où s'affirmait l'hégémonie

du metteur en scène, n'est certainement pas une simple coïncidence. Nous estimons que le développement du métatexte auctorial est étroitement lié à l'autonomisation progressive de la mise en scène et que cette évolution mérite bien une ample analyse.

Cette tâche dépasse cependant nos faibles forces. C'est pourquoi nous nous sommes proposés un objectif beaucoup plus modeste: celui d'étudier une hypostase particulière du phénomène mentionné. Il s'agit du discours didascalique compris dans un drame écrit justement à l'époque où la rivalité entre dramaturges et metteurs en scène commençait à produire ses premiers effets. Il s'appelle *Acte vénitien*² et son auteur est le roumain Camil Petrescu (1894–1957). Pendant son court directorat du Théâtre National de Bucarest, celui-ci a dû tenir tête aux vellétés de certains metteurs en scène, ce qui ne fît que contribuer à amplifier sa tendance initiale qui était celle de préciser jusqu'au derniers détails les aspects kinésiques et proxémiques du comportement de ses personnages.

Bien qu'elle précède de deux décennies ce moment de la carrière de l'écrivain (elle date de 1919), la pièce dont on s'occupe ici illustre d'une manière convaincante le type d'ouvrage au sein duquel le tissu dialogique est pratiquement doublé par un texte parallèle qui ambitionne de se constituer en un véritable cahier de mise en scène.

Il suffit de signaler que les trois actes de la pièce (malgré son titre, ce drame a une structure tripartite) contiennent non moins de 916 didascalies et que beaucoup d'entre elles sont composées de plusieurs phrases. Ce qui paraît préoccuper le plus notre auteur c'est que les acteurs respectent scrupuleusement la mimique et les inflexions vocales qu'il attribue à ses personnages. On reconnaît ici l'empreinte du romancier Camil Petrescu³ qui laisse souvent l'impression de n'être pas tout à son aise dans la posture de dramaturge et sent le besoin de compléter le profil psychologique de ses héros par des informations dont les simples répliques ne

² L'édition utilisée a été: Camil Petrescu, *Teatru*, vol. II, Editura Albatros, București, 1973.

³ Dans l'histoire de la littérature roumaine ses romans sont mieux cotés que ses drames.

peuvent pas rendre compte. Car, par rapport à la convention romanesque qui assure à l'écrivain le privilège de l'accès direct à l'intériorité des personnages, la création dramatique impose des conditions beaucoup plus dures. De plus, il appartient à la dramaturgie moderne d'avoir renoncé aux deux artifices classiques qui permettait qu'on fasse connaître au public les pensées secrètes des personnages, à savoir les soliloques et les apartés.

On pourrait dire que, souvent, Camil Petrescu se sert des didascalies d'une manière „illicite" pour décrire des états d'âme qu'un observateur ne saurait pas saisir et qui restent incommunicables du point de vue des interprètes:

„il sent sa profonde sincérité" (Pietro, dans l'acte II, scène 3);
comment faire pour montrer ça au public?

„en pensant avec amertume à son propre destin" (Alta, acte III, scène 5); d'où peut-on apprendre à quoi pense la héroïne?

„elle a compris que tout est perdu...Semblable au gens qui, au moment de leur mort, ont la vision de toute leur vie, elle embrasse d'un seul regard les ruines de son passé calciné" (Alta, acte III, scène 7)

et, encore plus fort:

„Il lui apparaît soudainement que la connaissance d'une autre femme que la sienne pourrait le soulager" (Pietro, acte III, scène 4)

Parfois, comme s'il aurait oublié qu'il écrit pour la scène d'un théâtre, le dramaturge fait aux acteurs des recommandations sans effets perceptibles, comme, par exemple, celles concernant le changement de la coloration du visage, qui, même si elles pouvaient être mises en pratique resteraient invisible au public à cause du maquillage:

„pâle, avec une violence terrible" (Pietro, acte I, scène 2)

„blême, en se débattant dans le piège" (Cellino, acte I, scène 1)

„une nouvelle pâleur lui parcourt le visage" (Pietro, acte III, scène 3)

ou, tout à fait insolite:

„avec des mains pâles” (Alta, acte II, scène 1); quelle tâche impossible pour la pauvre actrice! et pourtant pas plus difficile que celle de faire comprendre aux spectateurs qu’*”elle sent dans sa bouche un goût de vert-de-gris”*! (Alta, acte II, scène 1).

Il va sans dire que ces quelques discordances ou bizarreries ne diminuent pas la force du discours didascalique de Camil Petrescu. La plupart des indications concernant le comportement non-verbal et les qualités de l’émission vocale des interprètes s’avèrent très efficaces, puisqu’elles contribuent à une meilleure compréhension du profil psychologique des personnages et orientent la mise en scène en empêchant, au moins en théorie, des écarts fâcheux par rapport aux intentions de l’auteur.

En ce qui concerne le premier aspect, il faut remarquer le soin peut commun avec lequel le dramaturge choisit les moyens kinésiques (gestes, sourires, regards) et paralinguistiques (ton, rythme, intensité de la voix) pour exprimer pour le mieux les émotions de ses personnages⁴. Il y a des différences bien marquées entre les deux héros principaux du drame, une femme, Alta, et un homme (son mari) Pietro. Bien que sur le plan verbal leur poids dramaturgique soit sensiblement égal (Alta prononce au total 325 de répliques et Pietro 331), ils sont nettement différenciés par la nature des indices non-verbaux qui accompagnent leurs mots.

Alta se distingue par ses regards éloquents. Presque la moitié (47%) des didascalies relatives à l’expression des yeux la concerne. Son regard est, successivement, „long”, „craintif”, „halluciné”, „fougueux”, „ombragé”, „lourd”, „droit”, „indomptable

⁴ C’est pourquoi nous avons classé les didascalies selon des critères provenant de la théorie de la communication non-verbale (R. Bidwhistell, A. Mehrabian, P. Ekman, W. Friesen etc.) et non pas de la pragmatique linguistique, comme, par exemple Sanda Golopenția (*Les didascalies de l’action verbale, Studi Romeni e Romanzi — Omaggio a Florica Dimitrescu e Alexandru Niculescu*, Padova 1995, vol. III, p. 842–856) qui parle, en suivant le modèle austinien, de didascalies «du locutoire», «de l’illocutoire» et «du perlocutoire».

et frêle (!); elle considère ses interlocuteurs „avec des yeux fatigués”, „avec l'âme dévastée”, „avec un éclat d'argent dans les yeux”, „avec des yeux dilatés”, „avec un dédain infini”, „avec un regard scintillant”, „en baissant les yeux”, „avec des yeux humides” et ainsi de suite (jusqu'à 55 mentions différentes).

La protagoniste occupe la position dominante aussi du point de vue des manifestations vocales non-verbales (56% de toutes les didascalies de ce type). Son rire revêt chaque fois un timbre distinct. Il est à tour de rôle, „sonore”, „amusé”, „nerveux”, „aux éclats”, „affectueux”, „joyeux”, „artificiel”, „irritant”, „sac-cadé” etc. Parfois elle pleure „passionnément” ou „désespérément”.

En échange, le personnage principal masculin, Pietro, homme dur et retenu, s'exprime surtout par des signaux mimiques minimaux, et principalement par le sourire, qui connaît une multitude d'hypostases. Il est successivement: „mélancolique”, „tranquille”, „amer”, „triste et fatigué”, „couvert de rosée (!)”, „généreux”, „éloigné”, „venant de l'au delà”, „embarrassé”, „nerveux”, „glacial”, „diminué”, „dégouté” et ainsi de suite. Le fait que 65,3% du nombre total des sourires mentionnés dans les didascalies appartiennent à Pietro souligne l'importance que l'auteur accordait à cet élément en tant qu'indice du tempérament du héros.

Quant aux déplacements à travers la scène, le résultat fourni par la statistique des didascalies n'offre aucun motif de surprise: comme prévu, le personnage le plus mobile est un serviteur, Nicola. Sa condition ancillaire explique pleinement cette conduite. En revanche, ses gestes sont rarement consignés. Dans ce domaine, la championne est de nouveau Alta, personnalité féminine évidemment chéri par l'écrivain, dont il a prévu soigneusement toutes les manifestations non-verbales.

À l'antipode de ces signaux kinésiques se situe une forme de non-comportement qui est l'immobilisation totale, expression de la plus grande stupeur. Elle donne lieu à une série de *stop-cadres*, de possible inspiration cinématographique mais aussi redevable à une tradition théâtrale multiséculaire („*Guarda don Bartolo comme una statua...*”): „*pétrifiée par une émotion obscure*” (Alta, acte I, scène 1), „*elle reste immobile entre deux miroirs parallèles*”

(Alta, acte II, scène 1), „*elle glace*” (Alta, acte II, scène 1), „*toute pétrifiée*” (Alta, acte II, scène 1), „*elle n'écoute pas, ne parle pas, reste immobile*” (Alta, acte III, scène 7), „*a demeuré et demeure crucifiée*”, (Alta, acte III, scène 7), „*stupéfait*” (Pietro, acte I, scène 4), „*reste pétrifié, ne sachant que croire*” (Pietro, acte I, scène 4), „*il voudrait dire quelque chose, mais le regard transperçant de Pietro le gèle*” (Cellino, acte I, scène 2), „*paralysé par l'effroi*” (Cellino, acte II, scène 2) et ainsi de suite. Ces arrêts, habilement spéculés par la mise en scène, pourraient introduire une ponctuation d'un certain effet scénique dans l'écoulement continu de la représentation.

En ce qui concerne le ton des répliques, la qualité musicale de la déclamation réclamée par l'auteur, le lecteur des didascalies se trouve dans un certain embarras. Excepté quelques indications qui se rapportent d'une façon explicite au timbre de la voix („*avec une voix soyeuse comme un sourire*”, (Alta, acte I, scène 1), „*avec une voix rude et résolue*” (Pietro, acte I, scène 2), „*sa voix exprime maintenant une tristesse chaleureuse, comme la nostalgie d'une chose impossible*” (Pietro, acte I, scène 2), „*avec un ton légèrement mélancolique*” (Pietro, acte I, scène 2) etc.) on rencontre un très grand nombre de didascalies (non moins de 536!) dont l'objet est ambigu. Des éclaircissements comme „*déçu*”, „*candide*”, „*amical*”, „*sévère*”, „*nerveuse*”, „*confus*”, „*étonné*” peuvent se rapporter tout aussi bien à la mimique qu'à l'expression vocale. Il est bien probable que le dramaturge a eu en vue tous les deux aspects, mimico-facial et paralinguistique. En tout cas, un bon acteur tiendra compte tant de l'un que de l'autre, sans se poser trop de problèmes, puisqu'il est naturel de recourir à tous les moyens physiques disponibles pour exprimer les états du personnage interprété.

Une particularité frappante du discours didascalique de Camil Petrescu c'est l'abondance de métaphores qu'il emploie pour expliciter ses intentions. Bien qu'elles ne sont pas directement traduisibles en gestes ou en expressions faciales, ces „*fleurs de style*” suggèrent des états d'âme ineffables, dont un artiste sensible pourrait extraire des indications précieuses de comportement scénique qui ne peuvent pas être formulées autrement. Quelques exemples:

- „en brisant, repentante, les tiges de son orgueil” (Alta, acte I, scène 1)
 „avec des yeux brûlés, prise dans l’embûche de l’amour” (ib.)
 „dans une chemise de feu” (ib.)
 „comme sous des voûtes de passion et de tristesse” (ib.)
 „il y a en lui une course angoissée” (Cellino, acte II, scène 1)
 „tordue sur la roue de l’impossible” (Alta, acte III, scène 5)
 „grisée par la belladone du souvenir” (ib.)
 „elle sourit sur des hauts sentiers (ib.)
 „en interrogeant les fantômes de son cœur” (Pietro, acte III, scène 5)
 „avec un cœur de sapin qui découvre les cimes des montagnes” (Cellino, acte III, scène 7)
 „avec une joie de tulipes rouges” (Alta, acte II, scène 1)
 „comme un nénuphar heureux” (ib.).

On voit qu’au moins les derniers de ces indications sont tout à fait impossible de mettre en pratique. Leur présence dans le texte ne fait que dévoiler les ambitions poétiques du dramaturge, auteur aussi d’un volume de vers beaucoup moins bien reçu par la critique littéraire que sa prose ou son théâtre.

On doit, pourtant, reconnaître que l’analyse entreprise ci-dessus n’apporte encore presque aucune lumière concernant le problème énoncé au début de cet article. En effet, la thèse selon laquelle il existerait une corrélation entre l’essor de l’activité de mise en scène et le développement du discours didascalique ne peut s’appuyer que sur une étude comparative. Pour offrir une réponse valable à la question qui nous préoccupe, il faudrait confronter des œuvres dramatiques appartenant aux deux périodes successives de l’histoire du théâtre: celle d’avant et celle d’après l’éclosion de la mise en scène moderne. C’est pourquoi nous avons soumis à un examen similaire une autre pièce de théâtre, écrite justement avant la frontière temporelle d’entre ces deux périodes. Il s’agit de la comédie *Une lettre perdue*⁵ de Ion Luca Caragiale, jouée pour la première fois en 1883, à un moment où les nouveaux principes de

⁵ L’édition utilisée a été: I.L.Caragiale, *Opere I, Teatru*, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1959.

la représentation n'avaient pas encore pénétré dans la vie théâtrale roumaine.

Il faut reconnaître en toute sincérité que le résultat de cette comparaison nous a vraiment surpris. Le décalage entre les deux ouvrages examinés n'est pas du tout si grand qu'on le présumait. Pour un nombre comparable de répliques (1055 dans *Une lettre perdue* et 978 dans *Acte vénitien*) la différence en ce qui concerne le nombre des didascalies n'est que d'environ 15% (784 dans *Une lettre perdue* pour 916 dans *Acte vénitien*). Qu'y a-t-il d'étonnant dans ce résultat?

Il est certain qu'interrogés sur le discours didascalique de la comédie de Caragiale, la plupart de ceux qui la connaissent (et donc presque tous les Roumains, car *Une lettre perdue* est, sans concurrence possible, la plus fameuse pièce de théâtre jamais écrite en roumain), seraient inclinés d'affirmer qu'ils ne se souviennent pas de cette partie du texte. L'explication réside, sans doute, dans le caractère très fonctionnel des didascalies caragialiennes. Elles n'ont jamais l'air d'un commentaire superflu. Indispensables et discrètes à la fois, elles se contentent de mettre en valeur les répliques des personnages, sans retenir elles-mêmes l'attention du lecteur. De ce point de vue, les indications scéniques de Caragiale ressemblent beaucoup à la musique de film, dont on dit qu'elle est d'autant plus réussite qu'on ne l'entend pas. Tout comme dans une production cinématographique, où le commentaire sonore ne doit pas brouiller le discours visuel en détournant l'intérêt du spectateur vers un domaine collatéral, il est désirable que les indications de nature kinésique, proxémique, scénographique ou paraverbale ne saute pas aux yeux, pour permettre au lecteur de se concentrer sur le contenu des dialogues. Caragiale nous offre un modèle exemplaire d'une telle utilisation.

En revanche, les didascalies de Camil Petrescu, bien que suggestives, instructives ou poétiques, se constituent en un texte parallèle, autonome, qui peut être lu en soi et pour soi, mais qui est ressenti, plus ou moins, comme une tentative de transformer la pièce de théâtre en une sorte de quasi-roman où règne un certain équilibre entre les dialogues et les commentaires de l'auteur (les valeurs pas très différentes du nombre de répliques et de

didascalies dans l'*Acte vénitien* atteste, d'ailleurs, une telle tendance).

On décèle ici un danger qui menace tous les dramaturges tentés par l'ambition de se substituer aux metteurs en scène. Ils risquent de transformer en littérature des œuvres destinées à être représentées et non pas lues. Nous dirons même que ceux qui sont des véritables hommes de théâtre, „engendrés, non pas créés” ne tombent généralement pas dans ce piège.

Notre verdict est peut-être trop tranchant, car des contre-exemples peuvent être invoqués sans peine, mais il n'est pas moins vrai que ce sont toujours les auteurs dramatiques qui se tiennent à l'écart de la vie intime du théâtre qui manifestent la tendance de surenchérir le côté didascalique de leur pièces.

En tout cas, procéder ainsi dans l'espoir de limiter les velléités auctoriales des metteurs en scène tient de la plus pure illusion. L'appétit novateur de ceux-ci, phénomène qui date déjà depuis un bon siècle, ne pourra pas être découragé par une stratégie si naïve⁶.

Cependant la composante didascalique d'un texte destiné à être représenté n'est nullement dépourvue d'importance. Elle rend compte, d'une part, de l'image que l'auteur se fait sur les virtualités scéniques de son texte. De l'autre part, elle trace un portrait du dramaturge lui-même, puisque (nous l'avons déjà bien vu dans le cas de Camil Petrescu) elle nous parle de son goût et de sa vocation d'auteur non-dramatique, poète ou prosateur. Pour donner un seul exemple, il est clair que c'est l'influence du romancier Samuel Beckett qui fait que certaines pièces du dramaturge Samuel Beckett soient submergées de didascalies. Tout au contraire, son collègue de génération et de courant littéraire Eugène Ionesco préfère de suivre l'exemple de I. L. Caragiale (d'ailleurs son compatriote et prédécesseur), en se limitant aux indications strictement indispensables, qui accompagnent discrète-

⁶ Au contraire, pour échapper totalement aux tentatives des dramaturges de leur imposer leur propre vision scénique, les metteurs en scène contemporains préfèrent, de plus en plus, de monter des adaptations pour le théâtre de textes littéraires non-dramatiques, qui leur permettent d'expérimenter en parfaite liberté.

ment les dialogues à la manière de la musique de film „qu'on n'entend pas”.

Ces exemples nous attirent l'attention que notre hypothèse initiale est bien susceptible d'amendements. S'il existe, en effet, une tendance d'élargir le champ du discours didascalique dans les pièces écrites au XX-ième siècle, elle ne peut pas être considérée comme générale, étant donnée la variété de personnalités et de courants qui caractérise la littérature dramatique de cette période historique. Dans ces conditions, on aurait tort d'extrapoler un résultat sans s'appuyer sur une analyse plus ample, sinon exhaustive. Or, justement à cause de l'étendue du domaine à étudier, les chances d'une réponse rapide à la question formulée ici nous paraissent faibles. En ce qui nous concerne, nous avons essayé seulement de suggérer une direction de recherche qu'on pourrait suivre à l'avenir.

Merle Karusoo's Memory Theatre

PIRET KRUUSPERE

My aim is to analyze the phenomenon of sociologically oriented documentary productions by the Estonian female stage director Merle Karusoo (b. 1944). In recent years I have become interested in the role of the Estonian theatre in cultivating, and also stabilizing, national memory and identity. The impact of the Estonian theatre on the national movement can be traced from the time of the national awakening at the end of the 19th century, when similar events happened elsewhere in Europe, to the present. I have chosen the period of contemporary national theatre history, namely from the 1970s to the year 2000. Because of the changing socio-political context — in broad terms, the 1970s marking the time of the “deep” Soviet occupation; the 1980s, especially the second half of the decade, involving the subconscious awareness of possible future changes; and the 1990s, effecting the transition from one political-economic situation to another — these decades offer interesting and inspiring material for historical-comparative studies, presenting evidence of how problems of memory and identity have been reflected in the productions of national classics as well as of contemporary Estonian drama. Judging by the stage works of persons whose texts and/or productions are representative in that sense, I am convinced that Merle Karusoo definitely belongs to their company.

As to the **social** and **theatrical context**, I will first outline it briefly. From the 1960s to the 1980s the Estonian theatre functioned as one of the most important institutions of national culture (the statistics of theatregoing evidencing the popularity of theatre among Estonians). And, like the arts in general, the theatre

of that time could be characterized as a means of intellectual opposition (Tormis 1995: 289) or as a catalytic factor of national self-consciousness. Expressing, in most cases in a hidden mode (through metaphorical allusions, "secret" codes or Aesopian language) the idea of enduring as a nation, the theatre also functioned as the institution that maintained the Estonian language (especially when it came to russification).

After the more liberal period at the end of the 1960s, the social context and official ideology changed in the 1970s (the strengthening of censorship, the return of Stalinist dogmas, the politics of russification, accompanied by the phenomena of double standards and social pretence), and the theatre's compensatory role and its status as a place of refuge or that of ritual protest became even more pronounced. By the end of the 1970s environmental pollution (including that of the mental environment) and a crisis of social values as well as the clear danger of national demise caused deep pessimism among Estonians. On the other hand, the absurdity of the social situation was widely realized, especially among the intellectuals. In the 1970s the dominating "inner" ("hidden") opposition to the Soviet rule found its expression in the use of irony and grotesque and absurd humour on stage as well as in dramatic texts (Epner 1999: 347). In the theatre the end of the 1970s marked a more profound probing into the problems of national mentality and history, first and foremost relying on the national classics, while during the next decade (the 1980s) the motifs of national memory and "roots" emerged (Epner 1999: 349), e.g. in the productions of Mikk Mikiver and Raivo Trass. Jaak Rähesoo has claimed that "Mikiver's series of productions of plays by Estonian authors /---/ formed probably the most important chapter in the theatrical history of the early 1980s" (Rähesoo 1999: 69).

Although examples of confessional as well as documentary theatre had become noticeable already in the 1960s, such performances gained new resonance as well as a more adequate context of reception during the searching for "roots". Or, as the Finnish theatre historian Pentti Paavolainen has put it, the performances of the 1980s Estonian theatre could be interpreted as hidden manifestos of nationalism (Paavolainen 1992: 23).

In the changed political and social context at the end of the 1980s (the "second national awakening" of the so-called "singing revolution" of 1988 and the collapse of the empire of the Soviet Union in 1991), Estonian theatre and drama began to focus on problems of national history that had earlier been suppressed (e.g. plays by Jaan Kruusvall and Rein Saluri that dealt with Stalinist deportations). Estonians had been officially deprived of their individual as well as collective memories for decades, and the theatre, as a platform and a place of unification, now also became a medium for restoring that which had been taken away. On the other hand, as Jaak Rähesoo has stated, "once the novelty of speaking out had passed, the rush of political events left the arts somewhat in the shadows" (Rähesoo 1999: 71). As the 1980s became the 1990s, Estonian theatres experienced a sudden shrinking of audiences, and in an attempt to correct the situation, theatres began to emphasize light comedies. By now, however, while our life-style has undergone quite radical changes, the situation in the theatres has stabilized: different genres have found their audiences, and the classics have returned and become remarkably popular.

In the 1990s problems of national identity found new ways of expression, and the unidimensional national pathos, typical of the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, has been replaced by a more ambivalent (including a self-ironic, tragicomic, retrospective) point of view. More stress has been laid on the relativity and selectivity of personal and/or collective memory. Although some recent examples of the genre allow one to speak of a rebirth of social theatre, Jaak Rähesoo has claimed that during the early-capitalist materialism of the 1990s, Estonian theatre has preferred abstract and subjective themes to social problems (Rähesoo 2000: 14) and has thus — paradoxically — "functioned as an artistic oasis, a refuge from everyday worries" (Rähesoo 1999: 73), therefore becoming once again an escapist theatre.

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Thus, the phenomenon of Merle Karusoo's sociological documentary productions, or, as I have put it in my title, *Karusoo's*

memory theatre, is quite unique in the context of contemporary Estonian stage. I would like to state the three so-called "counterpoints" of her memory works: those belonging to the beginning of the 1980s (1980, 1982), to the end of the 1980s (1987/1988–1990), and to the end of the 1990s (1997–2000).

As for the first signs of her later documentary/memory theatre, which synthesized social concerns with impressive scenic images, I should mention three productions by Karusoo:

1) Two short plays — on the same bill — by the Russian playwright Ljudmila Petrushevskaya, entitled *Cinzano* and *Smirnova's Birthday* ('Smirnova sünnipäev'). The acerbic text, demonstrating the estrangement of even the well-educated people in Soviet society, had caused the banning of these works in the Soviet Union, and the first night took place in Tallinn in 1978. The tone of premonition as well as the polyphony of characters' voices that were noted by the critics of the Tallinn production later became characteristic features of Merle Karusoo's works.

2) A panoramic production, lasting five hours, entitled *Makarenko's Colony* ('Makarenko koloonia') in 1979, in which nearly 40 theatre students participated. The text was based on the novel *Pedagogical Poem* by the Soviet teacher and writer Anton Makarenko (originally published in Russian in 1933–35) as well as on different documentary material (including the data gathered by Karusoo herself in the Ukraine). The production examined the causes of why Makarenko's system of education turned out to be formalistic and offered profound social and pungent commentary as well as sharp visual imagery.

3) An open-air performance (but later transferred indoors because of its popularity), entitled *I'm Thirteen* ('Olen 13-aastane') in 1980. Here teenagers' self-cognition widened into social analysis. The starting point for the actors' improvisations as well as for the creation of the text were the essays of 500 teens that described their usual schoolday. In the main characters of three boys Karusoo managed to combine individual characterizations with acute generalizations. The production protested against the rigid formalism of the educational system and stressed the issue of estrangement between people.

Known as an uncompromising striver for maximal goals, Merle Karusoo has more than once found herself in conflict with or in opposition to the theatrical establishment. After having worked as a director in the Estonian State Academic Drama Theatre and the State Youth Theatre (from 1976 to 1983), she left the latter, worked as a journalist for some years, and in 1987 founded an alternative theatre group called Pirgu's Memory Department, the aim of which was to gather Estonian biographies. Now a freelancer, Karusoo has worked with amateur actors and theatre students, but occasionally she has created productions for the state theatres as well. In the general landscape of contemporary Estonian theatre, I would call her an outsider.

Having gained experience in sociological studies before attending theatre school (in the late 1960s and early 1970s she worked as an assistant in a sociology programme at Tartu University), Karusoo has always been fond of social models and legitimacies. Or, as theatre critic Sirje Endre has put it, Karusoo has always examined the influence of the mental atmosphere on an individual, as well as the relationship between the fate of the individual and that of a nation and a country (Endre 1985: 207).

Karusoo has revealed her sharp social criticism towards the hypocrisy of the Soviet system as well as towards the so-called "bottlenecks" of the state politics of the Estonian Republic of today. She has declared her constant attention to the so-called socially "risky" groups, among them the teenagers of the 1980s or 1990s in the formal school system, the drug users and the virtual reality freaks, or even the entire Estonian nation, which she has at times classified as also forming a "risky" group.

As to Karusoo's aesthetics or artistic 'signature', from the beginning of the 1980s on, the panoramic (*Makarenko's Colony*) or the playful (*I'm Thirteen*) treatment of a particular model or section of society has turned instead into external stasis and earnest restraint.

As a "mediator" of ordinary Estonians' authentic biographies on the stage, Karusoo has no doubt influenced — even initiated — the process of collecting the biographies of Estonians, which started at the end of the 1980s (and could to some extent be compared to the campaign of gathering national folklore during the

period of the national awakening in the 19th century). Karusoo's aim is to evoke the nation's social memory and self-consciousness. She firmly believes in the possibilities of *talking to each other* as a means of collective psychotherapy (*meeting each other* being one of the key notions Karusoo herself has used while talking about the tasks of the contemporary theatre in general). Quite a few of Karusoo's productions have been based on dramatic texts written by herself or created in cooperation with actors, thus giving evidence of collective creation or collective dramaturgy. Karusoo's dramatic texts and productions, based on diaries, interviews, questionnaires etc, have in most cases used the form of a monologue or a confession (therefore her theatre model has been called verbal theatre as well). The method of her sociological and documentary drama and theatre has been compared to Jerzy Grotowski's "poor theatre" and to that of Eugenio Barba as well as to those of Ariane Mnouchkine and Susan Osten and even certain Latin American theatre groups. Possible parallels can also be drawn between Karusoo's monologues and the East German protocol collections by Maxie Wander. In Estonia the first performances of Karusoo's documentary theatre, dating back to the beginning of the 1980s, have afterwards been labelled as being the avant-garde of their decade (L. Epner).

The so-called *generational monologues* were compiled in cooperation with and presented by theatre students in 1982, entitled *Our Biographies* ('Meie elulood') and *Full Rooms* ('Kui ruumid on täis'). Autobiographical memories of childhood and school days of a particular generation, or to be more exact, of the very actors on the stage, were viewed against the background of contemporary society and included the social and national "sore spots", such as the weakening position of the Estonian language in the Soviet Estonian society of the 1970s and 1980s and the inevitable and constant need of balancing social lies and truths or, in short, dealing with social hypocrisy. Among Karusoo's techniques was the actors' identification or one-to-one correspondence with their roles, for the text had been composed from their own speech transcriptions. The text was structured in terms of numbers, indicating either the year of birth, the first day of school, or some historical events, such as Yuri Gagarin's space flight in 1961 or

the Estonian song festival of 1969, which marked the 100th anniversary of the first song festival during the national awakening.

There was almost no intercommunication between actors in the unspecified space and time of both of these productions. In *Our Biographies*, the stage of which presented two rows of school desks, the external action was limited to marking the 16 pupils' answers during the (imagined) school lessons. The frequency of occurrence of one or another significant event that was mentioned, e.g., becoming a Pioneer or a member of Komsomol (the Soviet youth organisations), was indicated by raising hands. In the open structure of the text, single monologues — or their fragments — signified generational confessions. The actors/characters were named after the average mark of their school reports as well as according to some life episode they themselves had narrated, e.g., the Boy who wanted to make something happen and then disappear (Jaak Johanson), or the *Wunderkind* (Mare Martin), or the Girl who had trouble naming an object during her English lesson (Anu Lamp), etc. Comparing the naming of characters in the two productions of biographies, meaningful metamorphoses of types can be noted, e.g., the Boy who had no problem communicating in *Our Biographies* (played by Andrus Vaarik), had turned in *Full Rooms* into the Boy who is afraid of having serious communication problems. Concentrating more on inner psychological problems, the motif of fear, frequently occurring in Karusoo's productions, was especially amplified in *Full Rooms* even by the use of names, i.e. half of the characters were named as a Boy or a Girl who was afraid of something.

The fate of the production of *Full Rooms* served as an example of Soviet censorship in the Estonian theatre. Because the text mentioned the Berlin Wall and the repressions of the Soviet rule — and I remind you that the year was 1982 — the production was banned even before its opening night and the troupe was permitted to give only a few the so-called "closed" performances, making the production thus a non-event in the theatre-historical discourse. An open-minded treatment of current public affairs and the resemblance to a social happening would have been taken as an expression of novelty at the beginning of the 1980s. On the other hand, the same productions were — paradoxically — accused of

the lacking a "positive program" by some critics. By now *Our Biographies* as well as *Full Rooms* have turned out to be chrestomatic works in our national theatre history.

In the endeavor "to recover and mobilize precisely those energies and impulses that had been excluded from political discourses" (Sieg 1999: 87), Karusoo's above-mentioned texts/productions could be compared to protocol collections by the East German writer Maxie Wander (one of her books was published in Estonian translation in 1986).

At the end of the 1980s, after crucial social changes had taken place in Estonia, there was no longer a need to talk about national identity in an allegorical mood. After a pause in Karusoo's career, the generational confessions were followed by documentary biographies of common people. In *An Account* ('Aruanne' in 1987) and *Parents of Sick Children* ('Haigete laste vanemad' in 1988) life-stories were principally presented as monodramas, in the first case in the form of the personal diary of a woman, in the second case using the letters and interviews of another particular woman, thus introducing a feminine aspect into the discourse of visualized biographies. In the production of *An Account*, the historical cataclysmic events of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the monotonous reality in Siberia and in postwar Soviet Estonia, were mediated resp. presented through a very personal point of view. The text was divided among four actors, characterized as Voices, thus referring to the often found polyphonic pattern in Karusoo's texts and productions. In *Parents of Sick Children*, a monologue of a Mother whose daughter is mentally handicapped, one could see the image of the *sick child* as a symbol of the sick nation. Indeed, one could notice the symbols and/or metaphors of *unwanted children*, *exchanged children*, or *children as a group at risk* more than once in her works. The term *fatherless* also occurs repeatedly. Proceeding from the notion that children are punished for their parents' sins, Karusoo began in 1988 her analysis of the choices of Estonians, as well as the more profound treatment of the subject matter of historical conformation and the collective guilt of a generation.

In the late 1990s (meanwhile, at the beginning of the decade, an uncompromising social message had also been explicit in her

interpretations of classical texts) she has concentrated even more on the events of the historically fatal years of the 1940s, such as the failed attempts of escape from the homeland in 1944, presented in the twelve monologues in *Autumn 1944* ('Sügis 1944' in 1997). In *The Deportation Men* ('Küüdipoisid' in 1999) Karusoo analyzes the psychology of the so-called underlings during the deportation of Estonians to Siberia. Both of these productions were based on authentic interviews. In *The Deportation Men*, mediating the witnesses and their explanations, mostly young people in 1949, as well as their somewhat comically presented retrospective views fifty years later, Karusoo drew attention to the fact that Estonians themselves had taken part in the deportation and, thus, the Estonians' deeply entrenched view of *us* and *them* crumbled. Predictably, the reception of this production was quite controversial.

Even through the prism of the Estonians' love stories and the sexual experiences of different generations, Merle Karusoo has, in fact, continued to talk about our historical fate as a nation. In the production *The Cranes Gone, Bad Weather* ('Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad' in 1997), introducing a very personal, even intimate discourse of biographies, the characters' monologues, like the fragments of subjective history, became equal to a series of independent monodramas. The tonality of this production varied from tragic to comic — and even to the grotesque. Lacking ensemble acting in the traditional sense, the monologues nevertheless related to each other, and one could experience the stylistic unity of the production. This production became very popular among audiences and was presented over 100 times.

The presentation of *us* and the *others* was carried on in the year 2000. Karusoo's bilingual production *Save Our Souls*, analyzing the problems of integrating Russians into Estonian society, acquired rather the characteristic features of a sociological study in the form of theatre. Here Karusoo presented the monologues of imprisoned murderers (many of them Russians, and therefore Estonian as well as Russian actors participated in the production) and added to these texts the family-stories of non-Estonian children. Thus, the identity problems of the *Others*, and the image of the *Stranger*, the last of which has been deeply hidden in the Estonians' national subconscious, were actualized. As to *Save Our*

Souls, some problematic questions arose for me as a spectator. I agree with Karusoo's viewpoint that integration could be successful only on the basis of the national or ethnical identity of the *others* or *them*, or to put it another way, the Estonian Republic should not try to make — at any cost — Estonians out of Russian-speaking children. But what really troubled me was the positioning of the twelve children on the stage after the monologues of twelve murderers, i.e. into the comparative context or a direct connection with them. I doubt if the number of twelve murderers and twelve children was simply a coincidence, although the representative number of characters who deliver their monologues generally varies from 9 to 16 in Karusoo's productions. In this particular case the use of children on the stage was really problematic, raising ethical issues, including the question about the authority of the director in documentary theatre in general.

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Karusoo's works have been defined in different ways, most frequently as sociological theatre and theatre of biography. These have been described as situated between art and visual documents and have even been called quasi-dramaturgical. They can be compared to (social) studies of oral history. As to Karusoo's self-reflection (she has always given comments on her works), she has stressed her permanent interest in the dialectical modelling of the facts of the past. According to Karusoo, the aim of *sociological theatre* (the notion she herself uses) should be discovering unsolved problems and formulating social hypotheses or gathering material for future hypotheses, as well as raising questions, the social solution of which is badly needed (Karusoo 1982; Karusoo 1999).

Generally Karusoo's ascetic style includes external stasis, balanced by the actors' internal tension and dynamics. The actors have in most cases gained the role of a story-teller. Their aim is not to act, but rather to bear witness to or to testify about the life of a person. In her book *Memory-Theatre and Postmodern Drama* Janette R. Malkin has characterized the composition of the plays she has treated as "memoried" structures (NB! Karusoo cannot be

placed into the framework of postmodernism, be it on the textual or scenic/theatrical level, but some of Malkin's ideas or concepts of memory to which she has referred — e.g. the trauma theory — could be applied to the analysis of what Karusoo has created); the devices of these “memoried” structures include, for example, repetitions as well as long monologues and immobility as well as a collage of voices (Malkin 1999: 1, 8–9). From Karusoo's works one could find enough examples of the repetitive images on the textual as well as the scenic level, revealed in the exact rhythmic composition of texts and productions. These may involve, for instance, the use of popular songs of the historical period, reflecting or referring to the common national memory, as well as reconstructing the truthful atmosphere of the period. On the other hand, one could speak of the principle of contrast, also characteristic of Karusoo's personal “handwriting” (like the sudden interruptive still scenes/*tableaux* or breaks in the scenic atmosphere, e.g. the sudden, fatal interruptions at a village hop in the first part of *The Deportation Men*).

Karusoo's theatrical space, into which she has placed the representative “sections” of the national congregation ^{document or} she is depicting, tends to be laconic, rather like a closed space (a cellar in *An Account*, a metaphorically closed zone in a store house in *Save Our Souls*). It can also function as a symbolic equivalent of a landscape of memory (a *mindscape* — Malkin 1999: 9), demonstrating once again the visual images of interruption (like the broken tree trunks as symbols of people's lives in *The Cranes Gone*, *Bad Weather* or the torn background in *The Deportation Men*). Karusoo has also quite often employed the symbolic language of numbers, as, for instance, with the grades received in school in *Our Biographies* (in that case it could be characterized as the effect of numerology on personal fate) or with statistics written on the board and showing how many people remained in Estonia because of their failure to escape (in *Autumn 1944*). She has also made use of maps on stage (to show the personal escape routes of people in *Autumn 1944* and *Save Our Souls*, while in *Full Rooms* the map of Estonia served as a general symbol). In some productions photos have added semantic connotations to the theatrical

space (*An Account, Parents of Sick Children*, gaining special significance in *Save Our Souls*).

The genre of monodrama has been characterized as an evocation and formation of "genetic" collective memory, and, according to Patrice Pavis, theatrical monologues could be taken as a direct turning to the audience and through them to society at large, which explains Karusoo's attachment to this genre or its modifications.¹ It could also be pointed out that in the 1980s confessional performances appeared in the Estonian theatre as well as elsewhere. Pavis has defined confession as a subdivision of monologues, and the term *confession* has been widely used by critics in connection with Karusoo's productions, although she herself has argued against this notion, preferring the term *witnessing* (Karusoo 1999: 70). The dialogue of Karusoo's monologues deserves attention not only because her texts are based on interviews, but also because the monologues are in fact answers to implied not-articulated questions, the import of which emerges only from the heard responses (e.g. in *The Deportation Men*). As already mentioned, in many cases the fragmentary structure of texts generates a polyphony of voices (thus resembling to some extent the composition of Anna Deaver Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* — Fortier 1997: 124–125).

Using the principle of "authenticity", Karusoo has preserved, reconstructed and mediated genuine small talk (including jargon) as well as individual speech mannerisms or idiolects (including the rhythm and speed of speech, pauses and ellipses, and even grammatical and syntactical mistakes). By the way, the motif of the fear of losing one's language that first appeared in *Our Biographies* in 1982, is still current in *Save Our Souls* in 2000 but appears there in a totally different context.

In making my concluding remarks about the role of Merle Karusoo in the discourse on scenic images of national memory and identity, I would claim that she has developed a very special personal approach to the above-mentioned questions. The substantial phenomenon for Karusoo in the theatre as a whole is definitely the "congregation", the process of interpersonal relations, of meeting others.

The works of her memory theatre range from *Our Biographies* in 1982, a rather exceptional example or phenomenon of free speech in the context of the Soviet occupation, to the critical questioning of the stereotypical understanding of our historical roles in *The Deportation Men* (in 1999) as well as of our official state politics (in *Save Our Souls* in 2000). Furthermore, one could ask what *Our* meant in 1982 and what it means in 2000.

Merle Karusoo has succeeded in evoking and activating the personal memories of the Estonian people by saving and stitching together collected fragments in order to restore, even if in part, the forgotten discourse, because Estonians (like many other nations in the Baltics and in Eastern Europe) had been deprived of their right to their personal/family memories. Karusoo's works confirm J. R. Malkin's statement that "memory theatre might be doubly defined as a theatre that imitates conflicted and sometimes repressed or erased memories of a shared past; and as a theatre that initiates process of remembrance" (Malkin 1999: 8). In the productions of 1999 and 2000 Karusoo has managed to question the notions of *us* and the *other(s)*. In her manifesto-like article "The Theatre of the 21st Century" ('XXI sajandi teater' — Karusoo 1998) she has claimed that the future theatre, openly opposed to the noisy society of information, as well as the all-conquering virtual reality, will undoubtedly rely on documentary materials.

Allowing myself to be for a moment pathetic, I would say that maybe Merle Karusoo and the model of her theatre could be called the "canary in the mine shaft" that gives the first sign of danger and has definitely something to do with the fact that Estonian intellectuals have by and large withdrawn from contemporary political/social discussions. Here Karusoo turns out to be once again the exception to the rule.

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**Investigating Wor(l)ds:
The Personal *Is* Political in the Drama
of Merle Karusoo and Anna Deavere Smith**

PAMELA MONACO
LEENA KURVET-KÄOSAAR

Documentary Drama. Theatre of Testimony. Life Stories. Sociological Theatre. Journalistic Drama. Despite the different nomenclature, a single genre of drama is referenced, one that has gained in popularity during the closing decades of the twentieth century. This drama aims to bring to the stage the too frequently unheard voices of those who can offer a unique perspective on a social issue or crisis because they are witnesses or participants in this issue or crisis, and in doing so, to (re)establish community bonds. In countries separated by thousands of miles and with virtually no theatrical influence on the other, this drama is being written and produced in remarkably similar ways. In both the United States and Estonia, women playwrights have pioneered in this dramatic form. Anna Deavere Smith of the US and Merle Karusoo of Estonia, although differing in some significant ways, demonstrate the ways in which a dramatic echo exists on both sides of the Atlantic.

Merle Karusoo, the creator and the main practitioner of sociological or documentary drama in Estonia, started her projects in the early eighties, during the so-called stagnation period in the history of Soviet occupation of Estonia. Considering the mentality of the period, the very fact that Karusoo's first production, *I Am*

Thirteen ('Olen 13-aastane', 1980)¹, was first performed on the beach, could have been viewed as politically suspect by the Soviet authorities, especially when added to this was an inquiry into a formerly nonexistent and potentially dangerous field of life-stories. In 1999 Karusoo defended her MA thesis, containing an in-depth analysis of her production titled *Not Belonging to Mainstream* ('Põhisuunda mittekuuluv', 1999) with the following motto: "What is most violent about change is that changes bring along memory blocks. During the second half of this century, as a result of this tendency people were forbidden to remember their own lives" (Karusoo 1999: 1). Since the first production that can be defined as sociological or documentary theatre in 1980, Karusoo has produced and (co)-authored sixteen documentary plays on such topics as youth and teenage problems, deportations, Estonian history, love and sexuality, the life of the Russian minority in Estonia, homicide, HIV.

During the re-awakening movement in Estonia in the late 1980s, as part of the process of defining national identity and remembering the past was the collection of life stories of those who lived through the years of Soviet occupation. In 1987, Karusoo, whose former work experience involved both sociological research and directing, became part the Developmental Center of Pirgu, and with a group of actors, started interviewing people and collecting life-stories. Karusoo's goal, to bring to light the gaps in her nation's memory, required people to speak about their own lives, thereby discussing ideas, events, and attitudes that the official history had attempted to erase for many decades. The field work by Karusoo's team resulted in several productions based on biographical material in journal or letter format of ordinary Estonian people whose lives were in different ways shattered by the Soviet occupation (e.g. *The Report* ('Aruanne', 1987) based on the diary of an Estonian farmwife Ella Kaljas, *The Journal of August Oja* ('August Oja päevaraamat', 1989) and the *Letters of Theodor Maripuu* ('Theodor Maripuu kirjad', 1990)). Another group of plays take as its base the Viljandi Cultural College where

¹ All translations of the titles and quoted excerpts of Karusoo's plays and other works were made by Leena Kurvet-Käosaar.

Karusoo started to teach in 1996. A course assignment sent the first and second-year students into their communities with a task of finding the life stories of people who, in 1944, attempted to flee from the Soviet power to the West but failed. The assignment resulted in the productions *Fall 1944 I: Journeys to the Sea*, and *Fall 1944 II: The Story of the Sinking of the Hospital Ship Moero* ('Sügis 1944' I, II, both 1997). Other projects take as their starting-points an Estonian-Finnish joint call for papers of life-stories of Estonian people focusing on love and sexuality (*Snows of Sorrow*, 1997), life-stories of the Russian community in Estonia (*Who Am I?* (1999) and *SOS* (2000)), interviews and conversations with Estonian schoolchildren (*HIV*, (2002)). A different production is *Circulus* (1993), focusing on Estonian history and bringing together over 300 amateur actors from all over Estonia. All these productions explore the questions of community along parallel lines, each opening up new possibilities of communication.

Anna Deavere Smith's career began in theatre, and specifically from learning the power of language and the language of power from William Shakespeare. Trained as an actress, Smith is known across America for her performances in film, theatre, and television, and for her project, "*On the Road: Search for an American Character*," a theatrical event begun in 1982. Ms. Smith describes this project: "... I have been creating performances based on actual events in a series I have titled *On the Road: A Search for American Character*. Each *On the Road* performance evolves from interviews I conduct with individuals directly or indirectly involved in the event I intend to explore. Basing my scripts entirely on this interview material, I perform the interviewees on stage using their own words" (Smith 1994: xvii). Included in this project are the plays *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and Other Identities*; *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*; and *House Arrest*. The first two plays were developed following riots in New York (*Fires*) and Los Angeles (*Twilight*), each of which started from perceptions of racism and intolerance. The latter play, *House Arrest*, investigates the history of the American presidency from the point of view of morals and ethics, and in so doing, suggests something about the ethical nature of the American people. From the extensive interviews Smith conducts for each project, Smith

then selects people whom she will portray on the stage, using their words as the guide to creating the persona of the character.² Using simple props and costumes, in full view of the audience, Smith transforms herself from one character to another, suggesting to the audience as she does so the importance of listening to people and finding the avenues to more open dialogue. As she transforms herself and assumes male and female, black and white, gentile and Jewish identities, Smith challenges the audience to look past social and cultural markers to hear the stories that can unite rather than divide. As Nan Goldberg describes this process, Smith uses the interviewees' "mannerisms, rhythms of voice and unique use of language, to form a human collage, embodied in one woman, depicting a neighborhood as it tore itself apart. It was ... a remarkable act of racial, cultural and personal empathy" (Goldberg 2000).

As an African-American woman, Smith has been drawn to the race related crises that continue to divide people in the United States. *Twilight*, for example, was created following three days of riots in Los Angeles in 1992. In 1991, Rodney King, a black man, was beaten by four white police officers in LA following a high-speed chase for a traffic violation. A man in a neighboring apartment building videotaped the incident. The following year, the four officers were acquitted of the charges, and the city of Los Angeles demonstrated the horror and frustration over those verdicts in three days of rioting and looting, which at the time was called one of the worst race riots in US history in which fifty-one people died.³ To create the play, Smith interviewed 280 people, including former gang members, Korean shop owners, the mayor of Los Angeles, and victims of beatings. At the time she created this piece, the community was still trying to heal itself from these wounds; Smith believed she could "be part of the solution to these problems. I believe that solutions to these problems will call for

² Ms. Smith performs these plays in one-woman shows but theatre groups using a variety of actors to portray the individuals in the play also perform them.

³ Sadly, riots over a policeman's acquittal in race confrontation in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2001 have altered the point of view.

the participation of large and eclectic groups of people. I also believe that we are at a stage at which we must first break the silence about race and encourage many more people to participate in the dialogue" (Smith 1994: xxiv).

Karusoo and Smith appear to be influenced by Grotowski's theory of "poor theatre" that emphasizes the importance of research, communication between actor and spectator, elimination of the superfluous elements of staging, and ethical values. Each dramatist conducts extensive research in developing the plays, usually through background reading and then wide-ranging interviews with people who can offer personal narratives and insight into the problem at hand. Significantly, neither woman works in isolation, relying on others to help bring objectivity and differing points of view to the project. This is more of an issue for Smith than for Karusoo, for Smith explores issues of race and power, issues that impact her own life as a black woman artist, which she acknowledges: "My predominant concern about the creation of *Twilight* was that my own history, which is a history of race as a black and white struggle, would make the work narrower than it should be. For this reason, I sought out dramaturges who had very developed careers and identities, outside the theatre profession. I was interested not only in their ethnic diversity, but in the diversity that they would bring to the project in terms of areas of expertise" (Smith 1994: xxii). Smith's identity is firmly rooted in her race and gender, and she is aware that her own personal experiences or perceptions could easily influence what she uses from the interviews.

Karusoo's productions raise the issue of identity politics from a different point of view since her work focuses on the life of various currently or previously marginal groups in Estonian society (the deportees, Russian minority in North-Eastern Estonia, criminals). Karusoo herself, although she may develop a close contact with the marginal(ized) groups during the creation of a production, cannot really claim to be part of most of them. The fact that several of Karusoo's recent productions (*SOS* and *HIV* in particular) have received partial funding from various foreign foundations and organizations has led some of her critics to speculate about Karusoo's possible motivation in initiating these

productions: “the word ‘integration’ certainly attracts the money of foreign foundations” (Visnap 2000) claims Margot Visnap, a well-known Estonian theatre critic writing on *SOS*, a production that, among other things, looks at integration through crime in Estonia along nationality-related demarcation lines. However, Visnap further adds that Karusoo, who, in her opinion, has always been “into scratchy social issues, certainly did not take the *SOS*-project up for conjuncture-related reasons” (Visnap 2000)⁴.

The dramatic form of these writers blends the ancient and the postmodern view of the function and value of theatre. Both espouse a theatre that is of and for the community, a theatre that functions as the depository of a nation’s memory, and one that assists in the articulation of identity. For Smith, theatre begins the conversation that seems to have disappeared in modern society. She quotes Studs Terkle, an American writer, “We’re more into communications and less and less into communication” (Smith 2000: 11). In marked contrast to much of what appears on American stages, Smith’s works need no tricks or special effects to make an impact. Instead, she relies on the simplest but most powerful tool: words. Although some of the people she portrays in her plays are heard every day, such as a mayor or police chief, others are essentially silenced in a community, for economic, social, racial, religious, or ethnic markers pose obstacles that many, from fear or ignorance, feel are easier to avoid than to negotiate. Smith sees that theatre has the potential to assist communities in traversing these impediments, for theatre can create “a sense of community and healing, but also a vision for social change as well” (Kadlecek 2002). Karusoo’s dramaturgical method brings together sociological methodology (selecting a group or strata of society, obtaining and processing representational data about them) and artistic synthesis of the ‘crosscut’ that happens in the joint improvisational

⁴ Visnap also refers to the murder of Karusoo’s colleague and close friend and a well-known Estonian actor Sulev Luik in 1997 that shocked Estonia. Karusoo taped the trial, familiarized herself with the Estonian court system and interviewed the men who had killed him, trying to make sense of what had happened in her usual thorough and non-judgemental way.

effort of actors and the author-director (Lauristin 1983: 123). Karusoo's interest in that type of theatre lies in its multiplicity, in its "ability to make visible different possibilities that defy any simple social generalizations", contrary to more traditional theatre that tends to "enter human psychology and its environment from an extremely narrow and limited point of view" (Karusoo 1983, quoted in Lauristin 1988: 128–129). As a director, Karusoo finds herself to possess "greater freedom of interpretation that a scientist and stricter frames than an artist" (Karusoo 1998: 72).

These writers' dedication to building theatre from authentic speech celebrates the oral tradition upon which theatre originates. Although their plays exist in written form, they are not authentic transcriptions of performance, which is fluid and changing, reflecting the dynamics of the actors or the responses from the audience. Presently, Smith asserts, we are "estranged from memory," but "theatre could be the emotional memory bank of the nation," (Smith 1995). Similarly, Karusoo raises the issue of emotional remembering in her MA thesis and voices her own commitment as a playwright and director to the kind of memory "that aches in her" (Karusoo 1999: 55). All segments of society must make deposits. Theatre is not a part from society, a national monument that presents aesthetically pleasing pieces that affirm the audiences' sense of self. Rather, theatre should provoke and disturb, for that is how meaningful conversation, a fundamental agent of change, is born. Yet, theatre must honor and protect those who lend their voices and ideas. An essential element that informs their work is, therefore, empathy.

Smith, when describing how her work is theatre and not journalism, speaks about this element of empathy: "My work has been a departure from the theories that say the characters we play live in us. I don't believe that. I believe in difference, and I believe in the work it takes to make a bridge between the other and myself. That love, a kind of tough love, is this thing that one must use to get there. Other people call it empathy, and I'd say that's the biggest difference between acting and journalism. ... Actors have no interest in appearing to be dispassionate or disconnected" (Jenkins). Karusoo, looking back at her work in a sociological lab, recalls how people from an industrial region of North-Eastern

Estonia she interviewed developed “a desperate hope that their answers might be of some help in changing the society” (Karusoo 1992, quoted in Neimar 1992: 7). As a director, she denounces all acting, finding that “[actors] should not offer their own interpretation to the point when it robs the audience of seeing his/her own way” (Karusoo 1999: 54). Smith and Karusoo naturally have reactions and ideas in response to what people do, say, or think, but their art functions because they do not allow judgmental stances in their craft.

Their plays demand simple sets, with the focus being not on recreating the environment or the actual person, but on speech dynamics and truth of the person. For this reason, Karusoo directs her own plays and involves the actors in the entire creative process.⁵ Karusoo uses the word “mediate” (Karusoo 1999: 55) to describe the work of performers in her plays, a term that similarly describes Smith’s process. Karusoo’s attempt of situating her theatre in the post World War II experimental theatre on either side of the Iron Curtain, proceeds via two important keywords: encounter and integration. Karusoo sees integration at the heart of Peter Brooks’ s work with multinational casts, race issues in the work of *La Mama* theatre in New York, and the therapeutic goals of Robert Wilson in his work with disabled children (Karusoo 1999: 11). Integrational impulses, in Karusoo’s opinion, seem to point towards the fact that much of the Postwar theatre experiments are really about the possibility of encounter, about a “strong inner need to find that which people have in common, be it inside a nation, across nations, or across the lines of central/marginal in a culture” (Karusoo 1999: 11). Without necessarily entirely neglecting the aesthetical side, Karusoo’s theater projects always have a clear and recognizable focus on the ethical aspect. Karusoo traces back this way of doing theater to Peter Brook’s statement of having, over the years, “lost interest in theatre as a

⁵ An exception to this was the German staged reading of *Snows of Sorrow*, which Karusoo felt did not work well because the actors confirmed, told, and essentially acted the script rather than personally engaging with the words.

form of art but not in theater as a unique process of experience" (Brook 1999, quoted in Karusoo 1999: 12).

Although Karusoo is listed on the programs of many of her productions as both the author and director, the actors are often involved in the entire creative process, a rare and noteworthy phenomenon in contemporary Estonian theatre. The participatory process is also importantly different from the actors' work in more traditional sense: In Karusoo's theatre, actors have to exchange the aesthetic sphere of the theatre for that of anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and other positions necessary for gathering the material. More importantly, in one way or the other, much of the material is inextricably linked to a search of actor's own identities and their interrelations with the society at large and as well as their more immediate circle of friends and families.

Karusoo's *When the Rooms are Full ...* (1982), for example, is almost entirely based on the monologues of the participating actors and actresses about themselves. Carefully documenting the process of the creation of these monologues in her Master's thesis, Karusoo notes how in the production "the son of a state farm director, the son of a man who had been in prison for having fought on the 'wrong' side of the war, and a boy of Estonian-Udmurtian origin with an experience of ethnic discrimination in his childhood, studied together. Before the production they had not been aware of [the differences]. In the production they were sitting next to each other and their stories existed side by side" (Karusoo 1999: 25). The process as described by Karusoo involves, first, an acknowledgment of differences followed by an act of transcending them.

All the productions done at the Pirgu developmental Centre are based on interviews and life-stories in the format of autobiographical writing that the members of Karusoo's group found and gathered, "breaking down barriers of silence, distrust and denial" along the way (Karusoo 1999: 13). During that period Karusoo does not recall discussing with her group whether "this was theater, we talked about encounters" (Karusoo 1999: 13). All the productions done at Pirgu were co-authored by all group members involved, starting from "what moved us, then collecting additional materials and reading rehearsals started during which also the final

choice of materials was made, followed by a stylistic 'raking'" (Karusoo 1999: 26).

Jaan Urmet, one of the project leaders of the monumental performance *Circulum* (1993), focusing on 70 years of Estonian history, writes about how the intense rehearsal period of seven days united Estonians from Saaremaa and Russians from Sillamäe, teenage punks and old ladies (Urmet 1993: 10). Urmet also recalls as part of the rehearsals studying history books and listening to the memoirs of those who had participated in the events covered by the performance. The members of Russian theatre groups asked all lines of text and the lyrics of all songs to be translated into their language in order to be able to understand and participate more fully in the performance (Urmet 1993: 10). The project, although resulting in a powerful performance, had certainly as an important focus also the encounters between groups of actors coming from different geographical regions, ethnic and social backgrounds and age groups. Karusoo views the project as one attempt to realize the idea of "experiencing history via acting" (Karusoo 1999: 15). In essence the idea involves not only professional actors and actresses but also ordinary people 'acting out' certain events of history in order to gain a better understanding and to make a nation's history one's own history.

Because Smith performs her own plays, the process differs slightly. In constructing the play from the interviews, Smith closes herself in a large room and listens to the tapes of the individual, one at a time, over and over. She uses approximately one-tenth of the material recorded, listening for "the things where people are speaking from an other-than-performative place." (Savran 1999: 254) Her actor training has made her sensitive to listening to the rhythm of language; listening to this rhythm rather than strictly to content helps her choose performative moments. Smith describes character as "the place where words fall away. The place where we have to struggle with words" (Fuller 1997). During the listening process, she allows the rhythm of her words to dictate body movement, so that the stage movement is organic rather than imposed. Smith's technique reflects Grotowski's acting pedagogy: "Everything is concentrated on the 'ripening' of the actor which is expressed by a tension towards the extreme, by a complete

stripping down, by the laying bare of one's own intimacy — all this without the least trace of egotism or self-enjoyment. The actor makes a total gift of himself. This is a technique of the 'trance' and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of translumination" (Schechner 2001: 30–31). In *Twilight*, Smith embodies 26 different people, seamlessly shifting from one person to the next through slight costume changes, modulations of voice and register, and different body movements. As with *Karusoo*, Smith creates the text from the verbatim interviews, including the "umms," ungrammatical structures, and non-sequiturs, an ethical principle that each writer feels is essential in bringing the truth of the person and the issue to the stage. Of the twenty-six people in this play, some are heard from once, some more than once. The monologues are organized around ideas: Prologue, Territory, Here's A Nobody, War Zone, *Twilight*, and Justice, suggesting the environment for the conflict and the resolution of it. The juxtaposition of pieces create a "call and response" in which one person's perceptions or assumptions are contradicted by another's, or in which similar ideas and emotions are expressed by people from different backgrounds. Through this textual arrangement, Smith suggests some of the gaps in knowledge and understanding that have to be bridged for change to occur.

Some might argue that in performing all the roles herself, Smith negates the sense of community, if one defines community-based theatre as "of, by, and for the people." By choosing solo performance, Smith creates a collage effect, showing the overlaps and contradictions that exist between people, but also suggesting the possibility of finding in each of us the ability to listen to and embody the emotions of another. Smith portrays what has been called "identity in motion," arguing through her performance that identity is not fixed, that we can and must negotiate identity in response to the communities in which we exist. There is also a natural intimacy that develops between the solo actor and audience that does not occur between multiple actors and the audience. Smith acknowledges the aloneness she has on stage, and the fear that stems from the "feeling of life and death" when working alone

for three hours, taking on multiple roles, without anyone else to assist in the process (*Talk to Me* 221). Except for the audience. Audiences assume a greater role in solo performances, for the actor respond directly to the audience, and the audience feels the performance as created for him or her. Smith recalls that when she performed *House Arrest* at Ford's Theatre in Washington, the site of Lincoln's assassination, with President Clinton in the audience, the other members of the audience were particularly vocal and responsive: "The audience was so wild because they were performing for him. They wanted him to know what they thought about these people, all of whom were saying racially charged things. This audience was the exact opposite of the audience who passively observes. This audience was proving itself to be a thoughtful citizenry. In its way" (Smith 2000: 224). Through her energy and passion, Smith brings the audience, even without the president's help, to the performance with her. There are performances, however, that are done without Smith, or with Smith as one of many performers. *House Arrest*, for example, was originally produced at Arena Stage in Washington with many professional actors. The script was written with this in mind, written with the actors in order to reflect their own bodies and rhythms. In 1996 she also assisted a production of *Fires in the Mirror* that employed two actresses, one white and one black. Although such a performance would have obvious dramatic impact, especially since the black actress played the white roles and vice versa, it would be easy for audiences to focus on the spectacle of the exchanges rather than on the words themselves.

Community-based drama should also be for the community in the sense that performances are accessible to the members of the community of which it was written. In both the US and Estonia, this issue proves problematic. Theatre audiences in the US are segregated, not predominately along racial lines but more along socio-economic lines. Few people in America can afford to attend theatre on a regular basis, and even when it is made affordable, because it is an alien cultural experience, many do not choose to

avail themselves of the opportunity⁶. Karusoo has repeatedly addressed the need of theatre to reach out to smaller communities and rural areas. The first production of the Pirgu Theatre group, *The Report* (1987) was free. Furthermore, the group also arranged transport to bring people belonging to the older generation (born around 1920) for free. Trying to fit what they are doing into the emerging free market economy, Karusoo asks: "What is it that proves most beneficial in the end? The most beneficial for Estonia is when the good name and honor of its people would be rehabilitated" (Karusoo 1988: 32).

It is in their refusal to believe in a monolithic perspective that Karusoo and Smith create a postmodern theatrical form. At the same time, their belief that theatre must mirror its society is classical, as is their willingness to take theatre to the community. It is their multivocal work that eschews the linear causality and sense of closure that marks these women as innovators. In borrowing techniques from journalism and sociology, these writers highlight the interdisciplinary in their writing, suggestions that art is not produced separately from society but it an integral part of it. Smith, however, defines herself as a performer and writer, not an activist, saying that activists naturally are limited to a certain perspective. Through their listening and research, Smith and Karusoo find the patterns in the chaos, and suggest the bridges we need to cross to discover the memories that can unite, although nor the word *pattern* neither the word *unite* should be understood to imply making conclusions and determining the ways how their plays will be viewed and interpreted.

Visionaries often are not embraced within their own time, and the difference in cultures mediates the different place each woman has in her society. Smith has received numerous awards, honors, and fellowships, including the prestigious MacArthur Award, dubbed the genius award. She is a tenured member of the Stanford

⁶ P. L. Corso writes that when *Fires in the Mirror* was performed in Brooklyn, many people could not attend because of transportation problems, and the Lubavitchers do not own televisions, so could not see the film when it aired, and usually do not travel beyond their community.

University faculty, a regular performer on some of the most popular television serial dramas in the US, and a much-sought after speaker. Her plays have been filmed in order to bring her message to a wider audience. She is celebrated. Karusoo, a well-known and well-loved author and director, a 1998 recipient of the National Cultural Award, the Director of the National Drama Theatre from 1998–1999, and an associate professor at the Higher Theatre School of Estonia, is still oftentimes not included among the best directors and playwrights of contemporary Estonia. The reason Karusoo has not been embraced compatibly with that of Smith may lay in the fact that Estonian society continues to search for an identity in ways that the US is not. Whether politically correct or genuine, America is willing to hear the truth about her past and at least allow whispers of conversations. Estonia is creating its identity from a history of oppression and domination by others. It seeks acceptance by other nations and national bodies. Perhaps for many it is too soon to explore the cracks and fissures of the society but it may also be more specifically about the hesitation of Estonian cultural and theatre critics and audiences to accept and appreciate differences be they in aesthetic or ethic format or in a combination of both. Still, Karusoo continues to write and continues to find audiences eager for her work.

The search for national identity continues. As Merle Karusoo and Anna Deavere Smith demonstrate through their dramatic canon, theatre continues to serve a vital function in society when it allows us to hear the voices of the people, all the people, about the truths that define us. As a community event and resource, theatre can build stronger communities by bridging the gaps between disparate people. Smith states, “We don’t need a bridge that’s monumental. We don’t need an aesthetic miracle of a bridge. We need a bridge to take human beings from one side to the other. If we could remember the human touch and remind ourselves of the power of the word, the power of color, the power of song, the power of dance that defies gravity and our souls. If we could remember this — remember it — we would all be, I think, hopeful” (Smith 1995). Two women, two writers, two artists, create the bridges for their communities, and in so doing, build bridges between nations.

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The Avant-gardism of Kostas Ostrauskas' Dramas

IMELDA VEDRICKAITĖ

Kostas Ostrauskas' dramas feature a distinctive and novel phenomenon in contemporary Lithuanian dramaturgy. However, their avant-gardism is conditional and should be defined only as a pioneer phenomenon, aiming at the fosterage and re-valuation of Lithuanian literature and its traditional merits, rather than a separate literary trend. In the 1960s, Ostrauskas' dramas introduced both new and undeveloped themes and dramatic evolvement of the theatre of the absurd, unfamiliar to the Lithuanian audiences then and later rarely pursued. It must be noted here that his plays are one of only a few modern occurrences in Lithuanian literature which escapes pure imitation and belatedness: they emerged almost simultaneously with the dramas of S. Beckett and E. Ionesco. Having followed the playwrights of the symbolist trend (G. Hauptmann, M. Maeterlinck) in his dramas *The Pipe* (1951) and *The Canary* (1956), he subsequently chose the path of S. Beckett and E. Ionesco and became engrossed in the lyrics and the world outlook of the theatre of the absurd. Being an inherent proponent of psychological and aesthetic freedom, Ostrauskas, alongside two other Lithuanian playwrights in exile — A. Škëma and A. Landsbergis — was and still is carving a niche for Lithuanian drama in Western dramaturgy.

Ostrauskas' extremist freethinking does not spare national idols which are questioned in his dramas by means of laughter and bravura. On their emergence, his dramas were scarcely accepted even by the exile reader/viewer, who demanded the promotion of nationality, the fostering of patriotism, morals and religion. (Only

in 1969, in the period of a temporary political thaw, was Ostrauskas' drama *In the Green Water-Meadow* published in Lithuania for the first time). A conservative literary trend in exile drama resulted in the profusion of amateur drama of entertainment. It could be resisted only by exile (Ostrauskas is obviously prejudiced against such words as "deportee" or "exile": "I live in the Western world, therefore, whatever its condition, I have to be open to it. Could this duality mean a schizophrenic state of mind? By no means, it is most probably the symbiosis of two cultures. Any piece created by a Lithuanian in Lithuania is Lithuanian especially that of high quality or approximating to it. Poor "creation" — even Lithuanian — is no creation at all." (Ostrauskas 1996b: 65)

In his essay *A Writer and Exile* he reveals his deliverance from the romantic myths of exile, whereas in the very exile situation he notices a positive rudiment of both freedom and education:

Thus, when in exile, the writer also achieved personal freedom. He received an unrestricted possibility to continue his creative work in the way he had wished. The only obstacles left were either inherent /---/ or personally arranged. As freedom by its nature, like exile, is natural, consequently it has but little meaning if a man — in this case a writer — does not use it. Some exile writers found themselves in such a situation: having got lost in an exile complex, they failed to handle unexpected possibilities and consequently limited their own creative chances. (Ib. 24)

Here Ostrauskas also not only emphasizes the fact that cultural reticence, so peculiar to Lithuanian culture, is the antithesis of creativity but also stresses the necessity to open up to Western culture. Frequently a reader in exile with a positive attitude towards modern tendencies in exodus art or music showed, however, open prejudice against the trend of avant-garde literature, which was assumed "to tarnish a noble Lithuanian spirit", as in such literature they even saw the betrayal of nationality and patriotism. It is no wonder that K. Ostrauskas made an attempt to declare the nature of exile to be schizophrenic and thus provide a chance to

use it as the basis for creative debate: "Having adopted even the most pessimistic attitude to Western culture, it is worth to notice nevertheless the fact that both the pathologic aspect of contemporary civilization and our own schizophrenic nature of exile provide an excellent source for creativity." (Ib. 29)

By encouraging Lithuanian literature to follow the path of modernization, Ostrauskas notices it to have procrastinated too long, submitting itself to cultural reticence and provinciality, avoiding any challenging enterprise and doubting the concurrence of national and Western cultures: "La Rochefoucaud's remark explicitly stands out in such a case: "A woman, who burns with desire but keeps stubbornly chaste is doomed to a miserable fate. It is high time to lose this virginity". By trying to get rid of a frequently attached label of the drama of the absurd to his works, Ostrauskas asserts that pessimism, scepticism, irony and sarcasm as such do not mean absurdity and expresses doubts as to whether Lithuanian literature possesses the trend of "the drama of the absurd". In the main, however, Ostrauskas' dramas respond to the absurdity and meaninglessness of life, especially in the face of death, which is made explicit in his works and takes the form of unlimited menace. The postulate *Est absurde ce qui n'a pas de but*, maintained by Ionesco's theatre of the absurd, ideally matches the style of K. Ostrauskas' works. He admits to having "no programme", never sticking to some thesis in the process of creation and having no aim to prove anything. "In general, I attempt to ask questions rather than answer them, I doubt more frequently rather than state or assert, consider rather than preach or lecture." (Ib. 67)

He merely observes the absurdity of life, which is most frequently to be found in micro drama, reminiscent of an anecdote-allegory. Some phras or an quote from a scholarly piece, evidently nonsensical, or a simply anecdotal "plot" frequently provides the basis of a micro drama. Two Ostrauskas' micro dramas are given in the following:

I.

A Legless Flea

On a fingernail lies

A FLEA

with its legs chopped off.

A LEGLESS FLEA (*desperately*)

I beg you — do crush me, take my life, — life has become senseless.

II.

Van Gogh's Ear

VAN GOGH

(*Scratches his ear.*

Finally comes to reason ---)

I am a painter not a musician, - I do not need you.

(*--- and cuts off his ear.*

It falls down

-like the one made of rubber-

on the floor

and

keeps silent.)

Post scriptum

6

VAN GOGH'S EAR

I cannot remain silent all the same: he has cut not all of me.

(*After a pause*) But it's only a trifle.

(Ostrauskas 1996a: 272, 274)

The play of stereotypic phrases, hackneyed expressions and an "empty", insignificant dialogue, used by Ostrauskas, originates from his attitude towards the absurdity of life. The author frequently takes away from the word its communicative function, emphasizes the failure of the characters to understand each other or even mocks at their simplistic conversation; the continuity of the meaning is very often broken with the help of synonyms or by words which divide the general context into passing each other meanings. For instance, in the drama *Once There Lived a*

Grandfather and a Grandmother (1963, 1969), generally considered being the most avant-garde of his dramas, he includes entire newspaper news citations (the grandfather reads the news to the grandmother). Both dialogue poles of this drama — minimal word-signals for the maintenance of conversation and the “informativeness” of the newspaper — become plain and make up a common background of meaninglessness, perfunctoriness and verbal rubbish-hubbub, which disguises the genuine intentions of the murderers — the old couple (the grandfather and the grandmother avenge their grandson's death by murdering young tenants). What is more, the language of his dramas “migrates” from one speaker to the other irrespective of their characters. A pub hostess can start using Latin maxims just like Napoleon to communicate in the rural language (*Napoleon, a Crow and a Hen*), whereas Kastytis from a Lithuanian legend and the lyrical character of Maironis not only communicates with his author in Latin but also shows a highly refined taste — he admits that he favours not his beloved Jūratė but the Venus of Botticelli (*Jūratė and Kastytis*). The styles of the language “do not submit” to the character roles: the intellectual language of an elaborate style like some liquid pours into an inadequate vessel of the role. This schizophrenia of the language and the speaker slightly raises the curtain off a hardly definable menace — senselessness, failure to communicate and insanity (?). Absurdity is felt in the very nature of the language — in its synonymity or in similarly pronounced but only phonetically related words. Synonyms or reiterations, encompassed into the narrative, divide it into passing realities. The actors, playing the role of a chorus, merely repeat, like remarks, the words of the characters, transforming them into absurdities only due to a changed heterogeneous context. By stressing in this way the conditionality of a role, Ostrauskas demonstrates genuine stylistic virtuosity. He attempts to introduce not only as many stylistically varying ways of speaking (from the perfectly lyrical or scholarly to dialectical or lower vulgar) but also “mute” signs: notes, mathematical formula, picture duplicates. They make reading complicated as they signal possible yet unrealized mute narrations. This is the tendency of an anti-dialogue. Such a crumbling dialogue is expected to be compensated for by the very

act of drama reading and the reader's endeavour to decipher the author's intention, hiding behind such an abundance of signs. In that way the author "takes revenge" on the word for failing to escape into silence:

The word is sometimes dispensable — silence is needed, — silence *is necessary* to understand one's thoughts, — one seeks tranquility and simple customary order. /---/ Yes, silence and peace. To hear nothing and to listen to nothing. A return to a Neanderthal man? No, back even to the time when man did not exist — the word came with man. (Ostrauskas 1996b: 162–163)

There are no unpleasant or rude words for Ostrauskas — he rehabilitates even insignificant words, i.e. conjunctions because "in them lies the polarity of man, his life and his world", to him their phonetics is extremely important. When a sound fades, the text remains, because "it is possible to silence the tongue but a written word speaks even when it keeps silent". (The author apparently finds the dramatic text sometimes more important than its possible theatrical realization: remarks here become a significant means of laughter when repeated actors' words are transferred to a different level. On a theatre stage it is hardly possible to demonstrate this.)

The author also "hushes" the meaning of a word by means of an inlay of music texts (*Belladonna*, *Emperor and His Empire* and etc.) and by reproductions of visual art, which can disguise and complicate the meaning but can also become the intrigue and support of the whole play. Thus in the drama *The Knight, Devil and Death* A. Dürer's graphic work, depicting a knight tempted by the devil, is used as the starting point. It is a visual emblem of the knight on a crusade, lost in the wilderness and tempted by the devil and death. In that way the author probably compensates for the plainness of the landscape of the drama, meant for reading rather than for staging. Yet keeping in mind his negligence towards the landscape (he cares for the play of ideas and contexts more), the "citation" of the art works is therefore a decorative means for meaning density. In the drama *Temptations of St. Anthony*

fragments of J. Bosch's paintings are used as commentary of the drama plot. They serve more as elements of decoration which not only exaggerate the meaning but also disguise it.

With the help of the harmony of different texts and their contexts the author moulds a universe of secrets, questions and mute absurdity. By stating that he raises more questions than gives answers to them, he provokes the reader to find answers by himself.

The most significant question of his is the everlasting play of love and death (Šilbajoris 1992: 342), in the background of which man-allegory experiences the horror of nonentity. Ostrauskas' man is an abstract element of dramatic development. His dramas contain the characters of other playwrights, who frequently meet their authors or even their prototypes. In the drama *Anna and Emma* Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary meet up with their creators and resist the suicides, destined to them, whereas in the drama *Ars amoris* the author wills the acquaintance of Casanova and Don Giovanni. An animal, or sometimes even a thing, becomes a character (in the drama *The Trial of the Rooster* the medieval court finds the rooster guilty of laying an egg and thus disdaining his masculine nature but an insidious hen takes the blame upon herself). For instance, in the drama *The Death of a Scarecrow*, which makes a parody of a powerless governmental system, the main characters are a scarecrow and birds, fearless of the shabby ruler of the vegetable garden, assisted by the hawk, another attribute of raptorial power. He makes a new face for the scarecrow, which, on seeing it, dies of fear.

The author rejects not only a motivated character but also a traditional plot development: all attention is focused on culmination. The plot and its exposition lose their importance because a person, his actions and his words are deprived of motivation, which would naturally reveal itself in the exposition of a dramatic piece. For instance, in the play *Hamlet and the Others* the action starts after Hamlet stabs Polonius who happened to overhear the conversation between the voluptuous son and his mother. Hamlet drags his body out of his mother's bedroom. This act of dragging substitutes the entire action of the play: in the process, he meets Don Quixote and Faustus and debates with them on love in the

languages of different epochs. The action of the play limits itself to the undefined "between" or "anywhere", all characters travel and meet in space, which is also not defined beforehand and is thus "accidental". (Similarly, in undefined space — heaven — Romeo, Juliet and Ovidius meet in the play *Ars Amoris*.) The drama *Hamlet and the Others* has no action at all, the tension of Hamlet's sexual desire towards his mother is resolved only as she herself proposes sexual intercourse. The drama starts and finishes with Hamlet's question: first with a chrestomathic "To be or not to be" and last "Oh, Mother, my Mother! Why have you forsaken me!.." as a paraphrase of Christ's words on the Cross. A compositional ellipsis can be also noted in the drama *Napoleon, a Crow and a Hen*, in which the culmination (Napoleon's defeat) is only assumed. The first stage of the play — Napoleon marches through Lithuania and treats himself to broth in a pub (a crow befouls the dish and this act becomes a formal culmination, whereas the second one is when the pub owners observe his retreat. A similar composition is evident in the play *A Woodblock and an Axe*, which mocks at the attempt of totalitarianism to censor the press. Just like in the case of the play *The Knight, Devil and Death*, some other text becomes the pretext for its emergence, but in this case it is not visual, — this is a citation from an article by the literary scholar V. Kubilius: "Having arranged a traditional pile of books for a furnace of the paper mill in Petrašiūnai, L. Solominas, head of a "special" department of the national library, placed "a bourgeois book" on the woodblock and with a butcher's axe cut it into two or three parts." The characters receive the names according to their professional functions — they are a bibliophile and a librarian — the former preserves books, the latter axes them. However, when the former makes an attempt on an idea but not on the book, an axe fails him because it is impossible to destroy the idea. The defeat is marked by the change of the facial expression in the Leader's portrait — from euphoric to dysphoric (the Leader's portrait is an indispensable icon in a socialist interior). It is a sanction for the incompetence of subordinates. A mute question also finishes the play *Salome* in which both the denouement and the culmination coincide. Having gained the head of John the Baptist, who was not tempted by her charms, Salome

dies probably believing the words preached by the prophet that love is only achieved through suffering and death.

The denouements of Ostrauskas' dramas are frequently enigmatic and posing a number of questions as the author hopes to defeat the spectator's endeavors to decode the dramatic text. He deliberately makes the task impossible by overburdening it with a wide range of variant diversification. For instance, in the drama *Little Red Riding-Hood* he presents five denouement variants, e.g. "When the wolf does not know that the grandmother is aware of the fact" or the last — "When everybody knows that every one knows" or "When everybody knows everything" or "Knows nothing". In this way the author makes the very attempt to read the text the source of absurdity. It is hardly believable that there could be a reader who would get engrossed in the pseudo-scientific jargon of *The Second Drowned*. Here the author "continues" the narration of a classic of Lithuanian literature about a young seduced and deserted girl but also brings in changes by altering her from a suicidal person into an arduous literary doctoral student able to crack the most complex interpretations of *The Drowned*. These, formulated in a scientific jargon (her classical life story is being interpreted), make the entire plot of the drama. The author involves the reader in the absurd act of reading and makes him a part of the absurd... As the author gives priority to the reading of the drama rather than to its performance, this author-reader relationship could be equaled to the interaction equivalent of the theatrical stage and the spectator hall. It is one of Ostrauskas' games:

It should be noted — yet with some risk — that like any other form of creation, literature is to a great extent a game — in this case the play of words. (Ostrauskas 1996b: 173)

Having started the play of words in his dramas, Ostrauskas changes it into "the game of values" Matusevičiūtė 1994: 91) by pulling out of the context cultural and historical values, literary clichés or characters and their comprehension stereotypes and locating them in the undefined "between", where these values and their limits undergo a test which they subsequently fail and

therefore they most frequently decay. The location "between" is the fault of the entire context, compensated by peculiar websites of Ostrauskas' dramas. It is the hell overfilled with meaning where all stories ever told are potentially contained. The play *Ars Amoris* is one of the most vivid examples of this condensed meaning, described by I. Matusevičiūtė like this:

Even Antanas Škėma has noted in his *The Awakening* that after having committed a feat and still surviving the heroes become ridiculous. K. Ostrauskas employs this effect successfully. "The resurrection" of Romeo and Juliet, the continuation of literary biography indicate that the author rejects the traditional dramatic convention — in both a classical and a modern drama the character undergoes a variety of performances, conflicting situations until the revelation of his semantic value becomes evident. The text limits of Romeo and Juliet are already made distinct in "The prologue". "The wandering in heavens" indicates the crisis of the stereotypical value contained in its characters. (Ib.)

The innocent love of Romeo and Juliet is tested and reveals the hidden rudiment of infidelity and the strain between *Ars amoris* and *Remedia Amoris* (the art of love and loss of love, after Ovidius). In the denouement of the drama the tension calms down in favour of the second position of lost or fabricated love: Don Giovanni takes advantage of Romeo's words and allures Juliet by means of the latter's intimacy. Ovidius tests both ideal lovers by making them travel in "the labyrinth of values" (I. Matusevičiūtė), where they clearly see the illusoriness of their essence — innocent love. Just like Dante led by Virgil, here they, "guided" by Ovidius, observe and comment on a number of lovers' stories-scenes, which due to their incapacity to understand them because of the communication codes of different epochs, are demonstrated by Ovidius, the author's vicegerent. On the principle of a drama in a drama, a scene in a scene, Ostrauskas encompasses into one whole a multitude of mini dramas. For instance, the idealized and bodiless (therefore ridiculous) love of Dante for Beatrice, Salome's per-

nicious love for John the Baptist, Boccaccio's Francesca and Paolo's story of adultery, the envious and murderous love of Othello, the egoistic love of (the castrated) Abelard for Heloise, the voluptuous love of gods (Zeus), used as an instrument of power, Hamlet's desire for his mother which subsequently transforms into an instrument of revenge, the solitude of aged Casanova, the self-love of Narcissus. All these love stories are presented by the author in the order to devaluate love as an absolute virtue: in them the desire of love is matched with egoism, self-love, envy and lust for power.

The scenes represent open structures as deconstructive components of a complex love concept which make up the text entity. All characters in the text function as icon signs, i.e. they have already "brought" certain literary information into the text. They neither change nor experience the dramatic development of "characters" or "ideas", their function being to represent the already obtained value. (Ib. 95)

The culmination of the drama is the feast participated by the characters of all scenes, such love "experts" as Sappho, Byron, Wilde, the Marquis de Sade, Faustus, Don Quixote, Don Giovanni among them. "The author" "expresses his wish" to bring in Lithuanian legend characters Jūratė and Kastytis and the duke Kęstutis with a priestess Birutė (these episodes are entitled *ad libitum*), however, he "limits" himself only to the nobleman Čičinskas, a sacristan, a colonel and a maiden... During this feast-chaos of love emblems it becomes clear that love as an absolute value does not exist and its meaning lies only in one's individual experience. Juliet and Romeo follow not a single love example — in the epilogue naked Adam and Eve throw an apple to them. This act returns then to the purity of the inception. The characters remain emblematic and carry a stable value load. The play of contexts reveals the devaluation of a positive but abstract value, separated from a person. In this way "the crisis of positive value", unknown to earlier Lithuanian literature, manifests itself. The objective of the drama *Ars Amoris* is to deform, to demonstrate polysemantics, to question and destabilize. A. Tereškina probably exaggerates when assuming the history of demystification and demythologization of the Western culture to be general:

Which other obsessions could be attributed to *Ars Amoris*? It is obsessive to admit anything antihuman, the perversion of contemporary culture norms including; it is obsessive to believe in the infinite End, to experiment radically by giving priority to the means used for writing something rather than for presenting what is written; it is obsessive to employ the play, the universe of surfaces but not depths, intertextuality of false readings but not interpretation, irony and black humour — all these obsessions serve the purpose of devaluation, destruction and demystification of transcendental signifieds of Western culture. (Tereškinas 1994: 58)

Intertextual relationships result in Ostrauskas in irony and parody, which demand the re-evaluation of the ways of reasoning based on binary oppositions and freedom from limitations. The author compensates for the lack of intense dramatic action by the overload of contexts. Thus the dramatic text becomes brim-full with a “menacing possibility”, whereas essence of the text is concentrated in the state of the unattainableness of the meaning.

The other major theme of Ostrauskas’ dramas is death, which here reveals itself as a much stronger feeling than love or desire for power (dramas *Lazarus*, *Gravediggers*, *Once There Lived a Grandfather and a Grandmother*). Ostrauskas’ dramas reveal a certain hierarchical chain based on sovereign/slave opposition (plays *The King’s Jester*, *Emperor and His Empire*, 1492, *A Woodblock and an Axe*, *The Death of a Scarecrow* and etc.) It is always open as there frequently appears somebody much more powerful than a sovereign. The power limit often changes (the emperor’s throne is in constant danger) and turns the former emperor into a slave. The fate of Ostrauskas’ emperors resembles that of Ubu Roi. It is the loss of power, nonentity and death — the perspective of these dramas — that predetermines a constant change of power. Both in the drama *Once There Lived a Grandfather and a Grandmother* and in its sequel *Mushrooms*, *You Mushrooms* Ostrauskas makes an attempt to stop this change and demonstrates that it is an unrealizable endeavour. Like in Ionesco’s drama *The Chairs*, a couple of elderly people (the *semé*

of degraded femininity and masculinity is indispensable) are involved in an absurd game. Ostrauskas' old people take revenge for the loss of their son by murdering young tenants and finally, having raged, they fail to recognize their resurrected son and poison him (Ionesco's old man intends to save the world by asking an operator to announce the instructions how to behave but it appears that the operator is deaf-mute).¹ The murder of young people is similar to an infinite horror fairytale where there should be thirteen victims to satisfy the desire of grandparents for revenge. They act as blind instruments of destiny: the knitting grandmother resembles Moira, whereas the grandfather, murdering with a hammer and pretending the utensil to be a flute and performing music on it, corresponds to fauna and the elements of nature. The thirteenth victim emphasizes the absurd conditionality of the action but also encourages the elderly couple to try and find the perpetrator of this death mill (death circle?). A baker's dozen indicates the author — the prime decider, under whose will the murder takes place, therefore the couple put the blame on him. The action of death is contained in a circular composition:

GRANDFATHER. If we are in the good graces of the Author, we have nothing in common with all this. This is the fact!

GRANDMOTHER. Indeed! It is the Author's undertaking, not ours!

GRANDFATHER. We are not guilty!

GRANDMOTHER. The most innocent!

GRANDPARENTS look at each other and smile.

GRANDMOTHER. And what if like this...

GRANDFATHER takes a hammer out of his pocket again and starts to blow it like a flute, — the same melody, — whereas GRANDMOTHER resumes knitting. JONUKAS turns to the audience and only throws up his arms.

JONUKAS. It ends like it has started. It begins like it has finished. (Ostrauskas 1996a: 220)

¹ U. Uogintaitė has made a convincing comparison of these two dramas in the article in 2000: 96–100.

In the drama *Lazarus* Lazarus resists not his death but his resurrection. He says *no* to Christ's self-will. Here also takes place the struggle between Mary and Martha's blind faith in Christ and a painful doubt, the latter seemingly overcoming the former. In the drama *Gravediggers* one of the characters, a former actor, says that the digging of a grave for him is only a role, unaware of the fact that he is digging his own grave, which will be evened by the girl-death. A slightly eroticized dialogue between the gravedigger (that of Shakespearean Hamlet and the gravedigger) and the girl-death (Ophelia) makes an ambiguous interlace of the themes of love and death. (Šilbajoris 1994: 31) In the drama *Čičinskas* Ostrauskas creates a macabre world of non-death and non-existence, in which (in the cupboard as suggested by the English phraseology) hides an infamous nobleman and a folklore character Čičinskas, dead but rejected by mother-earth because of the malediction. While outlining the drama *A Quartet*, V. Kavolis notes that "our own language contains dialogues which lead to nowhere and are therefore absurd and motivated by the fear of death and the desire for power." (Kavolis 1994: 229) Inbetween of these poles, two essential (alongside love) desires, Ostrauskas' characters line up for the death dance.

Having rejected the logic of reality, character individuality and having chosen instead a parabolic plot, the play of contexts, emblematic characters free of psychological collisions, a mysterious irony and an open drama composition, Ostrauskas has made a revolution in Lithuanian drama. (Lankutis 1995: 75) His works reveal the play of demythologization based on the canons under destruction and the paradoxicality of the phenomena under discussion.

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Travestied Myths of European Culture in the Productions by J. J. Jillinger

SILVIA RADZOBE

The main hero of my story is a young man. However, not so young as you might imagine when you get acquainted with his public activities. Born in 1966, he is now 35 years old. First of all, there is no simple answer to as simple question as to what his name is. When he began to study theatre directing at the Latvian Academy of Culture at the beginning of the 1990s, he was enrolled under the name of Raimonds Rupeiks. However his first production *Emma Bovary* in 1995 was signed by the name of J. J. Jillinger. After some time he disclosed that his stage name had been derived from the name of the famous American gangster Dillinger who was a successful bank robber in the 1920s. Jillinger considers himself to be an intellectual gangster of Latvian culture. Moreover, his claims to intellectualism are based on a firm ground. His productions, including the stage versions of his own playscripts, are based on highly valuable literary works which mostly belong to modernism and post-modernism. Many of these authors were first introduced to the Latvian theatre by Jillinger. For instance, Vladimir Nabokov with *Invitation to a Beheading*, Isaac Bashevis Singer with *The Musician and the Prostitute*, Peter Handke with *The Ride Across Constance*, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch with *Venus in Furs*. He has also worked with Goethe's *Faust*, August Strindberg's *Games with Fire*, Tankred Dorst's *Fernando Krapp Wrote This Letter*, Samuel Becketts' *Molloy*, Gonzalo Torrente Ballester's *Don Juan*, Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*.

However, the word *gangster* could be better replaced by the word *player* and *gambler*. Firstly, he is a player in the meaning of

an actor who plays his part and does it very well; secondly, a sportsman in chess, Jillinger's favourite type of sports; or thirdly, as a gambler similar to a virtuoso in gambling. It is the part of an intellectual cynic who has experienced everything in life. His intellectual cynicism was most conspicuously revealed in the way he treated the theme of sexuality on the stage. His productions have openly discussed various types of intercourse between a man and a woman, up to the smallest physiological details. Besides, his productions provided rich information about sadism and masochism, and different forms of masturbation. Nevertheless, Jillinger is not a perverse personality who is obsessed with sex. At the beginning of the 1990s a new generation of Latvian directors presented themselves with the theme of sexuality. Alvis Hermanis and Regnārs Vaivars were the most impressive figures. All of them offered a new level of openness in discussing this subject. At the same time, this new level of openness was a challenge to the society. The more so, because the Latvian art and culture has traditionally been very shy and resistant in grappling with the theme of sex. In addition, during the Soviet period, according to the opinion of Soviet ideologists, there was no sex either in art or life. To speak about sex meant to break hypocrisy at the heart of the previous social order and to declare one's freedom. In this way the young directors, by carrying out a sexual revolution at the theatre, made the Latvian theatre more open. The older generation accused the young directors of immorality. However, these accusations only inspired the young directors and sometimes they ran into extremes in order to prove their freedom by any means.

When Jillinger was a 4th-year student at the Latvian Academy of Culture, he initiated together with his two course mates, Viesturs Kairiņš and Gatis Šmits, the Union of Unbearable Theatre. They, following a common practice, published a manifesto declaring that the old theatre was dead and a new alternative theatre would be born. This theatre would never become commercial. No member of the Union could explain why the theatre was called *unbearable*. But it was felt that directors used this word in a similar meaning to the concept *the theatre of cruelty* or *the theatre as a plague* by Antonin Artaud. The Union existed for a year, its productions were performed in the Chamber

Hall of the Daile (Art) Theatre. Each director staged two plays. When the money fell short the harsh reality set in. Gatis Šmits went to the USA to study cinema. Viesturs Kairiņš was employed by the New Riga Theatre. Jillingers was offered a contract by the Daile Theatre. At this point, some additional information should be given. At present, there are four professional theatres in Riga. Two of them — the National Theatre and the Riga Russian Theatre are traditional and conservative. The New Riga Theatre is the most modern one. It is a non-commercial theatre searching for up-to-date theatre language. The New Riga Theatre is mostly attended by young people and intellectuals. The most complicated situation is at the Daile Theatre. It has wonderful highly professional actors of all generations and a very small creative potential of directors. The Large Hall of the theatre has 1200 seats which are very difficult to sell out. The Daile Theatre is mostly attended by the so-called regular theatre goer who is used to boring performances and sincerely welcomes everything that is offered. Jillingers's talent and ambitions made him suitable for work at the New Riga Theatre where experiments and challenges are treated as a norm. However, he found himself at the Daile Theatre which willingly supported his ability to make scandals as it hoped to fill the auditorium by these scandals. Provocation ceased to justify the independence of the young artist and turned into a part of the theatre's commercial plans. However, Jillingers felt he had to compensate the disappointment about his lost freedom by creating a specific type of production which I would call *a parody play*.

A parody is defined in various ways: its original meaning in Greek is *counter song*. It can mean also a special type of pastiche or a travesty. An integral part is an actively ironic attitude towards the parodied object. Thus, the new text can be characterised by a degrading attitude towards the original. Most often the function of a traditional parody is to prove that a certain type of style has become outdated. In classic and modern art a parodist always has a certain goal to achieve. Post-modern art parodies without reformatory goals. Destruction of form or style is aimed at demonstrating the relativity of any philosophic, ethic or aesthetic values.

Traditionally, the object of a parody's attack is either the author, or a work of art in itself. For the parodies of Jillinger the object of attack is different. He always has at least three aims: to challenge ironically the typical Latvian theatre goer, as Jillinger would say *the simple-minded spectator*; to expose the prejudicial theatre critics and the Daile Theatre itself, since it substitutes commerce for art.

In 1999 Jillinger, using Goethe's *Faust* wrote a script for a rock opera by the young composer Andris Vilcāns. The title of the rock opera was *Faust. Deus ex machina* and Jillinger staged it at the Daile Theatre.

The script for the rock opera is written as "Antifaust" which can be regarded as a travesty on Goethe's tragedy. Still it is not mere game of an ironic mind. The script parallels the specific problems of a young person facing a situation of choice. Perhaps, this model reflects the current situation in Latvia which is also facing a situation of choice. Just before the first-night show the director articulated his opinion that nowadays Goethe's play has lost its topicality. No one has to be persuaded to sell oneself. On the contrary — Mephistopheles cannot do his job without extra work: those who want to sell themselves are standing in a long line at his office. The philosophic issues of the rock opera are presented in two binary of oppositions: Faust and Mephistopheles, Gretchen and Martha. Both Faust and Gretchen are very naïve, inexperienced and non-standard young people. They are looking for teachers, first of all, in the field of sex. And they find them in Mephistopheles and Martha, who fascinate the young people with their elegance, cynicism and refined Eurostandards. Faust wishes to become Mephistopheles, but Gretchen longs to be like Martha. At all costs they wish to deny themselves, since they consider cultured persons like themselves to be lower than civilised persons. A spiritual person is considered to be a failure in contrast to a successful person; an original person is unattractive in comparison to a standard person. It is impossible to deny the topicality of this opposition irrespective of the fact whether we see it from the point of view of current Latvia, Eastern Europe or eternity. Or in the aspect of the Jillinger's creative biography. However, it is difficult to trace these oppositions in the production,

since the actors playing Mephistopheles and Martha (Ģirts Ķesteris and Indra Briķe) are much more impressive than the actors playing Faust and Gretchen (Artūrs Skrastiņš and Rēzija Kalniņa). The perfect performance of Ķesteris and Briķe makes Mephistopheles and Martha the most convincing characters of the play. Consequently, the audience feel pitiful dislike, even shame that Faust fails again and again to achieve the elegance of Mephistopheles.

The title of the rock opera *Faust. Deus ex machina* parodies both the plot of *Faust* and its philosophy. The performance is complemented with a rock group of A. Vilcāns, named *Deus ex machina*. Since the beginning of the performance a crashed car is hanging from wires above the stage. At the end of the play Faust dies in a car crash after he escapes from prison together with Gretchen. The symbolic character of Faust — *the eternally searching human spirit* — is reduced to any mortal young man who is hunted by the police. Thus fate is replaced by chance, while the part of the God is played by the car.

Jillinger continues to provoke the audience and critics in his production *Don Juan X* staged in 2001. It is also based on a parody about a myth of European classical culture.

The director never mentioned the author of the text. Therefore, the critics took it for granted that it was the product of Jillinger's sick imagination. But he, as it turned out in an interview half a year after the first night performance, just wanted to check the competence of theatre critics. All of us failed at his examination, as we had not read the post-modern version about Don Juan written by the contemporary Spanish author Gonzalo Torrente Ballester. The production was introduced by an intrigue in the press. Ģirts Ķesteris, who played Don Juan, gave interviews in four out of the eleven Latvian illustrated women's magazines, where he shared his extremely rich sexual experience. The language of the production contained many clichés of mass culture, the task of which was to convince the audience that it participates in a courageous session of hot sex. Both *high* and *low* art are utilized in the formation of the clichés of mass culture which dominate in the performance. A new, blood-red theatre curtain was made specially for this performance. It does not open

throughout the prologue, which is accompanied by exciting music in the manner of Ravel's "Bolero". Thus the prologue arouses an atmosphere of the brothel and sin. When the curtain opens, the centre of the stage is occupied by tremendous stairs, onto which are glued weird, large-scale images of naked women. Since only some schools in Latvia teach the history of art, the average audience does not recognise reproductions of Salvador Dali's paintings in the nude and treats them as anonymous pornographic posters. However, the audience has an opportunity to observe a live half-naked woman as well. An intellectual girl Maria visits Don Juan and undresses hastily, leaving on her red panties and high-heeled shoes. As she categorically insists that Juan should prove his male skills, Juan unwillingly knocks her off on the piano and reluctantly massages her erogenous zones. The supporters of mass culture are also happy about the unmistakably ambiguous games with bananas and gun barrels.

The director reveals an absolutely neutral attitude towards the encyclopaedia of banalities used in this performance, by allowing those, who want to, to take them seriously. However, there is another story disguised under this provocative form.

Don Juan X continues the theme of the choice which is topical for the young generation. The aesthetics of *Faust* can be characterized in terms of post-modernism, but its philosophy — in terms of modernism. Conversely, the version of *Don Juan* completely corresponds to the post-modern relativism both in the meaning of form and content. This time Don Juan is a student, while Comandor — the teacher. The student is a success, he fully acquires the teacher's experience and even beats him. The teacher possesses a peculiar attraction, cynical witticism and artistry. Comandor is more interesting than whining or aggressive women who want only sex from Juan and have exhausted him to a complete emptiness. Comandor is a symbol of absolute sexual freedom; he desires his daughter Elvira and trains Don Juan in homosexual love. Actually Comandor is the true Don Juan, Don Juan number one, but Don Juan is number two, his disciple who has inherited his skills, philosophy and freedom. In the framework of performance Don Juan number two also has a disciple, his servant Leporello, who undoubtedly will become Don Juan

number three in the future. In the performance Don Juan kills Commandor. Symbolically it means killing one's past after a new stage of development has been achieved. In a similar way six years ago Raimonds Rupeiks killed his past and became J. J. Jillinger.

End-of-the-Millennium Latvian Theatre: The Concept of the National Historical Past

ANDRA RUTKĒVIČA

In Latvia, like in the whole former Soviet Union, the wave of ethnic nationalism is being identified with the end of the 1980s and it also embraces the politicisation of culture. In reality it means returning to the historical past, to an idealised image — “what we have been before” — that could serve as a model for the nation in future. With this mission in mind, Dailes Theatre (Arts Theatre) staged Aleksandr Čaks’s (1901–1950) heroic saga *Mūzibas skārtie* (*Touched by Eternity*, 1937–39) in 1987. It speaks about the heroic battles of Latvian riflemen during the World War I that helped to regain Latvia from the Germans and made it possible to establish Latvia as an independent state.

The piece written by A. Čaks at the end of the 1930s has had a complicated history. It was not been published during the whole Soviet period. The earlier editions of *Touched by Eternity* (of 1938, 1940) were kept in the closed funds of libraries and were not accessible to readers up till the end of the 1980s. In the 1960s some literature scholars, attributing expressive critical epithets to *Touched by Eternity*, at least managed to mention the title of this piece publicly. The 1970s and 1980s were even harsher years — it was forbidden to mention the title of the work in any context — neither analysing, nor criticising, nor praising. As if this poetic piece did not exist at all in Latvian literature ... What were the reasons why *Touched by Eternity* was so threatening to the Soviet regime? Why was it so desperately hidden from the people?

The epic consists of 24 songs. It begins with an unexpected encounter of the Poet — a person exhausted and depressed by

life — with the visions of the past — the Latvian riflemen. This is followed by singing the praise of the war experience of the riflemen. Čaks introduces each episode with a straightforward, purely historic comment, which is followed by poetic and emotional verses about the battles of riflemen. The emotional praise of the nation's heroic spirit becomes more significant than the historical event itself.

The staging of the epic in Dailes Theatre was based on the same emotional tonality. The performance started with the news that the poet Aleksandr Čaks had passed away. And everything that followed was a specific process of recalling — first of all calling back memories about Čaks's life, secondly — about the legends of the riflemen.

There was an intention to introduce into the production autobiographical motives from Čaks's own life. In the performance the poet's Alter Ego was turned into an independent stage character — The Shadow following the Poet (played by P. Liepiņš, J. Frīnbergs). Still, this externally projected Poet's internal battle with himself does not provide the dramatic accent of the production. The protagonist can sooner be characterised as condemned or doomed. His hopes, his longings belong to the past.

The riflemen of Dailes Theatre belong to the world of memories, as a ready-made symbol of the heroic past. Created by memories, one by one the riflemen rise from the netherworld, cross the stage and slowly walk up the stairs at the back of the stage — from their grave (oblivion), through the present towards eternity (heaven, the nation's memory).

The image of Death appears on the stage next to the Poet and the riflemen both — as a real character which follows them, and as an embodiment of the concrete consequences brought by war. The first battle in Čaks' poem is followed by the first death — the first killed rifleman. Čaks very laconically and precisely reminds us that the death of one person is a tragedy, but the death of many people — just statistics. The episode with the first killed rifleman became one of the most emotional moments of this production. The killed rifleman, played by a young actor Rihards Zihmanis, meets on the stage his bride, played by one of the first actresses of Dailes Theatre Irma Laiva. This tragically brief love-affair — a

bride who waited for and never saw again her ever-young killed rifleman, and the obvious time distance between both actors very vividly and dramatically revealed the irreversibility of war disasters and tragedies that was even more accented by the love lyrics recited by the actors.

The theme of riflemen, instead of direct action, is conveyed in the form of narration, memories. The former participants of battles, dressed in everyday clothes representing different professions, remember their battles but the ones dressed in riflemen uniform coats do not participate in their conversations. They become a symbol of the muteness of the riflemen passed away. The only exception is the first killed rifleman.

Only once — in Piņķu church — they join in common prayer. This is one of the central and most emotional episodes in this epic saga. In Piņķu church Colonel Vācietis spoke from the pulpit to inspire his soldiers before battle. In the theatre production the inspiring speech is delivered not by a rifleman, but by the Poet. It can even be said that in the theatre production the riflemen with the words of their common prayer inspire the Poet to deliver a speech about the role of belief, about developing one's spirit through love for one's motherland. It embodies the apotheosis of people's longings and hopes.

In the narrative intonation of the production the Poet's direct speech acquires double significance because it simultaneously addresses two audiences: the one acting in the play — the riflemen, as well as the audience sitting in the theatre. In K. Auškāps's production the riflemen and the people are identical. And in the episode in Piņķu church the sermon makes the concept of people broader, including not only all the actors, but also the audience.

It can be said that riflemen are the best part of the nation — its conscience and decency. At least the production tends to make them like that. And still the theme of Latvian riflemen is not only the theme of heroism and love for one's motherland. It is as contradictory as the fate of the poet himself. Riflemen have fought also under foreign flags, defending the ideas of the socialist revolution. The development of these events brings in a new tonality in Čaks' poetic work — instead of the heroic spirit and courage there is looming a mind dazed by the war. The Dailes

Theatre production tends to overlook this. For this production it is more important to seek for and to show the pages of the heroic past.

The staging of *Touched by Eternity* in Dailes Theatre became an EVENT in the life of the Soviet Latvia. It was the first public attempt to speak about the heroic history of the Latvian nation. For the first time during the 50-year period they spoke about and brought onto the stage the national maroon-white-maroon flag. *Touched by Eternity* became a reminder that the history of the Latvian nation did not start with 1940 — the establishment of the Soviet state. With the help of this production the theatre managed to wake up and strengthen the historic memory of the people, to unify them with the help of common symbols from the past. In the context of this production the past becomes a stimulus, a self-confidence-developing source that opens the prospect of eternity for the nation.

As a continuation of disclosing the legend of the riflemen, in 1989 in Liepājas Theatre there was staged a new version of Čaks's poem — *Psihiskais uzbrukums* (*Psychic attack*) with a totally different emphasis and focus. Čaks's *Touched by Eternity* forms the basis of Juris Rijnieks's and Uldis Ašmanis's stage version, there are extracts used also from other works of the poet, as well as documentary materials: extracts from World War I and the Civil War media (orders, calls, announcements, speeches, correspondence etc.) The historic materials studied at the end of the 1980s reveal the fate of the riflemen as being much more complicated, controversial and also more attractive than it used to be up to till then.

The performance starts when the Poet, acted by Juris Bartkevičs, is coming through the audience hall, dressed in a grey suit, holding a lantern with a burning candle in his hand. His eyes wander around, and the look in his eyes is disappointed, empty, overwhelmed by hopelessness. There is much more despair and Čaks's own life in this Poet than in the Dailes Theatre performance. "The grey suit of the intellectual will lie on the back of the chair, a knife blade finds the pulsing blood-vessels at the tucked-up sleeve and... falls down on the floor in desperate anger. No strength to live and no strength to die." (Čakare 1989: 9)

Suddenly the Gloomy Man with two companions appears in front of the Poet and offers the Poet a Faustian agreement: for the price of his life to turn back the wheel of history and to let the Poet together with riflemen experience their life. From this moment on the course of life common for the riflemen, the Poet and the people has commenced.

The whole play is devoted to the fight between the Poet and the Gloomy Man (this character has been borrowed from Čaks' another poem *Matīss — kausu bajārs*) for the riflemen's souls. For the first time there is a clash between two totally opposite opinions about riflemen: the heightened heroism expressed by the Poet and the totally cynical denial, represented by the Gloomy Man. On the one hand there is the calmness, imperturbability and indifference of the evil about everything that happens, on the other, the emotional personality of the Poet who manages to recapture from the cynicism of history quite a big share of the riflemen's fame, courage, selflessness and sacrifice. But, when after the first battle the Poet has finished praising the courage of the riflemen, the evil figures run down tumbling from the top of the stage platform and throw an open coffin at his feet, reminding him that there is no abstract death. Death is always very concrete — with a coffin. An icy silence falls. The first killed Latvian rifleman dressed in a white shirt and holding a red carnation in his hand comes from above with silent steps. The fisherman of souls fastens to his fishing rod a worsted untied from the hand of the killed man. And it is only the beginning, there will be more — a whole bunch of maroon-white-maroon worsteds and a whole armful of carnations will fill up the coffin.

A new higher-level tragic truth is born in the collision between the theses and anti-theses expressed by artistically equal forces. In this production each next step of epiphany, each next stage in the transfer from noble enthusiasm to the awareness of reality has been precisely calculated and explicitly outlined. Riflemen are going to fight, but in the role of their leaders more and more often there appears somebody from the trio of Satan. The philosophical concept of the satanic trio can be clearly seen: evil is multiform. The scope of the devil's actions is very broad — from transmuting

sacred ideas, selfless intentions into farce to mental crippling of a human being.

The first act of the play is called *Touched by Eternity*. Action takes place on a white stage. In many aspects this is a tragic and still noble battle. The scene of the second act *Psychic attack* is in brownish red — in the colour of blood. This time the riflemen go to fight in a foreign territory, becoming the victims of revolution and psychic attack. The actors of Liepājas Theatre look at history from today's viewpoint, taking into account the historical background — what has happened since the battles of riflemen.

The second act of the play marks the end of the internal psychological change of the riflemen. Warfare becomes a profession. Also the red colour, the colour of blood, more and more appears in the uniforms of the leaders of riflemen. E. Vilsons's Colonel Briedis has a red wrap, but Vācietis has gloves in the colour of blood. In this context the famous sermon of Colonel Vācietis in Piņķu church acquires a different meaning. The colonel, played by Jānis Makovskis, uses the same words used by the Poet in the Dailes Theatre production, but this time the message is totally different. The belief in motherland is not emphasised any more, the main idea is that it will not revive without blood. "There is a unexpected shift of meaning taking place. Blood is no more an argument for the freedom of motherland, but the freedom of motherland becomes an argument for bloodshed." (Ib.) The change of uniforms is used as an indicator for the riflemen losing their spirituality — instead of camouflage colour tunics they put on black mercenary uniforms.

In Čaks's poem the title *Psychic attack* is given to the chapter where in the battlefield riflemen meet with the invincible white guards regiment — the crack troops of Russia's army with orthodox priests as their leaders. In Liepājas Theatre production from the conceptual aspect this is one of the most essential episodes. Riflemen are going to the battle with their eyes covered with a red bandage — obsessed by ideas and blood. This is the moment when we can see most explicitly that ethics is not a class but human category. But it turns out that the white guards crack troops have not been the ones they have pretended to be. At the moment when the priests die from the hands of the riflemen, their

masks fall off and the three Satans revive (evil that cannot be exterminated by physical force). It is the most devilish provocation of the time — to force riflemen to be opponents of spirituality. Riflemen turn their faces towards the people but they turn away in horror. And riflemen remain standing solemn and undefeatable — on the verge of the grave. Destroyed by their own victory. “Psychic attack” is also a story about what war does to people.

At the end of the play the Poet passes away. But this is a totally different departure from this world than the first (unsuccessful) attempt. At the back of the stage behind the Poet the deceased rifleman and live people are gathering around the newborn symbol of Mother Latvia. Motherland and its founders — its people are inseparable and mutually interacting phenomena. The production of Liepājas Theatre stressed a bitter and unpleasant truth, which the theatre scholar Valda Čakare has very precisely defined as the riflemen’s way from national pride to national tragedy.

This generalisation can be attributed, on a broader scale, to the road of the epic saga *Touched by Eternity* to the audience. From Dailes Theatre production’s riflemen as a testimony of national pride to the tragedy of historic realism and unpleasant truth in Liepājas Theatre’s performance. From the necessity to identify unifying, fame-interwoven historic facts, which could serve as a new national religion (because history can best of all serve for consolidating people, especially in the territory of Latvia, where there are Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox believers) towards an analytic and emotional evaluation of the past where many traits of Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens* theories can be traced. If we recall the above-mentioned functions of historic experience, the aim of which is to reveal the society its true nature and the hidden mission of fate, then the production of Liepājas Theatre already demanded a strong nation, which could identify itself not only with heroic episodes from the past, but also acquire experience and learn from it.

It is very essential to note that the productions of both theatres very precisely and directly addressed their time, in some cases even running ahead of it. If Dailes Theatre production encouraged the audience by emphasising: “Go deeper into your nation/ Learn to feel its pain...” (Čaks 1988: 35), which was a demonstration of

true courage in the pre-awakening period, then two years later Liepājas theatre asked a more provoking question: "Nation, people do you see them/ will you ever understand them." (Čaks 1988: 170) The reality proved that the audiences did not always understand, or putting it more precisely, they did not want to accept this unpleasant viewpoint that differed from the general pathetic mood.

And still, irrespective of how different the intonations of both productions were — in both cases the message, the artistic objective was quite similar, and I would like to define it as a necessity to create a model of national identity using history and a national heroic poem as a foundation for it.

English sociologist Anthony D. Smith writes that "By identifying oneself with a "nation" in the secular world, we can most safely overcome the absoluteness of death and to a certain extent guarantee immortality for ourselves. And that is not all — a nation can offer a person famous future, which reminds of its heroic past. Therefore nation encourages a person to act in accordance with the common mission of fate, which will be fulfilled by the generations to come." (Smith 1997: 164) Thus the issue of national history acquires double significance, because it helps not only to understand the past, but also to structure the future. And from this approach it follows that our history and the way in which we interpret it, determines our identity.

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Lost in Definitions (some comments on American feminist drama criticism)

VERA SHAMINA

Nowadays nobody argues anymore that women's drama, both in America and in Europe, has become a relevant part of contemporary theatre. Apart from the plays themselves written by talented women-playwrights there have appeared many critical essays and monographs devoted to feminist theatre, which made a considerable contribution to the process of acknowledgement and understanding of women's drama as a valuable artistic phenomenon. Among those in the US are such authoritative critics as Ruby Cohn, Helene Keyssar, Janet Brown, Mary Dale, Elizabeth Natalie, Yvonne Shafer and some others. In their works they have presented a comprehensive picture of modern women's drama, tracing it back to its sources in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Not questioning the value and significance of their critical analysis, I would like to argue some points which seem relevant to be clarified when studying women's theatre.

First and foremost it concerns terminology. Some critics call everything written by women 'feminist' while others refer with this term only to the plays with a specifically feminist message and a certain stage technique. Honor Moore, as quoted by Janet Brown, for example, suggests that any play is a feminist drama "if a woman can identify with its characters and situations". (Brown 1979: 70). This approach is shared by Linda Killian who defines feminist drama as "something written by women, which tries to explore the female psyche, women's place in society, women's potential" (Natalie 1985: 5). It is obvious that such definitions are

very vague and tell very little if anything about the specific nature of feminist theatre, they also do not reflect its innovative character that is often stressed by feminist critics. I personally side with those who define as "feminist" only such plays in which the issues of feminist ideology are foregrounded and totally determine their subject-matter. Though we find here a great variety of opinions, all of them tend to look for particular characteristics of feminist drama, which enable to define it as a special artistic phenomenon. Thus, an authoritative theatre critic Helene Keyssar, the author of the monograph *Feminist Theatre*, calls feminist drama a "distinct theatrical genre", which came into being in the 1960s (Keissar 1985: 2) and in her opinion asserts a new aesthetic based on "the transformation", as opposed to the old one based on "recognition" (ib.). Transformation in this case is understood as emancipation from "the stereotyped gender roles", imposed by the society (ib.68). As an example the critic gives the play by Mirna Lamb *But What Have You Done for Me Lately*, which the scholar views as "a paradigm for the feminist theatre" (ib. 104) It shows a pregnant man who comes to a woman doctor pleading with her to perform an abortion.

Such cases in which men are shown in the situation traditionally typical for women are quite frequent in modern feminist dramas. See, for example, *Restaurant Blackout* by Patricia Horan, in which a woman behaves in a chivalric way, calling a waiter, lighting her friend's cigarette, paying for him, etc. Much the same is the situation in *The Jonnie Show* — a satire paralleling the *Tonight Show* — written by Rhode Island Feminist Theatre (RIFT). Here two men hosts are replaced by two women. They are portrayed as sexists who flirt with and cajole their guests (men) — as talk-show hosts usually condescend to women guests in real life. Or *Family, Family* by Sally Ordway, where men actors play the parts of the daughter and the mother and finally stop acting because the lines they have to say sound extremely silly to them, though they are quite familiar clichés. In all these cases the message is quite obvious — men object to being treated as women usually are, which questions the accepted gender roles in society. But it will be only just to mention that the trick itself has not been

invented by women and is known from the times of Shakespeare and Fielding.

Janet Brown defines feminist drama through the notion of the "rhetorical motive", borrowed from Kenneth Burke (Burke 1957). She states:

I have derived the concept of a feminist impulse. This feminist impulse is expressed dramaturgically in women's struggle for autonomy against an oppressive, sexist society. When women's struggle for autonomy is a play's central rhetorical motive that play can be called a feminist drama" (Brown 1979:1).

And further on:

If the agent is a woman, her purpose is autonomy and the scene is an unjust socio-sexual hierarchy, the play is a feminist drama" (ib. 22).¹

Another prominent scholar of feminist theatre Elisabeth Natalie also grounds her definition on the principles of rhetoric which she understands as a "persuasive message designed to influence the beliefs and convictions both of the members of the audience and of the theatre — they regard women and their existence in a male society" (Natalie 1985: 5). She justly points out that most of the plays created by feminist theatre groups are "message oriented" — "the emphasis is on the moral instruction of an audience" (ib. 32). Probably not realizing it herself, when defining the "rhetoric

¹ Here it should be noted that the great majority of feminist critics view the problem of feminism as part and parcel of society's problems at large, and even broader than that — in the context of history and traditional religion. See, for example, Mary Dale's *Beyond God the Father* (Dale: 1973), where she points out that in the myth of the Garden of Eden, Eve is made the original scapegoat for humanity's guilt, and throughout history women have been scapegoats suffering for the guilt created by patriarchal religion. Very close to her is Wendy Martin, the author of *American Sisterhood* (Martin: 1972), who examines the myth of the American heroine as Eve cursed for eating the apple of experience.

motive" of these plays she gives them rather an unattractive characteristic:

The plays... advise the audience to reject male power politics in favor of a society that is characterized by either androgynous or matriarchal traits (ib. 38).

Thus one kind of chauvinism is replaced for another. And further:

To aid further in the arousing of the appropriate emotions, the playwrights deliberately portray characters as opposites. The men exhibit negative traits, which arouse the animosity of the women towards those characters. The use of characters in this way is similar to melodrama. The playwrights reduce morality to black and white, and there is no doubt about which characters stand for a particular mode of conduct (ib. 40).

From my point of view the most distinct and accurate definition of feminist drama is given by Dinah Levitt, quoted by Elisabeth Natalie, who points out the following essential characteristics:

- 1) Feminist drama and art are political and associated with women's movement.
- 2) The emergent status of feminist theatre accounts for its variety in subject and its visionary point of view.
- 3) Feminist drama arrives at the universal through personal
- 4) Feminist theatre is pro-woman.
- 5) Feminist theatre is didactic
- 6) Common characteristics of feminist theatre groups — collective organization (ib. 4).

Though many of the afore-mentioned characteristics are quite acceptable, many of them can easily be attributed equally to some of male as well as female dramas. Here we come across the most crucial question: should we at all subdivide literature in general and drama in particular into male and female unless we prove that there is some drastic difference? This concerns American drama criticism where most of the feminist critics view women's drama as an alternative to the mainstream. They claim that the fact that on Broadway as well as in some other influential theatres the plays

by female playwrights for a long time were very scarce can be accounted for only by discrimination against women. The one who strongly objects to that is Lilian Hellman, who, to the question on the obstacles she might have faced as a woman writer for the stage, answered:

Listen, I don't write with my genitals...Let me tell you one thing, the New York theatre is so hard up for good plays, — they'll take it from anywhere they can get it. (*Feminist Focus*, Brater 1989: ix).

This, to my mind, is very true. Another thing, which should be taken into consideration here, is the criterion, which for a long time determined the choice plays on Broadway. Indeed, in the 1960s–1970s many female playwrights had to overcome obstacles on their way to the stage. But though this was the period when male chauvinism did play a significant role in American society, the plays of many female authors just as the plays by Albee, Kopit, Gelber and some other male playwrights were not staged mainly because they offered new, innovative forms and techniques, new ideas, which did not fit into the framework of the establishment, no matter who they were introduced by — men or women. It was then that the movement of off- and later off-off-Broadway theatres started, which staged many of the now well-known female dramatists. This situation however is not true for the present, which is definitely due to the collective efforts of American women. One of the few female critics who does not oppose women's drama to the "male" mainstream but tries to view it in the context of the general tendencies of development of American theatre is Ruby Cohn. She even ventures to make such an "antifeminist" comment as to state that some of contemporary female dramatists "have yet to match the depth and range of such male colleagues as David Rabe, David Mamet, Sam Shepard" (Cohn 1991: 58). Nowadays Broadway is functioning according to rather a strictly observed principle of political correctness, which often makes it easier to stage a weak play written by a woman than a good play written by a man. Thus we perceive here a principle which is very well known in Russia — the principle of the so-

called "social order" when the decisive factor in favor or against a work of art is ideological rather than aesthetic.

This brings us close to the next aspect of feminist criticism that I would like to comment on, that is the analysis of the plays as such.

The absolute majority of the afore-mentioned critics analyze women's drama from the viewpoint of its rhetoric, practically totally excluding the level of poetics. In my opinion it is almost impossible to speak about a specific female worldview when we take into consideration only the play's ideological message. Moreover, many of the traits, which are given as specific for feminist drama can be easily traced in the works of male playwrights as well. Thus Helen Kayssar speaking about Megan Terry as one of the most characteristic representatives of feminist drama writes:

Megan Terry's dramas unabashedly question the American dream and its corruption in the hands of the greedy and mendacious. (Keissar 1985: 70)

These words can be referred to the whole of the serious 20th-century American drama.

Karlyn Kohns Campbell, quoted by by Janet Brown, finds feminist rhetoric unique in its existence as "a process of discovery a new identity" (Brown 1979: 11). Her idea is supported by Gerda Lerner who calls it "the search of autonomy" (Lerner 1977: iii). This is actually very similar to what is termed as the search for one's "belonging" — be it male or female — the theme, which was introduced by O'Neill, and since then remained one of the key themes of American drama, both male and female. Diane Hope in her work *A Rhetorical Definition of Movements* analyzes the rhetoric of feminist drama on the basis of the death and rebirth pattern (Hope 1975). This pattern, as commonly known, underlies drama as such, but Hope speaks about the rebirth of a new woman, which has the following stages:

- a) Isolation of participants through redefinition. Women defined as a lower caste.
- b) Sharing of previously unshared cultural secrets through feminist literature and consciousness raising groups.

c) Victimization and symbolic death of the traditional woman as rebirth occurs through acceptance of movement reality (ib. 160) Tackling this issue most of the feminist critics refer to the famous essay of Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex* where she states:

Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself, but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being... woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality (Beauvoir: 1970).

Therefore the aim of feminist drama is to portray a woman not in the *object* but in the *subject* position.² Not questioning Beauvoir's statement in its essence, the more so because the *relativity* she speaks about is most characteristic feature of human perception (male or female) as such, I would still suggest that in great many plays written by men female characters are not only placed in the center, but definitely shown as subjects.

The feature that Dinah Leavitt claims to be specific for feminist drama — that is “arriving at the universal through personal” (Natalle 1985: 5) — is also common for all ‘good’ dramas. Here again we can refer to O'Neill, who declared that he was not interested in the relations of man with man, but only in the relations of man with God.

But still I think that there is a certain female vision of the world, which is implicitly reflected in the poetic of women's drama. It can be traced through the analysis of recurrent images and symbols, key motifs, specific metaphors. Thus even from a brief overview we can notice that one of the recurrent artistic details in women's dramas is the hair of the main character, the change it undergoes in the course of action (see, for example, plays by Adrienne Kennedy, Alice Childress). Another image that is often used by female playwrights is the image of a flowering tree

² Susan Rubin Suleiman in her essay (*Re*) *Writing the Body: The Politics and Poetics of Female Eroticism* wrote in this respect: “Women who for centuries had been the objects of male theorizing, male desires, male fears and male representation, had to discover and reappropriate themselves as subjects.” (*The Female Body*; Suleiman 1986: 65).

or plant (as in Susan Glaspel) These images, though not specifically feminist in their nature, taken together contribute to the peculiar poetics of women's drama. One of the important motifs often met in these plays is the motive of food, meals — the process of cooking and consuming food (Thus, for example, Judith E. Barlow in her essay *The Art of Tina Howe*, states that "a whole treatise could be written on the role of food in her plays" (Brater 1989: 250). We often come across the image of the kitchen which acquires a symbolic meaning. Much attention is paid to everyday details, domestic 'trifles', as in the eponymous play by Susan Glaspel (also in the plays by Marsha Norman, Tina Howe, some plays by Maria Irene Fornes and others). These are just a few examples, the number of which can be considerably increased.

One of the recurrent passages in feminist criticism is the accusation of male authors of simplifying female characters, showing them rather as stereotypes than full-blooded images. Though this accusation can also be argued on the examples of many prominent plays written by male playwrights, instead I would suggest reviewing women's drama to find out how male characters are represented. Even from a brief overview we cannot fail to notice that in the plays with distinctly articulated feminist rhetoric the characters of men are far from being very deep or psychologically developed. On the average they can be grouped into the following types: a man with a traditional view of gender roles in society, preaching out of date, patriarchal ideas about the role of women in family and society — usually a husband, a lover or a boss (see, for example plays by Sophie Tredwell, Wendy Wasserstein, Megan Terry, Rosalin Drexler, Maria Irene Fornes etc.),³ a rapist (the theme of sexual harassment is one of key-

³ In some feminist plays male chauvinism is shown in a most primitive and crude way, as, for example, in *The Independent Female* by Joan Holden, where a male character proclaims: "You, girls, were made for the lighter work — washing, cooking, raising children...If men have privileges — it is because they have earned them. After all males are responsible for every major achievement of civilization...Why aren't you girls content to be what we need? Competent secretaries, thrifty housewives..." (Quoted from Natalie 1985: 79)

themes in feminist dramas, it serves as a metaphor for the direct oppression of women by men)⁴ and a misfit, a marginal figure (usually due to his sexual orientation) who the female protagonist for that reason sympathizes with. The first two types represent the social system, which is rejected by feminists, and therefore are treated ruthlessly. This can be seen not only from the plays themselves but from the feminist critique as well. Thus Helen Keyssar points out that in the plays by Rosalin Drexler whom she considers to be one of the leading representatives of feminist drama, "man is an enemy more starkly and unremittingly than in some other feminist dramas" (Keyssar 1985: 119). The same critic when giving examples of different "forms of the theatrical vision of women" during the second wave of feminist drama in the 1970s states:

Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart* encourages the audience to be hostile towards men, but leaves little alternative — for men or for women — rather other than to shoot any male who displays chauvinistic tendencies (ib. 157).

⁴ In some of the plays written and performed by feminist theatre groups this topic is presented in a very violent and aggressive way to provoke the immediate negative reaction of the female audience. Thus in *Persiphone's Return* written by RIFT the myth of Demeter and Persiphone is intercepted with the scenes from modern life. In the mythological part the abdication and subsequent rape of Persiphone is a demonstration of the sexual domination that has become one of the characteristics of patriarchy. The modern scenes exemplify the use of rape as a method of patriarchal control. The audience is shown four instances in which men are forcefully seducing women: a young man making obscene advances to his date; an old man molesting an innocent schoolgirl; a rapist attacking a victim and a husband who insists on sexual intercourse with his wife though she does not want it. In *Sexpot Follies* written and performed by *The Circle of Witch* the rapists attacking their victim then come forward and proclaim that they represent institutions that rape women in many subtle ways — government, mass media, education, the nuclear family and institutionalized religion.

In reference to this we may say that men in many of feminist dramas become a kind of scapegoats sacrificed for the sake of a 'new woman' who rather ruthlessly establishes her new identity, very often simply killing the man (see, for example, *The Verge* Susan Glaspell, *Machinal* Sophie Tredwell). Diane Hope treats this issue a bit more mildly, she writes:

Though men are clearly seen as enemies, but men are not victims. The victim is "traditional woman", for it is "the male identified woman" who has been identified as an appendage to man. (Hope 1975: 160).

Thus feminist critics oppose 'female' drama to 'male' drama mainly because the latter shows 'male identified woman' unlike 'woman identified woman' in feminist dramas. But here, too, we can argue that the subtlest analysis and exposure of a male myth of a 'male identified woman' is given in a play written by a man — *M. Butterfly* by H. D. Hwang. All this testifies to the fact that a genuine artist is not directly dependent on his or her gender, as for example, on the other side, Rochelle Owens presents a deep insight into a male character in her *Chucky's Hunch* echoing Samuel Becket's *Krap's Last Tape*. At the same time a look of a male or a female at oneself can be equally biased as a look at the opposite sex from aside. That is why, in my opinion, instead of opposing women's drama to the mainstream a critic should look for the points of correlation and interaction, considering the process of drama and theatre development in the U.S. as well as in other countries as heterogeneous. It is no wonder that many of the prominent female playwrights object to being labelled as feminist writers.

One of the most distinguished representatives of American drama criticism Robert Brustein wrote on Marsha Norman:

An authentic universal playwright — not a woman playwright, mind you, not a regional playwright, not an ethnic playwright, but one who speaks to the concerns of all mankind (Brustein 1983: 25).

These words can be justly used when referring to the works of all major American female playwrights whose creative activity, being

part and parcel of contemporary theatre process, by far surpasses the rigid framework of feminism, which some critics tend to restrict them to.

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La vida como teatro, el teatro como vida. Fragmentación y recomposición del sujeto en Maiakovski y Pirandello

BIAGIO D'ANGELO

*Il teatro è immortale. Le sue effigi si svuotano
e si riempiono senza perire.
Le sue maschere disertate si rianimano.
La sfida tra menzogna e verità ha fine
E ciò lo tiene sveglio.
(Mario Luzi, Hystrio)*

En la práctica del comparatismo usualmente la poética de Maiakovski se confronta con la poética del futurismo, con las actitudes provocadoras de Marinetti y de otros poetas futuristas. Abundan los artículos y los estudios dedicados a los dos poetas vinculados por la adhesión al futurismo. Sin embargo, Maiakovski revela impresionantes semejanzas con el discurso teatral moderno que encuentra en Pirandello una de sus expresiones más altas. Una frase del autor siciliano podría aún ser puesta como epígrafe de la entera obra de Maiakovski: "Toda la diferencia que hay entre la tragedia antigua y la moderna consiste en eso...: en un agujero en el cielo de papel"(Pirandello 1963: 396). Una imagen, esta última, que no es difícil encontrar en los poemas y en el teatro de Maiakovski. Es interesante notar cómo los distintos procesos estéticos de ambos autores hallan origen y se proyectan a través de un punto de confluencia de excepción: Dostoievski. Dostoevski es un autor que retorna también en la lectura de Pirandello, así como en otros autores del teatro de la modernidad como Ibsen, Strindberg,

Claudel y Chéjov. La filiación Dostoievski-Pirandello adquiere sentido sólo en el caso en que se admita la modificación del sujeto en el arco de los siglos, hasta aquella desestabilización, distintiva de la época postmoderna. Walter Moser demostró que la génesis del paradigma polifónico, en que el punto de vista personal vuelve incierta la verdad absoluta del hecho narrado, se inicia propiamente con Dostoievski y representa la arqueología de la sabiduría postmoderna (Moser 1986). La investigación sobre el yo, su función social, ética, religiosa y su valor y concepto, convergen en el discurso sobre la modernidad obrado por Pirandello y Maïakovski. Otra frase, de Pasternak, nos introduce bien dentro del juego entre ficción y realidad, entre personaje e intérprete, que el teatro de aquellos años evidenciaba: "Maïakovski es una continuación de Dostoevski. Aun, es la lírica escrita por uno de sus más jóvenes personajes rebeldes".

La experiencia teatral de la Modernidad resulta ser de gran actualidad hoy en día. La Modernidad y nuestra época, definida por el discutible y abusado término de "globalización" están sin duda dramáticamente relacionadas. No sólo por aquel paso desde una modernidad vivida trágicamente e interiorizada artísticamente hacia una posmodernidad a la fuerza jocosa y fútil, sino sobre todo por una lectura profética que la modernidad obra a propósito del futuro mismo de la expresión artística. La modernidad interpreta el futuro según una perspectiva catastrófica y apocalíptica. No obstante las sublimes tentativas de poetas, escritores, músicos, pintores y artistas, toda la modernidad parece emitir un grito de desesperación, un feroz grito de impotencia frente a la conciencia de la humanidad, una tragedia que se consuma bajo el signo de la pérdida del centro, según la celebre definición de Sedlmayr, una verdadera tragedia del "signo". El signo, en el sentido de una realidad que reenvía a otra realidad, superior o no (una realidad experimental cuyo sentido es otra realidad, procedimiento típico de la naturaleza) se autoanula o tal vez se aniquila por la interpretación de los modernos. El signo ya no reenvía a ninguna otra realidad, perdiéndose en las múltiples funciones del pseudo-conocimiento del hombre. Para nada vale la tentativa de los simbolistas de buscar en el ocultismo del símbolo aquella realidad superior que Viacheslav Ivanov identifica en el axioma casi

científico de *a realibus ad realiora*. La inutilidad del gesto semiótico es comprobada por la fase sucesiva al simbolismo, de una búsqueda de la palabra verdadera, totalizadora, clarificadora de todo, que es característica de la poesía acmeísta en Rusia, del imaginismo americano o finalmente del hermetismo italiano. Esta búsqueda no conduce sino a un *échec* y la tragedia del signo se transforma en una tragedia del lenguaje de la cual las obras de la modernidad, y especialmente el teatro como experiencia altamente semiótica, ofrecen un testimonio ejemplar.

Nunca como en el caso del teatro moderno se percibe la fuerza y la magia del teatro calderoniano y se entiende bien la modernidad y el éxito de la teatralidad barroca que triunfa en las escenas de los teatros contemporáneos. La razón es evidentemente: como nuestra época globalizada, el teatro de Calderón se sitúa en el fin de una época, de un periodo que había tenido su apogeo con las obras de Lope de Vega o Tirso de Molina. José María Pozuelo Yvancos sintetiza brillantemente la modernidad absoluta y la originalidad del teatro de Calderón en el hecho que “la cultura contemporánea está también atravesada por la teatralidad”. Omar Calabrese afirma, recuperando toda una lectura positiva del siglo barroco, que el signo posmoderno es por su naturaleza un signo neobarroco porque la cultura contemporánea habría rechazado la lectura romántica idealista, solipsista, narcisista, a favor de la figuralidad y del simulacro y habría aceptado sólo en parte las vanguardias modernistas ridiculizándolas a través del uso irónico de la cita intertextual. El teatro de Calderón funciona de modo que el espacio de la representación escénica sea la misma teatralidad. Así escribe Pozuelo Yvancos:

Las personas son personajes en trama del mundo en cuyo escenario debaten los grandes temas de la existencia: el libre albedrío frente a la fuerza del destino (*La vida es sueño*), la conciencia individual del ciudadano civil que se opone frente a privilegios de casta del militar (*El alcalde de Zalamea*), la idea misma del teatro — la ficción de la ficción — como configuradora del mundo (*El gran teatro del mundo*). (Pozuelo Yvancos 2000: 7).

Como ya la mentalidad barroca proponía, y Pirandello lo confirma con algunos de sus títulos, de *Seis personajes en búsqueda de un autor* a *Enrique IV* y a *Así es (si les parece)*, la realidad propuesta es a tal punto compleja que no puede resolverse en una interpretación unitaria. De la misma manera, A.M. Ripellino define la época de Maiakovski como “la gran edad gogoliano-barroca de la moderna lírica rusa” y añade que el mundo representado por él, “rendido con hipérboles e hinchazones y dilatamientos [...] da continuamente en lo trágico, develando rajas y laceraciones dostoevskianas”(Ripellino, 1968: 269–70).

La compleja trama de los motivos intertextuales y de las prácticas descritas por Pirandello y Maiakovski puede ser esquematizada en seis aspectos casi intercambiables y dramáticamente modernos. Se trata de elementos que establecen una dialéctica significativa, aparentemente contrapuesta entre los autores y se solucionan en una misma relación con la vida y el teatro.

- 1) la categoría del humorismo en Pirandello / el motivo del llanto en el teatro maiakovskiano;
- 2) el procedimiento de la máscara en el primero / la postura exasperada del actor en el otro;
- 3) la búsqueda del sentido del yo según el esquema “uno, nadie, cien mil” contrapuesto al esquema binario Uno/Dios;
- 4) la búsqueda del Autor en los *Seis personajes* y la plegaria vociferada al Padre en la *Flauta vertebral*;
- 5) el barroco como tiempo arquetípico de la práctica moderna en ambos autores;
- 6) la relación irreconciliable y tragicómica entre vida y teatro.

Es sin duda “pirandelliana” la actitud de Maiakovski respecto de su obra primera representada en teatro, como lo recuerda Pasternak:

El arte se llamaba tragedia. Y así debe llamarse. La tragedia se llamaba *Vladimir Maiakovski*. El título escondía el descubrimiento genialmente sencillo de que el poeta no es el autor, sino el objeto de la lírica, la cual en primera persona se dirige al mundo. El título no era el nombre del escritor, sino el apellido del contenido. (Pasternák 1961: 273)

La tragedia de Maiakovski fue representada en 1913 en el teatro Luna Park de San Petersburgo, el mismo teatro en que Aleksandr Blok había decretado la agonía del gesto teatral con *Balagánhik* (La barraca de los saltimbanquis) en 1906. Blok proponía de un lado el triunfo de la convención teatral, del otro su anonadamiento. La paradoja utilizada por Blok fascina el sentido teatral de Maiakovski. La realidad vital es sólo espejismo, ilusión y el autor es consciente, desnudando el presunto realismo y la ridícula y vacía simbolicidad.

Esta visión nihilista, llevada a una extrema ironía destructiva (y autodestructiva), se puebla de humanas apariencias: es un mundo de máscaras, de maniquís, de marionetas, una metamorfosis de la nada en algo y de algo en la nada. Todo es falso, postizo, ficticio: una fantasmagoría presentada con medios suprema y manifiestamente ilusorios de la pura teatralidad. La sola figura real es aquella, grotesca, del Autor, desconcertado e indignado por la insubordinación de sus figuras, insertadas en una trama distinta de aquella querida por él, su "realista" creador; pero el Autor es arrastrado fuera de la escena, en la nada de donde ha emergido, y por fin, tras la catástrofe general, terminará por huir de la escena, en la cual queda, solitario, Pierrot, "máscara" del poeta, tocando un pífano, en el vacío. (Strada 1986: 135)

El límite entre sueño y realidad, la continuidad entre la vida y el espectáculo, la substancia detrás de las máscaras son los elementos portadores de un teatro que, persiguiendo la ilusión de una pureza y esencialidad absolutas, acaba proponiendo un mensaje nihilista, la imposibilidad de conciliar dos polos, dos signos interactuantes: la obra artística y la realidad, la adhesión a la vida social y la búsqueda del sentido del yo.

Vladimir Maiakovski ha sido definida tragedia futurista. El adjetivo futurista casi la aleja del mundo presente, proyectándola en una imaginativa concreción inexistente y rebelde. El teatro de Maiakovski parece en cambio estar bien anclado en el sentido del *hic et nunc* que unido a un exasperado egocentrismo aumenta la

dramaticidad del discurso lírico-teatral en la obra. Un testigo excepcional en el estreno de *Vladimir Maiakovski* nos ofrece algunas penetrantes reflexiones.

El único verdadero protagonista debía ser el mismo Maiakovski. Los demás personajes — el viejo con los gatos, el hombre sin un ojo y sin una pierna, el hombre sin una oreja, el hombre con dos besos — parecían hechos de cartón: no porque se cubrían de pedazos de cartón y parecían seres de dos dimensiones, sino porque, según la idea del autor, no eran sino entonaciones de su propia voz revestidas de imágenes visuales. Maiakovski se fragmentaba, se reproducía y se multiplicaba en un demiúrgico frenesí [...] Interpretándose a sí mismo, colgando a un clavo su abrigo verde-amarillo, arreglándose la blusa, encendiéndose un cigarro, leyendo sus versos, Maiakovski lanzaba un puente invisible de un género artístico a otro y lo hacía en la única forma concebible, bajo los ojos del público, ignorante de todo. (Livšic 1933: 184–185)

Maiakovski no es solo un personaje emergido de una novela de Dostoievski según la afirmación de Pasternák que ya hemos mencionado, sino que puede considerarse efectivamente un intérprete *sui generis* del teatro pirandelliano. Un único actor en la escena encarnando dos, mil personajes, monologando rabiosamente con Dios, cuyo silencio anonada al sujeto (el *nadie* pirandelliano, privado de su propia identidad). Los conflictos existenciales son la preocupación principal de los artistas de la modernidad, que se traduce en una reflexión sobre la palabra y, en nuestro contexto, sobre la palabra escénica, teatral. En el teatro futurista y en el teatro pirandelliano la palabra es autónoma porque “ésta no se pone en alguna relación con el mundo, no se coordina con él” (Livšic 1976: 75). En ambos casos, la palabra es explotada como surgida del discurso del personaje con que el autor se identifica y se expone. El discurso teatral es un sistema de tensión de palabras; de hecho, las palabras expresadas en la escena revelan su doble naturaleza de forma y contenido; sin embargo, en el teatro

de la modernidad esta función se suspende, se interrumpe, casi va quebrándose; es decir, ellas poseen ahora un valor que resulta ser exclusivamente fónico, reconocido por la sociedad, por la masa, pero han perdido, al mismo tiempo, su significación original porque se han vaciado de la naturaleza, a ellas intrínseca, del signo.

En la tragedia lírica de Maiakovski el diálogo-monólogo explícito entre el Poeta y Dios se realiza en las formas superfluas y vulgarmente cotidianas del personaje, alter ego del poeta: el Joven. Éste es la encarnación del anti-Poeta, del anti-Yo, del *nadie* que la sociedad en realidad prefiere al yo interrogante. Maiakovski emplea en este caso un recurso cómico-farsesco porque logra poner al revés el orden adquirido de las cosas amenazando a Dios y acusándolo de ser Él, el anti-Poeta, el anti-Yo, el *nadie* que permite el mal y la oscuridad del mundo. Como en un juego de encaje, las palabras con que Eijenbaum describe a Blok podrían aplicarse a Maiakovski mismo y revelan una tendencia teatral en la vida que Pirandello llevará a sus últimas consecuencias:

[Blok] se había vuelto para nosotros un actor trágico que se autointerpretaba. En lugar de una auténtica (e imposible, naturalmente) fusión de vida y arte había agregada una terrible ilusión escénica, que destruía ora la vida ora el arte. Nosotros no veíamos más al poeta y al hombre. Veíamos la máscara de un actor trágico y nos dejábamos hipnotizar por su actuación. (Eijenbaum 1924: 217)

Dios mismo se vuelve una máscara cómico-trágica. En Maiakovski Dios se viste de bufón y con su *gorro de cascabeles*¹, sacude a los hombres, máscaras también ellos en un juego divino cruel.

No embreéis con odio el cabo del corazón.
A vosotros,
Hijos míos,
Os instruiré con rigidez y severidad.
Todos, hombres,

¹ Curiosamente, esto es también el título de un famoso cuento pirandelliano.

Sois cascabeles
 En el gorro de Dios.
 (Maiakovski 1993: 37)

El Dios de Maiakovski es como el Enrique IV de Pirandello: insano, juglaresco, enloquecido; cuando finalmente se da cuenta de la rebelión de la sociedad frente a la nueva realidad creada por la “divina” locura, prefiere el silencio o disfrazarse para mirar, espectador imperturbable, el devenir del mundo. En la tragedia de Maiakovski se pueden observar las mismas temáticas puestas en evidencia por Pirandello en el *Enrique IV*: el individualismo desenfrenado que en la tragedia pirandelliana aparece como locura, el amor (la amada en Maiakovski es un personaje presente pero mudo, en Pirandello Frida dice siempre tener miedo de su papel) y la sociedad que choca contra el deseo de satisfacción del individuo. En ambos casos es impresionante notar como el “otro”, ya sea la estructura social o los afectos, se presenta siempre violentamente acusador y negativo, hasta destruir la tensión interior y buscar refugio en el delito (como en Pirandello) o en el grito blasfemo (como en Maiakovski). La sociedad y la acción de Dios impiden a Maiakovski ser feliz (“dicen que en un lugar — creo que en Brasil — hay un hombre feliz”, sostiene irónica y cruelmente Maiakovski en su “homónima” tragedia, ib. 39), así como en Pirandello la vulgaridad de los demás y la ausencia divina niegan el verídico rostro del hombre, trasformando el ser en máscara o payaso. La postura maiakovskiana parece repetirse en las palabras “insanas”, de Enrique IV que exclama:

Pero os aseguro que también vos vais disfrazando en serio, señora mia...” (Pirandello 1963: 151)

¿No comprendes? ¿No ves cómo los visto, cómo los arreglo, cómo hago que se me planten delante, payasos asustados! Y se espantan sólo de esto: de que les arranco su grotesca máscara, y descubro que van disfrazados. ¿Como si no les hubiera obligado yo mismo a disfrazarse, por el gusto que me doy de hacer el loco!” (172)

Y cómo no pensar que estas palabras puedan ser declamadas por Maiakovski cuando Enrique IV acusa a los demás de falta de vitalidad, de vegetar o interpretar un papel automáticamente:

¡Siempre pueden decirle adiós a todas las tradiciones!
 ¡Decirle adiós a todas las convenciones! ¡No harán
 más que respetar todas las palabras que siempre
 hemos dicho! ¿Creen vivir? ¡No hacen más que
 rumiar la vida de los muertos! (ib. 174, con algunas
 variaciones).

La famosa observación de Adriano Tilgher sobre la obra pirandelliana según la cual "en la tragedia de Enrique IV se halla la tragedia de la vida misma en forma ejemplar" puede aplicarse también a la vida y tragedia de Vladimir Maiakovski. Pero mientras que Pirandello lleva a una extrema negación las propias temáticas, propugnando la imposibilidad de una redención en la vida-teatro, en Maiakovski la única vía de salida será la representación teatral de la utopía comunista en el *Baño* (1929); sin embargo, también en este caso, la amarga constatación del fracaso de la bondad del individuo se acaba con una carnalesca y desesperante fanfarronada. Las obras de ambos escritores abren una ventana sobre el camino de la metatragedia existencial y ficcional.

Si *Vladimir Maiakovski* había sido denominada tragedia, Maiakovski llamará el tetráptico *La nube en pantalones* (1915) "segunda tragedia", precisando que intentaba mostrar cuánto el drama o el "monodrama", como en este caso, de la vida eran perfectamente pertinentes al teatro y a la teatralización.

Maiakovski lleva a la máxima ejemplificación la argumentación "teatrocrática" de Nikolai Evreinov. El teórico ruso afirmaba no sólo la indestructibilidad del teatro como gesto profundamente enraizado en la conciencia y en la acción del hombre, sino también su omnipresente manifestación. Respalado por los datos de la antropología y de la psicología, Evreinov sostiene que la vida entera se desarrolla en un escenario, confirmando uno de los conceptos fundamentales del teatro calderoniano.

La teatralidad está así orgánicamente vinculada a la esencia del hombre que también se libera de un cierto peso mediante la organización de arenas, teatros, carnavales y otras instituciones [...]. El hombre indefectiblemente sigue pagando el tributo a la teatralidad también en la vida lejana del teatro oficial. (Evreinov 1923: 29)

El yo de Maiakovski es un yo fragmentado, en que coexisten ya la “pulsión” lírica como la social, “manifestaciones distintas de su energía vital” (Woroszylski, en AA.VV. 1990: 296) que necesitan exteriorizarse en el grito, la hipérbole, el uso potente de la voz, *estentórea, declamada, teatral*. Maiakovski es el primer poeta-actor de las escenas rusas y europeas.²

...el monólogo ya no necesita de una representación teatral, porque el mundo entero parece ser la grande escena sobre que el Poeta actúa si mismo y con voz estentórea se confiesa, proponiendo a un público, que coincide con la humanidad, una especie de *stream of consciousness* en versos, experimento verdaderamente singular que puede ser compreso sólo si se

² Efim Etkind propone una reseña de voces y sonidos de poetas del tiempo de Maiakovski, una comparación sintética y poética que ayuda a situar también *fónicamente* la originalidad maiakovskiana entre sus contemporáneos: “Los contemporáneos de Maiakovski constantemente resaltaban la energía de su voz, voz no sólo de orador, sino también de poeta, la altisonancia de sus versos. En un trasfondo de arpas y violines de Blok, de la flauta campesina de Esenin, del recitativo dramático de Ajmátova, del refunfuño intencionalmente monótono de Jlébnikov, de los yambos marciales de Gumilëv, de los motivos de opereta de Severianin, de la melodiosa declamación de salón de Balmont, de la solemne tragicidad de Mandelshtam, del rombo hierático de Viacheslav Ivanov, la voz de Maiakovski resonó inmediatamente ensordecedora: sus rugidos y sus gritos provocadores eran opuestos a cada concepción de la poesía”. (Etkind, en AA.VV. 1990: 327–339). También Marina Tsvetaeva recuerda que “Maiakovski hay que leerlo todos juntos, casi en coro... en voz alta, lo más fuerte posible.... A toda la sala. A todo el siglo... el primer poeta al mundo de las masas [...] el primer poeta-orador ruso”. (Cvetaeva 1971: 640).

considera su tensión entre la espontaneidad del flujo autoconfesorio y la organización del discurso poético. La "teatralización" toca, en Maiakovski, los niveles del inconsciente y se desempeña en las profundidades del cosmos, bajo la mirada de un supremo espectador e interlocutor: Dios. (Strada 1986: 170)

Woroszyński define Maiakovski como el representante más brillante, apasionado, pero también el más sentimental, histérico de una enésima forma de romanticismo no reconciliado con la vida (ib. 293). El contenido existencial de la creación maiakovskiana, de hecho, no era provocador, sino tradicional y en ese sentido perfectamente moderno. Problematisa, critica, actualiza la disolución del yo que ha perdido su propia referencialidad.

Muy precisamente Krysinski resume en cuatro prácticas el conjunto de las poéticas de la modernidad: la subjetividad, la ironía, la fragmentación y la autorreflexividad (Krysinski 1995: 44-45).³ Detengámonos en la práctica de la ironía romántica que emparenta Maiakovski y Pirandello según procedimientos distintos, pero afirmando la misma imposibilidad de encontrar una vía de salida única y segura. La obra romántica se basa en la fragmentación, su ser inconcluso, porque la obra verdadera, la obra absoluta y universal pertenece sólo a aquella vida del espíritu que engloba los varios pedazos fragmentados en un único trabajo de perfección, en que las ausencias encuentran una Presencia que las repleta.⁴

³ "Estas vehicular ciertos valores. Presuponen técnicas de expresión (estilos, formas) y organizaciones del contenido. Estas cuatro invariantes subyacen en la modernidad. Dentro de sus combinatorias, tematizan y problematizan los avances o los estados de las prácticas discursivas. La modernidad sólo resulta homogénea entonces como un conjunto de invariantes y de poéticas específicas."

⁴ Hablando de ironía romántica, René Bourgeois identifica en la ruptura de la ilusión entre sueño y realidad y en el discurso permanente del juego con la obra las manifestaciones más nítidas de la ironía. La ironía, según Bourgeois, "afirma simultáneamente la nulidad total de la obra que genera y su valor trascendental: en breve, tiene, por naturaleza, la misma esencia que el acto poético". Véase Bourgeois 1974: 34.

La obra de Pirandello se compone de esta disgregación típica de la ironía romántica, verdadera “fuerza generadora” (Musarra 1987) según el código del humorismo. Las reflexiones en su teatro relativizan cualquier sentido de una lectura exclusiva de la realidad. La falta de una solución unívoca, por ejemplo, se puede constatar en *Cada uno a su modo* o en *Esta noche se improvisa*, siempre según el binomio indivisible de representar la vida / vivir el teatro. En Maiakovski la ironía se manifiesta principalmente con la representación de una realidad deforme, clownesca, inflada y dilatada, (“el mundo sufre un proceso de irónica gulliverización”, explica Ripellino (1968: 279); un procedimiento, aquel de la ironía que es apenas una brecha para penetrar dentro el misterio del mundo y de sus objetos y sujetos. Pero la realidad rechaza al curioso espectador, cosificando los objetos, entorpeciendo las almas, resquebrajando los deseos espasmódicos de felicidad. Como en *Esta noche se improvisa*, en que los actores se rebelan ante Hinkfuss, el director, así Maiakovski se rebela ante Dios, revirtiendo las funciones de espectador / creador, en la ilusión “cómica” de un Dios espectador distraído y del Poeta creador de la vida y descubridor del mal del mundo. Maiakovski y Pirandello son atraídos por la tentativa modernista de contemplar un yo fragmentado conscientes del fracaso de su recomposición. El alma (en Maiakovski) y el sujeto (en Pirandello) son obligados a enfrentarse con Dios.

La trampa del Otro encierra a los personajes pirandellianos. Sus gritos significan la desesperanza de conocer o la imposibilidad de acceder al Otro. [...] Su incapacidad de ser él mismo, no contra el Otro, sino con el Otro; ése es el recurso dramático por excelencia del teatro pirandelliano. La máscara es el símbolo negativo de lo social sin ser verdaderamente un accesorio lúdico del teatro. (Krysinski 1995: 53)

La representación teatral de Maiakovski posee esta misma “trampa del Otro”, con una única diferencia: ser contra el Otro es en Maiakovski una necesidad que esconde una “simbólica identificación”. El Otro no se hace reconocer, ni encontrar, pero:

...para el Poeta, que lo insulta y lo combate, Dios es un interlocutor necesario, aquel Tú supremo al que él debe dirigirse, porque su pensamiento, mítico y productor de mitos, no podría soportar un universo vacío, privado de una posibilidad de blasfemo diálogo para su Yo. (Strada 1986: 174)

Es justamente esta afanosa búsqueda del Autor, o de Dios, si queremos, que emparenta la tragedia *Vladimir Maiakovski* y la comedia-tragedia *Seis personajes en busca de autor*. Se trata de una búsqueda esencial, fundamental, sin la cual cada representación teatral se fractura. Los seis personajes pirandellianos se encuentran fundidos en el único yo prepotente maiakovskiano: Maiakovski da voz al Padre, a la Madre y a los demás personajes de la tragedia pirandelliana, replanteando la misma fórmula de carácter calderoniano y teológico. Lo que parece ser un juego ficticio, enfatizado por la fantasía del autor, revela ser finalmente una realidad cruel y sanguinaria. La muerte del Muchacho en Pirandello suscita, por ejemplo, la pregunta crucial si se trata de realidad o ficción:

Primera actriz: — (*Por la derecha, acongojada.*)
¡Qué ha de haber muerto! ¡No lo crea! ¡Todo es pura ficción!

Otros actores: — ¿Cómo ficción? ¡Realidad!
¡Realidad! ¡Ha muerto!

Otros: — ¡No, no! ¡Ficción! ¡Ficción!

Padre: — (*Levantándose y gritando en medio de todos.*) ¡Nada de ficción, señores! ¡Realidad!
(*Desaparece por el fondo.*) (Pirandello 1963: 114)

Así el “drama muy doloroso” que la familia quiere representar en efecto se realiza. Precisamente Kryszinski afirma:

La pregunta “ficción o realidad” sólo tiene su sentido al nivel de la estética confesada por el Director y por los actores. Para los personajes no tiene sentido, pues su concepción del arte teatral se basa, en cierta medida, en la identificación de la vida con el teatro. (Kryszinski 1970: 58)

También el personaje Vladimir Maiakovski se confunde con su propia representación teatral; ya no existe el límite entre vida vivida y vida representada. El monólogo de Maiakovski es el acto representado en la escena del mundo, exclamado, amargo, desesperado, concebido como contraparte del "banal" teatro burgués y del *vaudeville*. Es significativo que en Pirandello se encuentre el mismo procedimiento de autocita irónica y grotesca de aquellos que sobresalen en los casi soliloquios teatrales maiakovskianos:

Director: — ... ¡Si de Francia no nos llega una sola comedia que valga la pena, y nos vemos obligados a hacer las de Pirandello, que no hay quien las entienda! Parecen hechas a propósito para desagradar a los actores, a los críticos y al público. (Pirandello 1963: 56–57)

En realidad, el grito de Maiakovski y de Pirandello subraya la urgencia de la *vexata quaestio* de la recomposición del sujeto. La fórmula será siempre aquella del *camouflage*, de la metarrepresentación y siempre la reiteración del principio calderoniano del carácter teológico del teatro, a partir del derribo dramático (o trágico) de su esencia ontológica.

La escena es teológica mientras su estructura porte, siguiendo toda la tradición, los siguientes elementos: un autor-creador que, ausente y de lejos, armado de un texto, vigila, reúne y maneja el tiempo o el sentido de la representación, dejando que ésta lo represente en eso que llamamos el contenido de sus pensamientos, de sus intenciones, de sus ideas. (Derrida 1967: 345).

Después de las tragedias de Vladimir Maiakovski y la *Flauta vertebral* Maiakovski necesita para su yo lírico de una máscara nueva y elige aquella del actor que sube al escenario camuflándose. Era la vieja fórmula inaugurada por Blok de la *comédie féérie*, aquello que los futuristas, apasionados de cinematografía, circo y fuegos artificiales, amaban realizar. Se trata probablemente del momento más alto de la dramaturgia maiakovskiana, *El chinche* (1928) y *El baño* (1929). En el *Chinche*, Prisyppkin es un

filisteo que emprende un viaje hacia una utópica Tierra prometida, el proletario de un tiempo que se ha transformado ahora en un conformista. Sin embargo la máscara, este infinito número de perspectivas que el hombre asume sobre sí para defenderse del ataque de la sociedad, resulta ser un ulterior fracaso. Woroszylski recuerda un episodio de la vida teatral de Maiakovski, a nuestro parecer, muy significativo. Igor' Il'inskij, el actor que interpretó el primer Prisyphkin, tuvo una idea prodigiosa: se propone copiar algunos rasgos, manías y actitudes del mismo Maiakovski, hasta hacer una caricatura. A Maiakovski la identidad entre el autor empírico de la *pièce* y el héroe negativo de la *pièce* agradó mucho. Viendo en Prisyphkin la encarnación tanto de la pequeña burguesía como del poeta al mismo tiempo, la ironía se vuelve triste, se vuelve aquel "sentimiento del contrario", característico de Pirandello.

De la misma manera, en el "drama" *El baño*, obra llamada así solamente "para dar mayor comicidad", como sugiere Maiakovski, la comicidad es en verdad un pretexto para dar mayor problematicidad, tragicidad, mayor espesor al sueño. Los personajes, y en primer lugar el protagonista Pobedonosikov, son marionetas y así les había tratado el director Meierjold en su estreno, el 16 de marzo de 1930. También los diálogos (o monólogos) frente a un público estupefacto son paródicos y grotescos. Esta vez el protagonista es el antítesis del Vladimir Maiakovski de la tragedia homónima. En un juego de espejos y encajes, el Autor escarnece la nueva burguesía soviética y el fenómeno burocrático que están matando el sueño del Poeta: un utópico "comunismo del amor" cuyos rasgos llegaban a ser ambiguos y confusos. El público ya no entiende al Poeta que es obligado a transformarse en un Pierrot lloroso; pero esta vez la máscara es verdadera, como escribe en la lírica *Domoi!* (A casa!, 1925):

Yo quiero ser comprendido por mi país.

Pero si no seré comprendido,

que hacer ?

Pasaré en los márgenes

Del país nativo

Como cae oblicua la lluvia.

(Maiakovski 1935: 448)

Releemos también el *incipit* de *Vladimir Maiakovski*, donde la distancia se ofrece enorme, inabarcable:

Jamás comprenderéis
Por qué yo,
Tranquilo,
Entre un vendaval de burlas,
Llevo en un plato el alma
Al festín de los años futuros.
(Maiakovski 1993: 31)

Y más adelante:

Muy señores míos:
Remendadme el alma,
No vaya a infiltrarse la vacuidad. [...]
Me han ordeñado.
Muy señores míos:
Si lo deseáis
ahora os bailará un notable poeta. (Ib. 33)

En la *Nube en pantalones*, el Poeta verdadero “canta” su propio amor a despecho de los demás poetas falsos y charlatanes. Para ser aceptado por la masa y hacerse entender, el Poeta intenta todo hasta al paroxismo, dispuesto a venderse porque la muchedumbre quiere verlo sólo a su manera.

Si lo desean
Me volveré loco de la carne
Y — tornasoleado como el cielo —
Si lo desean
Seré impecablemente fino:
No un hombre, sino una nube en pantalones. [...]
Siento que
El “yo”
Me queda estrecho...
(Ib. 54; 58)

Sin embargo, a su pregunta existencial “¿esto, para qué?” (Ib. 66), el cielo no contesta y el yo queda grotescamente herido, ululante, lloroso. Lo grotesco y lo cómico no son usados por Maiakovski para desencadenar la risa grosera, sino la reflexión, es decir la ley

pirandelliana del sentimiento del contrario. El uso de lo cómico en Maiakovski es observar no un lado, sino la integridad del devenir humano, con sus sueños, certezas, dudas, dolores, el “cuerpo y la sombra” del personaje, para retomar la expresión con que Pirandello define el humorismo:

El humorismo consiste en el sentimiento de lo contrario, provocado por la especial actividad de la reflexión que no se oculta, que no se convierte, como, generalmente, en el arte, en una forma de sentimiento, sino en su contrario, aun siguiendo paso a paso el sentimiento como la sombra sigue al cuerpo. El artista ordinario se fija en el cuerpo solamente: *el humorista se fija en el cuerpo y en la sombra, y a veces más en la sombra que en el cuerpo*; advierte todas las bromas de esta sombra, cómo a veces se alarga y a veces se acorta, como si quisiera hacerle muecas al cuerpo, que, mientras tanto, no la tiene en cuenta ni se preocupa de ella. En las representaciones cómicas medievales del diablo encontramos a un estudiante que, para burlarse de él, le pide que atrape su propia sombra en la pared. *Quien representó este diablo no era, ciertamente, un humorista.* (Pirandello 1963: 1100–1101, las cursivas son mías).

Ni siquiera Maiakovski era un humorista medieval representando su *Misterio-Bufo*, (*Misterija-Buff*, 1918), “representación heroica, épica y satírica de nuestra época”, afirmará el Autor, “la gran revolución condensada en el verso y en la acción. *Misterija* es aquello que hay de grande en la revolución, *Buff* aquello que hay de cómico”. Como en un misterio medieval, lo grande y lo cómico coinciden en una figura única, emblema y símbolo encarnado de una Revolución: Cristo. El Poeta que ya no se identifica consigo mismo, quejoso y decepcionado, se refugia en una vastedad de fragmentos humanos que finalmente se pierden en una masa informe, aunque ellos sean el proletariado, esperanza de libertad y de humanidad. Pero la desesperada necesidad de egocentrismo del Poeta le hace preferir una simbiosis con un Cristo revolucionario (como en los *Doce* de Blok) que predica la revuelta. Esta parodia

burlesca del cristianismo tradicional motivó la censura de las autoridades soviéticas. Maiakovski queda prisionero de su fuga utópica en el comunismo, en una continua tensión latente entre el yo empírico y el yo lírico, entre un yo sollozante que busca su completarse en el Ser y un yo que debe declamar sus obras de forma altisonante para ser reconocido como ser por los demás, muchedumbre degenera e informe.

No hay duda de que el teatro de Pirandello y Maiakovski, cuestionando la dialéctica que transita entre el sujeto e la verdad, termina con un fracaso: el teatro no puede sino representar una descomposición, aquella del Yo y de Dios, es decir la imposibilidad del diálogo (monólogo en Maiakovski, polifonía *anárquica* en Pirandello) y por tanto una reformulación del acto teatral en sí. No es correcto hablar, de hecho, de anulación del gesto escénico. El teatro propuesto por ambos autores es transformado: en ellos, la pregunta existencial no es banalizada u olvidada, sino psicológicamente exasperada, a tal grado que la respuesta ausente del Otro no banaliza el acto teatral, sino que otorga la búsqueda engañosa e ilusoria, un “grito infinito”, citando a P. P. Pasolini. El teatro es inmortal porque la urgencia ontológica no tiene fin. Una vez más, un personaje de Pirandello (el Padre de *Seis personajes*) podría dar voz a Maiakovski mismo, como se lee en el siguiente fragmento:

... El que tiene la ventura de nacer personaje vivo, puede reírse hasta de la muerte, porque no morirá jamás. Morirá el hombre, el escritor, instrumento de la Creación. ¡Pero la criatura es inmortal! Y para vivir eternamente, ni siquiera necesita dotes extraordinarias ni realizar prodigios. ¿Quién era Sancho Panza? ¿Quién era Don Abundio? Y, sin embargo, viven eternamente, porque — gérmenes vivos — tuvieron la fortuna de encontrar un seno fecundo, una fantasía que supo crearlos y alimentarlos: darles vida eterna. (Ib. 61).

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Oxymoron als Profanation des Heiligen. Zu Thomas Bernhard

JAAN UNDUSK

In meinen Überlegungen werde ich mich auf drei Postulate stützen. Bevor ich zur Hauptsache gehe, sei daran erinnert, daß Oxymoron, der Gegenstand meines Gespräches, eine Stilfigur ist, die auf zwei logisch entgegengesetzten (konträren oder kontradiktorischen) Begriffen beruht (z.B. 'beredtes Schweigen' oder 'Wissen ist Nichtwissen'), wobei auch oxymorische Sätze entstehen können ('ich glaube an ihn und kann das nicht glauben'). Die Familie des Oxymorons ist ziemlich groß, dazu gehören z.B. Antithese, Antimetathese, Antilogie, Antimetabole, Paradoxon usw. Im folgenden ist Oxymoron ein Oberbegriff, um den herum alle anderen ihm verwandten sich versammeln. Und nun meine Postulate.

(1) Oxymoron als Stilfigur, und nicht nur als Stilfigur, deren Anwendungsgebiet sich auf die Wortebene beschränkt, sondern auch als Denk—, Lebensgefühls- und Kompositionsfigur — ein solches Oxymoron ist in der österreichischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts, das österreichische Drama eingeschlossen, von überdurchschnittlicher Bedeutung.

(2) Oxymoron als Denk- und Gefühlsfigur ist **eine Konstante der christlichen Theologie**, und von dort aus, auch der christlich geprägten Kultur. Besonders die Texte, die sich am tiefsten in das christliche Welträtsel einfühlen (z.B. die Evangelien, Mystikertexte, Bekenntnisse), vertreten einen hohen Stand der textuellen Oxymorisierung auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen; pragmatisch-grob läßt sich sogar der Regel formulieren — 'je oxymorischer, desto christlicher' — doch nur unter dem Vorbehalt, daß man in das

christliche Erfahrungsgebiet auch seinen anti-christlichen Teil mit einbezogen hat.

(3) Damit haben wir aber schon mein drittes Postulat getroffen, und nämlich: Oxymoron dient nicht nur der Christenheit als ein Mittel des Heiligtums, oder der Sakralisierung, sondern es ist auch — besonders im 20. Jahrhundert — **ein Mittel zum De-Sakralisieren, zur Profanation** geworden. Und es ist fast ein Gesetz in der Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit, daß zwei schroff entgegengesetzte geistige Richtungen, Mentalitäten, von denselben Mitteln Gebrauch machen, wenn auch die Zwecke hundertprozentig verschieden sind. Einer Anti-Ideologie ist immer ein Zug von Parodie eigen, und als Parodie bleibt sie von der Gedankenstruktur und Rhetorik des Originals höchst abhängig. Die satanistische schwarze Messe öffnet die einzelnen Phasen der heiligen Messe minutiös und in konträren Farben vor einem auf den Kopf gestellten Kruzifix nach; Friedrich Nietzsche schreibt sein Anti-Evangelium "Ecce homo" den rhetorischen Mustern der Christus-Story rückwärts folgend; die antichristliche Dichtung der stalinistischen Ära wirkt wie eine profanierte Wiederholung des mittelalterlichen Litaneien-Singens (dazu Undusk 1998). Und so weiter. Die antiautoritären Oxymorisierungs-Tendenzen der österreichischen Literatur weisen wahrscheinlich — und unter anderem — auf eine starke Abhängigkeit vom katholisch-autoritären Kulturerbe hin, die man nicht nur so und kaltblütig ignorieren kann, und gegen die man zuerst ein Gegenspiel erfindet, um dann schon das Spiel gegen das Gegenspiel auszuspielen — und wieder umgekehrt.

Diese sind meine drei Leitgedanken, zu denen man noch einiges bemerken muß. Das Wichtigste: Die Prozeduren der Profanation und Re-Sakralisierung sind in der modernen Kultur, die die Fahne der Ambiguität hochhält, nicht immer leicht zu unterscheiden. Die Antwort auf die Frage, ob es sich jeweils um eine profane oder sakrale Dominanz des Oxymorischen handelt, mag weit von Unzweideutigkeit sein. Sogar ein Autor wie Thomas Bernhard, der seine Antithesen-Maschinerie manchmal fast automatisch-frigid laufen zu lassen scheint, und in dem sein größter Konkurrent in der modernen österreichischen Literatur, Peter Handke, eine Neigung zur manichäischen Taschenspielerlei

zu vermuten bereit ist (z.B. Handke 1993: 29, Handke 1987: 93) — sogar dieser Bernhard ist nicht nur wärmer, komischer, sondern auch schwärmerischer, heiliger gesinnt, als man im ersten Augenblick erwarten darf. Sich bis zur Absurdität entwickelnde Antithetik schließt die Heiligkeit der Gefühle keinesfalls aus. Das christliche Gesangbuch bleibt einem Außenseiter, dem in die Schlichtheit des Gottleidens nicht Initiierten, immer monoton, automatenhaft, eher komisch und absurd-logisch, als gefühlsbetont. Todernsthaftigkeit ist ein Bruder des Total-Komischen, weil beide rein kontextuelle Größen sind: einen todernststen Menschen als tatsächlich todernststen anzuerkennen — dem ist nur der Eingeweihte gewachsen; für die außerkontextuelle Welt erscheint er als total-komisch. Und umgekehrt: die Total-Komik ist nur beim pünktlichen Gemeindebewußtsein wahrzunehmen, oder sie bietet sich als Todernstes aus.

Hier verbirgt sich auch die Schwierigkeit beim Verstehen eines Thomas Bernhard. Bernhard macht meistens keine Späße, d.h. er vermischt, vergleicht die Kontexte, das Komische und das Ernste, das Sakrale und das Profane nicht. Er hat ein reines Kontextbewußtsein, und er hat zwei von solchen. Er ist meistens bewußt todernst — und totalkomisch; die zwei Kontexte sind oxymorisch verbunden, beide sind von Anfang bis Ende da: keine Verschmelzung, keine Synthese zwischen ihnen. Man wechselt sie einfach nach Belieben.

Wer an den heiligen Bernhard nicht zu glauben bereit ist, den sei daran erinnert, daß Bernhard seinen Weg in Lyrik angefangen und mit dieser, z.B. dem Gedichtband *In hora mortis*, auch bewiesen hat, daß er um und für die alte christlich-religiöse Gebetstradition wirbt. Die Oxymora in seinen religiösen Gedichten sind eindeutig heilig gemeint. Bernhard als Lyriker war kein Literat noch, eher ein Mönch. Das war keine gute Literatur, eher eine Art belletrisiertes Mönchsschrifttum. Aber dann hat er sich für die Literatur entschieden und der Lohn dafür war die Profanation des Heiligen. Es gibt nämlich keine sozusagen schöne Literatur, ohne daß das Heilige profaniert werde. Als Prosaist und Dramatiker ist Bernhard Literat geworden und hat als Literat sein zweites, profanes Bewußtsein herausgearbeitet, einen neuen Kontext für sein Werk geschaffen. Aber das ursprünglich Heilige,

das sich in seiner Lyrik so rein ausdrückt, hat er nie in das neue Profane hineingemischt. Das Heilige und seine Profanation stehen bei Bernhard Seite an Seite nebeneinander wie zwei entgegengesetzte Begriffe in einem Oxymoron, und bilden kein synthetisches Ganzes. Sie verschmelzen nicht zu einer Metapher, d.h. zur heilig-profanen Einheit. Keine Entwicklung, keine Synthese, zwei eiserne Gegensätze bleiben stehen, wo sie schon am ersten Tag der Schöpfung waren. Bernhard schafft keine Metaphern. Er bleibt bei Oxymora. Deshalb sind seine Stücke auch keine Tragikomödien. Komödie und Tragödie laufen in ihnen parallel, berühren sich nicht, verschmelzen nicht.

Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, der gefeierte Autor des berühmten Buches über Bernhard, hat schon vor Jahren angenommen, daß "Bernhards Werk könnte den Wissenschaften (und nicht nur der Literaturwissenschaft) helfen, neue Kategorien der Beschreibung zu finden" (Schmidt-Dengler 1997: 149–150). Das Oxymoron ist keinesfalls eine neue Kategorie, mit den meisten literaturtheoretischen Begriffen verglichen ist es eher uralt, und gelegentlich stößt man darauf auch in der bisherigen Essayistik über Bernhard¹. Doch philosophisch erweitert und systematischer gebraucht, ist dieser Begriff, wie mir scheint, ein geeignetes Mittel, um eben einen Thomas Bernhard nochmals neu zu entdecken.

Die Tradition des abendländischen Oxymorisierens beginnt bestimmt nicht mit den christlichen Evangelien, doch gerade in diesen wurde das oxymorische Denken zum Prinzip erhoben. In Reden Christi stoßen wir auf die Oxymora, die allen bekannt sind und die den Kern des christlichen Glaubens ausmachen, auf Schritt und Tritt: 'Der kleinste bei euch ist groß' (Lk. 9, 48), 'Die Letzten werden die Ersten sein' (Mt. 20, 16), 'Die sehen und sehen nicht' (Mt 13, 14), usw. Das ursprüngliche christliche Oxymoron, sozial stark gefärbt, war doch schon anfänglich ein Merkmal neuer

¹ Zum Beispiel: "Mit dem Diktum "Die Kunst ist das Höchste und das Widerwärtigste gleichzeitig" stellt sich Reger (in *Alte Meister*) einen Freibrief für ein kontinuierlich praktiziertes Denkoxyoron aus, das alle Widersprüche in seiner Haltung aufzuheben und ihn und seinen Schöpfer, den Autor Thomas Bernhard, nicht festzulegen vermag." (Schmidt-Dengler 1996: 470).

Erkenntnismöglichkeiten. Besonders die Mystiker haben die Kunst des heiligen Oxymorons weiterentwickelt und in ihm das am besten geeignete sprachliche Mittel der christlichen Gnoseologie gesehen. Im "Cherubinischen Wandersmann" von Angelus Silesius hat die evangelisch geschulte oxymorische Phrase ihren Höhepunkt erreicht.

Wenn man von den schriftlichen Texten absieht, ist auch das zentrale rituelle Ereignis in der katholischen Kirche — die Wesensverwandlung oder Transsubstantiation bei der Eucharistie (analog der Inkarnation) ein lebendiges Oxymoron: durch die Weihe von Brot und Wein vollzieht sich die Wandlung der Brotsubstanz in die Substanz des Leibes Christi, und der Weinsubstanz in die Substanz seines Blutes, wonach Christi Leib und Blut in der äußeren Gestalt von Brot und Wein wahrhaft enthalten ist. Beachten wir, daß Leib Christi und Brot keine neue synthetische, metaphorische Einheit bilden, sondern voneinander getrennt bleiben: Brot ist Brot, eßbar, tastbar wie früher, ein Stück elementarer Materie, nur sein Wesen ist von nun an der ätherische Leib Christi.

So ist das Oxymoron wie eine rhetorische Entsprechung für das christliche Lebensgefühl geworden. Die Prozesse der Säkularisierung und Profanierung christlicher Werte, ihre Abschaffung sogar, haben die Positionen dieser Denkfigur in den spät-, nach- und antichristlichen Mentalitäten weniger geschüttelt als man vermuten darf. Das Oxymoron als eine Negation der konventionellen Logik verwandelt sich in ein Zeichen der geistigen Freiheit, des Anarchismus, der künstlerischen Avantgarde. Auch durch manche bewußt antichristlichen Ideologien schimmert die alte mysteriöse Figur, die aber nicht mehr zur Heiligkeit ruft, sondern eine offene psychische Gewalt vertritt. In einem der wichtigsten Romane vorigen Jahrhunderts, 1984 von George Orwell, wird eine totalitäre Gesellschaft beschrieben, die auf drei staatlich vorgeschriebene Oxymora gegründet ist: "Krieg ist Frieden", "Freiheit ist Sklaverei", "Unwissen ist Macht". Hier findet eine absolute Entheiligung des Oxymorons statt. Hier endet die christliche Welt. Aus der sakral-oxymorischen Totalität ist ein profan-oxymorischer Totalitarismus geworden. Für Orwell gibt es keine Möglichkeit mehr, in der logischen Absurdität der oxymorischen Beziehung

einen Weg zum positiven Geheimnis anzuerkennen. Das Oxymoron ist — in seinen Augen oder, sagen wir, auch in der bitteren politischen Erfahrung des 20. Jahrhunderts — ein zynisches Mittel gegen die Vernunft geworden, menschenfeindlich, gewalttätig.

Aber kehren wir zu den österreichischen Themen zurück. Ich habe behauptet: in der modernen österreichischen Literatur, so weit ich diese kenne, fühle ich eine etwas größere Bereitschaft zum oxymorischen Denken, als in manchen anderen Literaturen. Große Oxymoriker findet man natürlich überall, doch eben in der österreichischen Literatur scheint es so zu sein, daß das Oxymorische mit seinen Folgen zum Haupttrend gehört. Der moderne Österreicher, wenigstens wenn er ein Autor ist, liebt es, Oxymora zu schaffen, und das große Wort für diese Liebe, ihr international bekanntes Kennzeichen ist die berühmte **Haßliebe** für seine Heimat. Ich rechne die Haßliebe für das einst so glückliche Österreich zu den Hauptstimmungen der modernen österreichischen Literatur und behandle sie als ihr — keineswegs einziges, doch — zentrales Oxymoron. Dieses Oxymoron ist sozial ausgeprägt, was im ersten Augenblick auf seine quasi rein-sozialen Wurzeln verweist. Österreich war einmal groß und mächtig, heute ist es ein mitteleuropäischer Staat vom mittelkleinen Format — und wie ein Kind seinen heruntergekommenen Vater, so sieht auch der Österreicher sein Land aus ambivalenter Perspektive, wo sich die Verehrung mit dem Minderwertigkeitsgefühl vereinigt. Unter anderem konnte die Expansion, oder die ethnisch-funktionale Umstellung und -wandlung des gutbekannten jüdischen Selbsthasse, der in Österreich seine mächtigen Exponenten hatte, hier seine Wirkung ausüben.

Neben der relativ neuen sozialen Motivation ist die alte katholisch-barocke Geschichte des österreichischen Oxymorons nicht zu vergessen. Eben das Barock kann — Reservationen vorbehalten — als eine kulturelle Erweiterung der katholischen Transsubstantiationslehre geschildert werden, mit seiner Betonung der Kontraste zwischen Fleisch und Seele, Diesseits und Jenseits, mit seinem Druck auf die Parallelität — nicht Mischung, sondern Parallelität — zweier Welten. Die österreichische Selbsthaßliebe, zum großen Teil eine literarische Erscheinung, ist nicht nur sozial, sondern auch kulturell bedingt, und nämlich, **ein Nacherleben des**

barocken Weltgefühls in verhältnismäßig profanierter Form. Das hochliterarisch-heilige Transsubstantiations-Oxymoron, vom katholischen Ritus noch heute, obwohl unzureichend, unterstützt, geht seinen Weg durch den Bereich der Heimatliebe, d.h. des heutigen profanen Heiligtums. Für manche Österreicher ist die Selbsthaßliebe ein moderner Ersatz für die einstige Eucharistiefeier. Oxymoron, die Seele des Rituals, lebt weiter, lebt länger als seine äußere Gestalt, die mehr zeitbedingt und wechselnd ist. Nicht umsonst ist die Kirche, ein wichtiges Element des alten positiven Heimat- und Selbstgefühls, in das neue masochistische Verhältnis mit einbezogen.

Die Selbsthaßliebe als einer der originellsten Topoi der Nachkriegsliteratur des österreichischen Landes kann selbstverständlich verschiedenartig gestaltet werden. Im Augenblick bin ich nicht sehr interessiert am künstlerischen Wollen und Können; wichtiger ist die Haltbarkeit des Oxymorons, die Frage, wie lange der Literat die innere Spannung zwischen den zwei konträren Polen des Oxymorons zu halten imstande ist. Indirekt hat das auch mit dem künstlerischen Können zu tun. Und was auffällt, ist, daß der beschimpfte Erst-, Ur- und Hauptbeschimpfer seines Heimatlandes, ein Gründer — oder Neugründer der starken oxymorischen Tradition in der neueren österreichischen Literatur, Thomas Bernhard, seine Oxymora strenger, vorsichtiger aufbaut, als es bei seinen Nachfolgern gebräuchlich ist. Was z.B. dieselbe Haßliebe für Österreich betrifft, so ist Bernhard — bei näherer Betrachtung — fast immer bestrebt, die beiden Pole des Oxymorons herauszuarbeiten, d.h. ein tatsächliches Oxymoron und keine bloße Schimpfrede zu schaffen. Bei einigen anderen Autoren, die zur jüngeren Tradition der Österreichbeschimpfung gehören, läßt die innere Spannung der Figur manchmal nach, das Oxymoron löst sich auf, und was bleibt, ist der Haß allein, ohne die Unterströmungen weder des Humors noch der Liebe.

In "Holzfällen", am Ende des Romans, hat Bernhard die besten Beispiele seines **oxymorischen Diskurses der Haßliebe** gegeben. Diese sind beispielhaft geblieben für die ganze österreichische Literatur. Gerade beim Lesen des Endmonologes fühlen wir deutlich, daß das neue profanierte Oxymoron, erstens, tatsächlich ein vollberechtigtes Oxymoron ist, und zweitens, daß es mit dem

heiligen eucharistischen Oxymoron doch nah verwandt ist, d.h. seinen sakralen, geoffenbarten Ursprung durch sich selbst noch durchschimmern läßt und deshalb überhaupt nicht mehr so eindeutig profan wirkt.

... und [ich] dachte während des Laufens, daß diese Stadt, durch die ich laufe, so entsetzlich ich sie immer empfinde, immer empfunden habe, für mich doch die beste Stadt ist, dieses verhaßte, mir immer verhaßt gewesene Wien, mir auf einmal jetzt wieder doch das beste, mein bestes Wien ist und daß diese Menschen, die ich immer gehaßt habe und die ich hasse und die ich immer hassen werde, doch die besten Menschen sind, daß ich sie hasse, aber daß sie rührend sind, daß ich Wien hasse und daß es doch rührend ist, daß ich diese Menschen verfluche und doch lieben muß und daß ich dieses Wien hasse und doch lieben muß ... (Bernhard 1988c: 320–321).

Und so weiter.

Doch ist der Topos der Haßliebe nicht das einzige Oxymoron, daß von Bernhard kultiviert wird. Sein Schreibprozess ist überhaupt durch-oxymorisiert und bewegt sich nach der Logik der Kontradiktion. Ich bringe kurze Beispiele aus den Stücken Bernhards, um zu zeigen, was ich mit der Durch-Oxymorisierung seines Wortes meine. In *Die Macht der Gewohnheit* sagt Caribaldi, die Hauptperson des Stückes, dem Jongleur, etwas für die Bernhardsche Weltanschauung ganz Typisches. Es gibt Dutzende von Tiraden in seinen Theatertexten, wie mir scheint, die nach dem Vorbild desselben Algorithmus konstruiert sind (Bernhard 1988a: 278):

Alles nur widerwärtig
alles was geschieht
geschieht widerwärtig
Das Leben die Existenz
widerwärtig
Die Wahrheit ist
ich liebe das Cello nicht
Mir ist es eine Qual

aber es muß gespielt werden
 meine Enkelin liebt die Viola nicht
 aber sie muß gespielt werden
 der Spaßmacher liebt die Baßgeige nicht
 aber sie muß gespielt werden
 der Dompteur liebt das Klavier nicht
 aber es muß gespielt werden
 Und Sie lieben ja auch die Violine nicht
 Wir wollen das Leben nicht
 aber es muß gelebt werden

Auf den ersten Blick sieht es aus wie eine literarische Umformulierung der auf den Pflichtbegriff gegründeten Kantianischen Ethik: wir mögen das Leben nicht, aber es muß gelebt werden. Obwohl das Leben uns unangenehm ist, ist die apriorische moralische Pflicht des Menschen weiterzuleben, und dank unserem freien Willen ist diese Aufgabe auch lösbar. Wenn wir an die Sache etwas näher herantreten, stellen wir doch fest, daß keine der Personen Bernhards auch nur annähernd den kantianisch-protestantischen Willensmenschen darstellt. Vielmehr ist das genaue Gegenteil mit im Spiel. Der genannte Caribaldi, wie eine Menge anderer Paradenfiguren Bernhards, hat Jahrzehnte willensstark eine einzige Aufgabe zu lösen versucht (nämlich mit seiner Zirkustruppe das Forellenquintett von Schubert durchzuspielen), es besteht aber schon rein axiomatisch keine Hoffnung auf Erfolg. Damit möchte ich auch nicht behaupten, daß Bernhard als unheilbarer Pessimist den durchgefallenen Willensmenschen, die Ohnmacht des menschlichen Willens legitimiert. Vollkommener Pessimismus wäre trivial, doch Bernhard wirkt nicht trivial. In Caribaldi oder jemandem anderen will er nicht individuelle Willensbestrebungen des Menschen auslachen oder beweinen. Bernhard ist überhaupt kein Moralist, er ist ein Metaphysiker im Bereich der Moral. Die Arbeit am individuellen Willen interessiert einen Bernhard nicht, er beschildert nur die *conditio humana*, die menschliche Existenz an sich: die ewige Parallelität und Unvereinbarkeit des Wollens und Könnens. Die menschliche Welt als ein ontologisches, unüberbrückbares Oxymoron. Beachten wir den Anfang des Monologes: "alles was geschieht, geschieht widerwärtig". Es ist kein moralischer Satz, denn was immer geschieht,

geschieht naturgemäß. Die Welt als Geschehen ist ein Naturprozess. Und doch geschieht es, wie Bernhard sagt, widerwärtig, d.h. er spricht ein moralisches Urteil über das Nicht-Moralische, über das Naturgemäße aus. Widerwärtiges ist Naturgemäßes. Die Welt existiert widerwärtig, obwohl das Existieren ihr naturgemäß ist. Die Welt ist das naturgemäße Geschehen der Widerwärtigkeit. So sehen wir, daß das Oxymoron schon am Fundament allen Weltgeschehens liegt.

Zwei einfache Zeilen aus "Minetti", in denen jeder die typisch Bernhardsche Rhythmik wiedererkennt (Bernhard 1988b: 243):

Es ist ein Märchen
ein Märchen ist es

Was ist das, rhetorisch gesprochen? Die Figur heißt Epanodos, Wiederholung eines Satzes in umgekehrter Wortfolge². Die syntaktische Struktur des Epanodos entspricht der semantischen Struktur des Oxymorons: dort ist die Bedeutung, hier die Wortfolge des hinteren Satzteiles, mit dem vorderen verglichen, auf den Kopf gestellt. Doch wir bemerken etwas mehr. Das Sprechen in den Bernhardschen Stücken ist meistens abgehackt, fragmentarisch, auch wenn es sich um lange monologische Reden handelt. Bernhard zerstört das normale ordnungsgemäße Sprechen, seine handelnden Personen verschlucken Wörter gerne, beißen Anfänge und Enden der Sätze ab. Der Theaterbesucher muß, der Logik der Intonation und des Gedankens folgend, Phrasen häufig selbst zuendeführen. Und ich führe, während ich mich in die gewöhnliche Bernhardsche Sprachlogik einfühle, den oben zitierten Satz zuende. Statt den geschriebenen Satz "es ist ein Märchen, ein Märchen ist es" zu hören, höre ich beim Lesen und im Theatersaal einen anderen Satz, nämlich:

Es ist ein Märchen
ein Märchen ist es **nicht**

Dieses 'nicht', das Bernhard ausgelassen hat, ist oft seinen Reden hinzuzudenken, die Logik des Ganzen macht es erforderlich. Die

² Zu den Wiederholungen bei Bernhard im allgemeinen siehe z.B. Jahraus 1991, Görner 1997.

Bernhardschen Wiederholungen sind größtenteils keine einfachen, identischen Wiederholungen, auch nicht nur Wiederholungen eines Satzes in umgekehrter Wortfolge, sondern oxymorische, inhaltlich umgekehrte Wiederholungen, bei denen eine Aussage, ob explizit, ob implizit, durch eine entgegengesetzte Aussage ergänzt wird. Bernhard ist in solch ein Umkehren sehr verliebt und manifestiert dies auch offen durch seine Personen, die, wie mir scheint, höchst bereitwillig ihre Äußerungen mit der Klausel schließen, daß das Gesagte sich auch umgekehrt sagen läßt. Dabei macht es keinen Unterschied, ob das Umgekehren des Gesagten einen sinnvollen Satz ergibt oder nicht. Wesentlich ist das prinzipielle Umkehren des sprachlich Gesagten als solches und die Überzeugung, daß die Sprache sich naturgemäß umkehren läßt. So sagt Caribaldi dem Jongleur in der *Macht der Gewohnheit* (Bernhard 1988a: 318):

Die Violine absolut
zu ihrem Kopf machen
und umgekehrt
wissen Sie

Vielleicht können wir nicht gleich verstehen, wie dieses 'umgekehrt' realisierbar wäre, aber das ist überhaupt nicht wichtig. Wichtig ist, daß das Umgekehrte jedenfalls seine Gültigkeit hat. Oder ein anderes Beispiel aus demselben Stück. Der Dompteur sagt dem Spaßmacher (Bernhard 1988b: 290):

Die Tiere gehorchen mir
umgekehrt
gehorsche ich den Tieren

So würde ich prinzipiell gerne Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler beistimmen, wenn er über Bernhard schreibt, daß "in jedem [seinen] Satz wird der vorangehende aufgehoben, um wiederum im nächsten seinen Widerruf zu erfahren" (Schmidt-Dengler 1997: 150). Nur den Ausdruck 'aufgehoben' würde ich besser vermeiden: die Gegensätze im Sprechen Bernhards werden nicht aufgehoben, wie die Hegelsche, auf eine Synthese gezielte Dialektik es vorschreibt,

sondern bleiben in Kraft von Anfang bis Ende, ohne entwickelt, nur verstärkt zu werden³.

Dieses ausgelassene, implizite 'nicht', das ich in Bernhard so oft spüre, hat mir auch geholfen, zu der Erkenntnis zu kommen, wie eng eigentlich Bernhard mit den spezifischen Verneinungseigentümlichkeiten seiner Muttersprache verbunden, wie tief seine oxymorische Phrase in ihr eingekerkert ist. Bei uns Esten war es vor dem zweiten Weltkrieg, als es in Estland noch eine alte deutsche Minderheit gab, fast ein Sprichwort geworden, daß die Deutschen eine so ordentliche, so ordnungsgemäße Nation sind, daß sie, bevor sie etwas verneinen beginnen, zuerst die Sache bejahen, um dann, nur am Ende der Bejahung, ganz kurz, nur mit einem Wort, hinzufügen, daß die Sache eigentlich umgekehrt ist. Wenn der Deutsche sagen will, daß ihm eine Frau nicht lieb ist, sagt er zuerst, daß er die Frau liebt und ergänzt erst dann seine Aussage durch das Wort 'nicht': 'Ich liebe dich — (eine ein bißchen zynische Pause, und dann kommt) — nicht'. 'Ich liebe dich — nicht'. Im Rahmen unserer Überlegungen erlaube ich mir zu behaupten, daß solch eine verneinende Phrase im Deutschen von oxymorischer Art ist: sie schließt sowohl die ganze Bejahung als auch die ganze Verneinung in sich, beide stehen Seite an Seite in einem. Es ist auch möglich, die deutsche Sprache eine Sprache der Enttäuschung zu nennen, weil der Verneinung hier immer die Bejahung vorangeht und Hoffnungen nährt, die am Ende des Satzes, durch das klingende 'nicht', enttäuscht werden. Wenigstens was Thomas Bernhard persönlich betrifft, scheint mir dieses syntaktische Enttäuschungspotential, das die deutsche Sprache in sich hat, durchaus bemerkenswert. Bernhard macht aus dieser sprachlichen Eigenart sein Mittel des Philosophierens. Er genießt das Spiel mit den grammatikalisch heraufbeschworenen Hoffnungen und Enttäuschungen, das kein gutes oder böses Ende an sich hat, keine Entwicklung mit sich bringt und nur den oxymorischen Zustand der menschlichen Existenz immer aufs neue sichtbar macht. Bernhard liebt es, seine Helden 'ich liebe dich' sagen zu lassen, um dann, in der nächsten Zeile, das

³ Christian Klug spricht in diesem Zusammenhang von den Symbolen "einer fundamentalen Einheit des Widersprüchlichen" (Klug 1991: 216).

Publikum mit dem brüskem 'nicht' überraschen zu können. In dieser Hinsicht verhält er sich absolut deutschsprachig, er komponiert seine Texte nach dem Vorbilde der syntaktischen Struktur der deutschen Sprache, er läßt das Deutsche sein eigenes Sprechen aussprechen. Oder übertreiben wir etwas mehr, um zu sagen, daß Bernhards Stücke im Haus der deutschen Sprache spielen, wo die sprachlichen Regelungen als Naturgesetze der Komposition gelten.

Zum Schluß muß ein höchst berühmtes österreichisches Schauspiel erwähnt werden, das, rhetorisch gesprochen, wie ein fleißig durchkomponiertes dramatisches Oxymoron aussieht. Wieder einmal war das Stück im Herbst 1998 aktuell. Ich meine das *Reigen* von Arthur Schnitzler, das, wie bekannt, aus 10 Szenen über Sexualität besteht, eigentlich sich auf 10 Geschlechtsakte mit den entsprechenden Vorher und Nachher konzentriert, und wahrscheinlich den größten Skandal im Theaterleben des 20. Jahrhunderts ausgelöst hat.

Ich habe das Stück neu gelesen und parallel dazu in einer gekürzten österreichischen Ausgabe (Beilage der Zeitschrift *News*) des sog. Starr-Reports geblättert, der ja bekanntlich eine fast romanhafte Schilderung bis ins schlüpfrigste Detail der 10 sexuellen Kontakte ist, die der US-Präsident Bill Clinton und Monica Lewinsky im Weißen Haus hatten. Die Parallelität zwischen den 10 skandalösen Szenen von Schnitzler und den 10 skandalösen Szenen von Starr scheint mir nicht nur lustig, sondern auch erleuchtend zu sein.

Das 445 Schreibmaschinenseiten starke Manuskript von Kenneth Starr und das genau ebenso dicke Buch (445 Seiten Text + 3 Seiten Register!) von Wolfgang Heine, das den Bericht über den Reigen-Prozess im Jahre 1991 enthält (Heine 1992), sind beide den minutiösen sexuellen, quasi-sexuellen, vermutlich-sexuellen usw. Einzelheiten gewidmet. Beide Protokolle widerspiegeln einen zehnteiligen Sex-Skandal, und in beiden macht man einen übermenschlichen Versuch, das in 10 menschlichen Liebes-Treffen enthaltene Sexualverhalten bis zum Letzten zu beschreiben. Und in beiden vergißt man, daß es sich hauptsächlich nicht um die Sexualität, sondern um das Standesproblem handelt.

Es ist ja völlig gleich, ob und wie der Präsident Clinton mit Monica Lewinsky Oral- (oder meinetwegen sogar) Anal-Sex trieb.

Wichtig ist dagegen, daß der amerikanische Präsident, ein Herr vom höchsten Stand, es mit einer unbedeutenden Praktikantin trieb. Seine Schuld ist, daß er seinen hohen Stand vergessen hat.

In *Reigen* von Schnitzler verkehren geschlechtlich in der 1. Szene die Dirne mit dem Soldat, in der 2. Szene der Soldat mit dem Stubenmädchen, in der 3. Szene das Stubenmädchen mit dem jungen Herrn usw. Stufenweise geht es gesellschaftlich immer höher, und jede der Personen hat zwei verschiedene Partner. In der letzten Szene verkehrt die Dirne, die in der 1. Szene mit dem Soldat geschlafen hat, mit dem Grafen, einem Herrn von einem sehr hohen militärischen Stand⁴. So konstruiert Schnitzler Schritt für Schritt ein eindrucksvolles gesellschaftliches Oxymoron: der Niedrigste und der Höchste vereinigen sich in Einem, in diesem Fall im Schoß einer Prostituierten. Der Soldat und der Graf, militärische Gegensätze, stehen am Ende des Stückes wie ohne Epauletten nebeneinander. Das ist die Pointe des Stückes: eine oxymorische Profanation noch einmal. Was hier durch das Oxymoron entheiligt wird, ist die heilige Rangordnung des österreichischen Kaiserreiches.

Eben das ständische Moment war dasselbe, das als einer der maßgebenden Faktoren beim Ausbrechen des sogenannten sexuellen Skandals um den *Reigen* wirkte. Der Kern der Sache lag damals — und so ist es auch heute im Fall Clinton — in der Störung des ständischen Prinzips, die mit der sexuellen Pikanterie bedeckt wurde⁵. Kein bloßer Sex — die Anarchie des Oxymorons gefährdet die Moral der Gesellschaft vor allen Dingen.

⁴ Ohne besondere Bedeutung scheint mir die Vermutung zweier im übrigen angenehm soziologisch gesinnten Analytiker, daß die Dirne in der letzten Szene schon als eine andere, psychologisch und professionell erfahrenere Frau auftritt (Janz; Laermann 1977: 69-75).

⁵ Vergleiche eine unbekannte zeitgenössische Stimme: "Er [A. Schnitzler] will ja nur den Kastenunterschied ... ad absurdum führen" (Pfoser; Pfoser-Schewig; Renner 1993: 224). Ludwig Marcuse: "Es war nicht ein politisches Stück, gegen das man das Vaterland verteidigte; man warf den Szenen nur eine nicht-vaterländische Sexualität vor. Was das für eine ist, wurde nie aufgeklärt." Marcuse ist überzeugt, daß es sich um "den (antisemitischen) Kampf gegen den undeutschen Geschlechtsverkehr" handelte (Marcuse 1984: 205, 207).

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The German Theatre in Tallinn as Reflected in Estonian-Language Publications (1902–1940)

TIINA AUNIN

The aim of the article is to investigate various discourses that established the German Theatre's position in Estonian social, cultural and political life through the Estonian-language press during the first four decades of the 20th century (1902–1940).

The numerous articles and reviews in the Estonian newspapers *Uus Aeg* (*The New Age*), *Päevaleht* (*The Daily Paper*), *Teataja* (*The Messenger*) and others reveal the political and cultural codes of the period which determined the reception of the German Theatre among the multinational and multilingual audiences in Tallinn. Critical reading of the articles — over 200 in total — retained in the files of the Estonian Museum of Theatre and Music can make some important assumptions about the intercultural climate and cross-cultural tensions of those years.

The first reference to the 20th century German Theatre in Tallinn can be found in *Uus Aeg* (*The New Age*) of November 26, 1902 where two municipal officials question the selling of the newly restored theatre house to a joint-stock-company. Here the author of the article also determines the German Theatre as “not merely a cultural institution or a place of popular enlightenment, but as a politically significant territory for other local ethnic minorities.” (*TST*, Found. T 187, file 2: 4)¹

* All the quotations are translated from Estonian by T. Aunin. *Tallinna Saksa Teater* is further abbreviated as *TST*.

It is obvious that the first two decades of the last century the German theatre was one of the media targets and key-issues for the pro-Estonian forces in their campaign against Russian and German cultural domination in Tallinn. The newspaper *Linda* of January 16, 1903, for instance, comments on Pastor Fick's — the head of a rural parish — lavish donation of 1,000 roubles to the German theatre. Fick himself explains it as follows: "Sometimes a den of iniquity, the theatre nevertheless may serve as an educating institution, a good performance can be as didactic as a sermon in church." (Ib. 5)² The author of the article, however, is rather ironical in his comments: "How very odd that Pastor Fick has not introduced this kind of educative and nice means to his own congregation. He has been living among the peasants for 65 years, served as a priest for 30 long years and is still ignorant about the rich heredity of Estonian folk drama." (Ib.)³

In 1906 the same ironical attitude still prevails in the Estonian-language press: when the *Pernausche Zeit* (a local German-language gazette of Pärnu) laments over the small attendance at guest performances of the German Theatre, its Estonian counterpart *Pärnu Postimees* (*The Postman of Pärnu*) suggests that German community buy their pro-German Estonian audience in the same way they had bought voters during elections. (Ib. 14) Quite a serious accusation which political connotation is evident.

Meanwhile, however due to the unrest and riots in October 1905 the wooden building of the German Theatre near the Russian marketplace in Tallinn burnt down. *Uus Aeg* (*The New Age*) of 17th October (ib. 13) thanks God for not having any performance that night: due to gas shortage all the lights in the vicinity had been out. Otherwise the number of fire victims might have exceeded the

¹ ...mitte üksi süüta kunsti asutus ja rahva vaimu valgustuse koht ei ole, vaid et see poliitikas teiste siinsete rahvuste kohta suurt osa mängib.

² ...et see vahest küll "patusegune" asi olevat, aga "hää teater olla niisama hää, kui jutlus kirikus".

³ Imelik aga on, et õp. Hr. F seda kaunist harivat abinõu omas kihelkonnas ei ole tarvitanud, sest ta tunnistas üsna lapselikult, et tema maarahva näitemängusid ei tunne. Ja siiski on ta selle maarahva seas 65 aastat elanud ja õp. Ametit üle 30 a. Pidanud.

number of victims who were gunned down during this unrest. Already by autumn 104 000 roubles were donated for a new solid theatrehouse to be built, as we read in *Teataja (The Messenger)* of September 1906. (Ib. 15) Indeed, the house opened in 1910 and is still functioning as the Estonian Drama Theatre. By that time the membership of the German Theatre Society had amounted to 162. The Society was led by one of the richest and most influential citizens in Tallinn — the banker Scheel himself.

As to the performances given by the German Theatre, the Estonian newspapers, regardless of their political and language preferences, were still reluctant to admit their high artistic level. Already before the fire the theatre had shown a constant shift from lighter genres towards the drama. Careful examination of its repertoire shows that Schiller was undoubtedly the favourite, Lessing was the runner up, Hauptmann came third. In order to commemorate the centennial of Schiller's death in 1905 all his major plays were staged, two first parts of the *Wallenstein*-trilogy, *Die Braut von Messina* and *Wilhelm Tell* included — quite a heroic act, when taking into consideration the small stage of the theatre, setting its limits.

An interesting discursive comparison of two communities — the German and the Estonian — and of their contemporary values reveals itself through the analyses of Ernst Hardt's drama *Der Kampf ums Rosenrote* in *Päevaleht (the Daily Paper)* of November 11, 1920. The play had placed in the forefront generational confrontation, prejudices and father-son relationships. The reviewer of the play wonders whether these motifs had any acclaim whatsoever among the Estonian theatre-goers, and finds it not plausible: "For our middle-class these problems do not exist any more ... In this sense we feel much more happy and independent than the characters of the play. Hardt's drama has for us only historical meaning" (ib. 26)⁴. This kind of contrasting is characteristic of Estonian reviewers shortly after the declaration of

⁴ Kas see draama oleks mõeldav ka Eesti näitelaval? Vaevalt. Meie kodanline seltskond ei tunne neid probleeme mitte. Võib olla, mitte enam... Meie oleme selles mõttes õnnelikumad, vabamad. Ja sellepärast oleks sel näidendil meil ainult ajalooline tähtsus.

independence in 1918. Even Lessing's rarely staged drama *Nathan* caused fierce argument against the method and intellectuality of the German stage-masters: "Finding itself a new professional director shows the German Theatre's good intentions to go on and progress. Only, they should give a serious reconsideration of their directions, for it is a pity if the hollow pathos, Estonian theatres got rid of with such great difficulty, would continue to prevail [in the German Theatre — T. A.]" (ib. 33)⁵

Heavy smoking in the German Theatre's foyer was another critical issue for the Estonian papers propagating healthy and sporting ways of life. (*Päevaleht*, 22. 09. 21) (Ib. 34) Constant remarks were made on the actors' Baltic "provincial" dialect which, according to the critics, made the citizens of Tallinn a laughing stock for those who drew parallels to Kotzebue's times and his play *Kröhwinkel*.

In the 1930s tables turned. Already in March 1929 the theatre and music column of *Päevaleht* (*The Daily Paper*) gives two thirds of its space to the guest performers from the Berlin Theatre of Musical Comedy, leaving only a few informative lines for the Estonian Drama Theatre. In the article by an anonymous author the necessity of reviving the "old true spirit of Biedermeier" has been raised celebrating it as a "new spiritual wave following the crude materialism, dominating our lives" (ib. 4)⁶. The new spiritual and emotional attitude among the Estonians would glorify familiar relations, righteousness, clear conscience of a child, and it would distance itself from politics.

In November the same newspaper i.e. *Päevaleht* says:

After years of laboureous efforts and resourcefulness it is truly admirable what great advantages this theatre has made. The audience understands it and

⁵ Saksa teatril on kindel tahtmine tõsiselt edasi töötada — seda näitab uue, elukutselise näitejuhi ametisse panek. Tuleks aga järele kaaluda, mis vaimus seda tööd teha, sest siiski oleks väga kahju, kui jälle peaks hakkama näitelaval valitsema see õõnes paatos, millest meie Eesti teatrid suure vaevaga lahti on saanud.

⁶ ... Ja küllap meiegi labasele materialismile vist järgneb uus tunnetelaine.

and gives its due respect to the company. I think, our [i.e. Estonian-language — T. A.] theatres have disregarded something essential in their choice of repertoire. Lagging behind is a serious disadvantage.⁷

In fact, there was no reason at all for complaining. From a review to Moliere's *Hypochondriac* (ib. 1)⁸ one can learn that in those days a devoted theatre-goer could enjoy performances in four languages, all given by professional troupes. Frequent guest troupes from Berlin, Königsberg, Riga etc. constituted a great attraction for theatre fans in Tallinn. Mainly thanks to the lively response of schoolchildren and students who paid regular group visits, the German Theatre temporarily tided over the material crises.

Yet, in the 1930s, due to aggravating economic depression the number guest performances decreased and *Päevaleht* (*The Daily Paper* of October 20, 1932 writes: "It is perfunctory to suggest that the German community should go to the Estonian theatres more frequently and meet their cultural needs there. Performances in one's native language are more heart-stirring as are one's own authors, style of acting and national ways of thinking."⁹ But, alas, there was now a split inside the German community itself. In 1933 the German Jewish population in Estonia (banker Scheel's family among them) had turned their back to the German Theatre and chosen the local Russian Theatre instead. As a result, a radical

⁷ Üldse imestamisväärselt on selle teatri töö nüüd hoolsas pinges ja põhjalikus läbi mõtlemises suuri edusamme teinud. Publik mõistab seda ja külastajail on suur edu. Mõtlen, et meie teatrid jälle midagi on maha maganud, et nad seda teost [*Napoleongreifstein* by W. Hasencleber — T. A.] pole oma kavva võtnud. Hiljaksjäämine tähendab sageli kõige valusamat puudust.

⁸ On küll meil küllalt kutselisi teatrietendusi — neljas keeles antakse neid Tallinnas tänavu.

⁹ Mõni pinnapealne inimene mõtleb muidugi, et tulgu ja käigu sakslased eesti teatrites ja saagu kunstilisi rahuldusi sealt.... Säärane mõtlemine ei kaalu kuigi palju. Võõrkeelne teater võib kõiki ka vägagi huvitada, aga omakeelne seob südameid ikkagi kõige rohkem. Ja oma autorid, oma mängustiil, oma rahvuse vaimulaad.

decision was taken by the German Theatre to give only one performance a week.

There was a radical change in repertoire, too. The German audience in Tallinn now preferred lighter genres to the serious classical dramas — peasant comedies (vaudevilles) like Hindrichs's *The Scandal Caused by Yolante* with Signe Pinna in the leading role. A daughter of the Estonian favorite actor Paul Pinna, she was one of the greatest successes of the theatre and highly praised by the critics who admired her ability to prove equally good on three stages: Estonian, German and Russian.

By 1934, according to *Päevaleht* (*The Daily Paper*), the German Theatre in Tallinn had refused to host their colleagues from Riga, finding their repertoire "by far too serious to our taste". The Latvian German production of Hauptmann's *Before the Sunset* had caused almost a scandal in Tallinn, for the guest performance proved so dull that the audience found the author being not worthy his Nobel Prize (*TST*, Found. T 187, file 4: 5).¹⁰ Finally, *The New Age* critics consented to leave the Nobel with Hauptmann, but promised to reconsider their further invitation of guest-performers.

On September 17, 1935 the theatre opened its season with a festive evening. A new director Dr. Jens Soltau had been summoned from Germany, he was an actor as well as a director. With him an actress arrived meant to play leading female roles — a *heroïin* as the Estonian papers of the time called her (*TST*, Found. T 127, file 5: 15–25). The evening opened with the orchestra playing Händel's *Concerto Grosso E-minor*. The play itself entitled "Uta von Naumburg" extolled the message of love and pleasure in life as opposed to ascetisism.

In December the same year the German professional theatre celebrated its 150th anniversary and 25 years of the new theatre-house in Tallinn. By that time (in less than 3 months), a new director Hans Hesse had replaced Jens Soltau. After Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 (G-minor)* he and the head of the German theatre society Herr Riesenkauff gave their speeches. In their speeches

¹⁰ ...kuid sellise töö eest peaks õieti [Nobeli — T. A.] autasust hea osa tagasi võtma, ehk neid Nobeli auhindu peaks jagatama tingimusi, et kui kroonitu hakkab halvasti kirjutama, siis autasust maha...

both men stressed well known historical facts that the first permanent German-language theatre company in Estonia was founded at Paldiski in 1784. One year later, in 1785 a Tallinn amateur company was founded with the playwright August von Kotzebue as a leader. *The Revalische Zeitung* (the Estonian-language media had become somewhat terse in their information about the evening) praised the actresses, especially Signe Pinna in two verse-dramas by J. E. Schlegel and J. W. Goethe (*A Mute Beauty* and *The Caprice of Lover*) (ib. 30).

Despite financial difficulties the project of building a new spacious centre of German culture was suggested in the press. The Estonian newspaper *Vaba Maa* (*The Free Country*) of November 6, 1936 supports the idea of erecting a house that could become a home for all the German societies in Tallinn as well as for the theatre. In this connection the problem of selling the 26-year old theatrehouse near the Russian marketplace arose. The Drama Studio was an interested party but the Germans set new terms: besides paying in cash there should be a building plot drafted from the former Police Garden in the town center (*TST*, Found T 187, file 6: 29).

However, it would be unfair to describe the theatre society as profit greedy, they showed unselfishness and generosity, too. *Päevaleht* of January 9, 1937 mentions them setting a good example in distributing hundreds of free theatre tickets to the poorest citizens of Tallinn at Christmas time (*TST*, Found. T 127, file 7: 1).

On January 17, 1938 the Estonian newspapers let the readers know about an extraordinary event: Nora Schmidt-Jürgenson, a local lady of the German community had written a play based on the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*. It bore the title: *Kalevipoegs Wunderweltfarten. Dramatische Dichtung in 5 Akten. Freinach F. R. Kreutzwald*. Although dedicated to President Konstatin Päts, the manuscript was rejected by the authorities of the Ministry of Education as in any sense "not sufficient to enrich world literature or surprise the audience" (*TST*, Found. T 187, file 7: 1).¹¹

¹¹ Kuuldavasti pole teosest oodata just suurt üllatust maailmakirjanduse rikastamiseks.

In the very same year *Päevaleht* of September 3, made several enquiries to the German theatre urging them to include Estonian originals in its repertoire (ib. 10). Of course, there was a good reason for criticism as the theatre had meanwhile won a great number of fans among the Estonians, but it was equally unfair to reject all good intentions of the theatre, as described above.

True enough, the German theatre had made efforts to diversify its repertoire with dramatists of different nationalities but according to the papers their plays (e.g. H. Ibsen's *Ghosts*, W. Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife*, G. B. Shaw's *Apple Cart*, etc.) did not strike a cord. The audience demanded nothing more than entertainment.

On October 12, 1939, *Päevaleht* informs its readers about the repatriation of the German theatre company in full body. All of its inventory — more than 1000 costumes, scenes, carpets, furniture — was taken along when repatriating to Germany. In addition, an awkward incident occurred when the customs discovered the theatre authorities in their attempt to smuggle a valuable Theatre Society's library and its archives on board the ship. These forbidden valuables were returned to the Estonian Republic (TST, Found. T 187, file 9: 22–23).

At the time of repatriation, the theatre was not yet sure of its future location. Two towns, Poznan and Lodz were mentioned. But already in December 1939 *The Berliner Börsen Zeitung* gives a short announcement about the theatre's final destination which became Lodz.

The last notice of the German Theatre dates from January 20, 1940 when *Rahvaleht* (*The People's Gazette*) informed its readers about the opening of the "repatriated" theatre with Lessing's drama *Minna von Barnhelm* in one of Lodz's vacant theatrehouses in Ziegelstrasse, Poland (ib. 25).

This very short survey gives us a good idea of the press, first of all, as the most influential mechanism for creating a public space where open cultural and political discourse becomes possible. In this context the German Theatre in Tallinn became a part of cultural self-regulation, as well as a tool for ideological manipulation. It is evident that the attitude of the Estonian press towards the German Theatre was out of balance, politically as well

as emotionally, oscillating between two extremes: from high appraisal to most negative criticism. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the important role of the debate in building up the elements of civil society in multilingual and multicultural Estonia during the first half of the 20th century.

Intermediality and Yeats' Late Drama

NATALIA TISHUNINA

"Intermediality" is the term that indicates the specific type of interactions between different kinds of arts or different cultural codes. The term "intermediality" is used in the methodology of intertextual analysis, but differs in its meaning from the term "intertextuality".

It is well known that in the 1970s J. Kristeva and R. Barthes started working out the principles of intertextual analysis. The intertextual approach is based on the specific interactions between different literary "voices" within the frames of one literary work. Kristeva and Barthes worked out the theory of intertextuality on the basis of Bakhtin's idea of the so-called "polyphonic" nature of the novel.

At the same time in Tartu Yuri Lotman developed Bakhtin's idea in a broader context than Kristeva. He formulated the statement that culture itself has the so-called "polyglot" nature, and any work of art is characterized by the so-called "polyglot" structure. Cultural "polyglotism" according to Lotman means that any literary work or a work of art implicitly involves several artistic languages or several artistic "voices". In other words, every literary work is characterized not only by its intertextual nature but also by its intersemiotic nature, which means that different kinds of arts can be traced in a literary work, or any work of art. (Lotman 1996: 133, 143) Thus the term "intertextuality" turns out to be too narrow to explain broad intersemiotic actions in a work of art.

In 1983 the German scholar Otto Hanzen-Leve offered the term "intermediality" just to characterize the specific type of interactions of the verbal and visual plans in a literary text. The term

looked a little bit unexpected, because the word “media” was traditionally connected with the mass media and with the specific type of informational communications provided with the help of the mass media.

But as a matter of fact, speaking about culture and arts we should agree that cultural or artistic information can be transferred not only with the help of the mass media. Any cultural code becomes “informational”. Thus in the terms of culture the communication can be provided with the help of any semiotic code that contains some artistic information. Not only the word itself, but the color, the line, the tune, the composition, the sculptural form, the cinema sequence — all of them contain some information and communicate in their own artistic way. (Il’yn 1998: 8) Thus we may say that intermediality is a special type of interaction of different kinds of art within the frames of one artistic whole or one artistic piece.

It should be noted that the term “intermediality” differs in its meaning from traditional terms “the syntheses of arts” or “the interaction of arts”. In the latter case we deal with the principle of artistic coordination of different arts, when each art “invests” something in the new artistic image of a new work of art.

Intermediality supposes the specific principle of “citing” of one kind of art by the other. We know that traditionally “citing” can be traced in a literary work, when one text is cited in the other. In this case, the citing takes place within the frames of one semiotic code. Intermediate interactions are quite different. They do not suppose the coordination of arts. At the same time it is obvious that different arts have different “languages”, that is different semiotic codes. Thus, in order “to cite” one kind of art by the other, it is necessary “to translate” it from its own “language” to the “language” of the required art. During this semiotic “translation” we “loose” the original “text” and get some new artistic meaning. This is the main difference between intertextuality and intermediality. In intertextual interactions we deal with interactions of actual texts. In intermediate interactions, we deal with interactions of “translated” meanings of the original texts. Thus intermediality can be determined as a specific lexical or artistic organization of a

work of art that is based on the structural or expressive principles of another art.

For the dramatic art, intermediality becomes very significant. It is obvious that the theatre itself comprises different arts: verbal, visual, musical etc. All of them interact with each other making each time a whole and unique performance. Here we shall speak not about the natural synthesis of a stage performance, but about the specific type of "citing" of one theatrical language by the other. Here we shall speak about the specific way of "citing" of the Japanese Noh-Theatre of the 16th century by the Irish playwright William Butler Yeats in the 20th century.

We know very well that the mask appeared together with the theatre and has remained one of the most important expressive devices in the history of the theatre. Theatre masks differ greatly in their forms and functions. European, Eastern, African, North American theatre masks have their own peculiarities and each of them has its own artistic aim.

For the 20th century theatre the mask becomes very topical. Speaking about the mask we recall such names as Craig, Meierhold, Pirandello, Artaud, and many others. Among them Yeats's theatre is somewhat unique.

First the idea of the mask came to Yeats with Craig. Yeats and Craig had much in common in their views. Both of them were symbolists, both were eager to create "the theatre of ideal beauty", both rejected realism and naturalism both worked in forms of conventional theater. When in 1909 Yeats learned about Craig's idea of the "super-marionette", he was greatly inspired. But soon it turned out that their understanding of the concept of the mask was different.

Craig considered that the main aim of the theatre lay in the process of depersonalization. That meant that the theatre should cease to be mimetic both in the actors' playing and in decorations. He tended to create a so-called "total theatre", in other words a "universal theatre". Yeats also sought for a universal theatre that could express universal feelings and universal ideas. At the same time, as distinct from Craig, Yeats insisted on the embodiment of the idea of a personality on the stage. His dramatic personality was expressed in mythological images. It is obvious that when

formulating his idea of "personality" Yeats considered the idea of a mythological archetype. That is why the problem of myth was so important for him. Yeats' theatre was mythological both in its plot and in its concept. He wanted to represent on the stage the archetypal essence of the dramatic character. Yeats rejected everything temporal on the stage, but insisted on revealing some permanent, constant features of human nature. That is why Yeats felt that he needed some other concept of the mask than Craig's. Thus after two years of working together Yeats and Craig parted.

Nevertheless, Yeats continued thinking about the possibility of using conventional theatre forms to express his dramatic ideas in the second decade of the 20th century. Yeats's aesthetic views changed considerably in comparison with his earlier drama. In his early mythological plays he tried to reveal the confrontation of a bold and passionate personality with a commonplace and reasonable world. The conflict of his early dramas could be characterized as romantic.

In the second decade of the 20th century he concentrated on the examining of the depth of human consciousness and subconsciousness. He was not interested in external circumstances of human life, he was not interested in the social environment of his personages, he absolutely rejected any realistic motivation of the action. The dramatic action took place not in the external world; the life of the mind became the dramatic space of his new plays. In his new drama the archetypal levels of human consciousness and subconsciousness were embodied by the mythological images of old Irish legends.

Thus myths and symbols, combined with each other, provided a very specific artistic code of Yeats's late drama. His late plays can be defined as "spiritual drama". This drama demanded absolutely conventional forms and a conventional type of action. And again Yeats was looking for the specific theatrical language, appropriate to his dramatic plots.

Just in 1913 the American poet Ezra Pound started working on the posthumous papers of the well known American orientalist Fenollosa. These papers contained some unique materials about medieval Japanese Theatre of the 16th century: the so-called "Noh-theatre". At the same time Pound got an invitation from Yeats to

become his literary secretary and lately accepted it. Thus in 1913 thanks to Pound Yeats got the first idea about the Noh-Theatre. In 1914–1915 Yeats and Pound became more involved in the Japanese theatre and in 1916 Yeats offered Pound the opportunity of publishing in Dublin some extracts from Fenollosa's papers. In 1916 the book appeared. It was titled *Some Noble Plays of Japan. From the Papers of Ernest Fenollosa, Selected and Completed by Ezra Pound with the Introduction by W. B. Yeats*". The Introduction was called "Some Noble Plays of Japan". This introduction contained the programme of his new theatre and the explanation of his new theatrical language.

At the beginning of the 20th century Japanese Noh-Theatre was unknown in the European theatrical tradition. First of all, this theatre was based on specific forms of stage conventions, that turned out to be stage metaphors. The metaphoric nature of the Noh-Theatre was its main characteristics. The action itself, the actor's playing, the decorations, the stage music performed by the chorus, the stage dancing were combined in a whole synthetic performance. Dramatic characters of the Noh-play were nameless and fixed in their functions; they had some summarized features, though they remained individuals. Among them were: the Hero, the Companion of the Hero, the Guest, the Companion of the Guest, the Boy, the Slave, the Evil Spirit. They performed some action that was realistic and symbolic at one and the same time.

Japanese Noh-Theatre was often treated as a kind of stage "poetic realism", because for the oriental mentality of the 16th century the plot and the action of the Noh-performance were full of real meaning. But for the European mentality of the 20th century Noh-drama was an absolutely conventional theatrical form without any trace of stage realism. In this way Noh-drama was understood by Yeats and that was the reason why it attracted him.

The culmination of the Noh-play was expressed by the dance of the main character. It was not a dance in the traditional sense. The so-called "dance" was expressed by some slow, solemn, symbolic movements. During the dance the face of the dancing actor was covered with a mask.

Yeats was deeply impressed by Noh-drama. The exotic theatrical form seemed to him the most adequate to express the

spiritual, non-material reality of the human mind. But he did not copy Noh-drama. He cited the Noh-code in his own theatrical style. Yeats created quite an original dramatic form that was revealed in his famous "Plays for Dancers". In other words they are called "The Mask Plays". "Plays for Dancers" include: *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919), *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919), *Calvary* (1921). In 1926 he wrote a brief farce *The Cat and the Moon* that was attached to the "Dancing Plays".

The principles of "citing" of Noh-drama are vividly represented in the play *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. The characters of the play are:

Three Musicians (their faces made up to resemble masks)

The Ghost of Cuchulain (wearing a mask)

The Figure of Cuchulain (wearing a mask)

Emer — Old Cuchulain's wife

Eithne Inguba — young Cuchulain's } (Both are masked or their
mistress } faces made up to resemble masks)

Fand, the Woman of the Sidhe — Spirit (wearing a mask)

As we see, all the personages wear masks that indicate complete depsychologization of the action. The interrelations between the characters become not psychological but mythological or archetypical.

This play has rather a complicated dramatic structure. The main theme of the play is Emer's renunciation of her husband Cuchulain for the sake of his life. This act of sacrifice that remains unknown to her husband saves him from the death temptation offered by Fand, the woman of the Sidhe. The main problem of the play is the ambiguity of woman's beauty and love that kills and saves, makes a man suffer and gives him joy.

The play begins just as in a Noh-performance with the entrance of three Musicians with musical instruments: a flute, a zither, and a drum in their hands. But in Japanese theatre, the function of the musicians was that of an orchestra, which provided the performance with musical accompaniment and nothing else. In Yeats's drama their function is broader and more significant. First of all they represent an analogue of the ancient chorus and they

comment on the action, providing a kind of Brechtian "alienation effect" long before Brecht himself used it. Secondly, they formulate in their song the main idea of the play, its main dramatic problem, the Musicians sing:

What death? What discipline?
 What bonds no man could unbind,
 Being imagined within
 The labyrinth of the mind,
 What pursing or feeling,
 What wounds, what bloody press,
 Dragged into being
 This loveliness.

At last with their song they evoke before the mind's eye the set of the action. They provide the empty stage with some spiritual decoration, filling the stage with mental images. Mental levels become the levels of the action. We may say that the action proceeds from the depths of Emer's mind.

First Musician:

I call before the eyes a roof
 With cross-beams darkened by smoke;
 A fisher's net hangs from a beam,
 A long oar lies against the wall. I call up a poor
 fisher's house;
 A man lies dead or swooning,
 That amorous man,
 That amorous, violent man, renowned Cuchulain.
 Queen Emer at his side.

Within the frames of the action Cuchulain is a real figure, and that is why in the play he is called the Figure of Cuchulain. According to the plot Cuchulain-hero was badly wounded in a battle and now he is lying motionless, dying. Emer knows that Cuchulain is not dead yet though his force has come out of him. His powerless body is occupied by the Evil Spirit, named Bricriu, who identified himself with the Figure of Cuchulain. But as Cuchulain-hero is still alive his Ghost, invisible to the earthy people, also stays here,

near the bed. At the very beginning of the play, the Figure of Cuchulain wears a heroic mask. Emer is waiting for Eithne Inguba. The old lady hopes that the young mistress with her passionate voice and hot kisses will return Cuchulain to life.

The conversation between Emer and Eithne Inguba is the first, "the earthly level" of the action. Emer says — to the girl:

I am but his wife, but if you cry aloud
With the sweet voice that is so dear to him
He cannot help but listen.

But the passionate words of Eithne Inguba awoke not Cuchulain — the man, but Bricriu of the Sidhe. The girl exclaims:

It is no man
I geld some evil thing that dried my heart
When my lips touched it.

It is important to note that during the conversation between two women Emer pulled the curtains of the bed to hide Cuchulain's face. At that moment the actor could change his mask unseen. Bricriu, a new "substance" of Cuchulain, played by the same actor, appears in a new mask. Inguba runs away in horror, and the action reaches the "second level": the conversation of a person with some spiritual substance, that is Bricriu.

Bricriu explains to Emer that Cuchulain may live only if Emer agrees to be forgotten by her husband forever. Her lone, dull old age should be the price for his life. But if she doesn't agree, Cuchulain will be taken by the Sidhe Fand to the world of everlasting beauty, beyond the earthly life, to the world without sufferings and pain, without violent turbulence of struggle, to the world of cold and impassionate immortality. That is to death.

Bricriu touches Emer's eyes, and she sees the world of the Sidhes. Emer observes the Sidhe Fand who is eager to capture her husband. As she is described in the play: "Her mask and clothes must suggest gold or bronze, or brass or silver, so that she seems more an idol than a human being. This suggestion may be repeated in her movements. Her hair, too, must keep the metallic suggestion".

Fand starts her magic dance that turns out to be the culmination of the play. The episode with the dancing Fand may be treated as a kind of a materialized vision in Emer's mind. She perceives with her inner sight the future of her husband, and at the same time she contemplates on life to see the hidden world of the supernatural.

This episode turns out to be the "second theatre" within the whole dramatic action. In this "second theatre" it is Emer who is the spectator. The actors of the "second play" are Fand and the Ghost of Cuchulain — that is the alive part of the hero. They perform before Emer the mystery of life and death. Fand does her best to tempt Cuchulain and to take him with her. Cuchulain is almost ready to follow the Sidhe. At this moment, it becomes clear to Emer that the supernatural beauty will take her husband forever from the earthly life. And then she pronounces: "I renounce Cuchulain's love for ever".

Fand disappears. Instead of her Eithne Inguba appears on the threshold. The Figure of Cuchulain turns to her. But the evil spirit Bricriu has already left him, and Cuchulain wears again his heroic mask which he wore at the very beginning of the play. Happy Cuchulain opens his arms to his young mistress. From that moment on he will never remember the woman who had returned him to life.

Emer is the main character in the play and the dramatic episode reveals her feelings and her tragedy. We may say that in the play the Noh-canon is repeated by Yeats in a double meaning. From one side it shows us "the world of mythological spirits" as it was in Japanese theatre. But from the other, it metaphorizes the life of the human conscious and subconscious. That is why the action is objective and subjective at one and the same time. We may consider such dramatic characters as "the Lost Cuchulain", "The figure of Cuchulain" and the "Fand" to be the images of Emer's contemplation. She sees them acting with her "mind's eye". In other words, they act in her mind. The real Cuchulain is lying motionless on the bed.

On the other hand, the relations between Cuchulain and his young mistress, that we see on the stage, are also objective and subjective at one and the same time, because these are the relations that Emer thinks they are. The deepest level of subjectivity is the

appearance of the Woman Spirit on the stage. Fand symbolizes some irrational beauty, or rather the idea of some irrational beauty that takes man from life, beyond life, may be even to death. That is what Emer is afraid of most of all, even more than of the young mistress.

Thus the action is the revelation of Emer's subjectivity, or, in a broader sense, a woman's subjectivity. At the end of the play she understands that for the sake of the life of her husband, in order to return him to active life, she must make him free from her subjectivity. He must be himself and not the image of her mind. And thus she pronounces the words of rejection from Cuchulain.

At the end of the play the Musicians come up to the front of the stage and one of them sings:

What makes your heart to beat?
 What man is at your side?
 When beauty is complete
 Your own thought will have died
 And danger not be diminished;
 Dimmed a three quarter light,
 When moon's round is finished
 The stars are out of sight.

This dramatic story may seem to be too complicated and too artificial. However, these are the contemplations of the dramatist who was a contemporary of Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Proust, Kafka, and W. Woolf. Yeats did not find in the European theatre of his time the appropriate stage forms to reveal his ideas and he used the Noh-form. He "cited" the main elements of Japanese Noh-drama in his spiritual theatre. But he did not simply repeat these elements in his own plays. He used the old "artistic code" in a new dramatic texture. In other words, the Japanese theatrical text was inserted into a broader and deeper philosophical and aesthetical context of European thinking of the 20th century. Two cultural codes interacted with each other and intermediate connections gave birth to the unique theatrical phenomenon of the 20th century that is called "Yeats' mask theatre". Nowadays the postmodernist theatre often pretends that the principles of stage citing, the theatrical intertextuality and intermediality are the prerogatives of

postmodernism. But at the beginning of the 20th century the Irish playwright, poet and Noble Prize Winner for literature William Butler Yeats offered a theatrical language that now remains modern both in its form and in its meaning. And probably in order to understand the theatre of today, it is necessary to understand those playwrights who filled our century with a very peculiar spiritual and artistic content.

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The Battle of Sexes in Modern American and Russian Drama

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The concept of “world literature” introduced by Goethe at the beginning of the 19th century is based on the assumption that there are certain basic conflicts and problems, characterizing mankind. One of them is definitely “the battle of the sexes”. This issue was fore-grounded both in drama and literature especially in the 20th century, burdened by the Freudian theory on the one hand and feminist implications on the other. Being dramatic in its essence, no wonder, this problem has been most successfully explored in modern drama, where “the basic instinct” is usually placed in a complex social, national and philosophical context, which allows the authors to consider the issue on different levels of meaning. This can be traced on the basis of a comparative analysis of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee and *Sport Scenes 1981* by Edward Radzinski.

Albee's drama was written in 1962 — the decade in the history of the U.S. marked for its outburst of social and spiritual protest which manifested itself in different spheres of social life and especially so in literature. The 1980s in the Soviet Russia are known now as a period of *stagnation* when social hypocrisy reached its climax. The Olympic Games of 1980 held in Moscow became a kind of emblem for this period, when with all bums and prostitutes moved out of the city and Moscow being closed for provincial invaders, looked like a Communist paradise. Evidently this fact inspired the title of Radzinski's play. Though written at the time indicated, the play was staged only after the Perestroika joining the flood of exposing literature written during the *stagna-*

tion period. The theatre of the post-Perestroika days recalled in many ways the American theatre of the 1960s both in form — often bold and experimental, overturning the established canon of the Method — and in content, introducing themes widely common on the Western stage, forbidden and hushed-up, in Soviet Russia.

It is therefore no wonder that in many modern Russian plays we find a repetition of certain artistic devices and reminiscences of plots and images but only after a careful comparative study we can really state whether it is a case of plagiarism or an exploration of an old theme on a new level, adaptation or typological affinity.

In his play *Sport Scenes 1981* Radzinski does not openly acknowledge that he wrote it under the influence of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* though in his other play of the same period — *I Am Standing at the Restaurant* — Albee's play is mentioned by one of the characters. Still the plays reveal a definite similarity already on the surface. We have the same number of characters — 2 couples — one young and one middle aged, in both cases the object of the author's study is a human character in all its complexity.

At first sight time and space relations seem to be neutral and irrelevant for the action: in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* — the action develops in the living room of a house on the campus of a small New England college: in *Sport Scenes 1981* it is "a hill overlooking vast expanses: meadows, the curve of the river, a village and a remote forest..." (Radzinski 1986: 69). As for the time — in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* — it is just one night and in the *Sport Scenes* — one week. Still these elements are very important, as they have certain implications. Compressed time and space in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* intensify the tension existing between the spouses and create an impression of a cage into which both are locked. In *Sport Scenes* — vast expanses of Russian nature symbolize the roots betrayed by the characters — especially so by Mikhalyev who comes from a peasant family. Still the composition of both plays is very similar — though *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is a three-act play and *Sport Scenes* has only one act, it could also be easily split into the same three stages of the conflict development: *Fun and Games*, *Walpurgisnacht*; *Exorcism*.

In both dramas the conflict is based on the constant quarrels of the elder couples — George and Martha (in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*) and the Mikhalyevs in *Sport Scenes*. It is an exhaustive duel for both parties: the spouses do not pull any punches, use whatever weapon they can think of to hurt, insult, they make use of lies and fantasies, exposing in front of strangers the most intimate sides of an unhappy marriage.

Both couples are deeply disappointed in their 20-year marriage. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* George thinks Martha's father to be the root of all evil. Martha's father is Rector of the College and George's boss. This fact from the very first gave a mercantile touch to the marriage, though as George recalls he used to have strong feelings for his wife. He blames and despises himself for having let his father-in-law, a petty tyrant, this "great big white mouse" (Albee 1972: 75) dominate and morally subdue him. As a result George has turned into a cynical bookworm, totally indifferent to "the ills of the world". Martha, in her turn, was once desperately in love with her husband but at present considers him to be a complete failure, a good-for-nothing, cursing herself for the wrong choice. Their love, which used to be a deep and passionate feeling has vanished like a mirage: "George and Martha — sad, sad, sad," (ib. 191) repeats Martha and this triple repetition marks the leitmotiv of their relationship.

The situation in the Russian play is very similar, mercantile motivation is still more in place here than in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, for unlike George Mikhalyev, a peasant's son managed to make a career through his father-in-law's connections. For his wife Inga it was a good chance to shock her well-established family and exhibit her own free will. They also used to be madly in love with each other, but this too is in the past, so when the play opens there is practically nothing to keep them together, not even the mercantile motives. Inga's father has lost his influence, as she herself points out: "The Mercedes is old, the dacha is shabby, so there is no point for Mikhalyer to stick to the beautiful Inga any more." (Radzinski 1986: 81)

Thus the Mikhalyevs at present are nothing but jogging partners, hence the title.

This motive of competition, game, sports, tournament is very relevant for both plays. The couples are like two gladiators who are performing for the audience, which in this case is the second, younger couple — Nick and Honey in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and Sergei and Katya in *Sport Scenes*. George and Martha and the Mikhalyevs are very experienced and efficient in this kind of game — they develop new strategies, invent new weapons and change the rules. "You swing wild...just...anywhere...Hit out at everything," exclaims Nick, half shocked and half enchanted. (Albee 1972:193)

There is much of spiritual striptease and sadomasochistic exhibitionism in this game, which they suffer from and enjoy at the same time.

At first appalled and confused, Nick and Honey, Sergei and Katya little by little get involved into this sad entertainment, which major objective is to fill in the emptiness of their dull, futile existence. As a result the external conflict becomes the reflection of the deeply rooted internal one, as each one struggles not only with the other ones but first and foremost with him or her self.

Apart from the major confrontation of senior couples in both plays there is one more conflict that is George vs Nick in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and Mikhalyev vs Katya in *Sport Scenes*. This conflict in a way reflects another archetypal theme of "world literature" — the "generation gap". Here, too, we see not just a clash of personalities, but representatives of two different generations, preaching absolutely different sets of values.

George sees in Nick the embodiment of the "brave new world", mechanical and sterile. For him this young biologist is a prototype of the future race to come:

We will have a race of men ... test-tube-bred... incubator-born ... superb and sublime ... with this, we will have, in time, a race of glorious men ... I suspect we will not have much music, much painting, but we will have a civilization of men, smooth, blond, and right at the middleweight limit ... a race of scientists and mathematicians, each dedicated to and working for the glory of the supercivilization ... There will be a certain ... loss of liberty, I imagine,

as a result of this experiment ... but diversity will no longer be the goal. Cultures and races will eventually vanish.. the ants will take over the world. (Albee 1972: 65-67)

In this part of the play George becomes the speaker for human values, for spiritual culture and humanism, at the same time he feels helpless in the face of the young who keep pace with time and leave the like of him far behind.

Katya also represents this brave new world, but still in a more ruthless and immoral way. If Nick goes to bed with Martha it is not only because this can be a step in his conquest of the world, but also because she is an attractive and seductive woman. As for Katya, she is ready to go to bed with Mikhalyev just to hurt the sissy Sergei and appall his glamorous relations. She is not expecting any forgiveness. "I have warned you from the very first that I am a bitch!" she keeps saying. (Radzinski 1986: 75)

Inga Mikhalyeva calls her "one of those new fools":

You know, Mikhalyev, I feel these new fools, ... probably because they are different from what we used to be. They have a bitchy nature. If is enough to forbid something for them to start desperately longing for it. It is not interesting for them to desire. It is only interesting for them to desire what is for bidden. (Radzinski 1986: 80)

Unlike George, Mikhalyev is not the one to care for human values. He has got accustomed to getting what he wants and he is not afraid of the future. In his relationship with Katya there is no generation conflict, it is a battle of the sexes in its most natural version, when the male wants the female to submit to him.

Though both of the plays are very dynamic, the action is not moving forward and there is no character development. The dynamics is achieved through the characters' self-revelation and the so-called analytic structure, which goes deeper and deeper into the past, exposing new details which help to understand the background and motivation of constant quarrels and arguments of the elder couples, their present dissatisfaction with their lives.

Both couples at some point betrayed their moral principles for the sake of comfort and welfare. The conflict in both cases is in the hopes and aspirations the couples used to have in youth and the reality, which has crushed them. This conflict is revealed in passionate outbursts or felt through ironic implications underlying their casual remarks. In both plays the image symbolizing futile hopes and illusions of both spouses is their unborn baby.

The main invention of George and Martha is their son. They cherish this invention as if it were real, because it fills in the hollowness of their existence. They talk about their son in such a way that the reader or the spectator does not realize at once that it is just a family myth, neither do Nick and Honey. The climax of this invention is the game *Bringing Up Baby* in the third act of the play, during which each one presents his and her versions of his childhood. The parents' duel is based on contradiction — each one sees the child in the way he/she imagines him. Finally George, willing to take revenge on Martha for having brought up this intimate subject in front of strangers, announces that he received a telegram informing about their son's death in a car accident. At the same time it is an act of exorcism as it is indicated in the title of the third act — the truth is unveiled, the illusion is destroyed — the couple has nothing to do but face the void of their existence and learn to live with it.

In *Sport Scenes* Inga once bore a baby, "which was cut out of her womb" and her potential and unimplemented maternal love is transferred onto Sergei — the son of the father of Inga's unborn child. She regards him as a kind of substitute for her natural child, and suggests that with Mikhalyev they should treat him as their own son (ib. 86). Mikhalyev likes the game, as it gives him a possibility to hurt his arrogant wife and take revenge on his former rival by humiliating his son.

The younger couples — Sergei and Katya also have their baby — it's their dog Alka, which probably is the only thing keeping them together. When again and again they discuss their possible divorce, the main problem is whom Alka will stay with: "It's me who feeds her while you go to bed with your new lover... I won't give Alka away!" shouts hysterically Sergei. (Ib. 83)

The issue of the child is also relevant for Nick and Honey. In the course of development of the analytical structure it becomes known that Honey has had a false pregnancy which was the reason why Nick married her. Therefore we see that the background of their marriage was fake, symbolizing its inconsistency. Later it turns out that Honey is afraid of pain and therefore does not want to have children at all.

The child story in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is an extended metaphor the content of which is the spiritual futility of an individual in the world of consumption, a desperate desire to find refuge from the fears of life in illusion. In *Sport Scenes* the child story does not acquire such a wide meaning, here it is rather one more reason used in the "battle of the sexes".

Herein lies the main difference in the two plays: at the heart of both of them is the conflict of the sexes which according to Freud is intrinsic to human nature. This conflict is transposed into a totally different social and cultural surroundings. The social aspect is especially relevant for the conflict and character motivation in Radzinski's play. Each character here is a typical representative of the *stagnation* period and all of them give a limited but expressive picture of the psychological, spiritual and moral state of the Soviet Society of those days. This is the dramatist's major concern.

As for Edward Albee — he goes much further than that and the socio-psychological conflict in his play acquires a much wider philosophical meaning. Through many details scattered in the play he widens its limits enclosing the story not only into American social and cultural context, but also imparts a symbolic meaning to the action on the global scale. The small town where the scene is laid is called New Carthage. It serves as a reminder of the corruption characteristic of ancient Carthage and its tragic fate. It is not accidental that at one of the most crucial moments of the play George starts reading from Schpengler':

And the West, encumbered by crippling alliances,
and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommo-
date itself to the swing of events, must ... eventually
... fall (Albee 1972: 174)

This conclusion finally gives the conflict a philosophic turn. The fate of the family becomes a metaphor for civilization at large.

Both plays have an open denouement. The conflict remains unsolved, the future unclear. The reconciliation in the end may be just a short break in the never-ending battle of the sexes:

"Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" — "I .. am ... George ... I ... am," whispers Martha (ib. 242), and Mikhalyeva keeps jogging and crying.

Still we do not fail to notice that, though being very similar on the surface, these endings have different perspective. By giving a philosophic dimension to a routine spousal quarrel Albee tries to provide a deep insight into human nature as such, to get to the "marrow".

As a result, his characters are much more complicated and controversial than the Mikhalyevs. Their relationship is based on basic human emotions — passion, love, pain, suffering which may lead to hatred, but never to cold indifference. Therefore, in spite of all the dramatics in the end we see a ray of hope. All masks have been stripped off, lies are exposed and both couples have a chance to start anew and try to live without illusions. The first step is made — Martha acknowledges that it is she who is afraid of Virginia Woolf; Honey realizes that she wants something real in her life — she wants a baby. All this leaves spectators with a hope that the vicious circle will be finally broken.

In *Sports Scenes* we do not see such a possibility. The Mikhalyevs are perfect models of the social reality their characters have been molded by. They are denied any psychological depth or philosophical symbolism. And as the period of stagnation seemed to be unending, so the Mikhalyevs seem to be doomed to carry on their matrimonial marathon till the end of their days.

Thus in conclusion we may say that Radzinski's play can be called a kind of receptive adaptation of Albee's drama. A similar situation being transposed into a totally different social and cultural milieu acquires a different meaning, at the same time showing the similarity of certain basic patterns of human relations as well as social tendencies.

On the other hand the two plays can be viewed in the perspective of the dialogue of cultures.

We all know how much American playwrights and theatre at large was influenced by Russian drama. (The triumphant tour of the Moscow Art Theatre in the 1920s, Method acting schools, obsession with Chekhov whose disciple every other American playwright claims to be — Albee including). Unfortunately Russia lost during the Soviet times its place in the vanguard of world theater and now we see the opposite: many contemporary Russian playwrights intentionally or unintentionally follow the path laid by the major American dramatists. At least this was especially evident in the first post-Perestroika years, and Radzinski's play is one of such examples.

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Are Tennessee Williams's Modernist Techniques Still Relevant? Brecht's "Epic" and Williams's "Plastic" Theatre

ANNIKA NAMME

The present essay is an attempt to compare Brecht's epic and Williams's plastic theatre, focusing on the use of projected images and legends on the stage as a means of expression that appealed to both playwrights. The author of the article would like to contemplate on three aspects of the device, expressed in pairs of opposite notions: education vs. exorcism, plot vs. character, and the scientist vs. the moralist.

Tennessee Williams (1911–1983) exerted a decisive influence on the development of form in the contemporary Western theatre, as well as on the interpretation of character and dramatic action. Among Williams's lasting achievements is his creation of the famous "plastic theatre" which suggests that the truth of existence be presented through a plastic image that could convey the message beyond spoken word.

Modern theatre is characterized by profuse experimentation, as is Williams's work. One of the greatest experimenters of the modern European stage was Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) who developed the concept of the so-called "epic theatre". Yet, another great German experimenter, Erwin Piscator (1893–1966), pioneered the idea of the Epic Theatre by stressing the need for a "conscious emphasis on and cultivation of the idea of the class struggle" (Piscator 1998: 221). But even though both Piscator and Brecht wished the theatre to encompass primarily the socio-political dimension in drama, for Piscator the notion "epic" relates to depicting major social forces, whereas Brecht sees the Epic

Theatre as a scientific form of dramatic art with the aim of raising the public's awareness of the social conditions in the world and prompting them to take active part in remodelling those conditions.

Tennessee Williams was influenced, particularly in his apprenticeship years, by the work of the two Germans. Piscator headed the Dramatic Workshop at The New School for Social Research in New York in the 1930s and among his students were also Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. This influence is evident in Williams's very early dramas, "short plays written as class assignments" (at the University of Iowa) having a strong "political thrust" (Hale 1997: 18). The American has also "written of the final moment of Brecht's play [*Mother Courage*] as one of the inspiring moments in all theatre" (Bentley 1970: 2165). Consequently, it is natural to draw parallels between and juxtapose the epic and plastic theatre.

Very generally speaking, Brecht and Williams, working within the traditions of realism, experimented with both theatrical and non-theatrical devices, made use of modern stage machinery, such as a revolving stage, and employed several identical techniques, such as projections of text or images on a screen on the stage, musical background as a specific device, and lighting used in a particular manner. It must be noted that both dramatists strove to expand the limits of the theatre, but from different angles: Brecht the limits of naturalism and expressionism, Williams those of pure realism. Thus the underlying differences in the theatre of the two playwrights, despite the obvious similarities in their techniques.

First, let us explore the implications in "education" and "exorcism".

In his essay "The Sociology of Modern Drama", George Lukács argues that bourgeois drama was the first true form of class-conscious drama: "A new determinant is joined to the new drama: value judgement. In the new drama not merely passions are in conflict, but ideologies, *Weltanschauungen*, as well" (Lukács 1968: 426). Brecht appreciated the quality of class-consciousness on the modern stage, advocating pure realism, but he rejected the methods of naturalism, symbolism and expressionism on the grounds that these techniques ignore the need for conscious analysis on the part of the audience.

In Brecht's *Messingkauf*, the Philosopher claims that the theatre becomes instructive when it expounds on seemingly insignificant events of the social coexistence of human beings, so that the plastic representation of those events on the stage (instead of dramatizing them) would give the spectators some practical knowledge (Brecht *Vaseost* 1972: 45). Therefore, in addition to the ancient purpose of the theatre, i.e. entertainment, Brecht promotes the intellectual aspect of the stage. In his essay "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction", Brecht claims that his epic theatre aims at educating the audiences through pleasure, appealing to reason and urging the spectators to form opinions.

The themes and problems echoed in Williams's work stemmed from the tensions of his own experience. Never exclusively a writer of social and political commentary, Williams demonstrates in his dramas the destructive power of repressed sexuality and mental disturbances, drawing on psychological realism. His work ranges from realism to involved symbolism, conveying the critical phases of the life struggle evocatively. Seeking the best mode of expression for his ideas, Tennessee Williams strove to reform what he called the "exhausted theatre of realistic conventions" (Williams *The Glass Menagerie* 2000: 229)* with unconventional techniques, particularly with expressionism, for the purpose of appealing to all the senses of man. That is why he created what he called "the memory play".

In Brecht's opinion, the audience can only learn when they are not sitting in the theatre transfixed, distracted by the elaborate stage design or symbolic pieces in the setting, expecting with bated breath the unfolding of the events, which disables the spectator's critical mind. Thus he introduces the famous *Verfremdungseffekt*, i.e. the alienation effect, which has the function of submitting emotions to the spectator's criticism. For instance, in the last scene of *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, as Joan is dying, the audience is

* For the sake of convenience, in references to certain sources, the following abbreviations are used: *TGM* for *The Glass Menagerie* by T. Williams; *TSS* for "The Street Scene" by B. Brecht; and *OET* for "On Experimental Theatre" by B. Brecht.

not speechless with grief because they are asked to evaluate the factors that led to her death.

Brecht alienates and relativizes the standpoint of the audience by modelling his plays upon historical events, bringing for instance the Thirty Years' War on the twentieth-century stage in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, aiming at a deeper understanding of the disharmony in contemporary society. Thus the narrative line becomes a parable composed of disconnected scenes interrupted by songs that constitute commentary on the action from a bystander's point of view. For example, in Scene 4 in *Mother Courage*, the protagonist talks to the young soldier who has been protesting loudly about injustice:

Young soldier: It's no use your talking. I won't stand for injustice!

Mother Courage: You're quite right. But how long? How long won't you stand for injustice? One hour? Or two? You haven't asked yourself that, have you? And yet it's the main thing. It's pure misery to sit in the stocks. Especially if you leave it till then to decide you do stand for injustice (*Mother Courage and her Children* 1970: 2126).

And she delivers "The Song of the Great Capitulation" as a comment on people's passivity in the face of social injustice.

A distinctive feature of Brecht's epic theatre is thus "[t]he direct changeover from representation to commentary" (Brecht TSS 1968: 92). The direct addressing of the audience by the actors, choruses and documentary projections serve this purpose and enable the actors to achieve what Brecht calls "a beautiful simplicity of performance" (Brecht OET 1968: 102).

The fusion of different time layers has become a characteristic feature of twentieth-century literature. Tennessee Williams's first major success *The Glass Menagerie* is a series of recollections and the characters move on two different time levels (Now and the Past). What helps Williams to bring this idea forth more evocatively is the use of the screen device, discarded in the original Broadway production (and in the majority of the following

productions). For instance, when Amanda recalls her own youth in Scene 1, it is accompanied by a corresponding legend ("Ou sont les neiges d'antan?" — Where are the snows of bygone years?), and an image on the screen of Amanda as a girl on porch, greeting callers, is seen.

Williams's dramatic art accepts historical determinism. The past is problematic. Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for instance, is compelled to recall the past because she is haunted by her husband's suicide and her own transgressions. Her mental turmoil is indicated as "lurid reflections appear on the walls" around her (Williams 2000: 213). Williams resorts to his "plastic symbol" in order to emphasize Blanche's disintegration and the intensity of such moments, lending a non-realistic touch to the episodes. Similarly, a non-realistic touch is lent to the setting of *Sweet Bird of Youth* — a general "poetic unity of mood" is sustained by a cyclorama on which royal palm trees and clouds are projected (Williams 2000: 15). What constitutes the immediate action in a Williams drama is constant re-living of the past experience which triggered the feeling of guilt, thus seeking some form of redemption (Haley 1999: 4).

Williams's "memory play", however, does not simply mean that the characters indulge in their reminiscences; instead, these recollections give the play its form in a broader sense. There occurs what in his essay "The Timeless World of a Play" Williams calls "an arrest of time," which according to the playwright makes what happens in the play events, not mere occurrences (Williams *Three by Tennessee* 1976: 131). Such "timelessness" is achieved basically by three types of devices: projections, auditory background, and lighting effects.

Thus, Williams employs the screen device to illustrate the narrator's attempts to find absolution from the sins of the past. Proceeding from this, we might argue that while Brecht's theatre offers entertainment and education, Williams's dramas could be labelled as entertainment and exorcism of what the playwright calls his "blue devil" in *The Night of the Iguana* (Williams *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Other Plays* 1976: 309).

Second, the relationship between plot and character, indicative of social context as opposed to individualism, is revealed through the projected images.

Brecht believes in the power of the dramatic art to activate social alterations. He appreciated in particular the political element in Piscator's work and "the stage's ambition to supply images, statistics, slogans which would enable its parliament, the audience, to reach political decisions" (Brecht OET 1968: 98). Williams, on the other hand, perceives society as a threat to the individual, proved by his treatment of the Southern Lady, whose defeat is conditioned by a combination of social, historical and psychological factors. Hence, the personal themes of Williams's tragedies require a psychological approach, implying an extensive degree of individualism.

Taking an ordinary street scene as a model for his epic theatre, Brecht asserts that an essential element in the street scene is "that the demonstrator should derive his characters entirely from their actions" (Brecht TSS 1968: 89). Plot achieves pre-eminence over characterization; consequently, the social context plays the most important part. Brecht rejects "the orthodox theatre's habit of basing the actions on the characters" (ib.), which in his opinion exempts the actions presented on the stage from criticism, since those events become inevitable. Therefore, if Mother Courage's inability to save her son Swiss Cheese in Scene 3 is seen as a mother's tragedy, we must assume that she is a victim of fate. Yet, Brecht's insistence on the significance of man's active social participation suggests that it is she who makes the wrong choices — the little victories of her small business are more important to her than the great victory in the war business (the social struggle).

The legends and images on the screen in *The Glass Menagerie*, and especially the projections on the walls in *A Streetcar Named Desire* illuminate the trapped situation of the protagonists. For instance, in Scene 10, during Blanche's confrontation with Stanley, the grotesque and menacing shadows mentioned above are projected on the stage, intensifying the idea of Blanche's plight, suggestive of her mental instability.

For Williams, the main question is how the individual will survive in a hostile universe, and the sets reinforce the idea of a romantic soul in an unromantic world. Such social passivity is in direct contrast with Brecht's insistence on "shedding light on the world as an object of human activity" (Brecht OET 1968: 100). The greatest difference in the character drawing by Brecht and Williams is that the former suggests that the disaster of the figures on the stage is rooted in personal weakness, which prevents them from achieving a greater purpose than individual salvation, whereas the latter shows how the defeat of the individual is mainly conditioned by historical and social factors which are beyond his/her control.

From the opposition of the social and individual aspect in Brecht's and Williams's work derives the contrary use of the screen device, too. Brecht uses the technique in order to break down the narrative into an episodic representation of the events. So the projections in particular have an alienating effect — they must draw attention away from the personages and to the social issues behind all.

For the American playwright, the script accentuates "certain values in each scene". He writes in his Production Notes to *The Glass Menagerie*: "In an episodic play, such as this, the basic structure or narrative line may be obscured from the audience; the effect may be fragmentary rather than architectural" (Williams TGM 2000: 230). Therefore, the legends and images provide, to use Delma E. Presley's words, "a visual framework for the memory Tom shares with the audience" (Presley 1990: 81). By thus allowing the audience to step inside Tom's memory, Williams achieves a great degree of poetic texture and lyricism, as well as "a definite emotional appeal" (Williams TGM 2000: 230). Whenever Tom dreams about escaping the constrictive world of his home, "a nailed-up coffin" (Scene 4), there is the image of a sailing vessel with Jolly Roger on the screen (in Scenes 4 and 6, for example).

On the other hand, if these cinematic techniques have too strong an impact on the spectator, the play would simply fade into a melodrama. Lukács, speaking of modern drama as opposed to classical, remarks: "When a mythology is absent ... the basis on which everything must be justified is character. When the

motivations are wholly based upon character, however, the wholly inward origin of this destiny will drive the character relentlessly to the limits of pathology" (Lukács 1968: 448). To avoid such pathology, Williams combined pathos with irony: the image of Amanda as a girl on porch or Blue Roses associated with Laura add an atmospheric touch to the scenes, but when the lights go out in Scene 7 because Tom has not paid the electricity bill, there is the legend: "Suspension of public service", evoking a strong sense of realism.

Subsequently, Williams's cinematic techniques have a similar function to the alienation effect called for by Brecht, they "function as benign distractions" designed to "avoid solipsism" (Presley 1990: 82).

Third, we may perceive Brecht as a scientist and Williams as a moralist in the theatre. Again, it is the use of projected images that reinforces this idea.

According to David Roberts, the experimental nature of Brecht's theatre "is no metaphor but the endeavor to establish the experimental approach as a definitive function of the theatre" (Roberts 1987: 41). Brecht sees the spectators as social experimenters, and that in the sense of scientific experiments: the theatre must discard its old religious functions and "take on the functions of science" (ib. 45). It ought to "project a picture of the world by artistic means: models of men's life together such as could help the spectator to understand his social environment and both rationally and emotionally to master it" (Brecht OET 1968: 101).

Tennessee Williams, on the other hand, studies the fate of the unfortunate in the ambiguous moral universe of the twentieth century. He seems equally appalled by the empty style of the past, as well as the rationalism of the present (the idea is brought home to the audience in *The Glass Menagerie*, for instance, by the contrast between Amanda's pretensions to being of aristocratic origin and her inelegant present). But the simplistic opposition of the past and the present is suggestive of the divided consciousness of the individual in modern society. Bigsby explains: "Past and present are brought into dialectical relationship, both theatrically and in terms of plot, because the causal connection between event

and consequence is seen as the essence of personal and social meaning no less than the basis of ethics" (Bigsby 1999: 8).

The dialectical relationship in Brecht's work is expressed not in terms of epochs in history, but the development of society and the maturing of the individual who has to learn the priority of socially relevant activity over personal likes and dislikes (for example Joan Dark in *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*).

What interests Williams is a crisis and the individual's attempts to cope with it; what is important for him is "the obsessive interest in human affairs, plus a certain amount of compassion and moral conviction" (Williams "The Catastrophe of Success" 1970: 16–17). Brecht explores the possibilities of urging "the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view" (Brecht TSS 1968: 91) because the theatre must have a practical purpose (like the street scene) and intervene socially. For Brecht, the theatre is a changing medium. That is why he later began to talk about "theatre for a scientific age" (ib. 86), rather than "epic theatre". Explaining why the term "epic" turned out to be too restrictive for his form, Brecht asserted that "[a] technical apparatus and a style of acting had been evolved which could do more to stimulate illusions than to give experiences, more to intoxicate than to elevate, more to deceive than to illuminate." (Brecht OET 1968: 101)

Accordingly, the film-like projections literally and metaphorically turn Brecht's and Williams's theatres into laboratories for conducting experiments, with Brecht focusing on social reform through scientific knowledge, and Williams concentrating on the moral implications of the choices made by the protagonists.

To sum up, the comparison of the cinematic techniques employed by Bertolt Brecht and Tennessee Williams illustrates the fundamental differences in their art, expressed by such opposites as the narrative appealing to reason vs. the narrative appealing to the senses, public issues and social reform vs. private concerns and individualism, science vs. morals. The discussion of Williams's use of projections for the sake of greater expressiveness on the stage against the background of the experiments carried out by Brecht reveals the multiple layers of the intricate design of Williams's dramas, proving that his modernist techniques have not yet lost their relevance. Ultimately, we may say that Brecht

emphasizes the social role of his epic theatre (the plastic presentation of social events on the stage in order to gain practical knowledge of life); whereas Williams advocates a poetic transformation of reality combining external realism with psychological symbols, to gain a "closer approach to truth" (Williams *TGM* 2000: 229) in his plastic theatre.

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Queer Vision and Tony Kushner's Play *Angels in America*

LASSE KEKKI

Tony Kushner's two-part play *Angels in America I-II* has been valued as one of the most important theatrical works by the end of the 20th century (McRuer 1997: 155; Clum 2000: 249). The first part of Kushner's play *Angels in America*, entitled *Millennium Approaches*, was written during the years 1990–91¹ and the second part, *Perestroika*, was completed in 1992. Theater critics and literary scholars alike have praised this richly imaginative play.² For instance, John M. Clum compares the structure of the play to a Shakespearean romance, in which all the levels of the plot are intertwined with one another on the level of fantasy (Clum 1995:207). In contrast to Clum, Benilde Montgomery interprets Kushner's play as a Medieval mystery play and suggests that the protagonist's, Prior Walter's, AIDS-wounded body is analogous to the body of Christ (Montgomery 1998: 601). Christopher Bigsby draws attention to Kushner's use of humor in Bakhtian terms and continues: "Kushner's imagination brings together past, present and future, psychology, politics, sociology and metaphysics" (Bigsby 1999: 122).

¹ The earliest excerpt of Kushner's play was published in an anthology of AIDS drama entitled *The Way We Live Now* (1990), edited by M. Elizabeth Osborn. In fact, before the world premiere in 1991 dozens of people had experienced some version of the play. For more on the early readings and performances of the play, see Román 1997: 51.

² There are some negative reviews as well, mostly from conservative circles, see, for example, Steyn 1995: 49–53, see also about the reception in Canada, Bennett 1996: 160–174.

It is my aim to examine Kushner's *Angels in America* on the historical level by concentrating mainly on two characters in the play, Prior Walter and Roy Cohn. Prior is a fictional figure while Roy Cohn is an infamous person from American history, a central person behind Ethel and Julius Rosenberg's death penalty. Prior and Roy Cohn represent very different kinds of ethnic and homosexual backgrounds. Besides the fact that the play constantly questions general assumptions about gay male culture, it also challenges the very foundations of the United States as a Nation. As Alisa Solomon states in her article on Jewish themes in *Angels in America*, the play queers America.

Kushner riffs rhapsodically on these Jewish themes. He invokes them to establish a world view, and then to queer it, in order to turn his fantasia thoroughly gay. (Solomon 1997: 119).

Indeed, as we will see later, the past is only full of fabricated truths, and one's freedom is limited to re-memorizing the past. This re-memorizing is one of the main themes of Kushner's play. My hypothesis is that there are no binary oppositions between the center and the margins in Kushner's play in the way in which we perceive them to exist in other works belonging to the gay literary tradition. It is axiomatic that gayness is the focal point of Kushner's play, but Kushner avoids confronting the opposing forces. The opposite forces, the so-called straight world, mainly epitomized in the character of Roy Cohn, ultimately inhabit the "otherness," homosexuality.

My argument, following the central idea of queer theory, is that Kushner's play, more or less deliberately, takes into account the existence of the center and the margin, but constructs it differently. By repeating all the features connected to homosexuality it universalizes homosexuality into a component of the historical and social construction of the Nation. By constantly turning hegemonical assumptions upside down, *Angels in America* radically transforms the epistemological basis of homosexuality. Setting homosexuality as the norm, the play presents a radical vision of culture that is undergoing a profound change. The process even brings out the differences within gay male culture.

The structure of the play is based on a very carefully planned symmetric plot. All the themes and characters are introduced in the

first act of *Millennium Approaches*.³ Prior Walter, the protagonist, is a progeny of an old Puritan family. His boyfriend Louis Ironson also plays an important role in the play. Roy Cohn is a conservative Jewish lawyer, and he identifies himself as a heterosexual. Belize is an African American and a former drag queen, who is also a registered nurse who takes care of Prior. At the beginning of the play there are lots of bad news. For example, Roy Cohn learns that he has AIDS. As the play develops, its world becomes chaotic. The chaos also involves revelations. An angel speaks to Prior and Ethel Rosenberg appears to Roy Cohn.

The first part of the play begins with Rabbi Isidor Chemelwitz's speech at the funeral of Sarah Ironson, Louis's grandmother. This brief funeral oration emphasizes the meaning of Jewish heritage and metaphorically, the Rabbi guides people from the Old World to the New World. Similarly, the second part, *Perestroika*, begins with a monologue, this time by the World's Oldest Living Bolshevik, Aleksii Antedilluvianovich Prelapsarianov. The Bolshevik, like the Rabbi in the first part, represents the time and the world before the chaos.⁴ For the Rabbi the chaos was the Holocaust, for the Bolshevik it is the end of the communist Soviet Union.

The second part of the play, *Perestroika*, may be characterized as a time of dissolution, when people strange to each other meet. Roy Cohn is taken to the hospital because of AIDS and Belize also becomes his nurse. The second act consists of heavenly discussions between Prior and the Angel. Prior is being prepared for his prophetic work, which means that he is to bring a stasis back to the chaotic world.

The finale is apocalyptic, and it partly takes place in heaven. The most important message of Kushner's play is a metaphorical

³ For more on the characters, see Kiefer 1994: 23–26.

⁴ Bolshevik's name, Aleksii Antedilluvianovich Prelapsarianov, refers to both the time before the flood and a lapse into sin. Kushner's use of Russian names is incorrect and ironical. In Bolshevik's name only Aleksii is proper Russian, the rest of his name consists of funny neologisms. Especially in *Slavs!* (1995), his other piece of drama, Kushner plays with neo-Russian names.

journey into chaos. Stability will be "moved and shaken" both on the individual and on the national level.

America Revalued and Homosexualized

Queering society does not mean creating a separate queer society or queer history. It is not possible to be totally liberated from a straight society into a queer Nation. According to Michel Foucault, the aim of opposition politics, in this case queer politics, is resistance. By queering society one can resist its hegemony, and this is what, *de facto*, happens in Kushner's play.

In the tradition of American mainstream drama, the question of otherness is always present, but rejected. One of the most crucial American plays, which can also be compared with Kushner's *Angels in America*, is Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953). Miller's play is situated at the heart of American history, at the time when the Puritans in Salem conducted witch hunts — Miller's analogy to McCarthyism. The opening line is given to an outsider, a black slave called Tituba brought from Barbados, and the whole opening of the play reveals the underlying question of American mainstream society: who's inside and who's outside.

Throughout the play Tituba is an example of otherness, the scapegoat. She is accused of double otherness, that of race and language (see for example, Miller 1980: 43). *The Crucible* is only one example of the tradition of American drama in which the other is inserted only to become an outcast. Similarly, gay men have been introduced in drama to strengthen the overwhelming heterosexual hegemony. Kushner, for his part, utilizes historical periods such as Puritanism and McCarthyism in order to prove that outcasts were not out but inside.

Today's tendency to remember the past differently, to write counterhistories, is based on American cultural amnesia: the aim exactly is to remember those roots which mainstream Anglo-American history wants to forget. The function of remembering is, as the editors of a book *Memory, Narrative & Identity* write: "Memory interrupts linear, conventional narratives in order to make room for multiple voices..." (Singh, Skerrett, Jr., and Hogan

1994: 18). When personal memories and stories are opened to recollection, there is a realization that the personal past is also part of a larger group's past.

If we read Kushner's play in the light of the above, we have to conclude that the play does not adhere to any pre-given hierarchical structures. The opening lines do not suggest excluding anyone. Even Belize, who is the most likely person to be discriminated against in the play, never seems to be a total outsider. First of all, Kushner emphasizes that all the characters are equally important and central to the play, even the complex character of Roy Cohn. By doing this Kushner abandons the basic structure of American drama where otherness is almost a prerequisite and he does not stop here: on the contrary, he proves that homosexuality is as influential a factor in America's past as, in fact, the knowledge that all Americans belong to different ethnic groups.

In Kushner's play, the omnipotent power of sexual discourse becomes visible in the way in which he presents the history of America. The history of the United States is traditionally seen as a continuum of grand narratives. These stories have been deconstructed since the 1980s by the so-called New Scholarship, a new paradigm of American Studies, which concentrates on ethnicity, race, class, and gender. The problematics of difference has been emphasized. The importance of difference has also been taken into consideration in Kushner's play by presenting a spectrum of identities. And Kushner carries the idea of deconstruction even further by homosexualizing the history of America.⁵

The historical background of all the ethnic groups in the play is either homosexualized or parodied. Kushner's strategy is to emphasize a comical or an ironical aspect of a group's history and thereby to undermine its mythic dimensions. This method is deconstructive; the revisited version of history proves to be illogical and comical. In the play the most obvious example of homosexualizing history is Roy Cohn. His character highlights an

⁵ A similar statement has been presented by Leo Bersani when he writes that Kushner's play shows the willingness of American society to learn and accept gays more favorably. (Bersani 1995: 119).

important phase in American history, the period of right-wing politics, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, known as McCarthyism. Cohn's homosexuality, which he denies, does not remain invisible. Rather, it appears as a long list of innuendoes in various conversations.

According to a hypothesis presented by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her study *Epistemology of the Closet*, it is significant to understand how fundamental the late 19th century gay/hetero distinction has been for the classification and production of Western knowledge. Her statement is based on Foucault's claim that sexual discourse has begun to play a major role in producing knowledge and in constructing identity. This does not occur only in overt, distinct texts, but, covertly, the discourse is also affecting "neutral" texts. In particular, the epistemology of the closet, knowledge about the area between knowing and not-knowing, can help us to better understand the ways in which the discourses on knowledge are produced. According to Sedgwick, even when other people do not know of a person's gayness, and he or she does not speak about it, the hidden closet identity still influences his/her behavior, speech, and thinking.⁶

Cohn reflects his own conservative heritage from the 1950s and 1960s. The most crucial aspects of conservative homosexuality are a contempt for weakness, a search for a powerful Father figure and a hatred of those who are similar to oneself.

ROY: Everyone who makes it in this world makes it because somebody older and more powerful takes an interest. The most precious asset in life, I think, is the ability to be a good son. [---] I've had many fathers, I owe my life to them, powerful, powerful men. Walter Winchell, Edgar Hoover. Joe McCarthy most of all. He valued me because I am a good lawyer, but he loved me because I was and am a good son. (AAI: 56).

⁶ As Sedgwick writes: "[---] the relations of the known and the unknown, the explicit and the inexplicit around homo/heterosexual definition — have the potential for being peculiarly revealing, in fact, about speech acts more generally" (Sedgwick 1990: 3).

Cohn's emphasis on the importance of a powerful Father figure reveals his extremely authoritarian personality and his conformist behavior.⁷ Parodically, Cohn is doing his own "pinklist," the most hated closeted gay men in the United States.⁸ Cohn hails from a politically conservative background where he has been forced to adopt a closet identity. He continuously repeats homophobic acts in order to maintain his heterosexual self. Cohn's character illustrates Sedgwick's comment on the connection between power and homophobia: "But it is entirely within the experience of gay people to find that a homophobic figure in power has, if anything, a disproportionate likelihood of being gay and closeted" (Sedgwick 1990: 81). Here, once again, power operates in a dangerous way. Cohn and his fellow friends had to lie and deny their sexuality, had they not they would never have had an opportunity to gain power.

Another example of queering America is the chosen one, Prior the Prophet, who comes from the Puritan heritage. He is "the most American". The historical continuum is underlined by visits of his forefathers who carry the thematics of the play all the way to the Birth of the Nation.

When Prior's forefathers (also called Priors) are visiting the present time, Kushner manages to imply that homosexuality was not totally unknown to the Puritans. Prior's forefathers appear to Prior and ask questions about his private life:

PRIOR I: You have no wife, no children.

PRIOR: I'm gay.

PRIOR I: So? Be gay, dance in your altogether for all I care, what's that to do with not having children?

PRIOR: Gay homosexual, not bonny, blithe and ... never mind. (AAI: 86).

⁷ For more on the clout based father-son relationship in the play, see Tuss 1996: 49–55.

⁸ Walter Winchell was the Hearst newspaper star gossip columnist, J. Edgar Hoover was the head of the FBI, and Senator Joseph McCarthy organized the Anti-Communist hearings. For more on the American pinklists or blacklists see Cadden 1997: 78–88.

Later on, when the forefathers see Prior dancing with Louis, the point becomes clear to them.

PRIOR I: (*To Prior 2*): Hah. Now I see why he's got no children. He's a sodomite.

PRIOR 2: Oh be quiet, you medieval gnome, and let them dance. (AAI: 114).

Kushner also makes another connection between the forefathers and Prior. The forefathers died of various forms of the plague and thereby Kushner refers to AIDS (Geis 1997:204). There is an obvious tendency in today's gay studies to extend historical research beyond the Victorian era, not in an anachronistical or uncontextual way, but by queering historical periods like Kushner is doing in his play.

A fact that has often been forgotten is that from the very beginning John Winthrop, William Bradford (leader of the Mayflower Separatists and governor of Plymouth) and other Puritans were warning that *The City Upon a Hill* may go wrong, it can fail to give the right example (Ruland & Bradbury 1991: 10–11). Alongside many common sins another “sin” or “crime” sneaked into New England. As Michael Warner and Jonathan Goldberg have pointed out, the sin of sodomy was mentioned in the sermons in prayer houses. Actually, one of the reasons why the Puritans left England was that the country had collapsed into sodomy; the Puritans referred to the city of Sodom as an example of judgment and a warning for England (Warner 1994: 330). But sodomy “followed” the Puritans, and some New England records and writings prove that this sin, once left behind, reappeared (ib. 333–339). Once again, the other, the rejected margin was present. From early on sodomy, or homosexuality was present in American society because it had its very roots deep in the Puritan society. Ironically, what was rejected and neglected constituted a part of “The City Upon a Hill”, up to such an extent that Warner even named one of the chapters of his article “The Sodom on the Hill”. The Sodom on the Hill also proves the Derridean presumption that difference may not only be repressed by the dominant society, but, in a sense, difference can be produced by it.

Kushner's writing is subversive because he gives the role of a Prophet to an AIDS patient who is of Puritan descent. During the time of the Puritans, those who were chosen by God did not belong to the majority but to minorities exiled from the old continent. This time the trailblazers are gays, as Kushner states: "I do believe the oppressed hold the truth in society" (cited in Shewey 1993: 32). As the AIDS activists' slogan — *Silence=Death* — proclaims, the play underlines the importance of discussing homosexuality and AIDS.

Kushner does not praise gays as forerunners in a serious manner, but rather with self-irony. When Prior finally is in Heaven, it looks like San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. And when Prior returns from heaven after refusing to accomplish his prophetic task, he describes his excursion [to Belize] in a way that parodies Judy Garland's performance in *The Wizard of Oz*:

PRIOR: [---] I've had a remarkable dream. And you were there, and you... (AAII: 140).

When compared to Western philosophy and its obsession with reaching knowledge beyond a limited scope, Prior's cosmic journey is quite fantastic. Like the soul presented in Plato's *Phaedrus*, which was occasionally able to see above the sky, Prior travels beyond limits, and what he brings back is a visualization of *The Wizard of Oz*! One should take into consideration his surroundings, other people, not dream about the sublime. What did Prior find? No great truth, no revelation of heavenly secrets, but his friends.

To deconstruct theater, to make it queer, means that the notion of difference needs to be taken seriously, acknowledging that it is not a philosophical question only, but everyday politics. By conceiving society in terms of difference, we realize, that there are no essentials, only differences which construct our understanding of society. To regard gender, ethnicity, and sexuality in non-essential terms confuses, but also liberates. Instead of thinking that identity or society needs to be changed once and for all, we should emphasize the idea of subversive reiteration, reiterating differences differently, which gives a space for an alternative gay/lesbian

perspective (Butler 1990: 122). Or nowadays, rather for an alternative queer perspective.

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The Image of the “Modern Man of Power” in the Unfinished Play *Iphigenia* by M. Zīverts

ZANDA GŪTMANE

The creative work of the Latvian playwright Mārtiņš Zīverts develops the original and essential branch in the history of Latvian drama during the 20th century. Zīverts was born in 1903 in Latvia, he was a dramatist in the Latvian National Theatre and also in the Daile theatre from 1938 to 1944. Since the mid-20s Zīverts has written many very popular plays for the Latvian theatre. The significant milestone in his creative development was his going into exile to Sweden in 1944, where Zīverts continued his work and staged the plays in the Latvian theatre in Stockholm. During that period Zīverts was familiar with the trends of modern European drama, for example, the existentialist plays by J. P. Sartre and A. Camus which had a strong influence on Zīverts' post-war creative work.

I would like to analyse the unfinished tragedy *Iphigenia* by M. Zīverts in which the playwright shows the solution of problems of power, one of his favourite themes. This is Zīverts' last work which was planned at the end of the 1980s and was written until before the author's death in 1990.

Zīverts, like the greatest Latvian playwright of the first half of the 20th century Rainis, was a bad inventor of plots. He gladly used the plots of history and mythology (in this case) and gave “the old song new sounds”. A very important fact is that Zīverts turned to the ancient Greek mythology and literature at the end of his life. His interest in antiquity was manifest already in his early youth when Zīverts studied classical languages at a grammar school.

Zīverts has noted that Cicero, whose treatises he studied at that time had taught him to plan the structure of his plays (Zīverts 1992b: 21).

Zīverts has emphasized that he only utilizes the material of history and adds his own ideas to this old material. Just the revelation of the idea but not the cast of the character has been Zīverts' priority, though psychology was essential for the author too. Thus Zīverts' work in the post-war period when in exile in Sweden was connected with the theory of the existentialism and the principles of "situations theatre" by Sartre. Zīverts has recognized that the heroes of his plays often are under pressure in a hopeless and desperate situation (Zīverts 1992b: 66). According to J. P. Sartre, these situations help a human being to make himself what he is.

The substance of Zīverts' unfinished play is about the complex situation in which Agamemnon, the leader of Greeks, found himself before the Trojan War. This story is known to us from various sources of antiquity but, first of all, from the myths of the Bronze Age. This is the story about Agamemnon who sacrifices his beloved and dear daughter Iphigenia because this sacrifice would be the guarantee of Agamemnons' power. So Iphigenia was sacrificed by her father to appease Artemis and here traces of old archaic practice of sacrifice have been observed. A number of scholars of comparative religions, for example, M. Eliade and G. Menschings, classify the victim of this kind as a person in a ritual of purifying sacrifice who takes upon himself the guilt of the sacrificer, in this case, Agamemnon. This plot of the myth proved to be an important source for many tragedies of Classical Athens but the only plays to have come down to us in their entirety are Euripides's *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Iphigenia at Taurus*. The Latvian playwright used the text of the first-mentioned tragedy as the background of his interpretation.

In the Post-classical period Euripides enjoyed a greater popularity than the other tragic poets and his plays are more realistic than Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies. Euripides is the first author of antiquity we know about who looked at the relationship between man and woman from both the male and female point of view. His influence can be even found among the early

Christians who idealized the dying virgin as the most valuable of martyrs (Pomeroy 1998: 230).

Zīverts had the greatest respect for the ancient tragedian but he considered the end of the play *Iphigenia at Aulis* as not perfect and intended to provide a more realistic and psychologically reasonable conclusion. Zīverts wanted to ignore traces of the ancient initiation rituals which are shown in the Euripidean play. According to the theories of C. G. Jung and N. Frye, the practitioners of archetypal criticism, the tragic hero of Euripides' tragedy, the virgin Iphigenia, can be considered a divine being, a selected, chosen one. She embodies the archetype of the Divine Sacrifice (according to the N. Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) or the archetype of the Child-God, the Divine Child (according to C. G. Jung).

The Latvian playwright of the end of the 20th century did not believe in God or a divine being and in miraculous happenings either. Zīverts could have accepted Sartre's vision about a man who was born into a kind of void, into the world without a divine defender.

As one of Zīverts' favourite topics is the problem of power — the playwright had intended Agamemnon, the main hero, to be "the modern man of power". Zīverts came to the conclusion that already Euripides had shown the leader of the Greek army in a situation when he had to decide between love and power. Euripides in his tragedy deals with the period of the formation of Athens when the relations between gods and men were based on making deals. Euripides' plays and other tragedies of Classical Athenian dramatists show the collision of the will of gods and men, which provides the dramatic conflict. Euripides' tragedy *Iphigenia at Aulis* shows that the gods' will, which has the status of law, is to be fulfilled as men's will. Actually, Artemis' demand is the request of the people because the favourable winds were necessary for the heroes who went to Troy in order to rob, conquer and take revenge on Menelaus. Agamemnon in the tragedy *Iphigenia at Aulis* comes to this conclusion: "[...] we are slaves of crowd" (Eiripīds 1984: 271). Besides, the military expedition to Troy is the guarantee of Agamemnon power.

In antiquity Agamemnon was called a good man, he was a good king for the Greeks because he has four cardinal virtues — courage, temperance, justice and wisdom (Bowra 1957: 98). Humanity or sensibility, or responsibility for a child (daughter) are not virtues of a good man of antiquity. Therefore the Euripidean Agamemnon quickly decided to carry out the gods' will and ignored the emotions and love for his daughter.

The problem of choice between power and love in Zīverts' tragedy is more sharply emphasized than in Euripides' play. Ksenons, Agamemnons' old, true slave and his daughter Iphigenia's teacher, warned him that a very hard struggle would be expected between two "predatory Furies" — love and power:

They will never get together. Because love wants to rule but power demands to be loved. (Zīverts 1992a: 18)

If the hero of Zīverts' play had sacrificed his daughter, he would have gained the power, glory and wealth; if the leader had decided to save his daughter's life, he would have lost everything, except his humanity. Agamemnon is the modern man of power who wants to keep both of them. Zīverts' hero does not believe in the gods' power and oracle Kalhant's divination. But Agamemnon is aware of the firm belief of his people in the gods' will therefore he submits himself to the pressure of society. Zīverts shows a total freedom of the choice for Agamemnon and emphasizes the existential problem of responsibility for his action.

Though the title of Zīverts' play is *Iphigenia*, the main hero is Agamemnon and actually Zīverts ignores a woman's will. Contrary to Euripides' interpretation, Iphigenia does not know that she is doomed to death. Euripides involves Iphigenia in the action of the tragedy and offers her an illusory possibility of choice. Iphigenia is willing to submit herself to the sacrificial knife, motivating her choice with words that in wartime "it is better that one man lives to see the light of day than ten thousand women" (Eiripīds 1984: 291). In this way self-sacrificing heroines in Euripides' tragedies win prize from the traditionally minded (Pomeroy 1998: 228) and realize the rebirth or initiation themselves.

It is not the artistic purpose for Zīverts to show the sacrificial rite or the procedure of purification of the selected virgin Iphigenia. The author did not intend to create the episode of self-denying as Euripides did in his tragedy. Zīverts gives Iphigenia the role of an object, not a subject. The play of the Latvian dramatist exalts the so called masculine dominance. If Euripides "was the only tragedian to acquire a reputation for misogyny" (ib. 223), what should Zīverts be called? Misogyny or hatred against women has spawned the ideology of male superiority (ib. 217). And Zīverts' play clearly reveals the result of male superiority.

The basic conflict of Zīverts' drama is Agamemnon's inner conflict which reveals doubts about his behaviour and worries about the loss of both — his power or the object of his love. It is possible that the action of Zīverts' unfinished play was interrupted before the climax when the tragic hero had to make his final choice. In my opinion Agamemnon could have sacrificed his daughter because he is a ruler, a typical Machiavellian who justifies the use of any methods and ignores his own emotions. Agamemnon is an authoritative ruler but not the peoples' leader. According to the author's designation, he is the modern man of power, the typical active and efficient man of contemporary society.

The incompleteness of the play *Iphigenia* can be considered as conceptual (Kalnačs 1998:182) because, firstly, it was always interesting for Zīverts to leave problems open and allow the freedom of interpretation to his audience. Secondly, the incompleteness of the play emphasizes the problems of power as eternal and always topical. The modern, rational man on the threshold of the 21st century finds himself in a similar situation of choice as Agamemnon — to serve either insensible reason or humanity.

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Palabra y Persona. 8. Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino del P.E.N. Internacional, 2001. ISSN 0329-0425. (Ed. José Isaacson & Luis Mario Lozzia). The present issue is centred on the linguistic aspect of Argentine literature, containing articles by P. Verdevoye, T. Running, A. Cancellier, Z. Palermo, I. Pardal, J. Urien Berri, and J. Isaacson. Traditionally, it also includes samples of poetry and fiction.

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Rilce. 16.3. Géneros Narrativos. Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2000. ISSN 0213-2370. (Dir. Víctor García Ruiz; Ed. del número monográfico Kurt Spang). It contains the following articles: C. Alonso de Real, Sátira poética y narración en Horacio; M. L. Antonaya Núñez-Castelo, El ciclo de cuentos como género narrativo en la literatura española; R. Baena, *Childhoods*; la autobiografía de infancia como subgénero narrativo en auge; R. G. Davis, Mundos paralelos: un acercamiento a la fantasía en la literatura infantil; A. Erro, La ilustración en la literatura infantil; J. Fernández, Tres novelas de Gonzalo Torrente Ballester: *Dafne y ensueños*, *La rosa de los vientos* y *Yo no soy yo, evidentemente*; R. Fernández Urtasun, Autobiografías y Poéticas: confluencia de géneros narrativos; M. Gomes, Para una teoría del ciclo de cuentos hispanoamericano; C. Mafz, Para una poética del género autobiográfico. El problema de la intencionalidad; P. Merlo Morat, El folletín moderno. El regreso de un género decimonónico; J. de Navascués, Sobre conejos sandiyeros y otras zarandajas. El microcuento en Salarrué; K. Spang, La novela epistolar. Un intento de definición genérica; J. B. Torres Guerra, El himno en Grecia, un género narrativo; V. G. Zonana, *De viris pessimis*: biografías imaginarias de Marcel Schwob, Jorge Luis Borges y Juan Rodolfo Wilcock.

Rilce. 17.2. Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2001. ISSN 0213-2370. (Dir. Víctor García Ruiz). It contains the following full-length articles: J. M. Escudero Baztán, El entremés de *El astrólogo tunante* de Bances Candamo; M. T. García-Abad García, El cine y la risa en el teatro de Jardiel Poncela; D. Harris, Pisadas en el Paraíso: el mundo natural y la presencia humana en *Espadas como labios* de Vicente Aleixandre; E. Houvenaghel, La versalidad estilística de Alfonso Reyes a la luz del clásico "decoro"; M. A. Iglesias, "Los jóvenes y el arte": escapismo y

estética neorromántica en un grupo de intelectuales de derechas en el Madrid de preguerra; L. López Gutiérrez, La parodia de la poesía amorosa culta en Quevedo: el romance XLI; A. M. Pollin, Cervantes y El Greco: algunos paralelismos en su obra. Besides, it includes a number of reviews on recent books.

Salumets, Thomas (Ed.) *Norbert Elias and Human Interdependencies*. Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7735-2196-8. It contains essays about the German philosopher Norbert Elias by T. Salumets, H. Korte, S. Mennel, C. Wouters, J. Ardit, T. J. Scheff, H. Kuzmics, T. M. Kemple, S. Guy-Bray, U. C. Teucher, A. Treibel, G. van Benthem van der Bergh, R. Blomert, and S. Mennell.

Sign System Studies. 28. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2000. ISSN 1406-4243. ISBN 9985-56-542-8. (Eds. Peeter Torop, Michail Lotman, Kalevi Kull). It contains articles in English and Russian on general semiotics (J. Deely, W. Nöth, J. Hintikka, F. Stjernfelt), semiotics of culture (M. Danesi, A Note on Vico and Lotman; P. Torop, The Intersemiotic Space: Adrianopol in F. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* St. Petersburg; D. L. Gorlée, Text Semiotics: Textology as Survival-Machine; T. G. Winner, Czech and Tartu-Moscow Semiotics; T. Huttunen, From "Word-Images" to "Chapter-Shots": The Imaginist Montage of Anatolij Mariengof; I. Avramets, On the Definition of Genre of Dostoevsky's Works; M. Lotman, Russian Verse: Its Metrics, Versification Systems, and Prosody; M. Grishakova, V. Nabokov's *Bend Sinister*: A Social Message or an Experiment with Time?; J. Sanjinés, The Book at the Outskirts of Culture: Cortázar's First Almanac; L. Mäll, On the Concept of Humanistic Base Texts), ecossemiotics and biosemiotics.

Sign System Studies. 29.1. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2001. ISSN 1406-4243. ISBN 9985-56-576-2. (Eds. Peeter Torop, Michail Lotman, Kalevi Kull). Besides its main topic — ecossemiotics and biosemiotics — it contains articles in English on cultural ecossemiotics by A. Hornborg, A. Weber, C. Ljungberg, S. E. Larsen and A. Roepstorff.

Sign System Studies. 29.2. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2001. ISSN 1406-4243. ISBN 9985-56-622-X. (Eds. Peeter Torop, Mihail Lotman, Kalevi Kull). It contains articles in English and Russian on semiotics of culture (F. Merrell, Lotman's Semiosphere, Pierce's Categories, and Cultural Forms of Life; M. Lotman, The Semiotics of Culture and the Phenomenology of Fear; I. Mladenov, Unlimited Semiosis and Heteroglossia; I. Machado, Projections: Semiotics of Culture in Brazil), semiotics of text (P. Copley, Analysing Narrative

Genres; M. Grishakova, Metaphor and Narrative; L. Naiditch, Remarks on Semantic peculiarities of Numerals and on Usage of Numerals in Several Kinds of Texts; M.-K. Lotman, Prosody and Versification Systems of Ancient Verse; E. Sütiste, Translating the Seventeen Syllables), sociosemiotics, ecosemiotics and biosemiotics.

Σύγκριση / Comparaison. Annual magazine of the Greek Society of General and Comparative Literature. 12. Thessaly, 2001. ISSN 1105-1361. (Ed. Z. I. Siafléakis). Besides a variety of articles in Greek, it contains the following contributions in French and English: J. Bouchard, Nicolas Mavrocordatos censeur de la République des Lettres; S. Denissi, The Greek Enlightenment and the Changing Cultural Status of Women; T. A. Kaplanis, Women in the Looking-Glass; the philogynous Dapontes (1713-1784) within the misogynous tradition of the Middle Ages; A. Glycofrydi-Leontsini, Un témoignage tardif des Lumières en Grèce: Le dictionnaire inédit de Jules David; S. Athini Une traduction manuscrite en grec moderne: *L'histoire du compte de Comminge et de l'Adélaïde*; V. Patsiou, Du manuscrit à l'imprimé: Les premières éditions d'ouvrages littéraires en grec moderne au XVIIIe siècle.

Szegedy-Maszák, Mihály (ed.). *National Heritage — National Canon*. Budapest: Collegium Budapest (Workshop Series No. 11.), 2001. Following the editor's introduction, its undersection 1 ("Canon"), centred on literary research, contains the following articles: J. Jastrzebska, La manipulation du canon littéraire: canon national et la conscience nationale; A. Kiossev, Lists of the Missing; I. Sármány-Parsons, Art Criticism and the Construction of National Heritage; N. T. Parsons, 'Sweetness and Light' or 'Tyrannical Schoolmaster'? Some Thoughts on Function and Dysfunction in the Canon; C. Servant, Un *moment critique* dans les lettres tchèques des années 1890: le 'passage obligé de la modernité?'; G. C. Kálman, Canonised Interpretations; M. Szegedy-Maszák, Framing Texts as the Representation of National Character: From Enlightenment Universalism to Romantic Nationalism; P. Minney, Academia's Discovery of the National Literature: British and Russian Responses in the Wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Theatralia. Revista de Teoría del Teatro. 4. *Teatro hispánico y literatura europea. Teatro y Weltliteratur*. Vigo: Universidad de Vigo, 2002. ISSN 1576-1754. ISBN 84-600-9687-4. (Ed. Jesús G. Maestro). The present monographic issue gathers the papers of the 4th International Conference of Theatre Theory, held in Vigo in March, 2002: J. G. Maestro, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Molière; M. Tietz, Descontextualización histórica y mitificación de Calderón: la creación de un

poeta teólogo; M. Ribao Pereira, Fragmento de una traducción juvenil inédita de Emilia Pardo Bazán: 'Adriana Lecouvreur'; E. Banús, y L. Galván, Calderón, piedra de toque en la visión supranacional de la literatura: entre Goethe y Hofmannstahl; A. N. Zahareas, El teatro moderno como realidad y metáfora; W. Floeck, La difusión del teatro español del siglo XX en los escenarios alemanes; E. Cueto Asín, Sobre chinecas: Innovación, tradición y recuperación del espacio público; J. G. Menéndez, La configuración de la tragedia neoclásica en España y Portugal; T. García Ruiz, La tradición pedagógica en el teatro europeo durante el siglo XX; M. Cipolloni, Electra por dentro y por fuera: las orestrías americanas de O'Neill y Piñera; M. Martín Clavijo, El 'Verfremdungseffekt' en el teatro italiano de posguerra: Ennio Flaiano; E. Drumm, La ausencia de lo pictórico en 'Meninas' de Buero Vallejo; M. C. Becerra Suárez, La presencia del cine en el teatro de Roberto Vidal Bolaño; M. Constantini, Actantes, actores y personajes; J. M. Bobes, Representaciones de 'La Celestina' en la historia del teatro madrileño (1980-1999); C. González Vázquez, 'La Careta': Reflexiones de Castela sobre la función de la máscara en el teatro; V. Trueba Mira, Paradojas de alteridad en 'Zinda' de Rosa Gálvez.

Tópicos del Seminario. 5. Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. 2001. ISSN 165-1200. (Dir. María Isabel Filinich). Under the title "El discurso del otro" it contains the following articles: E. Landowski, Sabor del otro; A. Sladogna, El lugar del otro en el psicoanálisis; J. A. Montiel, Lenguaje y pasión según CL; E. Bossi, Los nombres del otro; T. Bubnova, Palabra propia, palabra ajena; E. Altuna, Contra toda mudanza: descripción y memoria de "lo notable" en textos coloniales del siglo XVI.

Tópicos del Seminario. 6. Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. 2001. ISSN 165-200. Under the title "La dimensión plástica de la escritura" it contains the following articles: N. Jitrik, La figura que reside en el poema; G. Casasco, Lazos en la escritura; M. Frenk, Una escritura problemática: las canciones de la tradición oral antigua; E. Ferreiro, La *mise en page* en contexto informático; V. Cárdenas, Lingüística y escritura: la zona visuográfica; S. Pérez Cortés, Dos debates en torno a la escritura; R. Dorra, Entrevista con Roger Chartier.

Tropelías. 9-10. Universidad de Zaragoza, 1998/1999. ISSN 1132-2373. (Ed. Túa Blesa). It contains the following full-length articles: T. Albadalejo, La poliacroasis como componente de la comunicación retórica; L. Albuixech, Arnalte, Cardenio and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*: From Narrative to Theater; S. Alonso Pérez, La enunciación lírica en el marco del canto litúrgico: la huida del significado; C.

Becerra Suárez, Dos miradas, dos versiones: Lope de Aguirre en Miguel Otero Silva y Ramón J. Sender; C. Besa Camprubí, La máxima y su lector en Proust. Consideraciones desde la estética de la recepción, la retórica y la psicocrítica; A. Calvo Revilla, Rasgos de oralidad en la *Poetria Nova* de Godofredo de Vinsauf: un acercamiento a la memoria y a la actio/pronuntiatio; V. Castrillo Salvador, Análisis semiológico de la luz en *Luces de bohemia* (1924); M. Catalá Pérez, Pragmática de la comunicación publicitaria: relación con los procesos comunicativos literarios; A. Chicharro, Modelo estructuralista genético y estudios teóricos generales sobre literatura y sociedad en España; M. Comellas & H. Fricke, La teoría literaria de Goethe; N. Dejong, Mutaciones de la mujer araña. Análisis comparativo de las versiones novelística, dramática y cinematográfica de una novela de Manuel Puig; A. Faro-Forteza, Cine frente a teatro: punto de vista, espacio y tiempo en *Canción de cuna* (Garci/ Martínez Sierra); M. Ferrante, Narciso, la maschera nello specchio: la ricerca dell'identità in Leopoldo María Panero; J. Franco i Giner, La representación de la mujer en *Nobleza Baturra* (Cifesa, 1935) y la adaptación fílmica en el caso del *remake Morena Clara* (Cifesa, 1936); S. Gil-Albarellos, El concepto de literatura comparada. Algunos problemas y soluciones; N. González-Ortega, Canon y canonización en la obra literaria, periodística y cinematográfica de García Márquez; U. Lada Ferreras, Pragmática del discurso literario: la comunicación literaria; R. Lledós, La poesía practica la destrucción: *Maniluvios*, de José-Miguel Ullán; J.A. Llera, Prolegómenos para una teoría de la sátira; A. López Eire, Retórica y publicística; S. Núñez Puente, A través de un tiempo circular: temporalidad y *ennui* en *La Regenta* y *Madame Bovary*; G. Pulido Tirado, La literatura cinematográfica en la España de los años cincuenta. La propuesta de Joaquín de Entrambasaguas; F. J. Ríos, La recepción de imágenes marítimas en la literatura española de los Siglos de Oro; J. M. Rodríguez García, La piedra y la flor en William Carlos Williams y Octavio Paz; M. Sánchez Moreiras, La metáfora ciega. El acontecimiento del lenguaje en la postmodernidad; M. A. Sanz Manzano, La música en el universo poético de Juan Ramón Jiménez; L. Silvestri, La novela policíaca y el mito de la racionalidad; V. Tortosa, La culpabilización histórica de la cultura; J. M. Trabado Cabado, Pablo García Baena y la tradición áurea. Intertextos gongorinos y la mediación de Cernuda en tres poemas de fieles guirnaldas fugitivas; X. Vall, J. M. Castellet y el existencialismo; D. Viñas, Ortega y Ayala frente a la temática de la novela (o frente a frente).

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